George Frederick Nott (1768 - 1841), Un ecclesiastico anglicano tra teologia, letteratura, arte, archeologia, bibliofilia e collezionismo

This book reconstructs the biography of George Frederick Nott, who reflected the intellectual climate of his time and bridged English and Italian cultures at the turn of the 19th century. An erudite and passionate admirer of Italian culture, Nott lived many years in Italy. As a writer, philologist and translator, he was a mediator between English and Italian culture. He met Vincenzo Monti and was befriended by Christian Karl Josias von Bunsen, Giovan Battista Niccolini, Giacomo Leopardi; translated into Italian the Book of Common Prayer, edited Dante and Bosone da Gubbio's Avventuroso Ciciliano. At the time Italian culture was becoming increasingly important for British high society; the Grand Tour to Italy was an essential part of the British elite's education. While Italy was considered the cradle of European civilization progressive Italian intellectuals looked to England as a model. George Frederick Nott (1768-1841), an Anglican minister, garnered an initial reputation as a theologian but was later better known for his studies in English literature, culminating in the publishing of the Earl of Surrey's and Thomas Wyatt's poems in 1815-1816. Nott delighted in archaeology and art. He was Joseph Anton Koch's, the spiritual father of the "Nazarenes", patron and as canon of Winchester he supervised the restoration of the Cathedral. He was among the first members of the Institute of Archaeology in Rome and was also a passionate collector of antiquities, coins, medals and a bibliophile who over time built a refined library of thousands of books and manuscripts. His collections were sold after his death; his important collection of coins was acquired by the British Museum and the manuscripts and books, including some very rare, are scattered throughout all major libraries and museums around the world. Reconstructing Nott's biography effectively also reconstructs the intellectual climate of the time, which we find described in the works of Jane Austen and George Eliot. In many respects Nott was an exemplary figure of pre-Victorian England. He undertook The Grand Tour as a tutor in the years immediately following the French Revolution. His complex relations with the English court, which had remained chaotic since the end of the Napoleonic Wars, his incredible network of relationships and his diversified interests reveal much about the transition from 18th century erudition to a new romantic sensibility. It is difficult to assess what Nott's impact really was on the development of Anglo-Italian relations. He felt he was unjustly undervalued by Italian scholars, yet he was esteemed by Giacomo Leopardi, whose friendship in itself demonstrated Nott was far from banal. What is certain is that his fascination with Italian culture was shared by many contemporary British writers. Nott was also certainly a very peculiar person. His dismissal as Princess Charlotte's tutor was talked of at length throughout England. Despite having serious health problems, he was clearly a hypochondriac. He had a difficult temper; many who came into contact with him considered him a "novel character" as a result of his fits and posturing. While Anthony Trollope transformed him into a generally benevolent caricature Shelley and Byron, with whom he had dealings in Pisa in 1821, were much less generous. Nott was a bizarre erudite. As a reflection, we decided to follow his tracks in an erudite fashion. Despite his oft cited work on English Renaissance and 13th century Italian literature, his notable relations with some of the most famous people of the era no biography of Nott was ever written beyond brief entries in the Dictionary of National Biography (1894 by Sidney Lee and 2004 by Rosemary Mitchell) and a recent short article by Carlo De Frede about his relationship with Leopardi. The painstaking reconstruction of Nott's life, characterised by his intellectual ties and international scope, was the only way to adequately describe his erudite anxiety which is precisely what renders him an emblematic figure.
One important collection, acquired in 1827, is that assembled by the Honorable George Knox (1765-1827), one-time Member of Parliament in Dublin and London. His collection contains Irish, European and American specimens. Knox's catalogs contain precise descriptions of specimens and of the physical properties of mineral groups. Un ecclesiastico anglicano tra teologia, letteratura, arte, archeologia, bibliofilia e collezionismo.