

::: SOME WOMEN :::
LOVING OR LUCKLESS



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THE MARQUISE DE VICHET

:: SOME WOMEN ::
LOVING OR LUCKLESS
BY TEODOR DE WYZEWA
A TRANSLATION FROM THE FRENCH
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THE PRINCESS SOPHIA DOROTHEA
AND PHILIP VON KÖNIGSMARK



I

THE LETTERS

ON the night of July 1, 1694, Philip Christopher of Königsmark, a Swedish nobleman in the service of the Elector of Saxony, was assassinated in a corridor of the ducal palace of Hanover, whilst leaving the room of Princess Sophia Dorothea whose lover he was. The circumstances connected with this assassination have often been described, and the story of the loves of Sophia Dorothea and Königsmark has often been told, as reconstructed by various German and Scandinavian scholars. Unfortunately these scholars, although in possession of numbers of documents which might have enabled them to present the facts in their true historic light, could not resist the temptation of dressing them up to suit their own fancy, the effect of which has been not only to rob their works of any serious value, but even to discredit the sources from which they have been drawn. Thus, for instance, it has come about that the love-letters of Sophia Dorothea and Königsmark, which have been at the public disposal since 1848, in the library of the Swedish University at Lund, have had to wait more than half a century for some one to take the trouble to read and publish them.

Here is what Henri Blaze formerly said of this

correspondence in his essay on "The Last of the Königsmarks":

The correspondence between Sophia Dorothea and Königsmark, recently discovered by Dr. Palmblad, is now in the archives of the library of La Gardie, at Loeberod in Sweden, where it was deposited somewhere about 1810 by a grand-niece of Philip Königsmark's own sister. In making over these letters to her children she had said that they were a precious and important deposit, for these letters had *cost her brother his life, and a king's mother her liberty*. This curious correspondence would alone form a thick volume. The princess's letters are distinguished by the elegance of the handwriting and the correctness of the spelling, a somewhat rare luxury at that time, even in France, and in a foreigner hardly to be over-estimated. On the other hand there are no dates, either of the month or the day, nor any indication of place. Nothing less than the patience of a dry-as-dust chartographer would be equal to the task of clearing up this chronological chaos. Yet the work would repay the trouble, for an exact classification, a plain and straightforward translation of these papers, most of which are in cipher, would, I have no doubt, bring out many a revelation interesting for the history of that period.

Nobody can find fault with Blaze for not having had the patience of a "dry-as-dust," but this want of patience seems to have equally characterised Dr. Palmblad, the Swedish author, whose enormous work on Aurora Königsmark he merely analysed, and whom he praised as "a writer of vast anecdotic erudition, particularly skilful in looking through family papers." This Palmblad, who was allowed to look through the letters of the Princess of Hanover and her lover, took the most amazing liberties with them. Without attempting to classify them, or to decipher them, he extracted at random a few phrases which he tacked on to each other, sometimes adding a few of

his own invention. Although these extracts from the correspondence scarcely fill six or seven pages, he has accumulated in them so many blunders, so many monstrous improbabilities—all the mere result of his “adaptation”—that scholars were unanimous in declaring that the letters “discovered” by him were evidently apocryphal. For fifty years they slumbered in a box at the Lund library without any one condescending to cast a glance at them.

And yet these letters are perfectly authentic. Even if no other proof existed their very tone would be sufficient testimony. Every line betrays a naturalness, an absence of literary scruples, a sincere and deep concern as to the trifles of every-day life—not to speak of their passionate accents—with which no forger, however learned or skilful, could have invested them. But, besides this, their authenticity has recently been proved absolutely and beyond the shadow of a doubt by an English writer, Mr. W. H. Wilkins, the first person who has undertaken to “reduce their chaos to order.”*

Mr. Wilkins began by proving, from a comparison of the manuscript text and Palmblad’s version, that all errors noticed by critics were merely to be ascribed to the exuberant fancy of their would-be editor. After that he verified one by one all the historical details mentioned in the manuscript letters, by comparing them with English documents of which nobody could possibly have had any knowledge thirty years ago. For instance, he studied among the State Papers in London the reports sent in weekly to William of Orange by Lord Colt, English ambassador to the Court of Hanover. These reports,

* “The Love of an Uncrowned Queen.” By W. H. Wilkins. 2 vols., 8vo, illustrated. London, Longmans & Co.

which were being kept in strict secrecy at the time when the papers of the Counts La Gardie were deposited in the library of the University of Lund, and to which consequently no forger can have had access, are in perfect agreement with the letters of Sophia Dorothea and Königsmark. There are even to be found in the letters of the former numerous allusions to projected journeys, festivities, &c., which never took place, but which we learn from Colt's reports had actually been planned by the Court of Hanover.

The letters of Sophia Dorothea and Königsmark are quite authentic: the learned researches of Mr. Wilkins leave no possible room for doubt on that point. We know besides, from Sophia's confidential friend, that she and her lover were in the habit of entrusting the keeping of their letters to Aurora Königsmark, not daring to keep them in their own neighbourhood, and not having the courage to destroy them. The last letters only were confiscated by the police of the Elector of Hanover, and doubtless destroyed immediately after Königsmark's murder. In point of fact these are missing, as well as others of Sophia Dorothea which the lovers must have thought too compromising and burnt as soon as read. The correspondence is incomplete, fragmentary, and continually interrupted by great gaps; we find answers to questions of which we know nothing, and again questions to which the answers are lost. Never was there a manuscript correspondence bearing more strongly on the face of it all the moral and material characteristics of authenticity.

And as this correspondence is in French, we cannot too deeply regret being obliged to read it in the English translation published by Mr. W. H. Wilkins. How greatly should we have

preferred that a French writer, following the advice of Blaze de Bury, should have taken the initiative of "reducing this chaos" of the Lund manuscripts "to order"! How much more should we have been touched and charmed, especially by the Princess's letters, could we have read them in the language in which they were written! For Blaze is mistaken when he says that they are mostly in cipher: the cipher, or occasionally pseudonyms, are only employed in place of certain names for the most part quite easy to discover; besides, the princess's letters are really written in the most elegant French, judging at all events from the few passages quoted by Mr. Wilkins. This, by the way, is hardly as meritorious in "a foreigner" as Blaze de Bury appears to think, when the foreigner happens to be, like Sophia Dorothea, the daughter of a French woman, and to have received an exclusively French education.

This correspondence ought to have made its first appearance in French, and I cannot refrain from expressing a hope that we shall one day be presented with the French text, now that its authenticity is proved, and its "chaos" pretty well "reduced to order." Only then shall we be in a position to appreciate its literary worth, only then will historical criticism be able to inform us as to the importance of the varied information contained in it. This importance would appear to be somewhat considerable, for all the letters of the lovers are strewed with curious details as to the inner and outer history of Hanover at the end of the seventeenth century; and a long series of Königsmark's letters is almost entirely devoted to an account of the Flanders campaign of 1692, in which the Swedish officer played an active

part, and of which he never wearies of recounting to his mistress the minutest events, either for her amusement or to avoid answering her reproaches on his gallantries.

But if we cannot as yet form a complete judgment on these letters, Mr. Wilkins's English translation, with the minute and copious commentary which he has appended to them, suffices far better than all the accounts of historians and novelists to make us acquainted with the character of the two heroes of the Hanoverian tragedy and with the different feelings they entertained for each other. Incomplete and disconnected as it may be, and actually because of its evident authenticity, their correspondence is the most instructive of all love tales. Here two hearts are entirely laid bare to us with such abandonment and burning passion that the most commonplace words interest and touch us, bringing with them, as they do, the echo of the deep emotions which inspired them. At the back of all Königsmark's lying and flattery and fits of anger we may watch almost day by day the impetuous struggle of his ambition and instincts. And in spite of the fact that Sophia Dorothea's letters are always full of the same complaints and the same reproaches, there is always something in the tone of each of them that reveals to us the unhappy young woman, ever more tenderly attached to her seducer, ever bolder, yet more docile, ever more blindly led by the growth of her passion to the sacrifice of all prudence and of all scruple. We have a revelation of two hearts in their living reality, the two most dissimilar hearts we can possibly imagine; and this contrast strengthens the impression of fatality that creeps upon us as the long drama is played out before our eyes.

II

KÖNIGSMARK

FIRST comes the lover, the handsome Philip Christopher Königsmark. Sprung from a race of brilliant adventurers, he spent his youth in wandering over Europe in quest of adventures; and there is good reason to believe that he was not unconnected with an attempt, organised by his elder brother, to murder in a London street the husband of a lady whose hand and fortune were coveted by this brother. He comes to Hanover in 1688, sets up there in great style, becomes intimate with the young sons of Duke Ernest Augustus, and as early as 1689 we find him carrying on two intrigues at once. For while paying his attentions to the Princess Sophia Dorothea he becomes the lover of the Countess of Platen, the Duke's mistress and the young princess's most cruel enemy. But it is not till July 1691 that, having broken with the Countess, he seriously undertakes the conquest of Sophia Dorothea. He secretly writes her several letters, implores her, threatens to kill himself, and at last receives a note from her. "Verily," he answers, "it is I who should complain. I who am constrained to take so many precautions and suffer cruel suspense! But I can now bear my hapless lot with fortitude, since the most amiable, captivating

and charming being in the universe is the cause of all." Again the princess makes no reply to this letter, and again Königsmark, by entreaties and threats, obtains a few kindly words. "If you had been free from blame," writes he, "you would not have deigned to write at all; but in spite of the way in which you have treated me, I needs must worship you still. The sorrow and the contrition which you express to me have determined me to leave here the day after to-morrow."

That is the tone of all his letters, brutal and imperious, scolding the timid young woman to bring her again and again to yield fresh favours. And, in fact, no later than the following August, Königsmark obtains the promise of a regular correspondence; they even settle to adopt a cipher to take the place of proper names, and henceforth, instead of signing his letters *your slave*, or *your obedient valet*, the Swedish officer writes to the wife of the heir-apparent of Hanover: "Adieu, aimable brune! La poste part, il faut finir. Je vous embrasse les genoux." It is in this same letter that he offers Sophia Dorothea for the first time a proof of his love which from this time will reappear in almost all his letters. Not having a poetical imagination, and not caring to exert himself to turn compliments, he tells his lady-love that the excess of his passion is making him ill. "Yesterday," he writes, "when I had started for a walk, I had such violent palpitations that I was obliged to return home." On other occasions his love gives him *la colique*, or prevents him from satisfying his hunger. He is perpetually insisting on a meeting, at one moment trying to make Sophia Dorothea ashamed of her want of courage, and citing the example of other princesses more enterprising

than herself, at another declaring that he will kill himself if she obstinately persists in refusing to receive him. "I have a consolation here—close to me—it is not a pretty girl, but a bear, a live bear which I feed. If you should fail to return my love, I shall bare my breast and let him tear my heart out. I am teaching him that trick with sheep and calves, and he doesn't manage it badly. If ever I have need of him, God help me! I shan't have to suffer long!"

Sophia Dorothea, more and more touched by the sufferings which he details to her, exhorts him to marry and undertakes to find him a wife. "I will marry if you order me to," answers the gallant Königsmark, "but on condition that you swear to me on your oath that you will always cherish the affection you have seemed to show me." In reality all he wants is a rendezvous, and to obtain it every wile is fair in his eyes. "I am starting for the Morea," he writes, "and I hope I shall never come back." Then he adds: "*When* wilt thou have pity on me? When shall I overcome thy coldness? Wilt thou ever keep from me the rapture of tasting perfect joy? I seek it in thy arms, and if I may not taste it there I care for naught else. No! if I may not be happy with you I will not be happy at all." The princess, alarmed, implores him not to rush to his death. To which he answers: "Since you ask me to stay, I will do so with joy. My greatest happiness is to pay you my court. . . . Courage, Madame; see me for once—no more—half a quarter of an hour." Sophia Dorothea consents. By way of thanks Königsmark writes to her: "The moments seem to me centuries. How long the hours are in passing! Do not fail to have at hand some of the Queen of Hungary's essence for fear I should faint

through excess of joy! What! Shall I press this night in my arms the most lovable of women? Shall I kiss her charming lips? Shall I hear from her lips the avowal of her love? Shall I feel the rapture of embracing her knees? My tears shall flow down her incomparable cheeks! I shall hold in my arms the fairest body in this world!"

A mere brute; that is what this handsome Königs-mark is in plain language, and a brute full of cunning in his coarseness; for the princess at this moment is not in the least resigned to give herself to him. But he guesses that she loves him, he knows that she is sad, timid and inexperienced, and evidently he hopes to conquer by force. Then, seeing that he cannot succeed by force (for he does not appear to have been successful at first), he has recourse to other wiles. "My manner towards the Duchess of Saxe-Eisenach must have shown you that my heart is all yours, and no other beauty could find place there, not even that princess. . . . Did you really notice how she attacked me? . . ." Sophia Dorothea then proposes to fly with him to some hidden nook where they can indulge their love in freedom. Königs-mark hastens to endorse this proposal, but gives her to understand at the same time that it would be better for her to keep her rank and fortune and remain a princess whilst taking him for her lover.

Then he sets out with the Hanoverian army for the Flanders campaign, and a fresh act of the comedy begins. During his leisure hours in this campaign Königs-mark amuses himself. He plays, gives parties, and so noisily that the report of his diversions soon reaches the ears of the princess. Königs-mark, in order to pacify his mistress's jealousy, pretends to appear jealous himself. He loads the unfortunate woman

with reproaches on the subject of balls at which she may have been, of conversations he supposes she may have had with young people. All the princess's letters are full of explanations, of justifications, of answers to unreal accusations which she takes seriously; whilst one guesses immediately the one only motive by which they were inspired. When she ventures gently to remind him that he has allowed three posts to pass by without writing to her, he gets angry, threatens a rupture, and declares that he has only let *two*, not *three*, posts pass. Or else he enumerates all the sacrifices which he has made for her. "I rejected the rich marriage that was proposed to me. I refused to stay in Sweden, although it was the only means of saving my fortune. I have been assured that, if I had returned, the King of Sweden would have offered me a regiment, with the rank of general. All this I have sacrificed! and what have I had in exchange?"

Perhaps at this moment he had not yet "received in exchange" the only favour he coveted; but he certainly received it immediately on his return to Hanover. "Last night," he writes on November 9, 1692, "makes me the happiest and the most satisfied man in the world. Your kisses showed me your tenderness, and I could not doubt your love." It was about the same time that he resumed his old relations with the Countess Platen. Sophia Dorothea reproaches him for this. He confesses to some interviews, an interchange of compliments; and again he has recourse to pretended jealousy, accusing his mistress of deceiving him with her brother-in-law, to whom she has not spoken a word for more than a year. However, he feels henceforth so sure of his conquest that he takes less and less trouble to

exculpate himself. What he desires is that Sophia Dorothea should obtain from her parents, who are very rich, a pension that will permit of her living in great style at some foreign court, for he feels that his own situation in Hanover is becoming more and more difficult. He sees that he is pretty nearly ruined by his gambling debts, and his dream is to migrate to some country where he can glory in his princely conquest without running the risk of paying for it with starvation.

“It is not a little matter,” he writes to Sophia Dorothea on June 17, 1693, “that your father is beginning to listen; and with your mother’s help you may perhaps succeed in your plan, provided you do not relax your efforts. Remember, it is the only way for us to become happy! . . . If your parents promise you something substantial, write anything and everything they wish; but beware of being tricked.” A few days later: “You tell me your mother has promised to give you 2000 crowns. I fear it will be very little good, but it is well to have her on your side—would to Heaven your father were the same.” On July 2 Königsmark loses courage: “I grieve to hear that your mother has quarrelled so with your father about the bastard. It is easy to see which side is the weaker, and I fear we can hope for nothing. You will be compelled to devote yourself more closely than ever to the Prince, and I shall have to seek some corner of the world, and beg for bread that I may not starve!” But this discouragement only lasts a few days, and no later than August 6 Königsmark is again pressing his mistress to continue her negotiations with her parents. “Don’t let them lead you by the nose in this way! It’s shameful!” Up to the beginning

of next year the lover's only thought is to force his mistress to obtain from her parents the fat pension which is to support them both. "If your father is ruined by the expenses of the war," writes he in November, "our hopes are all lost, but I can't believe that the Danish demands are so exorbitant as to leave him quite cleaned out."

Meanwhile these letters continue to be full of protestations of love and faithfulness, but their tone becomes continually harder and more impatient, and we often meet with passages like this: "The life I have been leading since the return of the Court must, I fear, give you cause for much jealousy; for I am playing every night with ladies, and, without vanity, they are not ugly nor of mean rank. I crave your pardon, but I cannot live without a little pleasure, and one of them is so like you that I cannot help being in her society. You will be curious to know her name, but I will not tell for fear you may forbid me to pay her my court." He gives suppers and balls and tells his mistress of them, adding, however, that they bore him to death. To all this the young woman whom he appears to have completely terrorised no longer dares to offer the shadow of a reproach: "Since you tell me your party was dull and tedious and everybody went home early, I am fain to believe you, though Stubenfol said nobody ever was so merry a host as you, and that the party did not break up until after midnight!" Assured of Sophia Dorothea's submission, Königsmark evidently thinks he can do what he pleases. He has not a thought either for his lady-love's rank or for her situation and the dangers to which he is constantly exposing her. Himself free in all his actions, he means to have her always at his beck and call.

Here is a note he writes her at the moment when their love is common knowledge and their smallest actions are being watched. "Your conduct is not very kind. You appoint a meeting with me and then you let me freeze to death in the cold, waiting for the signal. Yet you knew I was there from half-past eleven till one o'clock, walking up and down at the end of the street! I don't know what to think about it, but I can hardly doubt your inconstancy, after having such *icy* proof of it. . . . Make your mind easy, I will be off as quick as I can! Farewell, then! I start to-morrow morning for Hamburg."

Such is Königsmark, to judge him by his letters to Sophia Dorothea; and I regret having said that his letters reveal to us his whole heart. For though they furnish us with so much information about him, I do not think there is a single one which lets us know with any certainty whether he does or does not love the woman for whom he is going to die. One can surmise occasionally that he desires her for her beauty and luxury, above all for that title of princess, which no doubt must have attracted him to her from the first. But at other times even the expression of this desire has a false ring about it, and in any case it is never accompanied by a genuine cry of tenderness. Königsmark scolds the young woman, flatters her, commands her; one never feels that he is one with her, that he tries to understand her or so much as pities her. His death is the only thing lover-like about him. Sophia Dorothea has settled with him, during the last days of June, to run away on July 2 to Wolfenbützel, where he is to join her. He himself is in perfect safety at Dresden, and is aware that his return to Hanover will be at the risk of his life.

Yet he returns, visits his mistress in the night, forces her to receive him ; and it is in the act of leaving her room that he dies, like a hero. He did love her then, and more deeply than his letters testify ! Or did, perhaps, the danger of those tragic days suddenly arouse and exalt his desire ? Perhaps it inspired him with the same strange feeling for Sophia Dorothea that, later on, was to drive another adventurer, Lassalle, to rush to his death with the same madness.

III

SOPHIA DOROTHEA

WHETHER he loved her or not, few men assuredly have ever been more loved. And if, in spite of his heroic death, those who read his letters cannot help despising him, no one can help, in spite of her failings, admiring and pitying the young woman who yielded herself wholly to him. Here is one of her letters to him, the last which has come down to us :

This is the sixth day since you left, and I have not had a word from you. In what way have I deserved such treatment? Is it for loving you to adoration, for having sacrificed everything? But what use to remind you of this? My suspense is worse than death; nothing can equal the torments this cruel anxiety makes me suffer. What an ill fate is mine, good God! What shame to love without being loved! I was born to love you and I shall love you as long as I live. If it is true that you have changed—and I have no end of reasons for fearing so—I wish you no punishment save that of never finding a love and fidelity equal to mine. I wish that, despite the pleasures of fresh conquests, you may never cease to regret the love and tenderness which I have shown you. I love you more than woman ever loved man. But I tell you the same things too often; you must be tired of them. Do not count it ill I implore you, or grudge me the sad consolation of complaining of your harshness! I have not received a word; everything conspires to crush me. Perhaps,

in addition to the fact that you no longer love me, I am on the eve of being utterly lost. It is too much all at once ; I shall break down under it ! Farewell ! I forgive you for all you make me suffer.

Yes, in truth, she *was born to love* that coarse hard man *who made her suffer* ! Mr. Wilkins is quite right in evoking in connection with her tragedy the undying memory of Tristan and Isolt. Like the heroine of Wagner's drama, the princess of Hanover appears to us as the victim of an evil necessity, which, by degrees, robs her of all power to resist and defend herself. Married to a lout who hates her, surrounded by enemies implacably bent on humiliating and tormenting her, for a long time her only thought is for her duty ; but, from the very day that Königs-mark writes to her for the first time, we feel that she will never cease to belong to him. She feels it herself with a mixture of terror and rapture, and from day to day she abandons herself more and more to the passion which has possessed her, from day to day her letters show her more loving, more humble, more docile, more blindly resigned to endure the brutal domination of her faithless and cruel loved one ; till at last, like Isolt, she forgets, by dint of love, all the rest of the world, and almost voluntarily exposes herself to the worst dangers. With all this, ever timid and sweet, remaining to the end "the child" which Königsmark reproaches her with being. Her letters, even in the English translation, have a charm, a grace, a perfume that is delicious. Let us hope that we may soon be presented with the French text, that we may be made familiar with the lovable and tragic picture of Sophia Dorothea in its living relief.

QUEEN CAROLINE MATILDA AND
JOHN FREDERICK STRUENSÉE



I

THE MARRIAGE

WHEN in the last months of the year 1764, the Princess Caroline Matilda,* sister of King George III. of England, learnt that her brother had just betrothed her to the Crown Prince of Denmark, she burst into tears, overwhelmed with so deep a grief that, for a long time, it was thought that neither caresses nor remonstrances could ever calm her. Princess Amelia, her aunt, having told her that she would soon have an opportunity of realising one of her fondest dreams—that of travelling: “I guess what you are alluding to,” answered she, “but I would give everything in the world to be able to stay where I am, instead of being obliged to go and live so far off, with a prince whom I have never seen.” The child—she was scarcely thirteen and a half years old—ended, however, by forgetting her trouble somewhat. She had three years’ respite before her, the marriage being fixed for the summer of 1767, and meanwhile every day of her life was a holiday. At Kew she had a garden of her own, where she delighted in planting and rearing

* “A Queen of Tears, Caroline Matilda, Queen of Denmark and Norway.” By W. H. Wilkins. 2 vols., 8vo, illustrated. Longmans & Co. 1904.

all sorts of exotics. She loved learning English and French verses by heart, sometimes long tragic parts which she declaimed with wonderful earnestness and fire. But it was music that specially amused her and became her passion; whether she sang for herself the fine airs of the late Mr. Händel, accompanying herself on the harpsichord, or went to St. James' Palace to hear the "tours de force" of little Mozart, the infant prodigy of Salzburg, who was delighting London at that time.

Yet her trouble was only sleeping. It woke up entirely when she was told in June 1766 that her betrothed, who had meanwhile become king, wished the marriage to take place a year sooner. The admirable and excellent Sir Joshua Reynolds, who then had to paint her portrait, told in later years how no portrait had ever cost him so much trouble as this one, "because the poor young princess never ceased crying." Her great blue eyes were still full of pent-up tears, on the evening of October 1, 1766, while the Archbishop of Canterbury was celebrating her marriage by proxy in the Council Chamber of St. James', in the presence of the King and the whole Court uniting her to a prince of whom she still knew nothing, except that the marriage must necessarily detach him from his French sympathies and bring him over to an alliance of Denmark with England. Next day, at dawn, she had to start for her new country. Her mother, a dry, hard woman, could not help being somewhat sad to see her starting thus so much against her will. She gave her, at the last moment, a ring on which she had had these words engraved: "May it bring you good luck!" It is told that the young queen was pale and dejected,



CAROLINA MATILDA,
Queen of Denmark

and in such obvious despair, under the efforts she made to appear gay, that all along the road, up to Harwich Harbour, her ladies-in-waiting wept around her.

She was the more an object of pity because it was a long time since such a gentle princess, one so captivating by her good heart and manners, or so pretty, had been known at the Court of London. Old Reynolds was quite grieved that he had not been able to do her justice in his portrait of her ; but still this portrait is quite sufficient to give us an idea of the graceful and touching beauty which presently earned her the name of "the English white rose" in Copenhagen and all over Denmark. Under splendid gold-blonde hair, with gleams of silver, she had blue eyes of exquisite tenderness, a delicately arched nose and the most delicious complexion of the blonde type one could imagine in a dream. Her under-lip alone already somewhat full, made her face approach the very peculiar "bovine" type which we see in all her brothers' portraits as well as in that of her sister Augusta of Brunswick. Even this defect, rather noticeable in the melancholy expression of Reynolds' portrait, was effaced as soon as her little mouth brightened in a smile.

After a long and troublesome crossing, followed by a dismal journey under snowy squalls, Queen Matilda arrived on October 25, at the Danish town of Altona, where with fresh tears she had to part from the English ladies and maids who had escorted her. But her tears dried up, hope and confidence revived in her heart, when, on the morning of November 2, she saw for the first time her royal husband at Roeskild, the St. Denis of Denmark. For the latter, elegantly dressed in the latest Ver-

sailles fashion, had not only studied to adopt, for the occasion, the most refined bearing and ways, but as soon as he caught sight of the young queen, delighted no doubt to find himself in possession of such a beautiful woman, he rushed towards her, seized her in his arms and covered her with kisses.

THE "ROUÉ" OF THE NORTH

HE was a young man of seventeen, short but strongly built; he, too, was fair, with a little pointed face not altogether displeasing. He was not wanting also in kindness at the bottom of his heart, nor in a certain kind of ready wit, cynical for choice, reminding one rather of that of Louis XV., with whom indeed Christian VII. had some other points of resemblance. Unfortunately, with all his appearance of vigour, he was subject to attacks of epilepsy, which were soon to cloud his reason; without counting the fact that, having been brought up in a random fashion—his mother died when he was two years old, and his father had hastened to marry again—the bad influence of his playmates had made him a regular savage. He used to amuse himself by throwing boiling-hot tea in the faces of the court ladies, and hiding under the tables to pinch their legs, but he took even more pleasure in wandering about the streets of Copenhagen at night, breaking windows, assaulting the passers-by and scuffling with the police.

Thus it did not take poor Matilda long to discover that she had not been wrong in her gloomy presentiments. During the great wedding-ball which was given on November 17, at the palace of

Christianborg, the king insisted on letting a crowd of his comrades into the young queen's private rooms. Moreover he had publicly advised one of his friends, two days after his own marriage ceremony, never to marry, assuring him that "the bachelor-state was much pleasanter." On another occasion, when the evident sadness of Matilda was pointed out to him, "Ah," answered he, "she's probably got a touch of spleen, that's all!" The French ambassador at Copenhagen wrote to Versailles, three weeks after the wedding: "The English princess has produced very little impression on the king's heart; but even had she been still more lovable, everything leads to the belief that she would have met with the same fate, for how could she please a man who thinks it is not good style for a husband to be in love with his wife?" At the coronation-banquet, on May 1, 1767, the king was drunk when he sat down to table. The queen, neglected, despised, surrounded by indifferent or hostile faces, dropped her eyes to hide her tears; and in a music-gallery the choristers of the royal chapel sang a hymn of which we give four lines: "A long time shall elapse before the children of the North begin to weep again, for as long as Christian, as long as Matilda lives, there shall be nothing but joy in the kingdom, and every man shall dwell in peace within his own tent."

But I should never have done, if I chose to go on citing examples of the abominable way in which the young woman was treated by her husband, after her arrival in Denmark. Perhaps Christian really thought that "good style," and his manly dignity, bade him treat his wife in such a fashion. Perhaps he was encouraged to do so by his favourites, under

whose dominion he was always condemned to be, owing to his own natural weakness. Or perhaps, indeed, he felt the need of revenging himself for the scornful disapproval which he read in the queen's eyes of his coarse morals and behaviour. The fact remains that he inflicted on her the most scandalous affronts with ever increasing cruelty.

On July 22, 1767, he notified to her that, as a punishment, he would not celebrate her birth-day. The following month he harshly refused the favour she asked of accompanying him on his journey across Holstein; and when on the king's return, Matilda, who was *enceinte* and poorly, took the trouble to go five-and-twenty miles to meet him, he had not one kindly word for her, by way of thanks. In vain she now humbled herself, suppressed all her feelings of repugnance, offered to share Christian's ignoble pleasures—the latter openly insulted her, jeering at her being *enceinte*, or actually setting on his companions to pay attentions to her. He had chosen an acknowledged mistress; a clumsy girl called "Trowser-Catharina," because in her childhood she had been in service at a little tailor's; he danced with her at the palace-balls; after which he used to go about the streets with a list of all the townswomen of whom she had cause to complain, enter their houses, break their furniture and throw it into the street. Having learnt that the queen in her forsaken state had formed a friendship with her first maid-of-honour, Mme. de Plessen, an excellent woman whose heart was touched at the sight of so much gentleness and suffering, Christian had no rest till he had dismissed his wife's friend. He ended by turning her out without the shadow of an excuse, and put in her place the sister of his favourite,

Holck, who made no concealment of her hatred for the queen. At last in the month of May 1768, he announced his intention of leaving Holland to go and amuse himself in England and in France. Matilda begged him on her knees to take her with him on this journey—that too was refused her. Christian merely authorised her to recall Mme. de Plessen during his absence—then, at the first relay, he wrote to revoke his permission.

The only excuse for this wretch is that no doubt from this time his innate epilepsy, and all kinds of excesses, had made him mad; unless indeed we admit that he was mad from his birth, which would explain the strange disquieting smile, already observable in an official portrait, painted in 1766 by Wichmann, to be presented to the English Court. But, as I have said, his madness was always accompanied by a bitter, sarcastic *verve* which often caused him to be taken for a deep observer who chose to hide his game. Never did that *verve* show itself more abundantly than during his fantastic two-months' stay in London; very badly received at Court, but enthusiastically entertained by the whole town, which nicknamed him the "rake of the North," and never wearied of admiring his eccentricities. Bored with having to undergo ceremonious receptions—for he had only come on purpose to amuse himself—he said to his minister Bernstoff on arriving at Canterbury: "the last King of Denmark who entered Canterbury burnt it to ashes. Perhaps if the inhabitants were reminded of this they might let me go through without fuss?" His mother-in-law the Dowager-Princess of Wales, having made some show of reproaching him with his coldness to his wife, he answered her by asking after the health of

Lord Bute, who had been accused of being her lover. At the theatre he would applaud with affectation all the allusions showing disapproval of his marriage. And when Matilda's old aunt, the princess Amelia, who herself doted upon him, took courage to ask him why he did not get on better with his nice wife: "Why?" answered the strange husband, in French, "why? *Elle est si blonde!*"

Compelled to leave London, whence George III. almost drove him, he went off to Paris, and pursued the same sort of life there. But when he returned to Copenhagen, January 14, 1769, Matilda, as anxious as ever to please him, lavished upon him every proof of her indulgent affection; and he, unfortunate man, as soon as he saw her again fell passionately in love with her for the rest of his life. Had she changed, ripened, during his absence? Had she grown prettier from repose and living much in the open air, as we are inclined to believe from a touching and charming portrait of her painted about that period? Or was this sudden change of feeling only the effect of a fresh crisis in Christian's mind, as it became more and more tottering in its balance? In any case he was vanquished by the first glance, and from that hour his only dream was to obey the exquisite young woman he had lately scorned. Alas! he brought back with him from London or Paris an unpleasant disorder which he soon communicated to his dear Matilda, and she was so terrified and disgusted by it, that, while her husband's love grew more exalted, she on her part could never more feel for him anything but a mixture of deep scorn and repulsion. She was horrified at everything that came from him, everything that had approached him. For a long time she refused to nurse herself, partly

because she cared no more to live, but above all to avoid receiving the new court physician, a German picked up by the King in his travels, and whom she knew to be the King's favourite confidant. It was only in obedience to a formal command and after weeks of resistance that she resigned herself to submit to his visits. This doctor was a big tall man of thirty-two years of age, of a common and indeed rather ugly appearance, with an enormous arched nose under a retreating forehead ; but he was a fine talker, honied, insinuating, and, to judge by his talk, the most learned fellow in the world. His name was John Frederick Struensée.

III

A SUPER-MAN

WE should, I think, run the risk of entirely misunderstanding the part played by Struensée, both in Queen Matilda's life and in the political history of Denmark, if we did not begin by realising the origin, character and social position of this person. Under his title of physician, he had always been, and still was, a servant. Born of an obscure family of working men and shepherds, he had risen in ante-chambers, exerting his wits to oblige clients, nobles, or rich people by a thousand and one little services of a more or less honourable nature. Having been recommended by one of his masters to King Christian, when the latter was starting for England, he had been allowed to accompany him, but rather as a servant than as an official; and it was again by all sorts of humble complacencies that he had succeeded in creeping into familiarity with his new master. He had the demeanour, the expressions and the feelings of a servant, as spiritless in the presence of his superiors as he was arrogant with his equals, a dissembler, indiscreet, and of a nameless cowardice, in spite of his swaggering ways, as soon as the danger had fled. Intelligent, to be sure, but he never seems to have had anything but a servant's intelligence, that

is to say, his only skill was in appropriating other people's ideas, without even attempting to fathom them ; nor can we see that he was interested in medicine or any other science, except as a means of making himself indispensable to his protectors. But this flunkey's soul had from childhood been gnawed by a monstrous ambition. At twenty years of age, while administering clysters to the Altona shop-keepers, Struensée was already dreaming of presiding over the destinies of Denmark. From his reading of Rousseau and the other "philosophers" of his day, he had deduced a doctrine which strongly resembled that which Nietzsche afterwards was to call "the morality of the masters," but adapted to his own habits of flunkeyism. He had persuaded himself that, as all religious dogmas were certainly nothing but lies, and all moral principles consequently broken down, the sole duty of every man was to conquer, at any price, the greatest amount of pleasure of which he was capable. Now *his* pleasure, seeing that he had always had to serve others, was to rise to a position in which the rest of men would be compelled to serve him in his turn. On his return from his journey to France, he told his brother that he had been to Fontainebleau, to see the room where Christina of Sweden had formerly lived with Monaldeschi, adding that the idea of that visit had occurred to him through a dream which he had had, in which Queen Matilda had appeared to him. His brother looking at him with amazement, he added : "Yes, everything is possible for the man who dares !"

We have hardly any precise information as to the way in which he won over the young queen's heart and mind, since all the documents relating to his

trial were destroyed or have been kept secret in the Danish archives. But excellent observers, who knew him intimately during his three years' omnipotence, agree in asserting that the empire he wielded over the young woman had all the character of a magnetic fascination; and the supposition is the more probable from the fact that we have sure proof that Struensée himself never experienced a shadow of affection, pity, or gratitude for the unfortunate creature of whom he disposed as he pleased. We even know that Matilda strove at first to battle nobly against this influence that was taking possession of her. On a window of her oratory at Fredericksberg she wrote, with the diamond of a ring, this touching prayer: "Lord, grant that others may be great, but keep *me* innocent!" Then she gave way and yielded herself entirely.

In the month of June 1770, Prince Charles of Hesse, the king's brother-in-law, having come to the Court of Denmark, had asked Queen Matilda to accompany him to his wife. Suddenly Matilda perceived Struensée in a corridor; she immediately turned pale, grew embarrassed, and murmured vaguely to her brother-in-law: "Don't stop me! I must return!" Upon which she ran off, leaving the prince very much perplexed. At table, during the whole time of Charles of Hesse's visit, Struensée always sat opposite her; and, as soon as their eyes met, one could see that she was seized with a nervous trembling. Besides he treated her henceforth, even in the presence of the Court, with that extraordinary free-and-easiness, which for two years was to be a subject of laughter or indignation all over the town. "Well," he would say to her, "don't you hear what you are told? . . . Come, what are you thinking

of? Why don't you play?" He would prevent her receiving any letters or speaking to anybody. When the old Princess-Dowager of Wales came to the frontier on purpose to see her daughter again, Struensée forbade the latter to remain alone with her mother; and, in fact, he insisted on being present during the whole of the interview. Nothing existed for her any more, neither husband, brothers, nor even her children. She was to be seen at all hours of the day riding about the country with Struensée, or seated at table between him and the poor king, who, now completely sunk in imbecility, trembled before her as she trembled before her lover. As soon as she was alone in her room she would sink on to a sofa and burst into tears. Her beautiful eyes had assumed a vacant stare, a wandering expression which was painful to see. Indeed, there is not a feature in all that is told of her at this period of her life which does not at once evoke the picture of one of those hypnotic suggestions, the possibility of which had just been brought home to people's minds by men like Mesmer and Cagliostro.

In any case, whatever the means employed by Struensée to dominate her and thus to become the absolute master of the kingdom, the fact remains that he had succeeded beyond all that his ambition could have hoped. He had dismissed ministers and favourites, had had himself appointed, in succession, "master of requests" and "minister of the private Cabinet," had obtained permission that decrees bearing his signature should not need to be signed by the King. And naturally he had from the first day set to work to decree reforms. These reforms, some of which had a deliberately anti-religious direction, even won him in after days, both in the Scandi-

navian countries and in Germany, the reputation of a great politician. Yet without disputing the humanitarian merit of some of them—supposed, however, to be due to Matilda's inspiration—I confess that I find it difficult to attach serious importance to such abrupt and radical decisions, which, had they been carried out, would incontinently have turned the whole life of a nation upside down. With one stroke of his pen Struensée sliced into the army, the clergy, property, and family-life; more eager in his work of destruction than the French revolutionaries were soon to show themselves, and working upon a soil far less prepared beforehand. In that, as in everything else, the impression he gives and that he gave all the most thoughtful of his contemporaries, is that of a servant, who, having seized his master's house by surprise, begins, under the pretence of reforms, to work off an old stock of grudges accumulated in his menial days.

The three years of his reign offered a spectacle, which, under other conditions, might easily have become disastrous; but it appears actually to have been one of extraordinarily comical and unlooked-for effects. The prime minister would dictate to his sovereign, for despatch to the Empress Catharine, letters written in antechamber style, in which Christian called his imperial sister "your Majesty," and signed himself in all simplicity: "I have the honour to be, Madam, your Majesty's very humble and obedient servant." All the nobility of the kingdom carefully abstained, in future, from being present at court festivities; yet these went on the same as ever, in fact they were even more numerous and sumptuous. But the only people who attended them were the townspeople and their families. So it was

that the Prince Royal of Sweden, during his visit to his brother-in-law, Christian VII., had found the king and queen seated at table in company with a dozen ladies who had been introduced to him as "the wives of the principal merchants of Copenhagen." We find the English Ambassador Keith writing to his father: "This court has not the smallest resemblance to any other existing under the sun." Reverdil, an honest Swiss, former tutor to Christian VII., who had come back to Denmark after an absence of two years, tells us, in his curious *Mémoires*, that "the tone of conversation and the general style of the receptions at the Court of Copenhagen irresistibly suggested the idea of a parcel of upper-class servants, seated at table during the absence of their masters on a journey." Sometimes, in the course of one of the Queen's receptions (at which Struensée invariably helped Matilda to do the honours), the King would appear all of a sudden in his dressing-gown, and, without accosting anybody, begin to spout a French poem; after which he would go back to his rooms where his chamberlain Brandt, a creature of Struensée, would whip him soundly like a child.

This comedy might have been indefinitely prolonged—for the poor king was more in love with his wife than ever, while she submitted more and more to the will of her Nietzschean Ruy Blas—had not the incredible cowardice of the "super-flunkey" soon opened his enemies' eyes and restored their courage. Every time that workmen, soldiers, or sailors, having grounds of complaint for some fresh measure adopted by Struensée against their interests, threatened him with violent reprisals, the powerful minister would tremble in every limb, and hasten

to revoke the measures in question. The fact ended by being known to everybody ; and thus a band of adventurers, headed by Queen Juliana, Christian VII.'s step-mother, realised that the smallest effort would be enough for them to overthrow a position so ill-defended. In the night of January 16, 1772, Juliana, profiting by the disorder of a masked ball, managed to penetrate into Christian's presence, showed him a forged letter in which Struensée and the queen were supposed to have made a plot to kill him, and forcibly wrung from the wretched madman an order for the imprisonment of the queen and the minister. Whereupon the conspirators proceeded to seize Struensée as he slept in his bed, notified to him his arrest, and had him led to the citadel, in spite of his entreaties and moans. They next seized Queen Matilda with disgraceful violence, coarseness, and cruelty, and shut her up in Elsinore prison, in a room without any fire, where she remained for weeks, alone, without clothes, half dead, subjected to the dietary and treatment of thieves and murderers.

IV

THE LAST SCENE

HENCEFORWARD the drama was not to admit of comic episodes, unless any one can find the heart to smile at the sickening baseness of Struensée's admissions or rather denunciations. At first he had denied everything, counting on the favour of the queen whose fate he knew nothing about. One morning his judges, by way of trial, reveal to him that Matilda is a prisoner, that she can no longer do anything for him, but that by telling everything he knows against her he may possibly clear himself. Thereupon the scoundrel not only admits at once that she has been his mistress, but for a whole week obstinately proceeds to bring the most frightful charges against her, declaring that it was she who tempted and seduced him, nay, forced him to become her lover. He is made to sign his statements, they are carried off to the prison, where Matilda, indifferent to her own fate, never ceases to tremble and pray for her beloved one. Then begins a scene so tragic, of a horror at once so keen and so simple, that it would perhaps be hard to find its equal in any drama, of fiction or real life. The judges show Matilda Struensée's admissions. "If this confession is untrue, Madam, no death is cruel enough for this

monster who has dared to compromise you in such a fashion!" The queen shudders, turns pale, casts "a maddened look" upon her judges. She weighs the supreme gravity of the answer she is about to give; her rank, her honour, her life even is at stake. But her love ends by gaining the day. "If," says she, "I confirmed the truth of Struensée's words, could I thereby save his life?" "At any rate, Madam," replies the president of the committee, "your admission would count in his favour and might modify his position. You have only to sign this paper." The queen glanced at the paper, on which beforehand the confession of her adultery had been written. "Well," cried she, "so be it! I will sign!" She took the pen the judge offered her, signed her own condemnation, and "fell full length upon the stone-slabs in a dead faint."

However she was not put to death, but Struensée, in spite of his infamous denunciations, *was*. Seeing that this system of defence did not suffice to save his life, "the philosopher" next hit upon the notion of being converted. For a long time he edified by his piety the worthy pastor who was charged with the care of his soul. But that system also broke down. He was publicly degraded and executed, April 28, 1772, in company with his protégé Brandt, the chamberlain, who used to amuse himself by unmercifully flogging King Christian VII.

As for Matilda she was saved by the very extravagance of her enemies' hatred. The latter, before proceeding to other measures against her, had committed the imprudence of proclaiming her divorce. This gave Keith, the English Ambassador, the excuse to exact, under threats to bombard Copenhagen, that she should be handed over to

George III.'s keeping, since she had become once more an English princess. She received from him the order to go and live at the castle of Zell in Hanover, the very place where her grandmother (and sister in misfortune), the passionate and charming Sophia Dorothea, was born. It was at Zell that she died, three years later, of a fever, caught at the bedside of a child she had adopted out of charity. She died at the very moment when unknown friends, English and Danish, had formed the scheme of restoring her to the throne—a scheme which had considerable chances of success, for poor Christian continued to regret and to long with all his heart for the consort from whom he had been separated for reasons unknown to him. At all events he always declared to the end, in his lucid intervals, that Caroline Matilda was innocent. This was asserted, in ever increasing numbers, by all those who, at court, in the town, and throughout the whole kingdom, remembered the graciousness, the gentleness, the long sufferings of the young queen. Nevertheless she herself signed the confession of her sin ; and she does not appear to have ever seriously retracted it. Yet I do not believe that any one in view of such a fate as hers can help experiencing the wholly Christian feeling expressed in the fine line of one of her best-loved poets :

Et c'est être innocent que d'être malheureux ! *

* Such evil fortune ought to cancel guilt.

QUEENS IN PROFILE





J. Krieger pin.

SOPHIA DOROTHEA OF ZELL.

W. Faithorne, fecit.

I

HENRY VIII.'S SIX WIVES

NOBODY, from our own Ancelot to Miss Strickland's copious gallery of the "Queens of England," had yet presented us with so much valuable information on the English Blue-Beard's six wives as Major Martin Hume in his recent work.* If translated into French, I feel sure that the book would prove as great a success with us as it has been in the author's own country. For the very reason that he has been most careful to avoid picturesque descriptions and sentimental outbursts, and has always kept specially in view the historical rôles played by the six unfortunate creatures whose rise and fall he relates, his story brings us more directly face to face with them, so to speak, than the apologies and briefs of their previous biographers, who, with few exceptions, have only wished to see the romantic side of their lives. Major Hume does not talk to us about their dresses, so obligingly described by Miss Strickland; and as to their characters and feelings, he confines himself to what he has gathered from the innumerable State-papers he has consulted. But for the first time he

* "The Wives of Henry VIII. and the parts they played in History." Martin Hume. 1 vol., 8vo. London, Eveleigh Nash. 1905.

presents them to us in the environment in which they lived ; he reveals the different intrigues in which they took part ; he strives to study them as an historian, with more serious purpose than had been done before him. We find, moreover, that the portraits he gives of them, or rather which he allows us to draw for ourselves from the mass of historical facts which he lays before us, agree most exactly with those left us by the most skilled and faithful painters of those times—Holbein, Jost van Cleef, Lucas Cornelis—all those honest German and Flenish portrait-painters whom Henry VIII. entertained at his court, in order that, thanks to them, posterity might appreciate the charm of those princesses whom he had deigned to honour with his attentions. In almost every case these painted portraits and the written testimonies collected by Major Hume mutually complete each other in the most singular manner. By confronting these we have, as the result, a series of pictures so natural, so human, so full of life and pathetic expression, that we must needs admit their resemblance to the originals, at all events in part.

First comes Catharine of Aragon. Of her we have a touching and magnificent portrait from the hand of a greater than Holbein—one more skilful in deciphering the secrets of the soul. For although the tragedy of *Henry VIII.*, generally ascribed to Shakespeare, is doubtless not entirely his work, yet he alone could have written the two famous scenes in which Catharine, in the presence of the king and afterwards of the cardinals, explains the motives which make her oppose the annulling of her marriage. Shakespeare, touched by the queen's sufferings, and by the incontestable moral beauty of her character, has put into her mouth words so simply and purely



Holben., 1548.

Jacobus Houbraken, sculp.

CATHERINE HOWARD, QUEEN OF HENRY VIII

noble that those two scenes would suffice to make her immortally dear to us. But the creator of *Hamlet* was one of those painters of genius who, like Titian or Rubens, had no hesitation in neglecting a few real features in his model if these features risked destroying the inner harmony of the poetic vision of his dream. In point of fact his Catharine of Aragon combines with her queenly firmness—a perfectly authentic characteristic by the way—a womanly grace and sweetness that we hardly discover, for instance, in a very interesting portrait by an anonymous painter of the Holbein school, now in the National Portrait Gallery in London. Instead of the exquisite creature conceived by the poet, the sister of Cordelia and Desdemona, we behold a corpulent and massive woman, strangely devoid of any feminine attractions, whose hard face, with its too lofty forehead, staring eyes and pursed lips, proclaims a haughty, quarrelsome temper, a mind devoid of suppleness or penetration. All this is clearly to be read in the London portrait; and this is exactly what we find in the first chapters of Mr. Martin Hume's book.

Without a doubt the daughter of Isabella the Catholic was a martyr; but equally certain it is that to regard her as a saint would be a mistake. It would even be a mistake to suppose that she always had the upright character that most of her biographers have praised in her. Her father's blood, association with her father-in-law and her husband, the atmosphere of lying and deceit which she had breathed from childhood, had moulded her too, and made her not over-scrupulous as to the choice of means to arrive at the ends she had in view. But above all, she remained all her life, unintelligent, pig-headed, awkward; and if she was quite right in saying that

she had been made to suffer "hell on earth," she is not altogether free from the blame of having largely contributed to bringing this fate upon herself. During the long years of her power she never made an effort to divine her husband's character, nor to foresee the danger that would result to her from ceasing to please him. Later on, when the divorce question was formulated, she listened only to her pride, and, either from sheer want of intelligence, or from blindness, refused to understand the disastrous consequences to her religion that would inevitably be involved in a resistance to a project to which her sincerest friends counselled resignation.* Again, it would have been easy for her, to the very end, to turn to good account the devotion of those friends, the respectful sympathy which the English nation preserved for her, and many favourable chances which fell in her way. Yet she had no eye for what was going on around her, wholly taken up with the conscience of her rights, and perhaps with the pleasure of indulging her obstinacy. If we only regard her as a woman, as a heroine of romance or tragedy, no destiny can appear more stirring, more dramatic than hers; besides which, with all her faults, she had a heart of marvellous kindness, and her behaviour during all her persecutions, however unreasonable it may have been, attests a strength of soul, a courage, a Christian resignation, which touched even her worst enemies, from Cranmer and Cromwell to Henry VIII. himself. If we regard her as a queen, the historian is compelled to judge her more severely,

* The Vatican itself, as is shown by an interview between Cardinal Salviati with the representative of the Emperor at Rome, keenly desired Catharine to consent to the annulling of her marriage, so as to avoid a schism.

to acknowledge that her title of queen imposed upon her duties she failed to fulfil, and in particular we must attribute to this ardent Catholic a large part of the responsibility of England's conversion to Protestantism.

Henry VIII. had only married his brother's widow Catharine out of political convenience ; it was from love that he married his second wife, and the passionate love of this burly man is explained when we look at the portrait of Anne Boleyn in the National Portrait Gallery, painted by a Flemish (or French ?) painter of the period, with an art infinitely more prosaic than Holbein's, but more precise and full of detail. Not that Anne Boleyn's face, as seen in this portrait, has anything really beautiful about it—a face too long, too narrow, tapering down to a somewhat ugly, pointed chin. But there is something in the caressing and disturbing glance of the large dark eyes, in the pinched smile of the lips, and in the physiognomy as a whole, at once sensuous and serpentine, which must have immediately captivated and fascinated a nature so grossly sensual as that of Henry VIII. It is one of those faces one never forgets, when once seen, and which leaves the impression that their unwholesome charm is chiefly made up of a mixture of all the vices, combined in a choice blend. The study of Anne Boleyn's character yields a perfectly similar impression. I have vainly sought, among all that Protestant historians have revealed as to the life and actions of this zealous initiator of Protestantism, for a single sympathetic trait ; unless we may reckon to her credit a certain womanly bravery or boldness, which, however, seems to have been very intermittent and to have alternated with periods of equally abnormal cowardice. All

that her apologists can do is to insist upon the fact that she lived for a long time in France and brought back from that country a soul utterly corrupted by French morals. Yet it is by no means certain that it was not one of her sisters who made this long stay in France, and, in any case, the courts of Henry VII. and Henry VIII., in the matter of moral depravity, were quite capable of teaching the young woman what people are pleased to think she learned at the court of François I.

Before venturing upon Henry's conquest, she had already had several amorous adventures in England ; and scarcely had she succeeded in this conquest than she cynically displayed an arrogance, a rapacity and a cruelty that knew no bounds. Her conduct in regard to Catharine and the young Princess Mary (whose death she publicly accused herself of desiring), the miserable subterfuges by which she tried to retard her fall—even pretending to be *enceinte* that Henry might hope to have a son by her—the disgraceful way in which, whilst in her prison in the Tower, she poured forth denunciations against her most faithful partisans : all this is pretty well known, and forms a very striking contrast with the noble attitude of the Catholic queen whom Anne persecuted with such fury. In sooth the English Protestants of to-day can hardly have any respect for the memory of the first queen who desired and favoured the conversion of England. It would appear, moreover, that Anne Boleyn's Protestant convictions never had any other foundation than her personal ambition ; and numbers of facts cited by Mr. Hume prove that to save her crown she would have been perfectly ready, not only to support the return of her country to Catholicism, but to have all those persons burnt

or beheaded who had formerly worked with her for the rupture with Rome.

Anne Boleyn was beheaded on the morning of May 19, 1536. On the morning of the 20th, in the chapel of Hampton Court Palace, Henry, of whom the Ambassador Chapuys used to say that "never had a man worn his horns more merrily," married a young girl of twenty-five, Lady Jane Seymour. He has often been reproached for this excessive haste, and he himself, moreover, repented of it, for some days afterwards, seeing two pretty girls at his court whom he had not met there before, he confessed to his confidential friends that "he regretted not having seen these girls before having married Jane Seymour." But from the moment when, by constituting himself the pope of his church, he felt absolutely master of his actions before God as well as man, henceforth delivered from all scruples of conscience, he no longer admitted any obstacle to disturb him in the immediate and complete satisfaction of his royal desires. Doubtless he would not have been long in dismissing Jane Seymour, if she had not borne him a son on October 12, 1537, and died on the 24th of the same month, from the results of her confinement.

Yet he had married her from love, and she him : although, according to Chapuys, one of the reasons which had determined him to marry her was the fact that he knew her to have had several affairs of gallantry. "For," wrote Chapuys, "he is going to marry her on the condition of finding her a virgin, and then, when he wants to divorce her, numerous witnesses will be found to certify that she was not." However that may be, Jane Seymour can only have inspired the king with a merely passing caprice. In

the admirable and famous portrait of her in the possession of the Vienna museum, all the genius of Holbein has not succeeded in relieving by the smallest shade of beauty or prettiness, that big, common face with its low forehead, broad nose, and puffy double chin. In reality, Henry's marriage with Jane Seymour must have been made chiefly at the instigation of the leaders of the Catholic party, who hoped, by the influence of the new queen, to obtain the king's consent to resuming relations with the Court of Rome. It may well be that Jane was very pious, very sincerely attached to the Catholic faith, and it is even more certain that she must have had an excellent heart. It is well known with what affection, quite a maternal affection, she always treated the daughter of Henry and Catharine, and how, when the celebrated "Pilgrimage of Grace" took place, she threw herself at the king's knees to beg him to restore to the religious orders the monasteries of which Cranmer and Cromwell, aided by Anne Boleyn, had stripped them. But Henry, as he raised her to her feet, forbade her "to meddle with *his* business," and the poor woman from that day took good care never to infringe that command. Her courage was far from equalling her kindness, and it is enough to glance at the portrait by Holbein to understand that a person so flabby, and probably of such limited intelligence, was not calculated to play the active and heroic part which one is surprised that anybody should have dreamt of assigning to her.

Her death was followed, in the long matrimonial drama related for us by Mr. Hume, by a comic interlude.

On Cromwell's advice the king had decided, this time, to marry a Protestant princess. He had thought

of the Duke of Milan's widow, that charming and witty Christina of Denmark, of whom Holbein has left us a delicious portrait; but she had refused, adding that "if she had two heads she would be delighted to put one at the disposal of H.M. the King of England." Then Cromwell had fixed his choice on the youngest daughter of the Duke of Cleves, of whom he had assured the king that "everybody praised the beauty of her face and person, and that she was as superior in charm to her sister, the Duchess of Saxony, as the golden sun to the silver moon." Henry, to get more accurate information, had sent his painter, Holbein, to Cleves, and the latter, in the portrait which is to be seen in the Louvre, had represented a young woman who, without any great beauty of features, was certainly a much more lovable-looking person than Jane Seymour, such as he had painted her two years before. Doubtless determined by the sight of this picture, Henry had asked for the hand of Anne of Cleves. The young princess had started for England, busying herself on the journey with learning the favourite games of cards of her august *fiancé*. At Dover, at Canterbury, at Rochester, the people had given her an enthusiastic welcome; but when Henry, before coming in person to pay his respects to her, had despatched one of his attendants to meet her, the latter no sooner raised his eyes to her face than he made a grimace that boded no good things—he knew his master's tastes, and clearly foresaw that *that* face would hardly bewitch him.

Had Holbein, before starting for Cleves, received advice from Cromwell to flatter, in case of need, his "counterfeit of the princess's face? or had his artist's eyes deceived him, and made him discover in

Anne of Cleves's face charms which nature had not put there? There is another portrait of her, at Oxford, which must have been painted at the same time as Holbein's, for she is dressed in exactly the same fashion. This portrait already makes us better understand Henry's deception when he met his betrothed. Small eyes, a large mouth, every sign of a poor and unhealthy blood. But written testimony forces us to believe that this second portrait was still too flattering. These witnesses inform us that Anne of Cleves, at the period of her betrothal, had a great bony, ill-proportioned body, and that her flabby face was, besides, deeply scarred with the small-pox which she had recently had. So that Henry, when he stood before her, was so utterly amazed and nonplussed that he had not the courage to offer the presents which he had brought for her. He himself, however, at this period of his life could hardly pass for a *beau cavalier*: his whole body was extraordinarily puffy, his great, broad cheeks hung down in two huge folds, his legs were covered with purulent ulcers, which made it very unpleasant to be near him. But for all that he was none the less of opinion that a wife such as Cromwell had procured was not worthy of him. Cromwell had his head cut off, and Anne, almost the day after her wedding, was begged to sign the annulment of her marriage. However, she did so with such a good grace that Henry was really touched, and it is asserted that he afterwards thought several times of renewing his marriage with this very obliging princess—the more so because Anne of Cleves, in the meantime, having been well fed and well rested, and growing accustomed to the luxury and elegance of the English Court, had considerably changed and improved in looks. Taking one consideration with

another, she was certainly the most fortunate of Henry VIII.'s six wives.

The fifth of these wives was Catharine Howard; the sixth and last was Catharine Parr. I should like first to say a word or two about the latter. Historians are agreed in praising her tact, her reserve, affable manners, the skill with which she managed to retain to the end her husband's favour. How is it, then, that her portrait (by an anonymous painter in Lord Ashburnham's collection) leaves an even more disagreeable impression upon us than that of Anne Boleyn? Whence comes it that beneath the simplicity of her dress and the honest, middle-class style of her physiognomy, we feel something false and bad, which makes us even forget the ugliness of this face with its heavy lips and great prominent eyes? And how comes it that the same impression results from all documents cited by Mr. Hume, who, nevertheless, has also nothing but praise for the character of Catharine Parr? For instance, the letters she used to write to the king, in spite of being more "full of tact" than those of Catharine of Aragon, are so charged with constant flattery and forced humility that it is impossible to believe in her sincerity. And when we afterwards discover that this princess, always attentive and gentle to Henry's children, was cruelly hard to her attendants, we are no longer surprised to find that such a woman, while pretending to stand outside affairs of State, should succeed in playing the important political part which she did in fact play. For not only by her family and her environment did she belong to the Catholic party, not only had she become queen thanks solely to this party and by promising to support it, but that party had never, since the divorce of Catharine of

Aragon, been stronger than it was at the time of her accession. Now she had no sooner been installed at court than the influence of the Catholic party began to decrease ; and presently, when the conflict between the two parties openly began, it was the active protection of the queen which assured the final triumph of the Protestants, whilst at the same time bringing death or loss of favour to Catharine Parr's former friends. At all events, Henry's last wife had the merit of escaping every disaster on her own score : she survived the king just as she had survived the two old men she had married before, and no sooner was she a widow than she made a fourth marriage, with the brother of the regent Somerset. We are told, indeed, that before dying she was tormented by frightful night-mares—a fact which I would gladly hold to have been the effect of remorse, if souls of that type had not generally the enviable privilege of being false to themselves as well as others, and of preserving, even in the vilest actions, a perfectly clear conscience.

As for Catharine Howard, the scornful severity of historians in her case is only equalled by their indulgence towards Catharine Parr. They confine themselves to saying that that young woman had had lovers before her marriage and that she continued to have lovers after it, and that it served her quite right to cut off her head, except that they add ironically, like Mr. Pollard, "her Catholic orthodoxy was unimpeachable." They leave to writers of romances and melodramas the task of getting to the bottom of her adventurous career, and we all know (or perhaps we no longer all know) with what odious crimes Alexandre Dumas padded out the part of Catharine Howard.

The only quality which all testimony, old or recent, attribute to Henry VIII.'s fifth wife is that of having been extremely pretty; and that is what we gather at once from an excellent portrait of her in the National Portrait Gallery in London. This exquisite face, with its regular and delicate oval, fine chestnut hair, and eyes of a deep green, stands out in striking relief beside the commonness or ugliness of Henry's five other wives. We can quite imagine the king's delight in being able to replace the pitiful Anne of Cleves by a young woman, whom, moreover, we know to have been marvellously elegant and light, if somewhat short, and always smiling and singing and scattering around her an adorable perfume of spring. As a matter of fact, Catharine Howard is the only one who bears witness to the English Blue Beard's capability of appreciating female beauty. The king's apologists might, at all events, credit the poor woman with this. But the most curious thing is that in the London portrait this penetrating charm of Catharine's face is less the result of the features themselves than of their expression, and that this expression is infinitely engaging and sympathetic, revealing a peculiar mixture of courage and gentleness, of fearless frankness, and of affectionate goodness. Is it possible that all this can have been nothing but a mask hiding a soul all black with vice?

With the fervent "Catholic orthodoxy" with which Mr. Pollard credits her, Catharine, in her last hour, in her solemn confession before the Bishop of Lincoln, swore that she was innocent of the adultery of which she was accused. She confessed, on the contrary, that before becoming Henry's wife she had betrothed herself to one of her cousins, a certain

“Thomas Culpepper,” and that she continued to love this young man from the bottom of her heart, after her marriage, to render him services whenever she could, and to regret that she had not been able to become his wife. During her imprisonment in the Tower she never ceased to declare that she had not deserved death, but still awaited it with joy, so that she might be united with the man she loved. On the scaffold, too, after having granted to the headsmen the pardon he had begged on his knees, she exclaimed : “ I die a queen, but how greatly I would have preferred to be able to die as Culpepper’s wife ! ” After which she prayed fervently, and then with a smile laid her head on the block.

She was certainly guilty of not having banished at once from her heart the remembrance of her former betrothed, leaving her free to love and adore no one in the world but the mighty king who had deigned to admit her to the honour of amusing his old age. But when one thinks, on the one hand, what that king had now become, and when one discovers on the other hand, in the official enquiry instituted and kept up by the bitter enemies of Catharine Howard, the snares of all kinds set for her, immediately after her marriage, to keep her in touch with Culpepper, one cannot help feeling much more pity for than indignation against her. Nay, one is rather tempted to wonder that, under these conditions she was not more guilty ; for, I repeat it, in the absence of all proof against her, nobody has any right to throw doubt on the sincerity of the confession which she made with her dying lips. It is true, she might perhaps have refused to become Henry VIII.’s wife, but that was a kind of resistance which the old king hardly allowed, and which would certainly not

have been tolerated by Catharine's uncles and cousins, who were only too glad to profit by such a means of ensuring the preponderance of the Catholic party. In this, as in the preceding marriages, politics played the principal part: politics played it in the dénouement of the marriage; and politics again, after the lapse of nearly four hundred years, still contribute unconsciously to blacken the memory of Catharine Howard. And since "Protestant" Anne Boleyn has found numerous defenders, it would be desirable that an impartial biographer should attempt, if only by utilising the documents collected by Mr. Martin Hume, to revise the trial of this second of Henry VIII.'s "bad wives," and try to forget that amongst her other sins she counted that of being "a Catholic."

II

THE MYSTERY OF MARY STUART

I

DID Mary Stuart really write the "Casket Letters" which her enemies made use of to prove that she had shared in the murder of her second husband Lord Darnley? Or were these letters the work of a forger, as it is well known she always declared them to be? That is a question which, even in France, has given rise to numberless controversies; but, while in our country the matter hardly interested any but scholars, one may say that in England and Scotland it has stirred the whole public for the last three hundred years, and continues to do so now. In the present day, just as in 1570, all countrymen of Elizabeth and Mary Stuart feel themselves bound to have a duly reasoned opinion on the authenticity of the "Casket Letters," and not a year passes without four or five new books written by lawyers, doctors, priests and country gentlemen, being added to the literature of these letters. All these writers, laying aside their everyday occupations, have rushed after some ingenious hypothesis, with the hope of definitely rehabilitating the Scottish queen, or else of making that rehabilitation for ever impossible.



T. Wagman, del.

J. Brown, sculp.

MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS

From the original miniature by Zucchero in the British Museum



Accordingly we can understand that Carlyle, who was fond of paradox and who had, of course, a very decided opinion on the casket affair, should have vigorously protested against the excessive importance attached, in his opinion, to this matter—"a mere personal accident in the national history." We can equally understand how Mr. Andrew Lang, in the preface to his very interesting work on "The Mystery of Mary Stuart,"* should have protested in his turn against this sally on the part of the Chelsea prophet, by reminding us that this same man who affected to despise these revelations of scandals in high places, had elsewhere dwelt at great length on the necklace affair of Marie Antoinette. No, assuredly, a mystery which, after more than three centuries, still rouses such burning curiosity can hardly be regarded as a mere accident without any general bearing! I willingly allow that historians have no need to worry themselves to discover, for instance, the identity of the "Man with the Iron Mask," or to ascertain the real author of the "Letters of Junius," but there can be no comparison between these trifling anecdotic problems and the question of knowing whether Mary Stuart wrote the letters attributed to her by her accusers—that is to say, whether she demanded, concocted, and treacherously arranged her husband's murder; whether she deserved the frightful torture of the last twenty years of her life, and whether, in a word, the fervour of the "Papist" faith could accommodate itself to deeds and sentiments of which, it is claimed, no Protestant soul could ever have been capable. For

* "The Mystery of Mary Stuart." By Andrew Lang. 1 vol., illustrated. London, Longmans & Co. 1901.

that is to this day, as it was three hundred years ago, for the whole public of the United Kingdom, the gist of "the mystery of Mary Stuart!"

And yet after having read Mr. Andrew Lang's work I am tempted to believe with Carlyle that the historical importance of the Casket letters, and of all the facts connected with Darnley's murder, has been exaggerated. For in the first place these facts really do seem to be involved in an impenetrable mystery, whilst, on the other hand, those which preceded and those which followed them in the tragic life of the Queen of Scots stand before us, thanks to Mr. Lang, in perfectly clear relief. In the second place, after examining these facts anterior and posterior to Darnley's murder, at least as they are presented to us by their new historian, an irresistible conclusion is forced upon us, viz., that even if Mary had occasioned greater misfortunes than the death of the cowardly miscreant Darnley, history would have no right to make her entirely responsible for them, seeing the special conditions in which she found herself.

II

It has often been said that Mary Stuart, when she sought refuge in England, after the defeat of Langside, May 16, 1568, imprudently threw herself like a mouse into the claws of the cat. But the truth is that it was not in 1568 that the mouse fell into the cat's claws: it was much earlier, in 1561, immediately after her return to her Scottish kingdom. "I have often seen her," writes Brantôme, "dreading this return like death; and she would have rather a hundred times remained a simple dowager in France

than go and reign yonder in her wild country." On board the ship that conveyed her "she insisted on going to bed without eating," and during the five days she passed at sea "she did little else but weep." She evidently had a presentiment of the long torment which was about to begin for her.

The country where she was going to reign had recently completed its liberation from "the Roman superstition." Every person convicted of having celebrated mass, or merely of having attended it, was condemned for the first offence to the loss of his property, for the second to exile, and in case of relapse to death. To the sway of the Pope of Rome had succeeded that of a local pope, John Knox, a prudent man, but of great activity, who went from town to town and from village to village stirring up the people to hatred against Papists in general and Mary Stuart in particular. "I would rather," he used to say, "see ten thousand enemies land in Scotland than see one mass celebrated in it!" And when, after the young queen's return, a mass was celebrated in the royal chapel, the fierce apostle had no rest till "the hateful idol" should be destroyed, even at the price of seeing ten thousand enemies land. "The arrival of the queen," wrote he to Calvin on October 24, 1561, "has come to disturb the peace of our affairs."

To protect her against this terrible adversary of her idolatry, Mary Stuart was surrounded by a group of persons of rank, almost all Protestants. These consisted principally of her brother Murray, Secretary of State Lethington, Chancellor Morton, Kirkaldy of Grange, Ruthven, James Balfour. Some of them have been represented by historians as fairly upright people; and we were allowed to believe, for

instance, on the testimony of Mignet, that Murray, in spite of his ambition, was "a Christian of a deep faith and consistent conduct." We gladly admitted Kirkaldy of Grange as the type of the Scotch laird, "a second Wallace." Morton, Lethington and the others we imagined as all, more or less, on the model of Walter Scott's chivalrous Highlanders, intrepid and loyal, capable of a murder at need, but incapable of a lie or an act of treachery. Well, Mr. Lang parades them all before us, one after another: and then, with an impartiality and a conscientiousness beyond praise, he shows them to us at work. Then we make the discovery that "these generous Highlanders" are, without exception, men of an appalling baseness and perversity of soul, hardened in falsehood and treachery, and so utterly devoid of moral scruples that there is no infamy of which they are not capable. Lethington, whom his countrymen called Michael Wylie (and that meant Macchiavelli), was literally a monster. Mary Stuart who pardoned everybody could never pardon this one man for his conduct towards her even after he had perished in serving her cause. Morton, the future regent, was "a red-handed murderer, living in open adultery with the widow of Captain Cullen, whom he had hanged, and daily consorting with murderers like his kinsman, Archibald Douglas, the Parson of Glasgow." A thief, a forger, "yet he was godly; he was the foe of the Idolaters, and the Church of Scotland, while deploring his excesses, had a great regard for him." As for his relative, Archibald Douglas, Canon of Glasgow, "a professional murderer," he had made forgery a speciality. He too was a "godly man," although after his ordination he begged another minister to say prayers instead of him, "for I am

not used to pray." Kirkaldy, "the second Wallace," equally excelled in forgery. But still more repulsive than these open scoundrels was the queen's brother, the inflexible Murray, the finished type of cowardice and hypocrisy, an agent of Elizabeth, the secret inspirer of Rizzio's and of Darnley's murder, and later on the chief accuser of Mary, to whom he owed all.

Thus the unhappy princess, from the moment of her return from France, had fallen all at once into a bandit's cave. "They were," says Mr. Lang, "such men as are apt to be bred when a religious and social Revolution has shaken the bases of morality, when acquiescence in theological party cries confers the title of 'godly': when the wealth of a Church is to be won by cunning or force, and when feudal or clan loyalty to a chief is infinitely more potent than fidelity to king, country, and the fundamental laws of morality." And, in fact, all through the four hundred pages of the book we see these men busy with knotting and unknotting around the queen, villainous intrigues, in which they are presently joined by fresh actors, the "leprous" Darnley, then Bothwell, the Queen's third husband, a franker and braver adventurer than the others—in point of fact, the only one of the lot who was not wholly contemptible.

All of them, as Mr. Lang says, attach as little importance as possible to "fidelity to throne and country." There is not one who will not willingly consent, like Knox, to "see ten thousand enemies land in Scotland" if his personal intrigues could benefit slightly thereby. Moreover, in that tragic struggle of cat and mouse they all appear to us, in different degrees, as the purveyors of a huge and

terrible cat, hiding behind them and playing with the mouse, delighting in the sight of its wild scare till, with one last blow of her paw, she beats it to the ground.

From a scruple that one can very well understand, Mr. Lang, in common with most English historians, avoids dwelling upon the part played by Elizabeth in the dark tragedy which he relates for us. But every now and then, behind the actors shown to us, we get glimpses of the disquieting figure of Mary Stuart's rival, who, partly from womanly jealousy, partly from political ambitions, is bent upon the ruin of the unhappy woman who presently surrenders herself into her hands. Sometimes we perceive her in person, sometimes as represented by her agents—Cecil, who from 1559 drew up reports on "the policy to be pursued for the complete recovery of Scotland"—Randolph, the English Ambassador in Edinburgh, informing his sovereign of forthcoming murders which were doubtless being prepared at her instigation—and Murray himself, "pensioned by England," Murray, of whom Knox, in a letter to Calvin (in Latin) said: "James, the queen's brother, the only one of those who frequent the Court [who is] opposed to ungodliness, sends thee greetings," Murray, who from the beginning to the end of Mr. Lang's book, never ceases to "oppose ungodliness," by serving English interests against his sister.

III

Picture a young woman of twenty, careless and light-hearted, with all the pride and all the courage of a princess, but at the same time with the unrestraint, the heedlessness, and the ingenuous confidence of a child, suddenly transported into this new environment, after coming from the easy life and gallant ways of the Court of the Valois! I regret not being able to reproduce in full Mr. Lang's portrait of her; it is instinct with life, and every page of the story proceeds to confirm its absolute accuracy.

She was then a tall girl of twenty-four, with brown hair and sidelong eyes of red brown . . . half French in temper . . . and if not beautiful she was so beguiling that Elizabeth recognised her magic even in the reports of her enemies. . . There was something "divine" Elizabeth said in the face and manner which won the hearts of her gaolers in Loch Leven and in England. "Heaven bless that sweet face," cried the people in the streets as the queen rode by or swept along with the long train, the "targetted tails" and "stinking pride of women" that Knox denounced.

Mary's gratitude was not of the kind proverbial in princes. In September 1571, when the Rudolfs' plot collapsed, and Mary's household was reduced, her sorest grief was for Archibald Beaton, her usher, and little Willie Douglas, who rescued her from Loch Leven. They were to be sent to Scotland, which meant death to both, and she pleaded pitifully for them . . . In a trifling transaction she writes: "Rather would I pay twice over than injure or suspect any man. . . ."

This woman, sensitive, proud, tameless, fierce, and kind, was brow-beaten by the implacable Knox; her priests were scourged and pilloried, her creed was outraged every day; herself scolded, preached at, insulted; her every plan thwarted

by Elizabeth. Mary had reason enough for tears even before her servant was slain almost in her sight by her witless husband and the merciless lords. She could be gay, later, dancing and hunting, but it may well be that, after this last and worst of cruel insults, her heart had now become hard as the diamond; and that she was possessed by the evil spirit of loathing and hatred, and longing for revenge. It had not been a hard heart, but a tender; capable of sorrow for slaves at the galley oars. After her child's birth, when she was holiday-making at Alloa with Bothwell and his gang of pirates, she wrote to the Laird of Abercairnie, bidding him be merciful to a poor woman and her "company of puir bairns" whom he had evicted from their "kindly rowme" or little croft.

Her more than masculine courage her enemies never denied. Her resolution was incapable of despair; "her last word should be that of a queen." Her plighted promise she revered, but in such an age a woman's weapon was deceit.

She was of a nature so large and unsuspecting that, on the strength of a ring and a promise, she trusted to Elizabeth contrary to the advice of her staunchest adherents. She was no natural dissembler and with difficulty came to understand that others could be false.

And with all her courage and pride she was essentially a woman. She needed a master, a man to direct her, to rule her, and whom she could serve. Scarcely had she betrothed herself to Darnley, when "she loaded him with all the honours which a wife can bestow upon her husband." Later on, when she considered herself affianced to Norfolk, she immediately began to adopt towards him in her letters a tone of obedient and passive submission. Her enemies were well aware of this; there is nothing out of which they made more capital against her.

The first master she had in Scotland was her brother Murray, "the pensioner of Elizabeth."

The wretched Darnley, who was afterwards given her for a husband, was himself too much of a nullity to direct anybody. Mary then found a counsellor in the Italian Rizzio of whom there is not the smallest proof that he ever was her lover. He was devoted to her, he alone among all the villainous creatures whose only thought was to impose upon her. But Darnley, with the aid of Morton and on Murray's advice, had Rizzio murdered "almost before her eyes." That after this the poor woman's heart should have been "touched with the evil spirit of hatred and of vengeance" is a thing too natural to leave room for doubt. But I do not believe that any one can read Mr. Lang's dramatic story without being clearly impressed with the fact that, from Rizzio's murder, or even from her marriage with Darnley, Mary Stuart had ceased to be morally responsible for her actions, hunted and harassed as she was, like a poor little mouse in the claws of a cat.

IV

I should add, however, that as to the real part played by her in Darnley's murder, Mr. Lang informs us with vastly more clearness and likelihood than any of her accusers or defenders has hitherto done. He tells us that as early as October 1566, Mary, who was at that time seriously ill, was "praying to heaven to amend Darnley, whose evil conduct was the sole cause of her illness." But Darnley, instead of amending his ways, had gone even further in his evil courses, and every day Murray and Lethington, who were both resolved to ruin him, reported to Mary some new act of treachery

on his part. They revealed to her that Darnley had written against her to the Pope, to the Courts of France and Spain, that he was planning the seizure of the little prince royal, that he was meditating a rising and a civil war. It was upon this that, in the month of January of the following year, Murray and Lethington proposed to the queen to get rid of Darnley. And when Mary answered that "she would not have anything done which could stain her honour or her conscience," Lethington assured her that if she would only leave matters to them "she would see nothing but what was quite regular and approved by Parliament." Evidently the poor woman must have "left matters to them." They had infinitely more interest than she had in getting rid of Darnley, who had placed himself at the head of the Catholic party, and the plan they were concocting was meant to give them a chance of getting rid of Mary into the bargain. But it remains none the less almost certain that Mary was informed of a scheme against Darnley, and that she "left matters to them." On the other hand a letter of Archibald Douglas, written later to Mary herself, tells us that on January 19, 1567, Bothwell, Lethington and Morton told him that the queen "positively refused to hear anything about their plans." No doubt she confined herself from the beginning to the end to "leaving matters to them." And it was she, as is well known, who went to fetch Darnley to Glasgow, to install him in the little house of Kirk o' Field, where he was murdered some days afterwards. She did this obviously at the order of those who were then her counsellors, and knowing that they wanted "to rid her of him"; but nothing proves that even at that moment she may not have continued to

believe that they wished to do so by "regular means" which would be duly "approved by Parliament."

Nothing proves it, in spite of the great abundance of proofs brought against her by Murray, Lethington, Morton, and the other instigators of Darnley's murder. For, from the extremely impartial and circumstantial analysis of these proofs, as made by Mr. Andrew Lang, there results, with a certainty that can never again be refuted, that every one of these proofs finds another to contradict it. The fact is we know absolutely nothing, not only of the share taken by the queen in Darnley's murder, but even of the circumstances of that murder; so much so that according to Mr. Lang's expression, "a scrupulous historian, in presence of the contradiction of the documents would be bound to consider Darnley's murder as a fable devoid of the smallest foundation." At most one can affirm the complete falseness of all that Mary Stuart's accusers have told of the preparations for the crime, of the subterranean passage leading to Kirk o' Field, of Mary's presence at the moment of the murder, &c. This is a terrible accumulation of lies, some of which continue to this day to be registered by historians. Thus it happens, for instance, that the last two chapters of Mignet's first volume contain an incredible mass of mistakes, each of which, fortunately, has been totally dispelled.

There remains the eight casket letters and the thirteen sonnets which accompany them. With regard to these Mr. Lang begins by proving that no one ever seriously troubled to verify their authenticity during the extraordinary sittings at York, Westminster and Hampton Court, where Mary's share in

Darnley's murder was judged in her absence. The judges confined themselves to casting a glance at the letters handed to them by Murray; and most of them do not even seem to have attached any great importance to them, if we reflect upon the attitude they afterwards assumed towards the Queen of Scotland. It was not for them that these letters were produced, but for the people of the two kingdoms, for the Pope, and for the Court of France, for all those who might have intervened in Mary's favour, and with whom her enemies had an interest in blackening her name. The whole philosophy of the historical episode constituted by these letters is expressed once for all in the instructions addressed by Cecil to the English Ambassador in Paris, in 1571: "You will do well," wrote Elizabeth's minister, "to have several copies of Buchanan's 'Detectio'" (a pamphlet which contained, amongst other grounds of accusation against Mary, the text of the Casket letters), "and to hand them over on occasion, as if spontaneously, to the king, as well as to the noblemen of the council. This book renders us the useful service of dishonouring her, a thing which is indispensable till we can arrive at something else."

Mr. Lang, besides, has hit upon a very clever means of discrediting the evidence of the handwriting-experts of the period respecting the authenticity of the letters attributed to Mary Stuart. He asked one of his friends to imitate a few lines of the Queen's handwriting, and in a *fac simile* in his book he gives us an authentic letter of Mary to Elizabeth, in which some lines are in Mary's original hand and others are by the imitator. He defies us to say where the forged part begins and ends; and I confess, for

my own part, I should be very greatly puzzled to guess.

As for the text itself of the letters and sonnets (the originals of which, as everybody knows, are lost), Mr. Lang has made a very close examination of it. He admits, and proves very strongly, that these letters abound in improbabilities, and must have been in many places, falsified by Mary's accusers, especially Lethington, whose share in these forgeries appears to be beyond doubt. But in other places Mr. Lang is not disinclined to believe there are passages from authentic letters of Mary Stuart, only modified by clever interpolations.

In particular he admits the authenticity of the sonnets and also of one or two of the four rather insignificant letters of which the original French text has been preserved. In fact, if these sonnets and letters are forgeries, one must needs wonder that the forger did not give them a more precise bearing by making frequent allusions to Mary Stuart's criminal schemes. And yet I cannot help thinking that these letters and the celebrated sonnets are also forgeries, or at any rate that the odds are in favour of their being so, for I have an impression that both letters and sonnets, leaving aside their contents, *are not written in the same French in which the Queen of Scotland habitually wrote.*

Mr. Andrew Lang recalls the fact that when the pretended sonnets of Mary Stuart were published, both Brantôme and Ronsard immediately came to the conclusion that those verses were too rude and uncouth to be really the work of the young queen. Mr. Lang adds: "Both critics were, of course, prejudiced in favour of the beautiful queen. Both were good critics, but neither had ever seen 160 lines of

sonnet sequence written by her under the stress of a great passion, and amidst the toils of travel, of business, of intense anxiety, all in the space of two days, April 21 to April 23."

Of course. But I think Mr. Lang is mistaken as to the true character of Ronsard's objection. Assuredly, the peculiar position in which Mary Stuart was placed would amply suffice to explain the faulty prosody of the sonnets, and the grammatical mistakes of which they are quite full; not to speak of the fact that the Queen's authentic verses are themselves very imperfect, both from the grammatical and the prosodial point of view. But these authentic verses are not written in the same kind of language, or rather the same tone of thought, as the lines of the sonnets to Boswell. They are the work of a person who, though not born in France, had been accustomed to *think* in French, whilst in every line of the sonnets in question I seem to feel a person who, though perhaps knowing French even better, was accustomed to *think* in English.

It is not easy to explain this difference, but one feels it very distinctly, directly one compares closely the sonnets to Boswell with, for instance, these lines written by Mary Stuart, towards 1585, in her prison at Tutbury :

Que suis-je, hélas ! et de quoy sert ma vie ?
 Je ne suis fors qu'un corps privé de cueur,
 Un ombre vain, un objet de malheur,
 Qui n'a plus rien que de mourir envie.
 Plus ne portez, ô ennemis d'envie
 A qui n'a plus l'esprit à la grandeur !

Et vous, amys, qui m'avez tenu chère,
 Souvenez-vous que, sans heur, sans santay,
 Je ne saurais aucun bon œuvre fayre !
 Souhatez donc fin de calamitey ;
 Et que, ça bas étant assez punie,
 J'aye ma part en la joie infinie !

There we have verses certainly deplorable in form, though they serve to render a beautiful sentiment : and yet they are French verses gushing from a soul, which, if I may venture on the expression, *lived* in French. Their author instinctively felt the music of French words, that music which no one can ever feel but in one single language. Even the most incorrect phrases in these verses still preserve a French character.

Very different is the impression we receive at once from reading the sonnets to Boswell. The style is not much more incorrect than in the verses we have just read : but it is another kind of style in which the music of the words no longer counts for anything, a style one would suppose to be continually translated from English. The phrases are built upon another sort of rhythm, with a different way of arranging the ideas. I quote at random :

Pour lui, depuis, j'ai méprisé l'honneur
 Ce qui nous peut seul pourvoir de bonheur.
 Pour lui j'ai hasardé l'honneur et conscience.
 Pour lui tous mes parents j'ai quitté et amis,
 Et tous autres respects sont à part mis.
 Bref, de vous seul je cherche l'alliance.

But this impression becomes much stronger when one compares, from the same point of view, the

French prose of the "Casket Letters" with that of Mary Stuart's authentic letters. Here again I do not speak of the grammar, nor of the spelling. When the author of the "Casket Letters" invariably makes the blunder of making the past participle agree with the subject (j'ai promise, &c.), that may possibly be due to the copier; and besides, though I am not aware that Mary Stuart in her French letters makes that particular blunder, yet she makes others of a similar nature. More significant are the numerous English expressions running through the casket letters, "l'ingratitude *vers* moi," "quant au propose," and other essentially English idioms of which Mary Stuart's letters are infinitely more sparing. But the real difference between these letters and Mary Stuart's original letters is yet deeper, more indefinable, and more striking. It consists in the general tone, in the rhythm of the ideas and words, in the inner life of the language employed.

I take, at random, the opening of the second letter :* "Mon cueur, *helas* fault il que la follie d'une famme dont vous connoisses asses l'ingratitude vers moy soit cause de vous donner displesir, veu que je neusse sceu y remedier sans le scavoir; et depuis que men suis apersue, je ne vous lay peu dire pour scavoir comment mi guovejerneroy, car en cela in aultre chose je ne veulx entreprendre de rien fayre sans en scavoir votre volontay." Or take this: "Lesmail demirond est noir, qui signifie la fermete de celle qui lenvoie les larmes sont sans nombre, aussi sont les craintes de vous desplair, les pleurs de vostre absence et de desplaisir de ne pouvoir estre en effect exterieur vostre, comme je suis sans faintise de

* Letter IV. in Mr. Lang's Appendix.

cueur et desprit, et a bon droit, quant mes merites seroient trop plus grands que de la plus perfayte que Jamais feut, et telle que je desire estre, et mettray poine en condition de contrefair pour dignement estre employee soubz votre domination. . . . Comme fait celle que vous veult estre pour Jamais humble et obeisante loyalle femme et seulle amye, qui pour Jamais vous voue entierement le cueur, le corps, sans aucun changement, comme a celuy que J fait possesseur du cueur du quel, vous pouves tenir seur Jusques a la mort ne changera car mal ni bien onque ne estrangera.”

No. Whatever mistakes in this passage are due to the copyist, it is not the daughter of Marie de Guise, the widow of Francis II., the friend of Ronsard, who wrote these letters, which were evidently thought out in English before being clad in their French garb. Not for an instant is their “tone” French, whilst it always is so in Mary Stuart’s authentic letters, even those which are most hurried and incorrect. In her instructions to her defenders, in September 1508, Mary Stuart said: “There are in Scotland divers persons, men and women, who know how to imitate my writing, and to write in the way I write, as well as I can.” We know, too, that there were at that time in Scotland, and even in the *entourage* of the queen, plenty of well-educated people who could read and write French fluently. But all these persons had first learnt their native language, whilst Mary had first learnt French. Now when one of these persons set himself to forge letters of the queen, he might very well counterfeit her writing, her habitual expressions, even her mistakes: but there was something essentially French in Mary Stuart’s French which the

forger could not imitate ; and I think that by this clue one might contrive, in the present day, without great improbability, to acquit the poor queen of Scots of the detestable crime with which her brother Murray and the other real murderers of Darnley tried to stain her memory.

III

THE MARRIAGE OF MARY OF MODENA

IN the beginning of the year 1673 it was decided that the younger brother of King Charles II. ought to marry again. He had been a widower two years, having lost his first wife, Anne Hyde, a fat, worthy person whom he had married without quite knowing why, contrary to the wishes of both families, and to whom he had been almost continually unfaithful. Of the eight children she had borne, she only left him at her death two daughters, and it was hoped that a fresh marriage might give the Duke of York a male heir, which would secure the succession to the throne: for it was no longer at all probable that the king would ever have any children by his wife Catharine of Braganza, to whom he had been married about twelve years. The Protestants, it is true, would have preferred that the king should dismiss his Catholic wife, and choose another, more fertile and less "idolatrous." "Amongst the arguments that can be invoked against polygamy"—declared one of them, Burnet, future bishop of Salisbury—"I see nothing so strong as to balance the great and visible, imminent hazards that hang over so many thousands if it be not allowed in the present case." And already the House of Lords

had voted a bill authorising the king to this salutary act of "polygamy." But Charles, who, as a rule, was little troubled with scruples of conscience, had however scrupled to repudiate a princess whom he respected all the more because he felt that she had many wrongs to pardon him. He had resolved to keep her as his wife and to lose no time in finding a bride for his brother James. The latter, on his side, though perfectly comfortable in his widowerhood, was too loyal a subject to refuse to submit to his brother's wish: he had merely stipulated that his second wife, wherever she might come from, should possess a quality the absence of which he had always deplored in the first. "The Duke of York, priding himself on being a good husband," wrote the French minister Pomponne, "desires only to marry a handsome woman."

Accordingly a list was drawn up of all the princesses in the four corners of Europe who had some chance of fulfilling this condition. At first eleven of these princesses had been discovered; but it was not long before five of these had, for various reasons, to be eliminated, so that the final list only comprised six: the Archduchess Claudie Félicité of Innspruck, the Princess Eleonore Madeleine of Neuburg, the Princess Marie Anne of Wurtemberg, the Princess Marie Beatrice of Modena, the Duchesse de Guise and Mlle. de Retz. The question was next to examine them discreetly in turn, to compare their merits and to choose one. This highly grave and delicate mission was confided, in February 1673, to one of the Duke of York's most faithful servants, Henry Mordaunt, second Earl of Peterborough.



Photo.

Mason?

MARY OF MODENA

After a painting by W. Wissing in the National Gallery



Of all these princesses the best match for the Duke of York was incontestably the Austrian Archduchess. There was not a Court which was not full of the fame of her fresh, slight and charming beauty. Unfortunately she was too beautiful, and it was also well known that the Emperor Leopold had resolved to make an empress of her, as soon as heaven's mercy should be pleased to make him a widower. However it was to her that Peterborough first directed his steps "with jewels to the value of twenty thousand pounds, which the Duke of York took from his own chest." But, on landing at Calais, the negotiator found that the empress had just died, and that Leopold had already proclaimed his intention of having the fair princess for himself. Thus the list of the possible brides was reduced to five, and Peterborough received a fresh command from England—"to try and see these princesses, or at all events their portraits, and to send to London the most impartial account of their manners and dispositions."

At Paris, Peterborough first saw the Duchesse de Guise, youngest daughter of Gaston d'Orléans. The Duke of York, who knew her already, had not preserved a very favourable remembrance of her; and in point of fact she happened to be "short and ill-made," in a word—impossible. Another of the young ladies on the list, Mlle. de Retz, was in the country, and Peterborough, from all he heard about her, did not think it necessary to undertake the little journey he would have had to make for a closer study of her. As a set-off to this disappointment, Princess Marie Anne of Wurtemberg was then staying in Paris. Peterborough hastened to pay his respects to her at the convent to which she

had retired since her father's recent death. She was "of middle height, had a pretty complexion, brown hair, an agreeably modelled face, grey eyes, a grave but sweet expression, and in her whole person the bearing of a woman of quality and education. But above all, in all the maturity of her development, she looked like a young girl endowed with a vigorous and healthy constitution, capable of bearing robust children, such as would have a chance of living and thriving." And Peterborough adds that "though there was much modesty in her behaviour she was by no means chary of speech."

All that, except perhaps the last-named trait would doubtless have suited the Duke of York very well ; but the choice of the Princess of Wurtemberg was distasteful to Louis XIV., who from the outset had taken a great interest in the marriage schemes of his English cousin. As for Marie Beatrice of Modena, whose portrait Peterborough had seen at the Prince de Conti's, and who, from this picture, had seemed to him a dazzling beauty, the *chargé d'affaires* of the Court of Modena had unfortunately told him that this princess, with the consent of her mother, the regent of Modena, had taken a vow never to marry, and to enter a convent. The result was that, immediately after his interview with Marie Anne of Wurtemberg, Peterborough had to start for Düsseldorf, where Princess Eleonore Madeleine of Neuburg lived with her parents.

The Duke of Neuburg, who was quite aware both of his quality and of the object of his visit, made a point, however, of respecting his *incognito*. In the most comical fashion imaginable he led the conversa-

tion up to the Duke of York's matrimonial plans and to the excellent M. de Peterborough to whom they were entrusted. Where was this worthy nobleman at the present time? Was it true, as people said, that since the Duke of York could not marry the Archduchess of Innspruck he was going to marry an English lady? But probably the English tourist would like to make acquaintance with the Duchess of Neuburg and her daughter? When the two ladies appeared it was found that the Duchess unfortunately could not speak English or French, but that her daughter, on the contrary, knew all languages and would be delighted to serve as interpreter.

Thus the conversation begins, and Peterborough, whilst the young princess exerts herself to display all her talents—with an insistence that slightly shocks him—has leisure to pursue his examination. "The princess is eighteen years of age; of middle height and agreeable complexion, her face rather round than oval, and the part of the throat which I saw is as white as snow; but having regard to her present age, one may guess that she is likely to grow fat." The impression of the examiner is decidedly unfavourable. He awaits with impatience the end of the interview, and hastens to leave Dusseldorf, without divulging his *incognito*—not foreseeing that sixteen years later, this same princess, then become the third wife of Emperor Leopold, would avenge upon James II. the disdain of his proxy, and compel her husband to reject the touching appeals for help addressed to him by the dethroned king.

On his return to Paris Peterborough is charged with the investigation of another "parti." The

Duchess of Portsmouth, Charles II.'s mistress, cherished a whim to make the Duke of York marry Mlle. d'Elbœuf, a niece of Turenne; but this young lady is only just thirteen, and Peterborough can hardly take upon himself to encourage her marriage with a prince of over forty years of age. Taking everything into consideration it is still the Princess of Wurtemberg who seems to him, as also to the Duke himself, the most suitable match. So he goes back to her convent to see her, and this time informs her of the "orders" which he has every reason to believe he will soon receive, after which nothing will remain but to address her as his "Mistress," and offer her the respects due to the quality which accompanies this title. "Whereupon," Peterborough relates that "the moderation usually shown by the young princess in her character, was not sufficiently strong to allow her to dissemble her joy on this occasion." Alas! at the very moment of his return home from his visit, he receives a despatch forbidding him to trouble any more about the Princess of Wurtemberg, and ordering him to start immediately for Modena. Peterborough obeys, but not without having made an effort to find some means of mitigating the cruel deception reserved for Marie Anne. "For it is not an easy matter," he writes naïvely, "to appease a soul so grievously disappointed."

At Modena there are two available princesses—the aunt and the niece—the one thirty, the other fifteen years of age. Charles II. and Louis XIV. are of opinion that Peterborough should try to obtain the consent of one or the other, *mutatis mutandis*; but the Duke of York, fully determined only to marry a "handsome woman," will not

hear a word about the aunt, and insists on his proxy concentrating all his efforts and talents on obtaining the consent of the young princess Marie Beatrice.

The latter, when seen in her own person, surpasses the promises of the portrait inspected by Peterborough at Prince Conti's house. "She is tall and admirably built; her complexion is marvellously beautiful, her hair jet black, as well as her eyebrows and her eyes: but the latter are so full of sweetness and light that one is dazzled and charmed with them. The contours of her face, which is the purest oval, contains all the greatness and beauty which can exist in a human being." In vain, however, does Peterborough, astonished at the features and manners of the young princess, tell her all this to her face, to convince her of the impossibility of robbing the world of so much perfection; in vain does he exert himself, in a long interview, to combat her scruples and to induce her to break her vow; in vain he renews his efforts with her mother who would not be displeased with her daughter's marriage, but is too devout not to feel bound to respect the princess's pious wishes; in vain Charles II. and Louis XIV. set all the resources of diplomacy in motion—Marie Beatrice has determined to enter a convent, and nothing can make her go back upon her decision.

And yet it is not because she is a little fool, ignorant of the world, and blindly stricken with devotion. With all her pure and delicate beauty, destined to survive the ravages of time and suffering, and endure to this day in admirable portraits, she is merry, lively, witty, passionately fond of music and poetry; well-read too, writing Latin and

French wonderfully well, interested in the progress of the sciences, which the Court of Modena always protected, and so nimble-witted that we find her learning English in a few months and becoming much more English than any other foreign princess ever transported by marriage to the English Court. At the same time she has a simple and profound sense of honour which prevents her from admitting for a single moment that her given promise should not be kept. Peterborough is already sadly preparing to leave Modena, and renew his study of the Princess of Neuburg, when an event happens which suddenly changes the aspect of affairs. Pope Clement X., perhaps in answer to the entreaties of the English and French Courts, or perhaps from fatherly anxiety for the future of English Catholics, writes with his own hand to the little princess Marie Beatrice a long and beautiful Latin letter, in which he commands her to forget her vow and to consent to the marriage which is offered to her. "Dear daughter in Jesus Christ," he says, "you will easily understand with what anxiety Our soul was filled when We were informed of your repugnance to marry. For though We understood that this repugnance was the result of a desire, very laudable in itself, to embrace religious discipline, We have nevertheless been sincerely grieved thereby, reflecting that in the present case it was likely to raise an obstacle to the progress of religion."

This letter and this command had an immediate effect on Marie Beatrice. The young girl informed Peterborough that she consented to the marriage, which so astonished and delighted the worthy man that he determined to proceed to the ceremony at once, without waiting for the completion of negotia-

tions which had just been started with the Court of Rome, touching certain secret clauses of the contract. On September 30, 1673, in the chapel of the ducal palace of Modena, the Court chaplain Dom Andrea Roncagli, celebrated the marriage of the Duke of York, represented by the Earl of Peterborough, with Princess Marie Beatrice. As she left the chapel, the now Duchess of York had to take precedence of her mother and of the old Regent of Modena, her grandfather's widow. The whole town was given up to joyful *mascarades* which lasted three days, with incomparable splendour and artistic elegance. The following day, after a solemn mass at the cathedral and before a horse-race, a sumptuous banquet took place round a huge table decorated with a device of *triumphs*, ingenious allegorical monuments of sugar, pastry and marchpane. The whole duchy was *en fête*, under a mild autumn sun, until October 5, when the young duchess, accompanied by her mother and the happy Peterborough, left Modena to make acquaintance with her husband.

In Paris, where she arrived on November 2, the Court and the town gave her the most cordial welcome. But she had the vexation (or possibly the pleasure) to learn that she would in all probability have to return to Modena and henceforth devote herself entirely to God; for the English parliament formally refused to recognise the marriage of the Duke of York with a Catholic princess, and such was the fury of the Protestants that Charles II. had well-nigh determined to annul the Modena ceremony, leaving his brother to solace his widowerhood with his mistresses, if he could not resign himself to marry a Protestant. But

James, once married, had no intention of relapsing into widowerhood. He wrote his young wife a letter from London in which he begged her "not to take too much notice of what was going on in England"; and it was he, no doubt, who induced his brother, who had seemed willing to yield to the Protestant demands, to appear one morning at the House of Lords in royal robes, with the crown on his head, to prorogue Parliament till next year. The Duke of York immediately informed the duchess that he was awaiting her with impatience; and on the evening of December 1, the yacht *Catherine*, escorted by four ships of war brought the young princess into Dover harbour. "There on the sands," says Peterborough, "her husband the duke had come to meet her, and scarcely had she landed than she took possession of his heart as well as of his arms; and from thence was escorted to her abode."

She was so beautiful, so charming, so perfectly lovable in body and soul that her presence was bound to disarm even her bitterest enemies. When she arrived in London one may truly say that everybody felt compelled to love her. Parliament, itself, in 1674, and on several subsequent occasions, was tempted to pardon her "idolatry." The poets Dryden and Waller wrote verses in her praise, verses which rank among the most sincere and touching that they have left us. But she, with her girlish heart, was long before she could resolve to accept in full the part which a superior will had imposed upon her. Here is the first letter she wrote from London, January 18, 1674, to the Abbess of the Convent of the Visitation at Modena, where she formerly hoped to pass her life :

VERY REVEREND MOTHER,

I am in excellent health, thanks to God, my dear mother, but I cannot as yet accustom myself to the state in which I am, to which, as you know, I have always been opposed. Consequently I weep much and am very grieved and cannot manage to get rid of my melancholy.

May you at least find consolation, my dear mother, in what I am going to say : that the duke, my husband, is a very kind man and desirous of my welfare and that he would do anything in the world to prove it. He is so firm and so resolute in our holy religion (which he openly professes, like a good Catholic) that nothing could ever persuade him to abandon it. In my sadness, which is still more increased by the departure of my dear mamma, that is my consolation.

I remain,

Ever your faithful and
affectionate daughter,

MARIE D'ESTE,
Duchess of York.

Thus began the public career of that queen, of whom, half a century later, Dangeau was able to say, "She died like a saint, as she had lived," and of whom St. Simon said that "her life and death were comparable to those of the greatest saints." Much has been written about Marie of Modena, and the long years of her exile at St. Germain have more especially formed the subject of numerous publications, both English and French, the common fault of which is the tendency to become wearisome, from the constant anxiety (unfortunately too common with hagiographers) of continually harping on the proofs of this devout princess's martyrdom. But henceforth all these writings will be eclipsed by the

voluminous and splendid work, which an English scholar, Mr. Martin Haile, has recently consecrated to the second wife of James II. Not that this author has put more literary charm into his work than his predecessors. I would rather say that he has entirely suppressed all literary achievement in his work, so as to make it merely a complete and final collection of original documents, some of which are little known, while a great number are actually unpublished. The public archives of London, Paris, Modena, Vienna, the Vatican, Florence, the private archives of the great Jacobite families of the United Kingdom, have all been explored by Mr. Haile with admirable conscientiousness and with success, in his desire to present us with an exact "documentary" picture of the life and person of a princess whom he always carefully abstains from judging, but whom we feel that he loves and venerates no less than the most enthusiastic of his predecessors. Side by side with the series of intimate letters from Marie of Modena to her family, to the nuns of the Visitation, to her Italian and English friends, his book abounds in extracts from the confidential reports of ambassadors and *chargés d'affaires*, keeping their masters informed of all the trifling events at the Courts of London and St. Germain. It abounds, too, in extracts from the reports and letters of a host of secret agents employed by James II., by his wife and son, after the catastrophe of 1688. For the study of the period which immediately preceded that catastrophe all English historians will be particularly indebted to Mr. Haile for the mass of new information which he has collected; and I think that even in France a translation of this valuable collection could not fail to be well received. But in read-

ing this collection every one will be particularly struck by the vigorous relief, the simple, touching human truth, with which each of these innumerable documents, quoted or analysed by Mr. Haile, invests the figures of King James and Queen Mary. The figures are very dissimilar, and yet as we watch their gradual self-development, they seem in a way to complete and elucidate each other.

They have only one point of resemblance—the deep attachment of both to their Catholic faith. But even there the resemblance is far from being perfect. One would be tempted to say that James II. and his wife divided between them the ideal rôle of a good Catholic—James being the martyr and his wife the saint. For, truly, all the public acts of the last Stuart king, from his conversion to his vain attempts at restoration, bear the stamp of heroic and untimely madness which remind us of the stories of St. Sebastian and St. Maurice or of the most romantic martyrs of the Golden Legend. Every moment, and with no possible motive but a feverish desire to assert his faith and to suffer for it, James II. abandons himself to imprudent and useless provocations, each of which has the invariable effect of exposing him to fresh annoyances. At every turn, when his own personal situation and that of all English Catholics seems to be on the way to improvement, the unfortunate king hastens to spoil matters by some more or less direct proclamation of his “papistical” fervour. Never, probably, did a prince draw down more obstinately on his own head the blows he received. He evidently had, whether instinctively or from Christian zeal, the craving for martyrdom ; and that

is what all his detractors, with the single exception of Macaulay, have been compelled to acknowledge and admire in him. But, unlike the martyrs of the Golden Legend, we never see that the numerous opportunities he had of satisfying this generous craving ever procured him the smallest pleasure. Though he brought down the blows on his own head he seems generally to have received them with a sorry countenance. Even in his way of provoking the adversaries of his faith there was something passive and resigned, as though he were obeying a fatality in his nature rather than a spontaneous impulse of his heart. Not to mention that, apart from his martyrdom, this unfortunate prince had nothing whatever of the saint. He was simply a worthy man, very loyal and very set in his affections, scrupulously anxious about his dignity, always quick both to show anger and to pardon, caring neither for wine nor gambling, but devoted to women from his youth, and only repenting of this excessive love at an age when his repentance must fail to edify us.*

His wife, Mary of Modena, certainly suffered as much or more than he, and with this aggravation that she had always to suffer through him, through his infidelities in the first years of their married life, or through the effect of untimely or dangerous political acts which he took into his head to commit and from which she did her best to dissuade him, but in vain. From the time when, as we have seen,

* An anonymous English writer recently published "The Adventures of King James II." (Longmans & Co.), an excellent anecdotic life of James. His conclusions touching the characters of the king and queen are entirely confirmed by Mr. Martin Haile's collected documents.

she shed her first tears on the morrow of her arrival in England, how many must have flowed from those beautiful black eyes which seem to light up all the portraits we possess of her! The loss of her crown, stern exile, the successive deaths of all her children, except the unfortunate James III., the odious treachery of her two step-daughters, the defection of her friends and even of her relations, the failure of all her husband's and son's enterprises, the proscription of the latter, driven successively from France, Lorraine, and Avignon; sickness, poverty, the pawning or sale of her last jewels, the necessity of living sometimes for weeks together on nothing but vegetables, the impossibility of supplying bread to the pitiful colony of Irish emigrants—all this is but a part of the trials she had to endure. From this point of view nothing can be more characteristic than the contrast of the two figures of the king and queen, side by side, and accompanied by their two children, in an engraving made for the Jacobite propaganda, which must have been drawn in Paris about 1696. James, in spite of all the pious efforts of his portrayer, still has the haughty, sour mien of a prince who has but too good reason to complain of his lot; but his wife, on the contrary, although pale and emaciated, with a long ghost-like face under the heavy locks of her hair, continues to smile at us gently and almost gaily with her thin lips and large eyes, as though she bore in her heart a glorious flame of life that no suffering in this fleeting world could ever extinguish. We find this same smile beneath her tears in all her letters; in those she wrote from London to the nuns of Modena, praising her husband's virtues or telling them of the signs of affection she was

receiving (or thought she was receiving) from her step-daughters, as well as those dated forty years later from St. Germain, when—a widow, separated from her sons and reduced to poverty—she wrote to the nuns of Chaillot to tell them that she was coming to share with them a basket of fruit kindly sent by Mme. de Maintenon. Just as her husband had a craving for martyrdom, so this tragic victim of destiny preserved to the end the intrepid and unconquerable cheerfulness of the saint.

As with all saints this cheerfulness came to her from two sources—her innate self-forgetfulness, and the habit she had formed of always creating duties for herself which, whilst occupying her heart prevented her from giving way to useless repining. However cruel her life, it still left her evils to forestall or assuage, fresh hopes to entertain, fresh opportunities to lavish joyously the tenderness of a heart always overflowing with love for others and for God. Banished from England for the first time in 1679, she wrote to her brother from Brussels that she hoped she would be able to render him a service which he had asked her; that she was very troubled about the health of her step-daughter, the Princess of Orange, “who is as anxious to see me as I am to see her,” and that for that matter everybody in Brussels “treated her with more kindness than she could express.” The following year, being again banished, we find her writing: “We hear no good news from England. Parliament has begun its sittings in dashing style and the duke, my husband, is accused of all the evils that have happened in the kingdom for the last two years. God grant us patience! . . . but here, meanwhile, everybody treats us in

the most touching manner ; and we might do worse than stop here ; but I am very much afraid they may say to themselves that we are still too comfortable and send us somewhere further off." Charles II.'s death in 1685 grieves her so much as to make her ill ; and the first words she is able to write after a week of fever, are to express concern about her young brother and dissuade him from a *liaison* which she considers disastrous, and then once more to express her satisfaction and surprise at the tokens of kindness with which she has been loaded.

But it is during the thirty years of her last exile that she must be seen, such as she is shown by her letters and her conversation, smiling at the cruel persecution of fate. One day, in 1709, she learns that her dear nuns of Chaillot, knowing her to be deprived of her small income, have just let to a richer lady the rooms which had been for years reserved for her in their convent. She smiles again, under this humiliation ; and presently we find her more affectionate than ever to her good friends at Chaillot, joking with them about some new ribbons she has just stitched upon some old shoes, helping them to nurse their sick, relating to them all the minutes of her poor life that have seen a ray of sunshine, or else saying how grateful she is to God for having concealed the future from her. "When I came to France, I should have been miserable if any one had told me that I should have to stay here two years, and yet we have been living here twenty-three years !"

Bourdaloue, who used to meet her there, said of her : "I know of nobody so holy !" But her holiness never prevented her from being amiable, or, on

the whole, happy. Perhaps not one of the smallest merits of Mr. Martin Haile's valuable collection is to remind us that, even under the most pathetic conditions, saints may begin to have their reward even in this present life.

IV

THE QUEEN OF ETRURIA

I

IN a "revue de fin d'année," played in 1893 at the Cluny theatre, Napoleon I., the hero of all the "revues" of that year, was dilating complacently on all his virtues, his traits of character and generosity which could not fail to commend him to the admiration of coming ages—when one of his interlocutors timidly reminded him of the death of the Duc d'Enghien. "Of course!" cried Napoleon, who was not a man to be troubled by such a trifle, "Of course, I expected as much! I felt sure you were going to talk to me about that business! That's a joke that is never left out: whenever people want to annoy me—slap, bang! they begin talking about the Duc d'Enghien!" I need hardly say that the downrightness of this repartee was sufficient to disarm Napoleon's interlocutors, as well as the whole audience. It would have been enough to disarm all posterity.

But even supposing the unfortunate condemnation of the Duc d'Enghien may in future be held as a somewhat threadbare ground of complaint against Napoleon, I wonder what the Emperor, or rather

what his modern apologists would answer in his name, if he were reminded of many other circumstances in which he made short work, not only of legality, but of human dignity and human life. If he were accused, for instance, of having sacrificed to his own ambition millions of young men who died without knowing why, or of having deliberately cheated the hopes of this or that unfortunate nation, which had put its trust in him. In a book which is open to discussion but which stirs and charms us like a love-tale, M. Frédéric Masson shows us Mlle. Walewska offering herself to Napoleon in exchange for the welfare of her country, Poland, which he promises to set free. We admire the young woman's great heart, and share the passionate transports of her imperial lover. But did Napoleon ever seriously give a thought to the happiness of Poland, the price which was to repay such a heroic love? No, M. Masson knows it only too well; and his most eloquent pictures do not prevent us from looking upon Napoleon throughout the whole of this affair as one of those shabby lovers who promise wedlock to young girls without having the least intention of marrying them.

Perhaps, after all, Mlle. Walewska was not so completely Napoleon's victim as M. Masson fancies. I imagine that, leaving aside her country's happiness, she had some satisfaction in being loved by so great a man, and in being able to astonish him by such a touching example of patriotism. The souls of Polish women are such complicated little boxes that no one can ever be quite sure of getting to the bottom of them. But how many more authentic victims there were whose lives were upset by Napoleon's restless ambition! Think



THE QUEEN OF ETRURIA



merely of all the royal families he kept hard at it for twenty years, refusing to let them eat, sleep, or reign in peace for a single day, driving them at his caprice from one throne to another all across Europe, till the day when, by some last whim, he threw them on the street! Not one of these princes who did not tremble before him, as though he were the devil himself, and, in fact, the devil would not have tormented them more persistently. They felt that he had his eye on them, from far or near; and however devoted and faithful they might be to him they still trembled,—for they knew that it was only a question of having to find a home for some brother, or to get some marshal away from Paris, to bring their dynasty to an end.

Above all, how the women, the poor little princesses must have suffered, and hated him! He treated them with a familiar gallantry which humiliated them more than insulting language would have done. As for their beauty and the dresses they put on to please him, he hardly appeared to notice them. Without consulting their hearts, promised perhaps in secret to some handsome archduke, he gave them as wives to his generals, to his brothers, or to Josephine's relations. Only too lucky were those whom he deigned to give in marriage! But there were others who could never regard him as anything but a monster furiously bent on making them suffer—Queen Louise of Prussia, for instance, Queen Louise of Spain, and that Queen of Etruria, Marie Louise de Bourbon, who at a day's notice found herself driven from her father's kingdom, separated from her son, shut up in a convent—all without any other reason than Napoleon's desire to rule in her place.

A learned Italian, M. Giovanni Sforza, has just related the life and adventures of this unfortunate princess in a series of articles in the *Nuova Antologia*, and I propose to sum up in a few pages the long account he has given of them.

II

The Infanta Marie Louise was born July 6, 1782, while her father, the future Charles IV. of Spain, was as yet only Prince of Asturias. Her mother was that Queen Louise who, later on, had to suffer so much from Napoleon's ill humour. Marie Louise does not appear to have had a very happy childhood. In the dark and gloomy chambers of the Escorial she had a somewhat haphazard education, her mother having no longer a thought for anything but her lover, Manuel Godoy, whose insipid good looks recalled a hero of operetta, the best guitar player, but at the same time the stupidest and most cowardly man in Spain.

Little Marie Louise was hardly twelve years old when, in 1794, her parents received the visit of Louis de Bourbon, heir apparent of Parma. He was the Queen of Spain's nephew, and was coming to Madrid to marry one of cousins, Marie Amélie, who was two years older than her sister Marie Louise. But the young prince had no sooner arrived than he declared that he did not care for the Infanta Marie Amélie. Little Marie Louise, however, he thought charming, and Manuel Godoy, to whom he confided this opinion, hastened to offer him her hand. The wedding took place at St. Ildefonso, August 25, 1795. Marie Amélie, deeply

grieved, was married some months afterwards to a poor relation, the elderly Infante Antonio Pasquale; but the preference shown to her little sister was too painful a memory, and she died of grief within three years of her marriage.

Young Louis would have been glad to return to Parma. He had begun there a great work which entirely absorbed him: a detailed description of the flora of Parma, Piacenza, and Guastalla. This young prince was a passionate botanist; otherwise he was a ninny, with rather a pleasant face, but heavy, awkward, and subject to epileptic fits. He was twenty-two years of age when, in 1795, he married the little Infanta of thirteen; and it was no doubt owing to the youth of their daughter that his parents-in-law asked him to leave her with them a little longer. He resigned himself to their wish, putting off the study of the flora of Parma and setting to work to study that of Castille and Estramadura. He used to wander about the provinces in company with his little wife, often regretting that Spanish etiquette did not allow him to botanise with as much liberty as he would have liked. "I was very fond of him," Marie Louise declared at a later period, "and I was very fond of my parents too; those first years of our marriage were the happiest in all my life." In 1801 she had a son, Charles Louis, who was held over the baptismal font by her grandfather, the King of Spain.

She had scarcely got over her confinement when Napoleon first took possession of her destiny. By the treaty of Madrid, March 21, 1801, he decided that "the Duke of Parma resigned for ever, for himself and his heirs, the duchy of Parma, with all its dependencies, in favour of the French Republic;

that the Grand Duke of Tuscany also resigned his duchy, and that this duchy should be given to the Duke of Parma's son as an indemnity for the countries yielded by the Infanta to his father." Marie Louise's husband was thus transplanted from Parma to Florence, with the title of King of Tuscany, afterwards changed by Napoleon's whim to that of King of Etruria. So the young couple had to leave Spain to go to Italy, and the First Consul, furthermore, ordered them to go by way of Paris.

This journey to Paris did not appear to Prince Louis and his wife exactly in the light of a pleasure-trip. In fact, they were terrified at it, and the unfortunate little queen was destined to remember all her life the anguish that it caused her. "Some days after our departure from Madrid," she writes in her *Memoirs*, "the Prince de la Paix, having come to pay us a visit, told us that it was absolutely necessary that we should go to Paris, since the First Consul was anxious to see what effect the presence of a Bourbon would create in France. This piece of news put the climax to our alarm: we trembled at the experiment that was to be made at our expense in a country where our family had just been so odiously massacred." But they had to resign themselves, and left Madrid on the morning of April 21. At the frontier the Spanish escort was dismissed, and replaced by a French general with a small body of soldiers.

After a journey of forced marches, which was more like a convoy of prisoners than a royal progress, the King of Tuscany and his young wife entered Paris in an old-fashioned open carriage of the time of Philip V., drawn by a mule. They went to lodge at the Spanish Embassy. Fortunately

the mob did not pick any quarrel with them; it contented itself with looking at them as curious animals. They were treated to festivities here and there; the finest being that offered by their cousin, the Marquise de Montesson, who, having formerly been the morganatic wife of Philippe Egalité's father, prided herself ever after on belonging to the Bourbon family.

When every one had seen them they were dismissed by Napoleon, who does not seem to have found them very interesting at any time. He used to say to Bourrienne, speaking of the King of Tuscany: "I'm sick of him, he's a regular automaton. I asked him innumerable questions, and he couldn't answer one of them." As for the queen he credited her with more brains; but the unfortunate woman had nothing about her that pleased him. She took not the least care of her figure, which had never been very slim, nor of her complexion, nor of her teeth, nor of her hair which was of a splendid black; she invariably dressed in heavy velvet dresses, with too much gold trimming; and her terror was so great that she could scarcely raise a smile. "For a queen of an ancient lineage," writes Mme. du Cayla, "she is very badly dressed, and is certainly not stylish; our chamber-maids have a better appearance than she." It must be added that the poor queen was in bad health; she had caught a fever, on her journey, and until her arrival in Tuscany she could not sleep a single night.

She was delighted to leave Paris. On July 12 the royal couple entered Turin, where the Archbishop of Florence was awaiting them in great state. On the 14th they started again for Parma, and on August 12 they finally arrived in Florence. "We

entered in some alarm," says Marie Louise, "for we feared that the populace, seeing us surrounded by French troops, might give us an ugly reception."

The winter of 1801 was a sad one for her. The Pitti palace, where she lived, was almost empty. She had to apply to the patricians of Florence to procure furniture, plate, candlesticks. The king's health was failing from day to day: besides his epileptic attacks he now had inflammation of the lungs, and his disposition, generally very gentle, was beginning to grow sour. Estense Tassoni, Ambassador of the Italian Republic at Florence, wrote of him: "The king has intelligence, an excellent heart, and a great wish to do good, but his unfortunate state of health renders all these qualities vain. His epileptic attacks daze him, and cause him to lose his memory. He has crises of madness in which nobody dares approach him." On June 2, 1802, thinking all was over, he decreed that his wife "should henceforward be admitted to the council with a deliberative vote in all affairs of the realm."

Here follows a fresh episode, at once lamentable and comical. At the end of August 1802, this poor moribund king and his wife, then eight months with child, received the order to start for Spain immediately, to be present at the marriage of the Prince of the Asturias with Princess Marie Antoinette of Naples. They started, leaving the finances of Tuscany in frightful disorder. At Pisa they were obliged to make a halt; finally they arrived at Leghorn, where the Spanish squadron awaited them. But no sooner had they put to sea than the queen was brought to bed. Next day, in a terrible storm, they were within an inch of losing their lives—and, on arriving

at Madrid they found the wedding was over! Nothing remained but to start back for Florence, and again in the Gulf of Lyons they were overtaken by another storm, which lasted two hours and destroyed their vessel.

The fatigue proved too much for the poor king. He lingered one winter more, and died on May 27, 1803, leaving his kingdom to his son Charles Louis, under the regency of his wife.

III

Marie Louise had hardly been six months a widow, when her parents and Napoleon already began to make plans for her second marriage. She does not seem to have had any taste for the Infante whom her parents proposed for her; but there is no doubt she very much wanted to marry again, for she eagerly accepted Napoleon's proposal that she should wed Lucien Bonaparte. And in face of Lucien's refusal to repudiate his wife, Christina Boyer, she eagerly assented to receive another protégé of Napoleon, Eugène de Beauharnais. "On learning that it was proposed to marry her to H.R.H. the Prince of Beauharnais, her Majesty secretly ordered a *triduum* in two monasteries of Florence, with exposition of the Holy Sacrament." Alas! the *triduum* had no effect: Eugène de Beauharnais was betrothed to the Grand Duke of Baden's daughter, and the unhappy Queen of Etruria had to remain a widow to the end!

She had also many more serious cares. During the whole of the winter of 1803, the plague decimated Leghorn. On January 30, the Arno over-

flowed, ruining the whole country between Leghorn and Pisa. Earthquakes partly destroyed Siena and Colle; the public exchequer was growing emptier every day; bankruptcy seemed inevitable.

Marie Louise, however, took her title of regent very seriously. She examined all accounts with her own eyes, she visited her kingdom village by village, she superintended with tender care the education of her royal son. She neglected nothing, and with all her soul aspired to do good. But luck was against her.

On learning of Napoleon's arrival at Milan, she sent two ambassadors to him, charged with obtaining certain concessions. Napoleon consented to the concessions, but accompanied his consent with this terrible sentence: "Your queen is too young and her ministers too old to remain at the head of a kingdom like Tuscany!" And, in effect, he despatched to her court in 1806 a plenipotentiary who henceforth was to be the real sovereign. This new minister, Hector d'Aubusson de la Feuillade, announced upon his arrival that he intended to "put a little French briskness into affairs." In a confidential letter to Princess Elisa Bonaparte, on November 25, 1805, he writes: "The Queen, at heart, loves H.M. the Emperor and all his family, but she is surrounded by people who deceive her, and who hate her as much as they hate France. The ministers are all devoid of talent and good will. The great mass of State officials are much the same; the nobles and the priests are just as bad. The police is detestable. . . . But in a few days we shall be more at ease, without H.M. the Emperor's views being in any respect thwarted: for he has only to make a sign and this country will become a province of France, or Italy,

or Lucca, to the great satisfaction of the majority of the people. . . . While Sebastian is amusing himself at Constantinople in making an *aqua fortis* revolution,* I am making one here with rose water. I dismiss a few treacherous, ignorant or traitorous public officials, to put in their place others who are a trifle better, without being very good. But Sebastian is a lucky fellow. It takes him less time to have a dozen Pachas' heads knocked off than it does me to turn out one rascal of a minister."

For a whole year the regent had to submit to the supremacy of this amazing diplomatist. At last, in the first days of November 1807, d'Aubusson went to her apartment and informed her that Napoleon had just driven her from her throne. It was already a month, in fact, since a treaty had been signed at Fontainebleau of which Article IX. said: "H.M. the King of Etruria cedes the entire ownership and sovereignty of the Kingdom of Etruria to H.M. the Emperor of the French and King of Italy." Napoleon offered Marie Louise in exchange a small kingdom that he was creating for her out of a portion of Portugal. On hearing this news the poor woman fainted away; and as she delayed a few days to leave Florence Napoleon wrote to her that "he did not think it was decent of her to prolong her stay in a country which no longer belonged to her, consequently he advised her to go away without delay, informing her that she could see him at Milan on the 18th of the month." She left Florence on the morning of the 10th, and she even had to address her subjects in a proclamation in which she

* À l'eau forte.

said that "she consoled herself for the bitterness of this separation by reflecting that her kingdom was about to pass over to the happy authority of a monarch endowed with every virtue."

She met this virtuous monarch at Milan. "I set forth to him," says she, "my grief at having left Tuscany, and begged him to be kind enough to restore that State to me instead of the portion of Portugal that was to be given me. He had the impudence to assure me that, for his part, he would have left me in peace in Tuscany, but that it was the Court of Spain which had provoked the exchange with Portugal, because my parents wished to have me near them. This man had already conceived the idea of invading Spain, and he wanted to dissuade me from going there, suggesting that I should stay at Turin or Nice. 'Don't you know the news from Spain?' he asked me, alluding to the events of November of which I was at that time in complete ignorance."

The events alluded to by Napoleon are known to all. He had formed the plan of driving the Bourbons out of Spain, and this would-be throne in Portugal was only a pretence to get Tuscany into his hands. On arriving at Aranjuez, February, 1808, Marie Louise found her family in a lamentable state of unrest and discord. The father, Charles IV., was in open strife with his son Ferdinand, Queen Louise was in despair, not knowing which way to turn; and the wretched Manuel Godoy, mad with terror, was insisting that the royal family should embark without a moment's delay for Mexico. A few months later Napoleon summoned them all to Bayonne. When Marie Louise, delayed in Madrid by an attack of measles, at last joined them, her

father came running to meet her, and said in tragic tones: "Learn, my daughter, that our family has ceased to reign for evermore!"

To this, however, the Queen of Etruria, refused to resign herself. She charged one of her faithful confidants, Andrea Nuti, to negotiate with Napoleon the restitution of Tuscany. But as the negotiations were threatening to become eternal, Napoleon ended by simply sending Marie Louise an answer to the effect that "the burden of power was a very heavy one, and that in his opinion the Queen would be much better off with a rich appanage which would allow her to enjoy her life without cares, fatigues, or dangers."

If only he *had* given her this rich appanage! but the only compensation he offered her was a prison. He had her taken first to Fontainebleau, and then with her parents, and the inevitable Godoy, to Compiègne. He kept back from her the first months of the little pension he had promised her; that sum being set aside, he explained, to defray the expenses of her journey from Bayonne! He refused her permission to hunt or to ride on horseback. In September 1808, when her parents were transferred to Marseilles, he ordered her to remain at Compiègne. She remained there alone till April of the following year.

At last, upon the insistence of her Chamberlain, she receives permission to go to Parma, where Napoleon assigns her as a residence the palace of Colorno. The Emperor even writes her a highly gallant letter in which he wishes her a pleasant journey and hopes she may be pleased with Parma. She sets out, somewhat consoled. But at Lyons a police officer informs her that he has received orders

to escort her, not to Parma, but to Nice : and thither he escorts her by forced marches.

Her troubles are far from being at an end. At Nice her pension is withheld and she is treated like a prisoner. An honest tradesman of Leghorn, Gaspard Chifenti, taking pity on her, attempts to carry her off to England. His plans are discovered by an imprudent act of the queen : Chifenti is arrested with his accomplices, convicted, condemned to death and shot. Marie Louise receives the command to shut herself up in a convent for the rest of her life. Her son is carried off, she herself is taken to Rome, escorted by gendarmes, and shut up in the convent of Saint Sixtus with no other company than one lady of her retinue.

“I had been eleven months in this place,” she writes in her Memoirs, “when on the 16th of July 1812, my parents and my son arrived in Rome. I was in hopes that their arrival would be immediately followed by my liberation ; but, so far from that, more rigorous orders were given in regard to me.” Once a month only, General Miollis brought her family to her ; they saw each other for a quarter of an hour, the mother was allowed to embrace her son, and then she was left alone once more. She fell ill : the prioress of the convent, the medical men, the notables of the town, implored for mercy on her behalf. Napoleon persisted in keeping her in prison. Nothing less than Murat’s entry into Rome, on January 14, 1814, procured her restoration to liberty.

But liberty was not enough for her. Just as her first husband had not disgusted her with matrimony, so the memory of her unfortunate reign had not been able to kill her desire to be a queen. She

wanted a throne, she demanded one with indefatigable persistence from Napoleon's conquerors. Already, during her stay at Nice, she had begged the English Government to make her a queen somewhere or other, "either in Europe, or in the Indies, or in America." Failing Etruria, failing Parma, given to Marie Louise of Austria, she at length obtained the Principality of Lucca, which Napoleon had created for his sister Elisa. She was further promised that Parma should be restored to her family, after the death of Marie Louise.

She reigned in Lucca till her death in 1824. The treaties which proclaimed her queen had at the same time imposed on her the obligation of maintaining the constitutional régime at Lucca; and she had to resign herself to this, though it was a régime not at all to her taste. At all events she made it the constant occupation of her reign to efface from Lucca even the slightest trace of Napoleon's institutions. Her misfortunes had, moreover, made her rather capricious and intolerant, so that her death left no regrets behind it. When she died her son forbade the matter to be officially announced, in order that the carnival festivities should not be interrupted. The sculptor Bartolini received an order for her statue, but never succeeded in finishing it. "How can I help it," he would say to those who expressed their surprise, "the lady doesn't inspire me at all!"

GREAT LADIES AND BOURGEOISES



I

A FAMOUS ENGLISH LAW SUIT IN THE
EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

I

“THE DUKE OF DOUGLAS was a person of the meanest intelligence, vain, ignorant, fantastic, passionate, irritable, and unforgiving. With all that he possessed an agreeable face, and had, in his youth, much frequented the Court, where his sister Lady Jane had been a very conspicuous person owing to her extreme beauty and sweetness. This Lady Jane had already been the cause of a duel between her brother and Lord Dalkeith. . . . Some years afterwards, in 1726, she began a flirtation with one of her first-cousins, a certain Captain Ker ; and the Duke, who was as jealous of his sister as if she had been his wife, or who imagined, perhaps, that she was going to bring dishonour on the family, determined to get to the bottom of the matter. He therefore played the spy on the young man the night before his departure from Castle Douglas, and saw him enter Lady Jane’s boudoir to bid her good-bye; whereupon seized by a fit of devilish fury he stabbed him.”

In 1746, twenty years after the adventure related

above by C. K. Sharpe, Lady Jane was nearly fifty years of age, having been born March 17, 1698 ; but by a veritable miracle, the years had passed over her head without in any way depriving her of her beauty or charm. All who knew her at this period are agreed in declaring that she looked at least twenty years less than her age. She had remained the fascinating woman that her portraits represent her : tall, slim, of queenly, yet elegant, proportions, with a fine, open brow, set in silky masses of fair hair, a caressing smile on her pretty mouth, and large brown eyes, deep and luminous.

Virtuous, pious, charitable without ostentation, no one could see her without loving her ; and yet she was still unmarried. Not, assuredly, for lack of opportunities of making a good match, for we learn that she had been asked in marriage by : “ the Dukes of Hamilton, of Buccleuch, and of Athol, by the Earls of Hopetoun, of Aberdeen, and of Panmure and many others.” Sometimes the projected union had been made impossible by her own refusal, sometimes by force of circumstance. At that time Lady Jane was living alone and in humble circumstances, in a little house in the neighbourhood of Edinburgh. She had never had any fortune of her own, and her brother, with whom she soon became reconciled after Captain Ker’s tragic death, had just definitely broken with her.

Her brother, like herself, had never married. Of a temper that grew ever more gloomy and suspicious, shut up in his castle without any other company than that of his servants, he had ended by falling completely under the domination of one of these, a low scoundrel of the name of White of Stockbrigg, who, probably at the instigation of some of his master’s



LADY JEAN DOUGLAS
From an unsigned painting



relations, had brought about the Duke's final alienation from his sister. Moreover the complete contrast between the characters of the brother and sister was intensified by their difference of opinions. The brother was a zealous Presbyterian, and devoted to the House of Hanover, whilst the sister had increasingly displayed her Jacobite sentiments, and her dislike of the chilling stiffness of the Scottish form of worship. The result was that Lord Douglas, while continuing to regard her as the most virtuous woman in the world—as he was to acknowledge in the coming year—had cut off all her supplies, formally disinherited her, and declared his resolution of never hearing her name mentioned again.

But he was compelled to hear it, in spite of himself, during the last months of the year 1746; and we can imagine what his fury must have been when he learnt that Lady Jane, at the age of forty-eight, had just married. On August 4 she had been secretly wedded to an old Jacobite officer, John Stewart of Grantully, who had recently returned to Scotland after twenty years of exile. Colonel Stewart was, it is true, of good family, and it was notorious that he had known Lady Jane from childhood, and had always worshipped her; but he was as poor as she was, and had acquired during his exile such an unfortunate reputation for gambling and borrowing that for a long time after her marriage his wife never dared to confess that he was her husband.

She had hastened to the Continent immediately after her marriage. The couple stayed first at the Hague, where, as usual, many gentlemen, young and old, had fallen passionately in love with the fair Scotch lady. It seems obvious that, without bestowing on them any favours beyond kind words, she did

not scruple to borrow from them, on more than one occasion, the money necessary for her style of life. From the Hague the Stewarts had gone to Utrecht, then to Aix-la-Chapelle, where they prolonged their stay nearly a year. It was at Aix that Lady Jane, who had so far passed off Colonel Stewart as her major-domo, found herself compelled to make public acknowledgment of her marriage. The fact was she was *enceinte*. She had attempted at first to hide her condition by wearing very loose dresses and a large cloak, but all these precautions became useless, her figure having become peculiarly conspicuous.

In the face of the disturbing prospect of fresh expenses which awaited her, she resolved to approach her brother humbly and induce him to come to her assistance. The duke, still dominated by his valet, merely answered that his sister by a marriage such as hers had shown herself no better than the most degraded of her sex, and that her pretended pregnancy could only be a farce. Then the Stewarts being entirely without means, frightfully in debt, and more and more incapable of meeting the expenses of their extravagant life in Aix-la-Chapelle, were obliged to make up their minds to remove to some other less stylish town, where living would be less expensive. A lady of their acquaintance at Aix had spoken to them of Rheims, so thither they went towards the end of May 1748, and lodged very modestly with a Mme. Andrieux, an old lady who had a house in the parish of St. Jacques. They spent a month there in perfect quiet, and would have stayed longer if their hostess had not unfortunately taken it into her head to tell them that "the doctors in Rheims were a brutally ignorant lot, and that she herself had almost lost her health after a confine-

ment, all owing to them." The result of this was that in the early days of July, the period of her confinement being very near at hand, and the patient's health having sensibly improved, Colonel Stewart and his wife, in spite of their extreme poverty, resolved to go to Paris. They left their servants behind them at Rheims, as well as most of their luggage, promising to return as soon as possible.

At Paris they first took up their quarters in an hotel recommended them by a magistrate in Rheims, the Hotel de Châlons, in the Faubourg St. Germain, but only stayed a few days as the room which had been assigned them was uninhabitable. They next went to live with a certain Mme. Lebrun, no doubt a midwife; and it was there that in the night of July 10-11, attended by a doctor named Delamarre, Lady Jane gave birth to twin boys. A few days after, her maid, who alone had accompanied her mistress to Paris, wrote to the other servants who had remained at Rheims that "the two children were perfect dears, but that the younger was so small and weak that the doctor had ordered it to be put out to nurse in the country without a moment's delay."

About a month afterwards Lady Jane returned with her husband and the elder child to Rheims. They had him solemnly baptised by a catholic priest in the church of St. Jacques. He had as god-parents, by proxy, two great Scottish personages, Lord Crawford and Lady Lothian, who had remained sincerely attached to the mother. It was Lord Crawford who undertook to announce to the Duke of Douglas the birth of his two nephews. Whereupon the duke, as might have been expected, replied that

he regarded the entire story of his sister's confinement as a piece of trickery, and that if she ventured to apply to him again he would even withdraw the few hundred pounds which he had hitherto allowed her. The Stewarts were now utterly without bread to eat. They were obliged to cut short their stay in Rheims, fetch back immediately the child they had put out to nurse, and start for England, where some friends had promised to take charge of them.

In August 1750 their friends did in fact manage to obtain, a small royal pension of £300. And we know from numerous sources that everybody in London was touched with pity at the distress of this descendant of kings, and stirred with admiration for her sweetness and courage. The poor woman no longer lived for anything but her husband and her children. She waited on them herself with unbounded tenderness and solitude, teaching her sons, depriving herself of necessaries to provide them with playthings and sweets, and equally untiring in comforting in every way the old colonel, whom she had henceforth to scold or console as if he were a third child. Never a complaint escaped her lips. In the utmost destitution, crushed beneath the blows of tragic misfortune, she always maintained the resignation of a Christian, and the simple dignity of a princess. "When I saw her," relates Lord Mansfield, at a later period, "she was in the most wretched condition, and yet her modesty would not allow her even to appear to be grieved by it. Her innate nobility revealed itself, even under the pressure of poverty and want; so much so that I was afraid to offer my assistance, for fear she might resent it as an affront. Learning my intention to help her, she twice came to the house without finding courage to

explain her situation to me." We have quite a collection of letters written by her to her husband : truly one could not conceive a more natural or touching correspondence. Colonel Stewart's spiritual salvation concerns her as much as his bodily health : she entreats him to be patient, sends him good books which she advises him to read, is frankly delighted at occasional expressions on his part which seem to indicate some trace of hope, some return to his former belief in Providence.

During the three fatal years of her life in London, her only thought was to secure the future of her sons, by persuading her brother to see them and protect them. Alas ! all the letters that she wrote to the Duke of Douglas were intercepted by Stockbrigg, the valet ; and to every step which she induced her friends to make, the duke invariably replied that she must leave him alone.

At last, early in 1753, in the heart of winter, she resolved to go to Scotland, to appear before her brother with her sons. One of the duke's servants, a good old man who had known her in her youth, gives us a pathetic story of her arrival at the castle :

I was just crossing the court-yard when I saw her through the bars of the little door. She called me ; I went to her, and she told me that she had come with her children to wait for the duke. Then I offered to open the door for her and let her in ; but she said she would not come in till his lordship had been informed of her presence. So I went to find the Duke and informed him of my message ; he appeared rather surprised, reflected a minute, and then without making any remark unfavourable to his sister, told me he had no place to lodge them in, and asked me where they could be put. I answered that there was no want of room ; but he told me first to call Stockbrigg, to talk the matter over with him. When Stockbrigg came, the Duke told me to leave

them alone together. A short time afterwards Stockie came and ordered me to tell Lady Jane that she was forbidden to enter the castle. . . . After she was gone the Duke asked me if I had seen the children, and I told him that I had held them both in my arms—that the elder one was brown-haired, and the younger, Sholto, as like Lady Jane as any child ever was like its mother.

Lady Jane wrote from the neighbouring inn, where she had taken refuge, a long letter to her brother, which I wish I could translate in full. "All I ask your Grace," she said, "is to be allowed a few minutes interview; and if I do not succeed in convincing you entirely of my innocence, you may inflict on me any punishment you please. I consent to endure all your asperity if I do not succeed in clearing myself of the base slanders heaped on me. In the hope that your Lordship will deign to grant my petition and that you will be kind enough to summon me to your presence, I shall remain till to-morrow night at the inn from which I am writing. The children, poor little things, have certainly not done any harm. Allow them to see you and to kiss your hands!"

The Duke, who was certainly a stranger to clemency, left this letter unanswered. Lady Jane in despair retired to Edinburgh, where, some weeks later, a fresh disaster fell upon her—her second son Sholto, who had always been extremely frail, died suddenly.

Her grief was so keen, and so manifestly genuine, that her most implacable enemies were bound to admit her passionate affection for this child. In fact this grief killed her. She died on November 22, 1753, at Edinburgh, "very emaciated and weak," writes her doctor, "but after bearing her illness

with marvellous resignation and patience, and also with the admirable sweetness and affability which were natural to her character." Again, all testimony agrees on this point. Up to the end, when knowing her state to be hopeless, Jane's sole thought was for the child she had lost and for the one that was to survive her. "Before the Almighty, before whom I shall soon have to answer for my life," said she, "I swear that these two children were born of me! And what stronger proof can my brother require to convince him that they are my children than the fact that I am dying for them?" Far from fearing death she yearned for it with all her soul; but the future of her Archibald made her so painfully anxious that her trouble on this score seems to have hastened her end.

Now comes a comic interlude which deserves to be related in greater detail. There was at that time in Scotland an old spinster Douglas, a cousin of Lady Jane, and certainly one of the most eccentric of that family of eccentrics. Having conceived a deep hatred for her relative, Lady Hamilton, who reckoned on inheriting the title and fortune of the Duke of Douglas, about 1756, the old maid, in order to mortify her enemy, resolved to win the duke's recognition of Lady Jane's son. With a view to this end she first determined to marry him. She also in her turn put up at an inn near the castle under the pretext of consulting the duke about a law-suit in which she was engaged. The relations thus commenced went on regularly, till, one day, the duke sent the old lady one of the finest pieces of his plate as a love-pledge. From that moment the marriage was settled, to the great astonishment of all Scotland; and the new duchess immediately set to work

to convert her husband to the cause of the late Lady Jane.

The old man's obstinacy proved more difficult to conquer than she had anticipated. Being unable by other means to rid himself of his wife's urgent entreaties, reproaches, and allusions, Douglas ended by separating from her, in spite of the very great respect with which she inspired him; and when a reconciliation took place, it was on the express condition, drawn up by a lawyer, that the duchess should never again mention Lady Jane's pretended son before her husband. We do not know how the duchess managed to comply with this condition; but we do know that the old duke, who stuck with unshaken tenacity to his whim, refused to the end to see his nephew, though he showed an ever-increasing remorse for his harsh treatment of his sister. When, however, he felt himself at the point of death, in 1761, he annulled all his earlier wills, and named as the sole heir of his title and his property—Archibald Douglas, *alias* Stewart, younger son of the late Lady Jane Douglas." Thus, nine years after the unfortunate woman's death, her sole desire was realised.

II

We might suppose that the story ends there. It is only beginning. In bequeathing his fortune and his title to Lady Jane's son, the old Duke, by a last scruple, declared that he bequeathed them as "to the heir of the blood of his father, the Marquis of Douglas." Scarcely had Lady Hamilton become aware of the will which disinherited her, than she brought an action against young Archibald, being

confident of her ability to prove that he was not the "heir to the blood of the Douglasses." Thus began a law-suit which to this day Englishmen call the Great Suit, a case which for ten years was destined to stir England and Scotland, or rather all Europe, to split the most united families, to break up for ever the most solid friendships, and to make the defenders and accusers of the late Lady Jane almost come to blows in the streets.

The latter, as I have said, had never ceased to declare, with the most solemn oaths, that she really was the mother of the two children; but when she had been asked to furnish proofs, she invariably refused to give them declaring that it was for her adversaries to prove the imposition of which they accused her. As for her husband, Colonel Stewart, and the faithful maid who had accompanied them to Paris in July 1749, all their accounts of the confinement were, without any possible doubt, nothing but a tissue of lies and contradictions. The colonel especially, not only admitted being unable to give the exact address of the mid-wife, but even gave different versions of her name. He was equally unable to recall the name and address of the nurse to whom little Sholto had been entrusted. The most that could be got out of him was the name of the doctor, Pierre Delamarre, who had attended the confinement; and then he maintained that he had met him at the Tuileries and had never ascertained where he lived. All this was, to be sure, very suspicious, and well calculated to encourage Lady Hamilton's hopes; but this lady had besides the good luck to discover among the familiars of her house, a young Scotch advocate, Andrew Stewart, who combined precious gifts of activity with a genius

for police investigations—something like the prototype of those amateur detectives which the fancy of English romance-writers delights in creating in inexhaustible abundance. It was this Andrew Stewart whom the Duchess of Hamilton sent to France with the mission of finding out the exact truth about the confinement of Lord Douglas' sister.

I cannot, unfortunately, sum up in this place all the different phases of the enquiry set on foot in Paris and at Rheims by this precursor of the famous Sherlock Holmes—an enquiry in which the ingenious Andrew Stewart managed to interest persons of every class, from the Archbishop of Paris down to Diderot. Naturally he did not succeed in finding out the mid-wife, or the nurse, or Dr. Delamarre—though he was obliged to admit that a doctor of that name had lived in Paris in 1748. But, on the other hand, he found out a number of people who had met the Stewarts in their travels, or during their stay in Paris, and who were prepared to state that Lady Jane's pregnancy had been nothing but a fraud. He even discovered persons who had ridden in the same "diligences" as Lady Jane in her two journeys, from Aix-la-Chapelle to Rheims and from Rheims to Paris, and who remembered having seen her in excellent health some days before the date of the pretended confinement. He even improved on this: he hit upon two working-men's families in Paris, who told him with the most circumstantial details how each had sold one of their children to a foreigner very much like Colonel Stewart. One of these families had sold its child in July, the other in November—from which resulted the conclusion that Lady Jane had not even taken the trouble to supply herself with "twins" simultaneously.

One can imagine the effect produced in Scotland and in England by these revelations, which were, moreover, dished up with extraordinary skill. Yet they did not prevent Lady Hamilton from losing her case on a last appeal. On March 1, 1769, the House of Lords, after long debates, finally confirmed the legitimacy of the young Archibald. The enormous array of proofs, laboriously built up by Andrew Stewart, broke down before the passionate eloquence of certain lords friendly to Lady Jane, who, hardly deigning to discuss her adversaries' arguments, confined themselves to recalling what a perfect and admirable woman she had been. But when once their eloquence and the recollection of the poor lady's virtues were forgotten, the enquiry of the Scotch detective alone remained to enlighten and guide public opinion; and the result was that, in spite of the verdict of the House of Lords, the public came more and more to believe that Lady Jane, in order to lay hands on her brother's fortune, had passed off as her own sons a couple of children bought by her on the streets of Paris. That, too, is the admission of most English historians when they have had occasion to mention "the Douglas cause"; and it is now admitted with absolute assurance by Mr. Percy Fitzgerald, after having gone through all the documents, published or unpublished, which relate to this memorable affair. His book, full of facts and very pleasant to read, is from beginning to end nothing but a brief for the prosecution against Lady Jane Douglas.

Now if the conclusions of this brief should happen to be true, if Lady Jane's two pretended children were really the sons—one of a conjuror's assistant in the Foire St. Laurent, the other of a

workman in the Faubourg St. Antoine—would it not lead to a very disquieting psychological mystery? For Mr. Fitzgerald himself is forced to admit that not only did Lady Jane succeed in appearing to love these alien children, but that she really did love them with all her heart, to the point of depriving herself of everything in order to bring them up, and of being unable to survive the death of one of them. On her death bed, in the presence of that God before whose justice she knew she had soon to appear—and the sincerity of her faith cannot be doubted—she swore once more that the two children really were her sons. How is all that to be explained? And how are we to explain a woman of that kind, who had refused twenty times the best matches, stooping to plan and carry out such a miserable fraud?

But I am bound to add that, for my own part, after having read with the greatest care all the documents quoted by Mr. Fitzgerald, I have not discovered a single one which really could be held as a decisive proof of fraud. In reality the whole business is resumed for us, to-day, into the alternative of choosing between two testimonies—that of Lady Jane and that of the advocate Andrew Stewart. If the latter speaks the truth, Lady Jane's guilt is incontestable. But we are by no means sure that he speaks the truth, or rather we have an irresistible impression that he is too smart, too clever, and that the scaffolding of his enquiry is too ingenious. With the marvellous resources of his wit, and the great sum of money at his disposal, we imagine that this friend of Grimm and Diderot would have been perfectly able, in case of need, to discover witnesses to assert that they had seen the Stewarts carry home

the towers of Notre Dame. And so, remembering the unanimous respect paid to Lady Jane by all who knew her, we end by asking ourselves whether at the bottom of this mystery, as of so many others, there may not simply be a mystification.

II

AN EPISODE IN THE LIFE OF KANT

“FAR away, on the coast of the Baltic Sea, there lived at that time (in 1789) a strange and mighty being, not a man but a system, a living scholasticism, bristling, hard, a rock, a reef sharpened to a point of adamant in the granite of the Baltic. Every philosophy had grounded there and been shattered. He remained immovable—offering no hold to the outside world. Others called him Immanuel Kant ; *he* called himself Criticism. For sixty years, that wholly abstract being, void of all relations with humanity, went out exactly at the same hour, and without speaking to any one, used to make the same round in a given number of minutes, just as one sees in the old town-clocks an iron man come out, strike the hour, and then go in again. But one day, strange sight, the inhabitants of Königsberg (it was to them a sign of mighty events) saw this planet deviate from its secular path, and move towards the west, towards the gate through which the French mail came in.” Who does not know these splendid lines of Michelet? Who has not derived from them more than from all philosophical works, the picture of that living “sys-

tem" which was in truth the author of the 'Critique of pure reason' and 'The Metaphysic of Ethics'? Now, sometime after the memorable occurrence related by Michelet, the Western post brought "this man of iron" a letter which probably disturbed him no less than the news of the French Revolution had recently done. The letter came from a young, unknown girl, Maria von Herbert, and in the most extravagant style and spelling addressed the old philosopher somewhat in this fashion :

GREAT KANT,

I invoke thee as a believer invokes his God, that thou mayst succour and console me, or condemn me to death. Thy arguments in thy books suffice to inform me as to the future life, and that is why I have recourse to thee ; but I find nothing in them relating to this life, absolutely nothing which might compensate me for the blessing which I have lost. For I loved one who, in my eyes, contained everything in himself ; I only drew my life from him, all other things were to me as empty rags. Now, I have offended this being by a protracted lie, which I have just made known to him. But there was nothing in it that stained my character, for I never had any vice in my life to conceal. No, but the lie of itself was enough to extinguish the love of my friend. Being a man of honour, he does not refuse me his faithful friendship ; but the deeper feeling, which, without our having evoked it, led us towards each other—that feeling is no more ! Oh ! my heart is breaking into a thousand pieces ! If I had not read so many of thy writings, I should assuredly have put an end to my life. And now put thyself in my place and give a consolation or a condemnation ! I have read the "Metaphysic of Ethic" ; but neither that, nor the "Categorical imperative" are of any use to me. My reason abandons me at the very moment when I need it most. An answer, I beg thee, or else it must

be that thou canst not guide thyself by the imperative thou hast imposed on us !

My address is—

MARIA VON HERBERT,
Klagenfurth,
Carinthia,

but you can also write to me through Reinhold ; I think the post is safer that way.

This letter reached Kant in the first days of August 1791. Two or three days later, the philosopher received from his colleague, Borowski, the following note :

Enclosed I am sending you back Maria Herbert's extraordinary letter, which I inadvertently carried off in my pocket last night, so deeply moved was I by our conversation on the subject ! Even if your answer only served to console for a moment the agonised heart of your correspondent, and divert her thoughts for a few days from the object to which she is chained, you would be doing a good action ! A person who takes pleasure in reading your works, who has such a strong confidence and faith in you, deserves your consideration, and that you should attempt to tranquillise her.

That was also Kant's opinion, and he at once began to meditate upon the answer which he should send his correspondent. But he was slow in his meditations, and his letters, in particular, cost him great efforts to compose. It was only six months later, in February 1792 that he answered Marie von Herbert. His answer has not come down to us, but a rough draft, or plan of it is extant, he himself having carefully preserved it among his papers. It begins thus :

Your touching letter must have sprung from a heart created for uprightness and virtue, since it is sensible to a moral doctrine which is deficient in everything that can flatter and caress a woman's fancy. And so I have not failed to do what you asked me, that is, to put myself in your place and to reflect for you on the means of a purely moral satisfaction. It is true I am ignorant of the nature of the relation between you and that dear object whose character appears so noble, seeing that he is so attached to the essence of virtue—I mean sincerity. I do not know whether you are bound by the ties of marriage, or simply by those of friendship. I suppose, however, from your letter, that it is this second hypothesis that is the true one. Besides, that has no important bearing upon that which troubles you; for love, whether for a husband or a friend, exacts an equal and mutual respect, without which it is only a sensual illusion, and one of the most fleeting.

Then followed long pages meant for the "moral appeasement" of the young woman. But Kant, according to Michelet's admirable expression, was a "system," a "perfectly abstract being." By the time he was fifty he had framed for himself a body of ideas on all subjects; and from that time it was as if his brain and his heart had transformed themselves into a collection of big folios, from which he drew on every occasion, the page appropriate to the particular circumstance. And his letter to Maria von Herbert, in spite of his excellent intentions, was only a kind of corollary of his Critique of the Practical Reason. He demonstrated to her that repentance is more or less meritorious, according as it comes from regret for the fault itself, or only from regret for its consequences; he told her that either her friend must pardon her some day and love her again, or else, if he did not, the love he had for her must be "more physical than moral,"

repeating his opinion that love of that kind was only a passing illusion. He wound up by saying that he had insisted "more on the condemnation than the consolation, because, when the condemnation should have produced its effect, the consolation would not fail to come into the bargain."

When he had written the letter, did he delay to send it? It appears that in December 1792, in the postscript of a letter to one of his young disciples—a letter which seems to have been written for no other purpose than this postscript—he asked to know the "impression which his letter had made on Fräulain von Herbert," and the very next month, he received from the young lady herself a long letter, which must have astonished him still more than the first one.

The young girl began by thanking him for his kind advice, which, however, had been of no use to her, for her friend "had persisted in his coldness." She added that at that moment she was more tormented with *ennui* than love. "Nothing has any charm for me now, the realisation of any of my wishes gives me no pleasure, and there is not a single action in the world that seems worth the trouble of doing." At all events she had the hope that in a future life that condition of "vegetative void" would cease for her; she felt convinced that in this life all remedies would be powerless to bring her relief. "I have no desire to study natural sciences nor the knowledge of man, for, having no genius, I feel only too well that I should never succeed in making discoveries valuable for others. As for myself, everything is a matter of indifference that does not belong to the Categorical imperative, and

my transcendental conscience." Then breaking off suddenly from this difficult jargon, she went on to tell Kant: "By and by, if my health allows me, I shall go to Königsberg, for which I ask your permission beforehand. I shall then beg you to tell me your story, for I am curious to know what mode of life your philosophy has led you to, and if it would not be a good thing for you, too, to choose a wife, or to give yourself up heart and soul to somebody and to prolong your species by having children. I have had your portrait sent from Bause's in Leipzig: I certainly found in it moral tranquillity, but not a trace of the subtlety of mind which struck me above all in your *Critique of Pure Reason*. For the rest, I shall never be satisfied till I have seen you personally." The letter concluded with this request, startling in its artless candour: "If you consent to give me the extreme pleasure of honouring me by a reply, I entreat you to compose it in such a way as to touch merely upon particulars and not on generalities, upon which I have in your books all the information I require!"

Kant, once more moved and stirred, meditates a reply. But this goodly flame dies out at once, when the disciple, Benjamin Erhard, whom he has questioned about Maria von Herbert tells him that the young girl is, in his opinion, an unbalanced creature, who, to crown all horrors, "belongs to the coterie of romantic love." "She is more to be pitied than a mad woman," adds Erhard, "since she has got into her head the unfortunate chimera of an ideal love. Perhaps, however, if my friend Herbert had more *delicacy of feeling*, one might yet manage to save her." But Kant, who had turned seventy, was not the man to undertake the salvation of a young

girl "affiliated to the coterie of romantic love." In vain a year later, she wrote to him again. In vain—a pathetic detail—she had revised and corrected her letter, which has nothing in common with the shocking scrawl of the two former letters. She thanked him for the pleasure she had derived from his last book, "Religion within the Limits of Reason"; she declared that all her moral sufferings had been completely cured by studying and meditating "the antinomies"; and she expressed her desire to go and see him at Königsberg, adding this time that she would go with her "friend," which leads us to surmise that the "antinomies" had not been the only instrument of her cure. A younger and more "particular" friendship had doubtless already consoled her to some extent for the silence of the old philosopher—very fortunately for her, since the latter immediately after Erhard's communication had sent both her letters to the daughter of one of his friends, with the following note:

It is I myself, honoured lady, who dated the enclosed documents, for the little enthusiast never even thought of writing the date at the bottom of her letters! The third letter that you are going to read is not hers, but from one of my friends, and I only send it you because my friend gives in it some information as to this person's singular state of mind. Several of her expressions, especially in her first letter, refer to my writings which she had just read, and which could hardly be thoroughly understood without a commentary.

The education with which you have been blessed forbids me to dream of suggesting that you should read these letters as a warning and example, to keep you from such aberrations of a sublimated fancy. But I hope the reading of them will

at least serve to make you appreciate still more your valuable good fortune.—Yours, &c.,

I. KANT.

This 11th Febr., 1793.

I should add that these letters of “the little enthusiast” are in truth the only ray of sunshine that sometimes warms and enlivens the first two volumes of “Kant’s Correspondence,” recently published by M. Rodolphe Reicke.* Of the philosopher’s own letters the greater part have scarcely any interest except for philosophers. And here again we find the same ideas as in Kant’s speculative writings, expressed in the same language, “the hardest and most bristly that exists,” to repeat Michelet’s words once more. The most that can be claimed for these letters is that they effectually demonstrate the utter nonsense of Heine’s celebrated fanciful notion that Kant after having at first suppressed God and duty to satisfy the exigencies of his own reason, afterwards resigned himself to restore them to satisfy the prejudices of his footman. The truth is that, from the very first, the postulates of the practical reason were the centre and the essential *raison d’être* of Kant’s system. This pretended atheist remained all the rest of his life, in his Protestant, philosophical and professorial fashion, a Christian, whose great concern was to secure for the doctrines of the Gospel the rational basis with which he could not conceive of their dispensing.

On April 28, writing to Lavater, who had con-

* Kant’s “Gesammelte Schriften.” New Edition, published by the Academy of Sciences of Berlin. Vols. X. and XI. Briefwechsel. 2 vols., 8vo. Berlin, 1901.

sulted him on religious questions, he says that for his part the morality of the Gospels was the foundation of religion. "I admit," he writes, "that in the time of Christ miracles and revelation may have been necessary to establish and spread this pure religion. Christianity at that time needed *argumenta ad hominem*, which the men of those days valued more than we do. But as soon as this religion—the only one in which the true salvation of man is to be found—became sufficiently wide-spread and solidly established to stand by its own strength, the scaffolding formerly used to support it became unnecessary. I have a great respect for the narratives of the apostles and evangelists, and I have full confidence in the means of salvation of which they furnish me the historical tidings. . . . But I place above them what I call the moral faith, *i.e.* the confidence of the soul in God's help. Now I think that every one can assure himself of the justness and of the necessity of this moral faith, without needing any historical proofs to convince himself fully." And twenty years later, when the Prussian government reproached him with having "depreciated and lowered" in his writings "several dogmas of the sacred books and of Christianity," the old man affirmed, with an indignation that is almost eloquent from its sheer sincerity, that, on the contrary, he has always laboured for the good of Christian dogma. "I have sufficiently proved my attachment and respect for Christianity," says he, "by proclaiming the Bible as the best law of a truly moral religion; and without ever allowing myself to attach the least blame to purely theoretical dogmas, I have always demonstrated the holiness of its practical contents, which must to the end of time, and beneath the fluctuation of dogmas, constitute the

essence and the basis of religion, and which alone will always be able to restore its primitive purity to Christianity when it degenerates." Like Descartes, Malebranche and Leibnitz, but perhaps more seriously than any of them, Kant wished to lend the support of philosophy to God; and the principal philosophical interest of his letters is to be found, in my opinion, in the abundance of proof which they furnish of that aim.

As to the picture which they present of his person and character, it remains pretty much the same as Michelet had already conjectured. He is indeed, taking him all in all, "a living scholasticism," "a perfectly abstract man," one of those "iron men" who strike the hour "on the old town-clocks." Nothing interests this man but his ideas; and I have ransacked—in vain—these two thick volumes of letters, to find the smallest trace of that curiosity which he has been said to have felt about the beginning and progress of the French Revolution. In 1789 as in 1793, as, indeed, in all the years of his long life, his only occupation is to write his books or publish them, to explain them as a whole or in detail, to rectify the analyses that have been made of them, or the verdicts that have been given upon them. The rest of the world, men or things, have no existence for him. Whether one correspondent complains of the state of his own affairs, or another expounds to him Berkeley's theories, or submits to him some new theory—Kant sees nothing in their letters but what relates to his own system. Not that he is not an excellent man, in his way, and ready to oblige those who take him as their master; but the moment they allow themselves to have a different opinion to his, on any particular point, he withdraws his favour, and

literally knows them no more. Thus in these two volumes of his "Correspondence," twenty young philosophers march past him, one after another, each of whom in turn is his friend and confidant, and then they suddenly disappear—we see them no more! The fact is that this one has mingled a few reservations with his compliments in some review; another has had the daring to "complete" such and such a chapter of the "Critique of Pure Reason." Take the case of J. G. Kiesewetter, his favourite pupil. This man does not confine himself to preaching Kant's favourite doctrine indefatigably; he even constitutes himself his errand-boy, his proof-corrector, and not a month passes without him sending his master a bag of radishes or some other vegetable of which he knows him to be fond. But he takes the liberty of having a "Logic" of his own composition published by the same firm that has just published the "Critique of Judgment, and of prefixing to it a splendid dedication, in which he calls Kant his "father," and lavishes on him the tokens of his respectful affection—and Kant, without even glancing at this unfortunate "Logic," immediately expunges Kiesewetter from the number of the living. He cannot admit the possibility of a philosopher being his friend who publishes, at his own publisher's, works that may compete with his own. So there is silence for two years between Kiesewetter and Kant; and when, towards the end of 1793, the disciple humbly reminds his master of his existence, offering his services again, and again announcing the despatch of a bag of radishes, it is with the utmost coldness that the master answers with an "Honoured Sir" very widely different from the "My very dear friend" or "My dear boy" of earlier days.

He had the legitimate pride of great discoverers. Was he not a second Copernicus? And, by placing the mind of man at the centre of things, had he not made a still more important revolution than the man who three centuries before had reversed the course of the planets? At all events, *he* was deeply convinced that he had; but joined to his legitimate pride there was, one must admit, some of the egotism of the old bachelor. His person was as dear to him as his system. Few philosophers have ever pushed so far extreme prudence, the fear of compromising themselves and the desire of living in peace with the powers that be. "When the destiny of the great men of this world is at the mercy of one evil chance," he wrote to his publisher Spener, "a pygmy who cares for his skin cannot take too much care not to mix himself up in their disputes, even in the most respectful and inoffensive manner." When in 1794, King Frederick William II. accused him of "depreciating and lowering" the Christian religion by his books, he defended himself, as we have seen, with sincere eloquence, but he proceeded to add that "as a faithful subject of his Majesty and to avoid in future even the possibility of a suspicion," he undertook "never to treat in public, whether in his lectures or his writings, subjects relating to religion, whether natural or revealed." This brought upon him some days afterwards, the only reproach which was ever made to him by his oldest friend, J. E. Biester, the celebrated editor of "The Berlin Philosophical Review."

"You have prepared a great triumph for the enemies of the light," wrote Biester, "and a perceptible injury to the good cause; and he ended his letter with this compliment in which his

deference and affection are tempered with gentle irony: "Farewell, excellent friend, may you remain a long time for us, as an example of the way in which a wise and noble man can keep his equanimity and his inward peace even in the midst of the storms which threaten reason!"

III

THE MARQUIS DE CASTELLANE'S PRISONS

I

I THE undersigned, appointed by the police authorities to manage the lock-up of this commune, hereby acknowledge having received from Citizen Castellane, detained here, the sum of 250 livres, 3 sous, his share of the expenses for food and other things in the said house, during the month of Germinal being at the rate of 83 livres, 7 sous, 8 deniers per décade.

At Montagne-Bon-Air, 1st Floréal, year II of the Republic one and indivisible.

BRETON.

At that time, Montagne-Bon-Air, was, as is well known, the republican name for Saint-Germain-en-Laye. As for citizen Castellane he was the father of that Boniface de Castellane who later on was to become a Marshal of France, and whose curious Journal, recently published, presents us with a highly amusing and picturesque view of the old French military spirit.

The real name of the prisoner of Montagne-Bon-Air was the Marquis Boniface-Louis-André de Castellane. Born in Paris in 1758, he had at first

followed the military profession, and was a colonel in the 16th cavalry regt. when, on the 12th March 1789, the *bailliage* of Châteauneuf-en-Thimerais had elected him as deputy of the Nobles at the States General. At Versailles and then in Paris, during the whole time that the Constituent Assembly lasted he had made his mark as one of the most ardent friends of liberty. Especially had he been one of the first to demand the fusion of the three orders, and had proposed amongst other reforms the suppression of arbitrary arrests. After the dissolution of the Assembly he had rejoined the army; but immediately after August 10 he sent in his resignation and retired with his wife and son, the future marshal, to a little village in the neighbourhood of Meulan, Aubergenville, where he had been appointed a municipal officer. It was here that, on March 21, 1793—while fishing with a rod and line in a little lake, as his son tells us—he was arrested “as a former general” * and taken off to the prison of Montagne-Bon-Air.

Here, he was kept in detention over two months, till May 30. At that date citizen Crassous, deputy of Martinique representative of the Convention for the Department of Seine-et-Oise, brought about his provisional liberation, as is witnessed by the following document, dated the “tenth of Prairial, Year II. of the Republic, one, indivisible, and imperishable”:

* The truth is that he was confounded with his brother the Vicomte, who, being concerned in a pretended conspiracy, had been incarcerated first at Ste. Pélagie, then at the Conciergerie, and lastly at the Luxembourg, whence he had escaped on October 25, 1793, under highly romantic circumstances.

Considering the position of citizen Castellane, of the commune of Aubergenville, arrested as a former general, by order of the Committee of Public Welfare, after having made the most accurate enquiries about this citizen and seen the reasons given in the order for his arrest, I have decided that this citizen be kept under arrest in his own commune, in the keeping of a *sans culotte* who shall be appointed by the watch committee of Montagne-Bon-Air.

A. CRASSOUS.

But whether the *sans-culotte* appointed to watch over de Castellane had doubts as to his civic qualities, or the Committee of Public Welfare considered the measure adopted on his behalf by citizen Crassous as a dangerous one (they could hardly suspect Crassous of paltering with the reaction,) scarcely had the unfortunate official of Aubergenville got back to his commune when he was sent for once again, this time to be taken to Paris and no longer as a former general but as "charged with having conspired against the Republic."

After being locked up in the Conciergerie on the 4th Messidor, he passed seven weeks there, the first five of which—till after the 9th Thermidor—must have been full of excitement for him. On the 27th Thermidor he was removed to the Collège du Plessis, where he remained a prisoner for another two months, to the great grief of his colleagues in the municipal council of Aubergenville, who from week to week sent attestations of this sort to the Committee of Public Safety :

LIBERTY, EQUALITY, FRATERNITY.

DEPARTMENT OF SEINE-ET-OISE,
DISTRICT OF MONTAGNE-DU-BON-AIR.

MUNICIPALITY OF AUBERGENVILLE.

WE, the undersigned, being the Mayor and National Agent of the Commune of Aubergenville, hereby certify that citizen Boucher, bailiff to the Revolutionary Tribunal, arrived in our commune on the 3rd Messidor, accompanied by a guard; that he communicated to us an order signed Fouquier-Tinville, ordering the arrest of the ex-vicomte de Castellane, conspirator; that we notified to him that citizen Boniface-Louis-André Castellane, who had been domiciled in our commune for the last four years, was a patriot, that he had never styled himself vicomte and that this warrant could not refer to him. He continued to persist and showed us another order, signed Fouquier-Tinville, by which he could arrest (so he told us) everybody whom his zeal and patriotism might dictate to him; consequently in spite of our observations he carried off our fellow-citizen, who from that day has been in moaning in the prisons of the tribunal, in spite of the demand made by the whole of the Commune, which would be renewed, were it not that it awaits prompt justice from the Committee of Public Safety.

AUBERGENVILLE, the 16th Fructidor, Year II.
of the Republic one and indivisible.

BERTRAND, *Mayor*.
GOJARD, *National Agent*.

WE, the undersigned, members of the commune of Aubergenville, certify that citizen Castellane, living at Aubergenville, is an excellent patriot, whom the whole of his commune

would unanimously reclaim, if they did not expect the prompt liberation of this good citizen by the Committee of Public Safety.

Signed : AUCHANT, notable ; F. BOULLAND, notable ; J. B. RAQUILLET, notable ; LORREZ, municipal official ; DENIS CABIT, municipal official ; F. DEBAIZE, notable ; BLIN, registrar.

Unfortunately the justice of the Committee of Public Safety had grown very tardy since the 9th Thermidor. Weeks passed and the excellent patriot Castellane was still in prison ; so that on the 10th Vendémiaire, the communal council of Aubergenville, the citizens whose names we have just given, and some other notables, among whom a citizen Gravelle styled Grattarola, having assembled in solemn deliberation, "at the Temple of the Supreme Being," decreed that two commissaries, the Mayor Bertrand and the National agent Gojard, should be authorised to sojourn in Paris, at the expense of the commune, "to solicit the Committee of Public Safety to do justice to their demand touching the liberation of citizen Castellane." The two commissaries actually went to Paris. They were received by a member of the Committee, who informed Castellane the same evening that he "was delighted with them." But their proceedings do not seem to have had any other result.

With no less zeal and with just as little success Castellane on his side made repeated attempts to obtain his liberation. Here, for instance, is a note written by him on the 27th Fructidor, "to be handed to citizen Goupilleau, a member of the Committee of Public Safety."

Citizen Boniface-Louis-André Castellane was committed to the prison of the Conciergerie in virtue of a warrant of the public prosecutor of the Revolutionary Tribunal, bearing the date of the 3rd Messidor, which warrant *gave the name of another person*; this fact was admitted by the usher of the court who conveyed the warrant, in the presence of the Mayor and procurator of the commune of Aubergenville.

He has always been staunch to the Revolution, having been a brigadier-general by seniority March 20, 1792. He was neither discharged, nor suspended, nor did he voluntarily resign, but he holds from the executive council an honourable permission to retire, on grounds of certified ill-health.

He has not left France for more than ten years; nor have his father and mother left the territory of the Republic. From the 26th May, old style, he has never stirred from Aubergenville, district of Montagne-Bon-Air, department of Seine-et-Oise: he has been major of the National Guard there, and since then municipal officer. The inhabitants of this commune, all avowed Republicans, whose civic principles have never been questioned, unanimously demand his liberty.

Having been previously arrested on the 2nd Germinal, as an ex-general (although he never discharged the functions of that post) he had been sent back to his commune, in Prairial, by Crassous the representative of the people, whose order contained these words: "After having made the most minute enquiries about this citizen."

He is provided with certificates of residence, of non-emigration, of good citizenship: and all the authorities of the Montagne-Bon-Air district will testify to his patriotism.

He cultivates a modest farm at Aubergenville. His son is six years old; his wife, who had been severely ill for twenty-seven months in consequence of a lacteal deposit, has been at death's door since his imprisonment.

If any calumny can have blackened his name he demands to hear it and to be questioned by the Committee, to put an end to the torture he is suffering, separated from a beloved wife who needs his care.

He presented a petition to the Committee of Public Safety on the 22nd Thermidor.

B. L. CASTELLANE.

As a matter of fact no fresh calumny had come to blacken Castellane's name since his arrest, and it was not from any ill-feeling that the Committee of Public Safety thus delayed attending to his case. It had even been decided that, on the 4th Fructidor, that he should not come up for trial, but that his liberation should be signed on the mere inspection of his warrant of arrest. But with the best intentions in the world, the Committee had not time to attend to him; and it was not till the 22nd Vendémiaire that the prisoner, on Legendre's report, obtained his discharge. He left the Maison Égalité on the following day after the concierge, the famous Haly, had handed him the following certificate :

MAISON D'ARRET ÉGALITÉ.

Extract from the gaol-book delivered in accordance with the law of the 8th of Messidor last on life annuities.

The person named Boniface-Louis-André Castellane has been detained in this house by order of the constituted authorities, since the 27th of Floreal last, and left it to-day, the 23rd Vendémiaire, year III. of the French Republic, one and indivisible.

HALY, *concierge*.

Three days later, the 26th Vendémiaire, the liberated prisoner appeared solemnly before the mayor, the municipal officers, and the national agent

of the Commune of Aubergenville, to whom he presented his certificate of release, signed by six members of the Committee of Public Safety, Legendre, Goupilleau de Fontenay, Lesage, Bentabole, Reverchon, and Clauzel. A certificate acknowledging his appearance was given him, "for his future uses and purposes as the law directs."

II

Such is a succinct account of "the prisons" of the Marquis de Castellane. No doubt it could have furnished the materials for a very curious narrative if the marshal's father had had the habit, which his son afterwards adopted, of noting the events of his life day by day. How much, for instance, we should liked to have had some information from him as to his stay in the Conciergerie during the most tragic days of the Terror! But he has left neither diary nor letters; and of his stay in the Conciergerie, especially, we know nothing more than the date of his entry and that of his departure. Indeed I should never have taken the trouble to drag this little episode of revolutionary history from oblivion if, to make up for this want of personal testimony, the Marquis of Castellane had not brought back from his prisons a rather curious kind of record—viz., a series of eighty-seven letters written to the prisoner of Le Plessis from the end of Thermidor to the 21st of Vendémiaire, by those persons of the same family, a brother and his two sisters, who during the whole of this time appear to have

had no other thought than to solicit and obtain his release.*

The brother's letters are signed Courcelles. One of his sisters signs Clémentine Courcelles, the other one signs sometimes Julie Courcelles, at other times Widow Raby. At the bottom of one of her letters Clémentine adds to her name the word "artist." And twice we find written before the name Courcelles, and then scratched out, the syllable Var . . . which would lead one to suppose that Courcelles was only an assumed name adopted by the correspondents of Castellane to throw indiscreet persons off the scent. This hypothesis is all the more probable because the Courcelles in their letters show a tendency to employ precautions of the same kind, writing for instance Lienta for Tallien, and Narbo for Bonnard. The letters also inform us that the Courcelles have an uncle who is a deputy to the Convention; that they are on intimate terms with some of the biggest people of the day. Tallien, Louis David, Rouget de l'Isle, Legendre; that they have been living since Vendémiaire at 41, Rue du Faubourg Honoré, "the new house on the right after you pass the Rue de la République"; and that they have only known Castellane a very short time. We may add that all three are young, in spite of the widowhood of Mme. Raby, whose husband chanced to die during Castellane's detention in the prison of Le Plessis.

This is almost all the information to be gathered from these letters as to the three persons who

* I am indebted for the communication of these letters, and most of the documents of which I have made use in this essay, to the kindness of Mme. de Boulaincourt, grand-daughter of the prisoner of Le Plessis.

wrote them. And who, after all, were these three persons? What tie connected them with the Marquis de Castellane, whom the young women freely called "little brother", and whom they "kissed" at the end of their letters? What motive had they for taking such a passionate interest in the release of a "ci-devant", literally spending their days and their nights in making effort after effort on his behalf, attending every sitting of the Committee to watch for a chance of hurrying their decision, to stimulate, nay even to corrupt, the members of that Committee? All these are questions to which the letters give no answers, and on which, unfortunately, nobody is any longer in a position to give us the smallest information. At the most I might venture upon some hypothetical answers to these questions, and particularly as to the last of them. I think, as a matter of fact, that it was in the most disinterested way, out of pure kindness of heart, from a sort of praiseworthy and touching madness of devotion that the Courcelles gave themselves up heart and soul to the release of the prisoner in Le Plessis.

It is well-known that, after the 9th Thermidor, the prisons were invaded by a crowd of improvised lawyers, men and women, who offered their services—for a consideration—on behalf of the prisoners. The Countess of Bohm, in her interesting recollections of "The Prisons in 1793,"* tells us that on the very evening of the 10th Thermidor a gaoler at the Plessis said to her: "Employ me in order to get out of here quickly. I am the intimate friend of a

* These recollections have been collected by M. de Leseure in the "Bibliothèque des Mémoires relatifs à l'Histoire de France." Vol. xxxiv. Firmin-Didot.

member of the Committee of Public Safety." She adds that on the following days "the brood of creatures which in Paris lives only by intrigues swarmed to Le Plessis. "Services were offered, bargains struck, clients were touted for, a traffic went on, either directly or by means of go-betweens, the gaolers preferred to use their influence in favour of the male-prisoners, the professional intriguers worked for the women." Mme. Duras, in her "Journal of my Prisons,"* also speaks of men and women who, making their way to the prisoners "showed their desire to gain their confidence so as to get mixed up in their affairs." But the Courcelles certainly did not belong to that category. The mere tone of their letters would suffice to prove that it was not in a trafficking spirit that they worked for "their little brother"; one feels that they were actuated by the most sincere ardour, and the most keen and generous sympathy. Indeed Clémentine Courcelles herself explains to us that she has nothing in common with "that brood" of which Mme. de Bohm and Mme. de Duras have spoken. "I often see at the Committee meetings," she writes to Castellane on the 1st of Vendémiaire, "the woman that man Billard told us about. Her means are the same as ours. Everybody knows her, and everybody knows that for some time past she does no more than the rest. I see her every day. She openly says that she is charged with soliciting for persons who have not time to do so. She makes a trade of it and it would seem she makes a business of justice. However I shall speak to her to-night."

Certain passages in other letters might make us suppose on the other hand that the Courcelles are

acting in the name and on behalf of Mme. de Castellane. We see, for instance, that they willingly act as intermediaries between the prisoner and his wife, that they are in correspondence with her, and that it is they who undertake to hand over to the porter Haly the baskets of fruit, poultry, and melons, sent to them from Aubergenville for that purpose. But, when we come to look into the matter more closely, the second hypothesis is as little probable as the former. Sometimes, it is true, the Courcelles praise Mme. de Castellane for her obligingness and for the kindness which she condescends to show them : but this very praise shows that they merely regard her as an ally, a fellow-worker, not as a client on whom they depend.

The hope of profit, whether distant or immediate, is certainly no factor in the passionate zeal of these good people. Spontaneously, in a noble burst of sympathy, they have formed the plan of drawing an innocent nobleman from prison and to attain this end they spare neither their time nor their strength, nor even their money, since they take upon themselves the responsibility of Castellane's debts. "I have promised to discharge the debt you contracted at the Conciergerie" writes Clémentine, "so don't let that bother you any more!"

And I must add that it is not religion, either, which actuates them ; for though their hearts are thoroughly Christian and full of simplicity and compassion, they have the ideas and the tone of ardent Jacobins who have long since forgotten their catechism. It is true that Clémentine several times asks Castellane's opinion on a certain "hymn" which she sends in bundles to the citoyenne Haly, to be distributed among the prisoners of Le Plessis : but there

is no doubt her "hymn" was one of those patriotic songs to which the lasting success of the *Marseillaise* gave birth every day ; and I should not be surprised if Rouget de Lisle himself had collaborated in the hymn, seeing that the Courcelles were, at that period, in daily relations with him. Might it, perhaps, have been a piece "created" by Clémentine herself in some theatre or some public square, and might one explain in this way the title of "artiste" which she gives herself in one of her letters? Or might Clémentine have been a painter—which would explain her relations with David and the academician Taillasson?*

Whatever her "art" may have been she certainly sacrificed it to the interests of her "little brother," during the two months he passed in the prison of Le Plessis : for she gives him an account of all her actions, from hour to hour, and there is not one which is not devoted to giving him pleasure or serving his interests. Ill, half-dead with fatigue, in rain and wind she pursues her efforts : after which she spends whole evenings in waiting in the Halys' lodge for their permission to visit the prisoner. "You affected me so deeply last night," she writes to him on the 20th Fructidor, "that I was obliged to stop on my way home at the house of an acquaintance, and there I was ill, downright ill, and I still feel the effects of it, for besides that I was caught in the heavy down-pour."

Who then was this friend of Castellane? Where had he made her acquaintance? and by what chance had she been brought to take him under her protection? That is a thing which, in spite of all my

* A certain Josephine Courcelles, a painter, was attached to the Museum under the Consulate.

efforts, I have not been able to discover. Neither in the newspapers of the period, nor among the Archives, have I been able to find any mention of a family of Courcelles having any possible connection with the Courcelles who concern us. The syllable "Var . . ." has not yielded me anything, either; and I have vainly hunted for the name of an "artiste" of the revolutionary period corresponding in the smallest degree with what the letters of Clémentine tell us about herself. The name of Raby almost put me on to a scent; yet that, too, is so poor that I hardly venture to mention it.

The registry of arrests, preserved at the Préfecture of Police, has two entries under the name of Raby. One Raby, Jean Étienne, was arrested at the meeting of the Revolutionary Tribunal on the 11th Ventose Year II., and taken to the Conciergerie, brought again next day before the tribunal, and condemned to death that same day. He was accused "of participation in a conspiracy formed in several communes of the district of Rosary." He was a man of sixty years of age, "a game-keeper to the émigré Montesquiou." Evidently that man could never have met Castellane, who in the month of Ventose of Year II., was still a municipal officer at Aubergenville. But immediately after his name, the register of the Préfecture of Police shows that of another Raby (without giving Christian names, age or profession) who was imprisoned at Le Plessis on the 27th Nivose, and released the 30th Messidor. There is nothing to prevent our believing that this second Raby may have been the son of the first, that Julie Courcelles was his wife, and that what we know of that young woman's husband refers to him. Unfortunately his

discharge dates the 30th of Messidor, and Castellane was only transferred to Le Plessis nearly a month later—so that we are still in the dark as to where and how the Courcelles can have met him. At most we are justified in imagining that the execution of the game-keeper and the long imprisonment of his son may have had the effect of interesting the whole family in the fate of the unfortunate beings who still remained in prison. Clémentine says to Castellane, in one of her earliest letters, that her brother has to attend to the cases of other prisoners. Perhaps the brothers and the two sisters, may in the first instance have each undertaken the case of one of the prisoners of Le Plessis, although in the following letters we find them all concerned with Castellane alone.

III

But these are gratuitous hypotheses, and the truth is we know nothing at all about the authors of these letters. Let us therefore confine ourselves to the letters themselves, which, in spite of the impenetrable mystery with which they are surrounded are abundantly full of interest. They amount, as I have said, to the number of ninety-seven, and cover a period of about sixty days. Some are mere notes, whilst others fill many pages, but, long or short, there is not one that does not contain some curious detail.

Not that I pretend to ascribe to them any historical import. They give us little information except on the Committee of Public Safety telling us, for instance, that on a particular day, a particular number of the Committee was ill, or that another went off

before the close of the sitting. They show us above all, in the most striking manner, the incredible state of anarchy prevailing in the revolutionary tribunals in 1794, and in what an extraordinarily free and easy fashion they went to work. As they had condemned at random up till the 9th Thermidor (July 27), they now acquitted at random—with this difference, that now they took their time. It was impossible to know in the morning who would be judged in the evening at the sitting of the Committee, or even if there would be a sitting, for often the Committee could not sit for want of a quorum. Poor Castellane never got to understand this, when he saw his release put off from day to day, owing to the disorder and carelessness of these fantastical magistrates. But his friends, the Courcelles never dreamt of being astonished at it, and it is with the utmost simplicity that they explain to him in all of their letters the fresh reasons which daily postponed the success of their enterprise. “If you are not released to-day,” writes Clémentine on the 20th Thermidor, “the devil must be at the bottom of it!” But on the 28th Castellane learns that the Committee has settled “not to attend to the noble prisoners till the fate of the other prisoners has been decided.” On the 4th Fructidor (August 21), Clémentine announces that he will not come up for trial and that “within a very few days” the Committee will deliberate upon his case; “but it cannot be to-day nor to-morrow, nor the day after.” Alas! nor on any of the following days, either! Although justice is very much the order of the day, there are so many prisoners that it is extremely difficult to obtain the discharge of friends who are not even under an accusation. Citizen Despré, a man of

letters, claimed by his "section," which gave him "the most favourable character, and who had nothing laid to his charge, experienced, from that very fact, a thousand difficulties in obtaining his liberty, in spite of numberless petitions." (Letter of the 7th Fructidor).

Will it be on the 11th Fructidor? "If people keep their word; and no fresh events again derange the regular order of things, you will probably be released about three or four o'clock to-day." But on the evening of the 11th Courcelles writes to the prisoner: "I have been carried on Fortune's wings to the seventh heaven that is to say, I have managed to gain access to the Committee of Public Safety provided with all the necessary documents to obtain your liberation." The affair was started, but the "rapporteur," summoned immediately to Le Plessis, gave the documents to his secretary to report on them to him to-morrow morning. "I shall be there with some fresh documents which my sister has gone to fetch from the Committee of Public Welfare." Next day we find Julia Raby writing: "My sister is at this moment at the Committee of Public Welfare; she finds some difficulty in getting at the grounds of your arrest, but we hope to get them. So by mid-day we shall be at the Committee of Public Safety and from there we shall go . . . whither? I wish it might be to the 'maison Egalité!'" But presently Clémentine, on returning home adds a P.S. "It's the very devil to get hold of the grounds of your arrest! At the Committee of Public Welfare, they hunted for them in my presence, with incredible patience, but without being able to find them. It is supposed that they are at the War Office. I went there—but if they *are* there, we

shall want a permit from Carnot to get them. I have therefore written to Carnot and an usher, a very decent man, has undertaken to give him my letter, and not to leave him till he has got an answer to it."

The papers in question are not to be found; but after all they can be dispensed with, and the fourteenth Fructidor (August 31) Clémentine writes to Castellane that his "rapporteur" has been appointed. He is André Dumont, Robespierre's enemy, and I have no need to say that from that day Dumont's room in the Rue de l'Echelle is often visited by the Courcelles and their friends. Sometimes at nine o'clock in the morning Clémentine is already waiting in his ante-room. Thither she sends Champeaux, David, Bourdon de l'Oise; and Chaveau-Lagarde, who appears to have been Castellane's lawyer. But André Dumont is in no hurry to draw up his "report," and every day the Courcelles wait at the Committee of Public Safety. There was no sitting on the 13th Fructidor; there were not enough members present. "The last few days there have not been more than three members present." Next day Clémentine writes: "I have just come from the Committee of Public Welfare and the Committee of Public Safety. The first is quite unapproachable—one can't even get a word with the humblest clerk. At the latter it has already been given out that there would be no sitting; but my brother and sister are to stay there to the end, on the mere chance." A week later, the 20th Fructidor: "They say it is possible you may be let out, any moment—we have been promised it should be so within the twenty-four hours. But one must not make sure until one hears shouted in the court "Castellane is released!"

Castellane had to await this moment for another month. One day the Committee is not sitting—another day the sitting is raised without anything having been done. On the 2nd Vendémiaire (September 23), it meets at the Committee of Public Welfare. “Consequently we were not able to do anything that night—nothing again on the night of the 6th, and yet 152 prisoners were released. There was a Castellan but no Castellane, and only one released from Le Plessis. As the work began late, all my people went away and tried to persuade me to go too, because Dumont had not appeared and one of his colleagues said that he was no doubt ill and gone to bed. Well, he did come, after all, and gave many discharges! Ah how my heart was oppressed!” Some days after she has a fresh ray of hope: “It’s to be hoped André (Dumont) won’t hold out any longer against so many recommendations. Crassous, Alquier, Lindet and Champeaux are talking to him about the affair: he surely must tell them why he doesn’t draw up your report!” And so it goes on, from day to day, from week to week, until at last Castellane gets a fresh “rapporteur” appointed, the ex-butcher Legendre, become from this time the most active and sincere friend of the aristocrats. This man settles the business in a twinkling. On the 20th Vendémiaire, Dumont hands him the necessary documents—on the 22nd Castellane is declared free.

But great as were the incoherence and the anarchy of the revolutionary administration they were far deeper in the minds of the men of that period; of that too the Courcelles letters furnish us quite a typical example: Those little “bourgeois” devoting themselves to the cause of a marquis, whom besides

they call "citizen" and treat as their "little brother," and whom they "embrace" in every letter; those *sans-culottes* who show themselves quite proud of a kindly word that citoyenne Castellane condescends to write to them, and, with all that, full of admiration for some of the most offensive purveyors to the guillotine—is it possible to conceive anything more strange? And how much more strange does their case appear if they really do belong to the family of that game-keeper of the *émigré* Montesquiou, who was executed some months before "for having taken part in a royalist conspiracy!" It is as though all their ideas had got into a muddle, as if they had lost all sense of real things, as if the fever of the events they had just passed through had distorted their minds for ever. And yet this distorted mind was accompanied by a heart perfectly healthy and honest, a kindly heart in which the most delicate feelings blossomed.

Castellane having manifested some repugnance to avail himself of a republicanism which he doubtless did not like, Clémentine would hasten to let him know how greatly she respected his scruples. "I won't give the certificate of citizenship," wrote she, "unless your liberty absolutely depends on it. . . . One must learn to sacrifice something to be free!" And some days later she read with transports of enthusiasm Lindet's report to the Convention. "I hope you will be pleased with Lindet's report!" She writes to her "little brother." All her letters give us the reflection of her republican impressions and opinions; and if she purposely showed off her civism in her letters, to meet the contingency of their being read on the way, even if her civism had been first inspired by prudence and the fear of being compro-

mised, we feel that at the moment of writing it had become quite natural to her. "Even if you should have to appear before the court, don't be at all afraid: I know the members of it, and assuredly they are as just as they are humane."

IV

All this we learn from these letters, the very address of which is sufficient to set us dreaming: "To citizen Castellane, Chamber of the Sansculottes, Maison Égalité, Rue Jacques, in Paris." But their principal attraction, in my eyes, is less in their historical interest than in the little sentimental romance of which they convey to us the echo. For although all the three Courcelles show equal ardour in serving Castellane, it is in reality Clémentine Courcelles who is his protectress; it is she who directs the campaign, and who takes upon herself to give him an account of its results. Her brother and sister only write when her efforts leave her no time to do so herself. From the commencement to the end of the correspondence it is she whom we see in the foreground, indefatigable in keeping "her little brother" informed, in diverting and consoling him. And if, in the beginning, pity is the only feeling which actuates her, we feel that gradually another feeling is born in her and gathers strength. Her letters are continually becoming more familiar, more intimate and more tender. Every day we notice discreet and touching attentions, flatteries, often complaints hidden beneath smiles, a thousand little tokens of a love that the woman dares not confess to herself, but which takes deep root in her

heart. "Meanwhile I am going to have a chat with 'my little brother,' although you never call me anything but 'citoyenne!' . . . But how *can* you say: *When you leave me in prison!* to me who suffer so deeply to think that you are there? Ah! that cuts me to the heart!" And then she timidly adds: "Yes, I think I can guess the reasons which make you long for your release!"

She writes those words after coming from the first interview she has been allowed to have with him; and from that day the tone of her letters begins to change, and Castellane really becomes the sole object of all her thoughts. "*Mon Dieu*, dear little brother, how long these two days have seemed to me! What a torture it is not to see each other, especially when one has got into the delicious habit of doing so! But to-morrow we shall meet again!" She writes to him two or three times a day. On leaving the Committee she runs to Le Plessis, taxes her ingenuity to win the good graces of the concierge and his wife, watches with feverish anxiety for a chance of seeing her friend. Often there is no chance, and Clémentine in despair writes another note before leaving the prison: "Just now," she writes, on the 5th *sans-culottide*, "I had forgotten to bring my little writing-desk, and there were so many people at the registrar's office that I had great difficulty in procuring a pen. I would have sent to buy one, but the cabmen are not at all obliging and won't wait." Another time she writes: "I was not able to write to you in the court-yard; I have felt so ill all day that it was impossible for me either to walk for long or to stand without feeling faint. Besides, I was dressed in white linen, which is hardly a suitable style of dress in which to sit on the ground, as I

have had to do several times when writing to you !”

And the more passionately she becomes attached to Castellane, the more unkindly does he seem to treat her. He grows impatient, he loses nerve ; and the poor girl annoys him with continual promises which always end in fresh disappointments. At first Clémentine lets him complain without being greatly hurt. “Courage,” she writes on the 12th Fructidor, “one surely must sacrifice private convenience to the general good !” Next day she writes : “I won’t say—‘be patient !’ You must be very impatient. You must curse and swear to your heart’s content—that’s a relief to your feelings, and I beg you to do so, even though your impatience turns against me. I wish you to do so, if it brings you ever so little consolation !”

But presently she takes her friend’s reproaches more to heart ; and then she complains of the cruel words : “When you leave me in prison !” Some days later the reception she meets with from her friend makes her “feel quite ill.” Castellane seems to have told her that everybody at Le Plessis was laughing at him for taking her everlasting promises so seriously ! “Can my heart repent of having procured you a moment’s satisfaction. No, no, little brother, I am willing to deserve even the most disagreeable epithets, so long as that may procure you a few moments of peace ! Farewell, I embrace you with all my soul.”

Alas ! “the disagreeable epithets” were destined to be renewed, and the mournful tone of Clémentine’s answers show but too plainly how truly she spoke when she told her friend “her heart was sore.” Yet she continued to bear all, except that sometimes she

defended herself against too outrageous accusations. And she continued to make promises to him, day after day, promises which, it must be admitted, would have tried the patience of a saint. There is not one of her letters which does not announce his release on that night or the next day. "If you are not discharged to-day," she wrote on the 20th Thermidor, "il faudra que le diable s'en mêle!" Two months after, she again writes to him: "I don't hesitate to tell you that I hope to go and fetch you away to-night." We can quite understand Castellane's companions laughing at him, seeing him continually fed on such empty hopes.

Here we witness a situation at once comical and affecting, which accentuates itself still more as this little romance draws to its close. Or rather, this closing scene is so touching, of such a simple yet profound melancholy, that the comic side ceases to amuse us. For not only did Clémentine, by dint of zeal and tenderness, merely end by wearing out the patience of the man she wished to serve, but, when all is said and done, her efforts were wasted, for what she failed to bring about in two months another friend of Castellane's managed to do in two days, without her—almost in spite of her! This is what happened, according to the Courcelles' letters:

On the 19th Vendémiaire (October 10th) Clémentine writes to her friend: "Poor little brother, is it really possible that you are still in your painful and inconceivable captivity? Would you believe it, dear brother, André Dumont did not come to the Committee last night; they all gathered at the Committee of Public Welfare after leaving the theatre; a few only came towards midnight, and I saw four releases

granted, after which they worked at the report on the commune."

Next day, doubtless not daring to approach a subject which must have been so painful to him, she gets her sister Julie to write :

20th Vendémiaire, Year III.

It is most unfortunate that your friend Saisseval,* though anxious to serve you, does nothing but thwart everything we do. Champeaux had at last managed to get André to draw up your report ; he had quite made up his mind and was looking up your papers for that purpose, but at that very moment Lonchet, on Saisseval's order, came to remove them in order to hand them over to Legendre. André's secretary, who had a duplicate set, had just gone out, and when I fetched him back André was no longer disposed to make any reports that night.

I can't understand Saisseval's conduct at all : that is the second time he has bungled your affairs. How could he possibly withdraw your papers without telling us about it, and all the time assure us that he too is applying to André ? It is inconceivable, and calculated to discourage those who have your interests at heart ! I assure you that for my part I am indignant at it. That's not the way to act. When one desires the welfare of a friend, one goes to work straightforwardly, and does not play fast and loose in that way with honourable people who have already given a

* He was a friend of the Marquis de Castellane. This is what Marshal Castellane tells us about him in his Journal, November 16, 1815 : "I have just heard of the death of the Marquis de Saisseval. He was a man of great wit, of queer temper, and of a ridiculous appearance, yet he had some excellent qualities. He had been my father's intimate friend for the last fifty years ; his loss was a cruel grief to him. M. de Saisseval before the Revolution had been appointed colonel of a militia regiment in Paris, which never existed except on paper. It was only given to him to avoid giving him a real regiment." I must add that in all the efforts made for the release of Castellane Saisseval acted in concert with Mme. de Castellane and the municipality of Aubergenville.

proof of delicate feelings by forgiving him for his rudeness at first. He ought to have come to an understanding with us, instead of deceiving us, instead of begging us not to meddle with the matter any more : we should have done this, and even if it had not succeeded, you would still have found your family ready to serve you, because you ought not to suffer from the inconsistency of others. . . . Farewell, unfortunate brother.

RABY.*

But Saisseval, even if he really had, on a former occasion, caused Castellane's release to fall through, succeeded this time in the most astonishing manner. Two days after he had had the report entrusted to Legendre, the prisoner of Le Plessis was free ! And here is the last letter written to the latter by poor Clémentine Courcelles, on the very morning of the 22nd Vendémiaire :

Dear little brother, it is a terrible thing for me to refuse you, but it is impossible for me to go and see you to-day. Your repeated requests that I should do so grieve me because I must needs refuse to accede to them. You ought to feel sure that my greatest consolation would be to visit you, and that I need a pressing reason to resign myself to this deprivation.

My brother and sister are done up with fatigue, and so am I ; but I can still back them up till the time of the Committee meeting, at which I shall not fail to attend, not to intrude upon your liberty if the report is made to-night, and it is granted as I don't doubt it will be—but solely that I may not miss the moment when your misfortunes come to an end.

I know, from my own feelings, how wrong it would be to rob your friend of the pleasure of handing you your discharge. I shall bid my sister, in case it is handed to us, to send it on to him, as rightfully belonging to him, and I

* *Femme* Raby in the original.

shall merely go and tell you that it is in his hands ; that is the one pleasure I cannot sacrifice to him. It is sacrificing much that I should not be with you at the moment when your chains are broken ; and if your friend had been as kind as I had fancied he was, he would have offered to let me share with him that delightful moment. I thought he owed it to the tender friendship which I have vowed to you, and I expected it ; so much so that I am grieved he has not shown this generosity, but that diminishes in no wise the gratitude I shall feel all my life for the happiness he is procuring you. He can be quite sure that he acquires thereby every imaginable claim upon me.

Little brother, I leave you regretfully, but it must needs be ; you will assuredly see your friend to-day. I beseech you not to mention to him what I am writing to you. To beg a favour is to rob it of any value and I should find none in it. Merely tell him that, if he can set any value on the affection of a sister who loves you dearly, he may be sure of having acquired sacred rights to mine. Farewell, little brother !

CLÉMENTINE COURCELLES.

Is not that a beautiful letter, discreet and gentle, well worthy of the "tender friendship" which inspired her ? That refusal to go and see Castellane, and that determination to go nevertheless, those complaints, checked immediately, and even the change of tone, even the absence of the "kisses" with which the former letters ended—is there not a touching eloquence in all that ? We call to mind how, during two months the young woman had become more and more intimate with Castellane, how she had counted more and more on the happiness of spending with him the first days of his liberty. "Your sisters, your whole family," she wrote him, "love you and long for you with as much ardour as you long for your liberty. Every moment that delays

your coming into our midst, is, rest assured, a torment for hearts in which you are enthroned by the tenderest, fondest friendship!" Or again, when she was excusing herself for not being able to come to Le Plessis: "Dear little brother, it is better to attend to you than to be with you. *We shall be together afterwards as much as we please!*" Twenty times she announces to him that "she hopes to go and fetch him that night." And then for all those beautiful dreams suddenly to collapse, and not even to be invited to witness that release which she has longed for so constantly, so passionately!

Did the Marquis de Castellane see her again, when he left Le Plessis? Everything leads us to suppose so, for we see clearly from Clémentine's letters, that with all his fits of anger and impatience he had a delicate soul, and was grateful to the young woman for her devotion. But the registries of the commune of Aubergenville inform us that, on the 26th, the municipal council of that commune was convoked to certify officially Castellane's appearance; and doubtless from that moment all relations between the *ci-devants* of Aubergenville and the republicans of the Rue du Faubourg Honoré must have ceased, since no trace has remained in the papers of the Castellane family, which allows us even to guess who the Castellanes were, or what became of them.

IV

THE DAUGHTER OF THE POET VINCENZO MONTI

I

ON June 6, 1812, in the little village-church of Majano, was celebrated the marriage of Count Giulio Perticari with the *signorina* Costanza Monti. It was quite a private ceremony, no one being present but the nearest relations of the two young *fiancés*; but we may truthfully assert that, from Venice to Naples, every educated person in Italy was interested in this marriage, rejoiced over it and greeted it with hearty good wishes. In the first place the bridegroom, Giulio Perticari, though scarcely thirty years of age, was already known as a very learned scholar, a remarkable poet, and above all as one of the most finished connoisseurs of that beautiful Renaissance Italian, which a large group of enthusiasts was then striving to restore to honour. With all this he was noble, rich, generous, unwearied in his zeal for the literary glory and greatness of his country. The bride, on the other hand, was the only daughter of Vincenzo Monti, the greatest and most celebrated of the Italian poets of the day, one of the most influential *protégés* of Napoleon, who had recently appointed

him historiographer of his kingdom of Italy. But the warmest sympathies were reserved for the bride herself. It was well known that, educated in her father's house since leaving her convent, she had early displayed an extraordinary intelligence and poetical talent; that she could read Greek and Latin authors; that few men were her equals in knowledge and understanding of the old Italian poets, particularly Dante, of whom she had made a special study; and that she had already composed charming sonnets, in which to her father's faultless, masterly style she added more of womanly grace. It was well known that she was instinctively a judge of painting and music, being passionately devoted to every form of beauty. Lastly it was known that she was marvellously beautiful, fair, with magnificent black eyes, and so graceful and gentle both in the expression of her face and in all her movements that no one could come near her without losing their hearts.

Ten years later, in 1822, this woman was again attracting the attention of all Italy—but the former sympathy had now been converted into a well-nigh unanimous feeling of repulsion and hatred. The fair Costanza Perticari-Monti found herself ignominiously driven from her own house. All her husband's family, all her friends, and even her most intimate confidants, turned away from her, not even condescending to answer her letters. Her parents, it is true, had consented to take her home again, but they, too, accused her, overwhelmed her with reproaches, or else made her feel by their silence that henceforth they judged her to be unworthy of their affection. It was her husband's death, which took place in June 1822, which had let loose upon her this

tempest—for manuscript letters passing from hand to hand, followed after a time by printed pamphlets, declared that she alone had caused Peticari's death, as much by her scandalous misconduct, as by the brutal and inhuman manner in which she had always treated him. And there was more besides: at the post-mortem on Peticari's corpse, the doctors had discovered in the stomach brown spots, which might be the sign of an incipient gangrene, but in which one might also see traces of poisoning. Although the most celebrated of these doctors openly declared his opinion that Costanza's husband had died a natural death, most of her old friends continued to believe and to repeat that, not content with having brought about Giulio's illness, she had even despatched him by a dose of poison.

At the present day, almost a century since that tragic affair, Italy has forgotten most of the persons who were mixed up with it. Vincenzo Monti alone still preserves some of his bygone glory. His *Misogonia*, his *Feroniade*, his hymns in honour of Napoleon, even his translation of Homer are no longer read, but every one, without reading him, honours in him one of the principal restorers of Italian poetry. As for Giulio Peticari he has disappeared for ever. Nobody is the least concerned with his philological researches, with his commentaries on Dante and Petrarch, with all those works which his contemporaries proclaimed equal to the masterpieces of the great humanists of the Renaissance. Much less has the world troubled to preserve the memory of the poems and learned treaties of his wife Costanza, as to which an excellent judge, Signor Ernesto Masi, in a recent article of the "Nuova Anto-

logia," declares there is nothing in them which rises above flat mediocrity. Francesco Cassi, the translator of the *Pharsalia*, who was one of the most vehement accusers of the young woman; the learned Marquis Antaldo Antaldi, whom Costanza valued and cherished more than all the rest, and who, after having tried at first to believe her innocent, ended by giving her up—not a trace is left of these men in the memory of their fellow-countrymen. But the name of Monti's daughter still survives in default of her works; and it still survives surrounded with mystery, for opinion has never quite decided whether to believe the accusations brought against the young woman by almost all her husband's friends, or the unwearied protestations of innocence which she herself never ceased to make during the eighteen years of struggle and martyrdom through which she lived after her widowhood.

We can easily understand, therefore, that an Italian lady of generous heart and glowing imagination—Signorina Maria Romano—should have felt one day a desire to penetrate this mystery and to reconstitute the true Costanza Monti by setting her living image before us. In the public and private archives of the kingdom, at Florence, at Pesaro, at Bologna and Vicenza, wherever she might hope to find some document relating to the life of her heroine, Signorina Romano went personally, copying and directing, neglecting no steps that could lead to information. The result of these researches she now presents to us, in two volumes which mutually explain and elucidate each other. The first is devoted to Costanza's biography, the second is wholly made up of her letters, hitherto for the most part unpub-

lished.* How can we doubt that such admirable zeal could fail of its reward, and that, thanks to Signorina Romano's labours, the mystery of Monti's daughter would not be at length revealed!

II

Unfortunately, however, we must acknowledge that that secret remains intact. One, indeed of the charges brought against the young woman, the gravest charge of all, must henceforth be regarded as absolutely false. Costanza, it seems certain, never tried to poison her husband. This, as I have already said, was the opinion asserted by the celebrated doctor and professor Tommasini of Bologna, who saw the dying man during his last days. In truth, neither Costanza's behaviour before and after her husband's death, nor the most detailed account of the circumstances of that death, allow us to suppose in the slightest degree that she could have had a criminal share in it. That point is cleared up once for all. But if Costanza Monti did not poison her husband, was she all the same quite innocent of his death? Did she not contribute by indifference or harshness, by the troubles of all kinds which she caused him, to aggravate his illness and to hasten his end? Signorina Romano, with splendid courage, maintains that no one has a right to address the shadow of a reproach to her; that far from having been a criminal, she never once ceased to be the

* "Costanza Monti-Peticari, Studio su documenti inediti." By Maria Romano—Lettere inedite e sparce di Costanza Monti, raccolte da Maria Romano. 2 vols. Rocca S. Casciano Cappelli. 1903-4.

most virtuous of women ; and that all the accusations she had to endure, and all the terrible torture she suffered, are nothing but the outcome of a plot woven against her with infernal wickedness and skill by certain men who hated her for refusing to become their mistress. That is what she eloquently maintains, both in Costanza's biography and in the preface and the notes to the collection of letters. But, alas ! she does not succeed in proving her case ; and, with the utmost good will, we cannot accept the picture she offers us of an unhappy woman perfectly virtuous and good, having nothing against her but her very charm, the victim of a fatality unparalleled in the world. On every page of her narrative we meet with obscurities or contradictions which rouse our suspicions ; we gather the impression that she is not telling us everything, having no doubt blinded herself beforehand as regards all that might injure her heroine. When we afterwards take up Costanza Monti's letters we do indeed see that the unhappy woman obstinately protests her innocence : but her protestations are for the most part so emphatic, so perplexed, and stated in letter after letter in such stereotyped phrases that we can scarcely discern in them a real and profound accent of truth.

Moreover, in spite of all Signorina Romano's zeal, a highly important series of Costanza's letters seems to have remained unknown to her—letters written by the young woman between 1819 and 1823, to a priest of Savignano, the Abbé Bignardi, whom she deeply venerated and who was doubtless her confessor. Extracts from these letters have been published by M. Masi ;* and I think that one of these,

* "Nuova Antologia," of August 1, 1904. It was probably

dated about the middle of July 1822, is better calculated to make us understand the real feelings of the unfortunate woman than all the protestations afterwards lavished by her in her letters to her family and her husband's friends. We quote, at least the principal passages :

My dear friend, oh ! how wicked the world is ! If you knew all that I am compelled to suffer, your excellent heart would grieve. It is quite true that in God's eyes I deserve even worse : but what right have men to put a worse light on my conduct by the blackest calumnies ? Is not my horrible disgrace enough for them ? Assuredly, it is not in the power of men to increase the reproaches I address to myself, for these never cease to rend my soul ; but it *is* in their power to make me out before the world more guilty than I am ; and in *that* they are fiendishly successful. . . . A thousand conflicting passions rage within me. . . . Giulio, yes, Giulio himself, from God's bosom, must be doing my heart justice now ; he sees that my heart never had any share in my downfalls, and that, had I known it better, I should never have hurried along the path of perdition, nor would he have ever had to shed a single tear for fault of mine !

I wrote to you yesterday about the disloyal conduct of my husband's cousin towards me. I told you that under a thousand pretexts he was putting off his return to Pesaro, to hand me Giulio's papers. Well, now I know that he came here secretly, handed the said papers to my brother-in-law, and disappeared again without even going upstairs to pay my father a visit. . . . Everyone turns against me : everyone attacks me savagely. I have seen Professor Tommasini, he admitted to me that the way they treated poor Giulio killed him. I told him what I had wished to do myself ;

this same Abbé Bignardi to whom one of the most interesting of Signorina Romano's collection of letters was written, and of which she says (p. 133 ff) she had not been able to discover who was the person addressed.

and he answered that it would not have been sufficient, seeing the weakness of the patient, but he added that at least all the things I had done had been indicated. . . . Now people are trying to conceal the observations made at the *post-mortem*. Why so many mysteries? Oh! if I were to tell you everything I should never have finished! I shall never forgive myself for having been the first cause of his illness; but when I think this illness was made incurable by the ignorance of those who attended him, my grief becomes almost despair. O Giulio, my darling Giulio! God would not allow me to redeem his life by mine, because, perhaps, my death would have been an insufficient penalty for my sins. . . . Console me in my wretchedness! God sees the purity of my intentions! Pray to God for him who, I hope, is praying for us; and think too of my unhappy self! and let not what I have said to you fade from your mind! Farewell, my dear friend and benefactor, love your poor Costanza!

The woman who wrote that letter, at such a moment, when she knew that she was lying under such terrible suspicion, could not believe herself entirely innocent in the depths of her heart. Nor is that the only confession which escaped her lips. "Listen to me, all of you!" she cried at the foot of her husband's death-bed, "It was I who caused poor Giulio's death!" After which she fled from the presence of the corpse, and hid herself at Savignano, at Cesena, making, (as she naïvely admits to Bignardi in one of her letters), "a false step." Her whole behaviour, immediately after the tragic event clearly shows a consciousness, perhaps even excessive, of having been "the prime cause" of Peticari's malady. The "false step" of which she accuses herself was taken after many others, which we can guess, even under the veil of Signorina Romano's special pleading, and the remembrance of them,

in presence of the final catastrophe, must have stirred up a remorse rendered all the more terrible from the fact that she had really never ceased to love the man with whose death she reproached herself.

The fact is that the whole history of the ten years of her marriage appears to us like a continuous prologue to this double catastrophe; and I greatly fear that Signorina Romano is the only one who sees in her the mere victim of a plot, skilfully built up on calumny. But at the same time the history of those ten years, as also of the period which preceded them, shows us how large a share of responsibility devolves on others besides her for the faults of every kind which she may have committed, and how much we ought to pity her, whatever her guilt may have been: for we feel that here was a woman who really was a victim, not, as Signorina Romano imagines, of a mysterious fatality, but of a deplorable education before and after marriage, of an almost entire lack of moral guidance, and of the imprudent neglectfulness or levity of her father and husband. "I leave my Costanza in your charge," wrote Monti to his son-in-law, the day after the marriage, "be indulgent to her faults and cultivate her heart, which I know is thoroughly good at bottom, and remember that most of the faults women commit are, above all, our own work!" The unfortunate thing was that neither Monti himself, nor Perticari troubled to put these wise counsels in practice.

III

In the first place Costanza's father was so little concerned with her that he did not even know her age. "I was under the impression she was fifteen," he writes to his brother in 1805, "but I see by her baptismal certificate that she is only thirteen." Then he adds: "So much the better for her education, and for giving us time to find her a husband!" Then, when he has removed her from the convent and discovered her marvellous beauty and great gifts, his only thought is "to find her a husband" who will take her without a portion, and keep her in all the luxury he desires for her. "There is some one here," he writes in 1806, "who has cast his eyes on my Costanza, and who has made overtures to me to marry her. Truly the little thing's age is still very tender," (she was then fourteen): "but if, after I have made all enquiries, the match turns out to be what I wish, it will not be difficult to say yes, except for the child's own inclinations—I should not like to do violence to them." But actually he is not so anxious as he says he is about "the child's inclinations." Twice he prevents her marrying young men she was inclined to love—her cousin Giovanni, and the learned Greek Mustoxidi, simply because he does not think either of them rich enough. On the other hand, he shows great eagerness to favour the plans of Count Perticari, although the latter has confessed to him that he has just had a son by a mistress, and although the girl shows no inclination for this new match. In fact, for a long time, Costanza's coldness makes the young suitor hesitate and retards the con-

clusion of the marriage. "Costanza's sadness," writes Giulio Perticari, at the commencement of his betrothal, "must be occasioned by the paternal decree which imposes a husband upon her. . . . And if her coldness remains unchanged, if she shows no real joy at this alliance, if her melancholy continues to betray her heart, my suspicions will turn to certainty." At length the girl is persuaded by the authority of Monti. She consents to forget her poor Mustoxidi, and try to love the man who is imposed upon her—so the marriage is concluded. "After having sacrificed his talent and reputation to Plutus, nothing was left to Vincenzo Monti but to sacrifice his daughter and his friend to the same divinity." This stern judgment of the Florentine poet Niccolini is confirmed by all the facts related in the first chapters of Signorina Romano's biography.

I must add that neither Vincenzo Monti nor his wife took much trouble to prepare their child for the new duties that were opening out before her. Devoid of all moral scruples, the father appears to have contented himself with teaching his daughter Latin and prosody ; whilst the mother, whose moral worth was even more doubtful, could teach her little else than the love of luxury, coquetry and the art of bewitching men, whilst despising them. So that if we compare the daughter's soul with those of the parents who brought her up, we ask ourselves whence she could have got the precious qualities which, in spite of her faults, we discover in her—her disinterestedness and generosity, her passionate horror of lies, the wholly Christian bent which made her more and more incline to forgiveness and devotion.

No doubt these things came to her partly by

nature, but the germ may also have been developed under the influence and through the teaching of her husband ; for he, in contradistinction to Costanza's parents, really does seem to have been a man of delicate and noble feelings worthy of the ancient lineage of honourable people from which he sprang. Signorina Romano reproaches him with having been miserly, but his wife on the contrary, often complained of his prodigality. Nor do I see that it can be imputed to him as a great crime that he concealed from his young wife his having had a natural child by another woman, and having taken an interest in the fate of that child. Moreover, not only, as all admit, did he always remain faithful to Costanza after his marriage, but he loved her to the end with the most devoted and indulgent love—so much so so that when at last she hastened to his side, the very day before his death, he received her in his arms with tears of joy, forgetting everything that others had said against her, and everything that she herself had done against him.

Unfortunately he loved his wife too much to bear in mind that she was still a mere child. Instead of beginning by striving to form her character and attaching her to himself, he hastened to gather round her a brilliant group of young men, compelling her to address them with the familiar "thou," to treat them as comrades, and live with them in constant familiarity. Nothing can be more curious than Costanza's letters, written a few days after her marriage, to her husband's former boon-companions. She invites them to come and beguile her solitude, has fits of jealousy when their visits are too few and far between, and ends her letters with assurances of her "faithful love." All in perfect innocence as we

cannot help feeling ; but by degrees, owing to the natural force of circumstances, she comes to assume two different tones with her friends, according as her letters do or do not run the risk of being read by their wives or her husband. One day, the latter having installed in his house a Florentine *improvisatore*, the young woman perceives that this young dandy is making love to her and that she herself is not so insensible as she ought to be to his attentions. In a moment of artless alarm she throws herself at her husband's feet, confesses her secret, and begs him to send away this dangerous guest ; but the imprudent husband laughs at what he takes for a bit of romantic folly, and not content with keeping the *improvisatore* at his house during his whole stay at Pesaro, he even desires Costanza to accompany him to Milan, where, however, the good-looking Florentine's baseness of soul completely cures her of this first flame. On another occasion it is the young Rossini who comes back to Pesaro, his native town ; the Peticari hasten to take him into their house, and one morning the lady's maid sees her mistress throw herself on his bed, in order, as she says "to try and make some of his genius pass into her by this contact." At this as at everything else the husband only laughs. When the famous Caroline of Brunswick, Princess of Wales, fixes her residence at Pesaro and opens her court, the Peticari immediately figure as intimate friends, which does not prevent the two women coming to logger-heads soon afterwards and opening a pretty scandalous campaign of slander against each other. On the curtain of the new theatre at Pesaro, Peticari has his wife's portrait painted as Sappho, and he laughs again when he learns that a certain Paolino

Giorgi boasts all over the town of having been Costanza's lover.

Giorgi lied. Costanza declares so in her letters, and we are quite willing to believe her word. In spite of all the temptations with which she is deliberately surrounded, an innate feeling of duty still holds her back, and perhaps too she is under the excellent influence of the man she has chosen for her "heart's friend," the Marquis Antaldo Antaldi, who appears to have been, with Giulio Peticari, the only respectable figure in all that group of learned and gallant gentlemen of Pesaro. She remains faithful to her husband, but her virtue weighs upon her and she is bored. "She was the oddest woman I ever met," said Rossini at a later period, "always doing mad things, and nagging her husband, and poor Giulio used to come and beg me to calm her down." Such was the state of the *ménage*, when in the early months of 1818 Costanza suddenly took it into her head that her boredom was due to her long stay in Pesaro, and would be dispelled if only she could live in Rome. From that instant one can truly say that "poor Giulio" never had a moment's peace. In vain he would flee to the country to escape the urgent entreaties and the ill-temper of his wife; for she would write him letters every day, sometimes spiteful, sometimes flattering and full of affection, but all with the one object of persuading him to go to Rome. She would say, for instance:

I beg you, dear Giulio, to think it over well, and if you can't free me from Pesaro for good and all, at least let me breathe for a few months and then I will be content to come back to this tomb and die in it. You know that I have always made your will mine: so you can be easy as to the

future, knowing that the moment you say to me : " Let us go back to Pesaro ! " I shall make no opposition.

Or else she ends a particularly amiable letter with these words : " Come, come, come, come, come, come, come, come, come, at once, at once, at once, at once, at once, and God bless you ! Farewell. Your Costanza." After which she immediately adds : " P.S. Just fancy, Abbé Guidi has discovered, in Rome, for the Felici, two nice rooms, well furnished and lighted, and a little drawing-room to be shared with other visitors. These apartments are admirably situated, and all this for—guess how much?—for eight crowns a month ! " The husband, vanquished at last, ends by consenting to leave for Rome.

Costanza Monti herself always declared that this residence in Rome was the disaster of her life, the origin and cause of all her misfortunes. At all events we can see that she had no sooner arrived in Rome than she began to be as much or more bored than she had been at Pesaro, and she began to persecute her husband to leave Rome, as diligently as she had worried him to go there. But her husband, though still loving her, had evidently grown rather weary of her persecutions. What was it, precisely, that happened there and occasioned a coolness between them? Some levity on Costanza's part, who was henceforth deprived of her dear Antaldi's wise counsels? Or was it simply an extra dose of harshness to " poor Giulio," who had felt compelled about this time to confess the existence of a son born before their marriage? Moreover Monti, as might easily have been predicted, showed no signs of being willing to pay his son-in-law the small marriage-portion promised to his

daughter. Whatever the reasons may be, the letters written by Costanza from Rome become daily more gloomy and more tinged with despair. She complains of everything and everybody; but we guess that it is her husband of whom she would like to complain. We also learn from her correspondence that Giulio is in ill-health—a *malade imaginaire*, she thinks,—from which we can well imagine the way she received him when he speaks to her of his anxieties. At length after two years' absence, the couple return to Pesaro—but how changed from what they were when they left for Rome! The husband has lost for ever his former confidence in his wife's affection; he has lost the habit of seeking in her a helpmate and a trusty friend; he instinctively shrinks from her, and resigns himself to suffer in silence from his two-fold malady of mind and body. The wife disappointed and bored, her character still more weakened by the feeling of her solitude, and, on the other hand, more beautiful and attractive than ever, is ready for the first lover who chooses to take her.

One cannot seriously doubt that she had lovers, after her return to Pesaro and up to the death of her husband. It is true that her history during those two years is far from being as clear to us as it is up to that point, thanks to her own letters and to the recollections of eye-witnesses. The latter no longer speak of her save in covert allusions, or else with the deliberate purpose of attacking or defending her. She herself shows in her letters an affected and constrained tone in which there is no longer a trace of her former exuberant frankness. But the little we know is enough to make us grasp the fact that she has now become a public scandal. At one moment we see her compromising herself with a burly re-

ceiver of imposts who pursues her about the streets in broad daylight. At another time she is seen by Colonel Basi in the country, at night, quarrelling with a certain Gavelli, who suddenly gives her a violent blow with his fist and runs off, loading her with abusive words. We feel that the unfortunate creature is no longer mistress of herself, she is in the grip of downright madness, and will never wake up from it save under the sudden shock of the catastrophe.

The husband, on his part, during these two years, continues to suffer from the liver disease which he brought back from Rome, of which his wife, as we have seen, afterwards accused herself of having been "the first cause." He grows anxious and sad, he weeps, and his wife persists in laughing at his "melancholy," just as he laughed only too long at the fears and temptations she confessed to him. She keeps repeating to all her friends that Giulio's illness is perfectly imaginary. "Several doctors have been consulted," she writes, "and all have replied the same thing, assuring him that he will end by having some serious disease if he does not get out of his head the fear of being already seriously ill." To the very end we shall hear her adopting this tone as to the health of a man who is dying, worn out, done for, and whose emaciation and pallor are frightful to see. She leaves him for whole weeks to accompany her father to Bologna, where he wants to undergo an operation for cataract in the eye. Here is the last letter that she writes to her husband from Savignano, on May 11, 1822, that is to say, at a time when Giulio had but a few days more to live :

MY DEAR HUSBAND,

Your letter of the 8th shows me that you have not received the one my father wrote you before leaving Bologna. . . . I am very sorry to hear you are still ill. If you think my presence can give you any pleasure, write and tell me so, and I will gladly leave my beloved solitude here to go and do my duty. In any case, I beg you will keep me informed as to your health, and take great care of yourself. Papa wrote me a line from Milan, but without telling me anything as to what the doctors thought of his complaint. This silence keeps me in great suspense. To-morrow no doubt I shall have news about the operation—I tremble at the bare thought of it. You shall be informed of all he tells me. Try on your part to get well too, and

Believe me, your devoted wife,

COSTANZA.

And yet she loved her husband—of that, too, we have no room for doubt. As she says in her letter to Abbé Bignardi, “her heart has not been concerned in the sins she has committed.” And we are convinced she is not lying when, towards the close of her life, she declares that her terrible grief does not arise so much from the accusations raised against her, nor even from her remorse, as from “the torturing thought,” that “she no longer has by her side the only man she ever loved, the man she loves still.” Imagine then what the eighteen years which she survived him must have been for her. Imagine her abandoned by all, exposed to the continual reproaches of her parents, reduced after a time to finding not a single person who will listen to her; but, worse than all, driven incessantly to protest her innocence, whilst continually hearing the still small voice proclaim her guilt—not the guilt which others

charge her with, but one no less grave! Whatever her sins may have been, the expiation was adequate if not more than adequate; and thus, when all is said and done, the only feeling left in our hearts by the story of Costanza Monti's failings and sufferings is one of profound pity.

V

CHA TEAUBRIAND'S "INCONNUE"*

IN a château in the neighbourhood of Viviers, the ancient property of her family, lived in the year 1827 a woman of delicate sensibility and distinguished wit, the Marquise de V. Born in 1779, she married, at the age of fifteen, a nobleman of Languedoc, who was also of excellent family, by whom she had a son—her only child. But in 1827 she was living alone in her château in the Vivarais. Her husband, who had entered the Government service under the Empire, was living at Toulouse, where he fulfilled the functions of a custom-house inspector. His son, an officer in the Chasseurs, was in garrison at the other end of the kingdom. So that in her solitude Mme. de V. was able to keep up at her leisure the cult which she had devoted from her earliest youth to the author of the "Genius of Christianity." She had been one of those whom the appearance of that book had once driven wild with enthusiasm.† From that day she had continued to

* This article was written to serve as a preface to "Chateaubriand's Correspondence with the Marquise de V." 1 vol., 8vo. Perrin. 1903.

† "I should find it embarrassing to relate with becoming modesty how a word written by me became an object of envy,

be divided between her desire to know Chateaubriand and her fear of annoying or displeasing him. As early as 1816 she had profited by a visit to Paris to write to her great man; then at the last moment she had contrived an excuse for not making his personal acquaintance. Eleven years later, on the occasion of a few words read in the *Journal des Débats* on some indisposition of Chateaubriand's, she took courage to write again; and this time her letter was the starting-point of a correspondence which was to last without interruption nearly two years, till June 1829.

At the moment when this correspondence commenced, Chateaubriand was passing through one of the saddest and most troublous periods of his life. He had lost, a few months before, his old friend Mme. de Custine. Mme. de Chateaubriand, who was herself in very poor health, made him feel more keenly than ever the natural incompatibility of their characters. Ruined, stripped of all political influence, reduced to a wrangling and repulsive opposition, increasingly bored with others and himself as he felt more and more his own futility, René was doubtless in a moral condition which rendered him more sensible to the unexpected worship of Mme. de V. Anyhow, he replied to it at once, with extraordinary eagerness, yielding himself as he seldom did even to his most confidential friends. Thus began between him and the "unknown" a veritable romance, the existence of which does not appear to have been suspected by any of his

how an envelope in my hand-writing would be picked up and hidden with blushing face and lowered head, under the sweeping veil of long tresses."—Chateaubriand, "Mémoires d'Outre-Tombe."

biographers, and which is now revealed to us in the most complete and unlooked-for manner, thanks to the pious precaution of Mme. de V.*

Let us admit at once that what gives this romance a very especial interest and piquancy is that the Marquise de V. remained almost to the end an "inconnue" for Chateaubriand. During the whole time that their relations lasted he was ignorant of the age or appearance of his correspondent. There was a mystery there, and in consequence of this mystery a misunderstanding, which alone can explain the true significance of the series of letters which has just appeared. The mystery originated in a mere chance, and even if Mme. de V. did not do absolutely all that was in her power to dispel the misunderstanding, we do not believe that anybody after reading these letters could find courage to reproach her with it.

Who, for instance, would find courage to reproach her with the fact that when the man she worshipped at last deigned to make enquiries about her she did not make it quite clear to him that she was not a young woman, as he seemed to assume she was. She was at that time nearly fifty years of age; she might have told Chateaubriand this, and she did not do so. We feel she had not sufficient strength to resign herself to this; we feel, too, that she suffered cruelly from this misunderstanding which she dared not dispel. Incessantly, and in many highly touching

* "When my letters are done I copy them just as they are and join them to yours. Thus all that I have written to you and all that you have written to me remains in my possession." (Mme. de V. to Chateaubriand, letter of December 16, 1828.) It is well known that Chateaubriand was in the habit of destroying immediately all letters he received from women.

ways, she forces herself to hint to Chateaubriand that she can never expect from him more than a mere brotherly friendship. At one time she scolds him for his familiarity; at another she declares her intention of never writing to him again. She even goes so far as to beg him to find out about her from the friends they have in common; but the poet persists in his illusions with an obstinacy which we feel terrifies and delights the poor woman at the same time. "Your writing," says he, "is quite youthful; mine is as old as myself." He is sure he will find in her, when he sees her, "a woman such as he has pictured to himself since his youth," and "has nowhere yet come across." When she asks him "to think of her only as a simple good person who loves him with all her heart," he accuses her of desiring "to begin a stormy correspondence." Then he buys a map of France, to look out the place where "Marie" lives; he invites her to come with him to Rome; talks to her of long years "which are in store for her, but not for him, who must soon depart." But, above all, he wants to see her; it is a kind of refrain to all his letters: "Come to me! . . . I must see you!"

And this makes Mme. de V. all the more afraid of showing herself. Chateaubriand's affection has henceforth become so necessary to her that she is terrified at the idea of losing it.

"My life," she writes one day, "has been wholly spent in longing for your affection and fleeing your presence." Or rather, she longs with all her soul for her friend's presence, she dreams of meeting him at the watering-place to which he is going, of having him near her in her château, of walking with him under the wall of the Marie-Thérèse Hospital; but

as soon as the chance of realising one of those dreams presents itself to her, she hesitates, postpones, and invents excuses for remaining unknown a little longer. What pangs are these of which we hear the echo in every one of her letters! And how expressive and touching her letters seem to us now with their contradictions, their alternations of confidence and despair, with that graceful display of imagination and style by which she hopes to win in her "master's" heart an esteem strong enough to survive the disillusionments of love! "Why," she naïvely asks, "why cannot you love me through my letters, as I love you through your books?"

But Chateaubriand persists in misunderstanding her. He sees in all this behaviour nothing but caprice, perhaps a sly trick to rouse his curiosity the more. And in point of fact his curiosity *is* continually and increasingly aroused during the first months of the correspondence. He writes letter after letter, in a tone that is at once most tender and sincere. He, of whom Mme. de Duras said that "he never, in his replies to letters, said a word that related to what was written to him," pays attention to every single passage of Mme. de V.'s letters. Then by degrees we feel that his curiosity begins to grow weary. The fall of the Villèle ministry has just reopened for him the hope of a great political career: he refuses ministerial posts, gets himself appointed ambassador at Rome: a new life opens out before him,* which leaves him but

* A new life and also a new romance, for it was in Rome he met that Hortense Allart, who for several months appears to have succeeded in taking entire possession of his senses, if not of his heart —though at the same time we need not attach excessive faith to

little leisure to exchange dreams and confidences with a "sister" he has never seen.

He continues, however, to beg for letters from his "unknown," he continues to tell her: "I must see you!" But he says it with less impatience; and his poor Marie, who a short time before was begging him to think of her only as a good and simple friend, now reproaches him because his letters "have a kind of anonymous style, as though they were addressed to nobody!" Alas! yes, Chateaubriand's last letters, more valuable perhaps to us than the first, owing to the historical information they contain, justify the reproaches and complaints of Mme. de V. However interesting these last letters of the poet may be, we are much more deeply touched by the long awkward answers in which his friend in despair, exhausts herself in useless efforts to arrest his wandering attention. It is in these answers that we have, at the same time, the revelation of all Mme. de V.'s love and of all her suffering. Then we once more call to mind her age and the peculiar situation in which she was placed towards the man she loves with such a love; and we cannot help thinking what a splendid subject for a Balzac this romance of Chateaubriand's "unknown" would have been.

At last—after what struggles, and what fears!—Marie decides to brave her friend's presence; and thus her sad romance comes to an end. "M. de Chateaubriand came to see me on the 30th of May and the following Saturday, June 6th," she writes many years later, in the pages of a note-book in which she has just copied the whole of her corre-

the story she herself has given of this episode in the Appendix to St. Beuve's very poor book on Chateaubriand.

spondence with "the elect of her heart." And *he* goes off to the waters at Cauterets, whither he had often invited her to accompany him; while *she*, during the long years she has yet to live (she died in 1848, almost at the same time as Chateaubriand), never again makes the most timid effort to recall herself to the memory of the man who once swore "to love his unknown Marie to life's end."

Yet she was happy in dying before him, and in having been spared the reading, in the "Mémoires d'Outre Tombe," of an adventure which occurred precisely during this stay at Cauterets:

Lo and behold, while I was composing poetry [he was amusing himself by making an ode], I came across a young woman sitting beside the mountain-stream. She got up and came straight towards me. She knew from public rumour that I was at Cauterets. It turned out that the unknown lady was an Occitanian [a Provençale], who had been writing to me for the past two years, without my ever having seen her. The mysterious anonyma raised her veil: *patuit dea*. I went to pay a respectful visit to the naïad of the torrent. One evening when we were together she wished to follow me when I took my departure: I was obliged to carry her back to her house in my arms. . . . I allowed the fleeting impression of my Clémence Isaure to fade away; the mountain breeze soon blew away this flower-like fancy; the witty, determined and charming stranger of sixteen was grateful to me for having done justice to myself: she is now married.*

So Chateaubriand during the two years that his correspondence with Mme. de V. lasted, had another "inconnue," whom perhaps he also promised

* "Mémoires d'Outre-Tombe." Part iii., bk. viii. Very valuable information on this episode will be found in a learned and clever article by M. Victor Giraud. "Revue des Deux Mondes," April 1, 1896.

“to love till life’s end”! Perhaps he proposed to her, also, to join him in Rome, at the same time that he proposed it to “Marie” and to Mme. Récamier? And perhaps it was not mere chance which made him meet her at Cauterets “sitting by the mountain-stream?” He had always had a taste for carrying on several little sentimental intrigues at the same time, treating each one with so much warmth and so much mystery, that one might imagine he was giving his whole heart to it; but occasionally the mystery got unveiled and then some poor woman’s heart was torn. “Marie” was at least fortunate in not having known that suffering!

Yes, the letters in this new book prove the fact once again—Chateaubriand was right in saying that “his love brought misfortune”; but we are inclined to believe that for this he was quite as much to blame as fate. He was so constituted that, as he always valued what he had not more highly than what he had, he could not help letting this be seen. The harshness with which he is accused of having treated women who “comforted his life,” seems to have consisted especially in a too rapid, too outspoken contrast in his behaviour towards them before and after his conquest of them; and doubtless his women-friends would have found him less hard, if he had not accustomed them at first to all the sweetness of tenderness, attention and solicitude that knew no bounds. His first letters to Mme. de V. suffice to give us an idea of the truly marvellous art which this great artist knew how to employ in the conquest of a heart. Every word is a caress, and the music of his words, languorous and importunate by turns, seems to whisper with irresistible allure-ment: “Come to me!” We can well understand

that a woman, accustomed to such music, should have wept all the tears of her heart before resigning herself never to hear it again !

But Mme. de V. was too fair-minded and too generous a soul not to remember that the man who made her suffer was also the man who for many months had transfigured her life into an enchanted dream. In the same way that she loved Chateaubriand before knowing him, she continued to love him after fate had separated them: the care with which she kept, copied, and annotated his letters, shows us plainly that she remained faithful to the "chosen of her heart." And in our turn, while pitying her, let us beware of being unjust or severe towards him. We are too often tempted by a strange perversity of our nature to the precondemnation of men of genius in the love affairs in which we see them engaged; we feel that these men are so different and so superior to ourselves, that we cannot help wishing to punish them for it. And yet when we look closer into the matter, it is very rare that true genius is not accompanied by a certain goodness—a goodness sometimes made up of detachment, nay even indifference, but having an instinctive repugnance to every form of baseness, of which there is none baser than the infliction of suffering. As for Chateaubriand in particular, if his first letters to Mme. de V. reveal him as extraordinarily skilful in all the wiles of seduction, the later ones supply as with a fresh testimony to what he somewhere laughingly calls his "cursed kindness." From the very moment of his leaving Rome we feel that his "inconnue" no longer interests him; we feel this, as she felt it herself, from the "anonymous style" of his letters, from

a thousand little involuntary touches of coolness and embarrassment: but he does not for all that cease writing and consoling her, with a kindness which is the more touching because we feel what an effort it costs him. He was not a man, who, like the pitiful Adolphe, would have stooped so low as to complain of a woman he had ceased to love. Unfortunately, ceasing to love was always quick work with him, and many were the women who suffered for it, but he never accused any one but himself for this fatal and mischief-working fickleness of his heart.

He was one of those spoilt children who cannot resist the temptation of immediately breaking the toys that have been given them, and afterwards grieving at having broken them. How many different playthings did he break, or at least damage, in the course of his life, from women's hearts to a religion and a royalty! And how he lamented the fact all his life! Beneath the outward appearances of puerile vanity, his *Mémoires*, from beginning to end, are nothing but the lament of a child over his broken toys. "Is it not a strange thing," he wrote in 1826, in a preface to the *Martyrs*, "that at the present time my Christianity and my Monarchism are both under suspicion?" Alas! he really was both, in spite of the best intentions in the world, and though he combated the charge in the outside world, he could not help admitting it to his inner self, nor grieving at it, and feeling that he would repeat on the morrow the sins he repented of committing the day before. He was a child, an unhappy child. One night in Rome at a brilliant reception at the French Embassy, an English lady, "whom he knew neither by name nor face,"

approached him, looked at him and said to him in French but with a very strong accent : " Monsieur de Chateaubriand, you are very unhappy ! " Amazed " at this style of starting a conversation," the ambassador asked the lady what she meant. " What I mean is that I pity you ! " answered the lady, upon which " she caught another English lady by the arm, and disappeared in the crowd." Nothing that any one can write about Chateaubriand will ever equal, either in shrewdness or in depth, the verdict of that unknown lady.

AUTHORS' WIVES AND LITERARY
WOMEN



I

AN ITALIAN LADY-ADVENTURER IN THE
SEVENTEENTH CENTURY :
CHRISTINA OF NORTHUMBERLAND

I

ONE fine August evening, in the year 1680, nine or ten young women were sitting on the benches outside the Paleotti palace at Bologna, enjoying the open air and flirting with some gentlemen who remained standing before them. All the flower of the aristocracy of Bologna was present, and, as was always the case at these gatherings, the conversation was led by the mistress of the house, the fair and charming Marchesa Christina Paleotti. Now as the conversation had fallen on another great lady of Bologna, Marchesa Christina, who was not in the habit of concealing her thoughts, began to recall, "with extreme freedom of speech," various love affairs that the lady had had in Venice and even in Bologna itself. Whereupon one of the young women who were sitting around her, the Marchesa Caterina Roverelli Malvezzi, after having allowed her to "say her say," smiled a bitter smile and, turning towards her, made the following speech: "To hear you talk of

Locatelli one would really suppose you had forgotten what you have done yourself and what you continue to do! What you *have* done is well known to Count Antonio Trotti, who has lavished untold wealth upon you; also to Count Pignoranda and other gentlemen of Milan, not to speak of those of Florence and Rome; it is also well known, too, to our Bolognese gentry whom you have striven to entice into your nets. But they, thank Heaven, have not proved quite the simple boobies you supposed them to be! Count Hercules Pepoli, about whom you built up mighty projects, cast you off; Count Antonio Zambecari laughed at you; from the Marchese Guido Pepoli you will never manage to extract another sequin; and at the present moment you have no one left to pluck but the Marchese Filippo Barbazza: moreover, *he* is so fickle that you may be quite sure you won't have him much longer. It seems to me you might reflect a little on your own actions instead of criticising other people's behaviour!" At this, like a true woman of the world, the Marchesa Christina answered with a burst of laughter; and the Bolognese chronicler, the burly Canon Ghiselli, to whom we are indebted for this scene, adds that Malvezzi "was not very much applauded by the bystanders for this plain-speaking."

The woman thus insulted in her own house was then thirty-one years of age. Born, educated and married in Italy, she had not a drop of Italian blood in her veins. On her mother's side—a Mlle. de Gouffier—she came of an old Poitevin stock; on her father's side she was English, and the great-granddaughter of that Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, whose relations with Queen Elizabeth are

known to all. Dudley's only son, having fled from England after all sorts of adventures, eventually settled in Florence, where he had been appointed Chamberlain to the Grand-duchess. There, in 1649, one of his sons had a daughter, Christine Dudley, Duchess of Northumberland, or to give her the name preferred by Italian chroniclers Christina of Northumbria. The first years of her life had been spent in Florence and Rome; then, at fourteen years of age, she had married a Bolognese nobleman, the Marchese Andrea Paleotti who had only been a widower for a few months, and whose first wife had perished under very extraordinary circumstances—murdered, along with her father, by order of a certain Count Suzzi, a homicidal monomaniac who, suspecting the Marchese Andrea of being in love with his wife, had conceived the idea of annihilating him and his whole house.

Christina, who had settled in Bologna since her marriage, had soon shown her wonderful combination of qualities and attractions. Passionately interested in music and poetry, learned and bright-witted beyond any woman of her time, she was also so marvellously beautiful that for half a century no man could ever set eyes on her without desiring to win her. A couplet composed in 1665 thus describes her :

A face of beauty, and a breast of snow,
Wit on her lips, her cheeks with health aglow.

She had large blue eyes, splendid black hair, and in all her whole personality something childlike and angelic, which, at forty years of age, caused her to be taken for the sister of her daughters. And we may truly say that as long as she lived she never ceased

to fill Italy with the noise of her name—to such a degree that, to this day, she is often cited as one of the most astonishing “aventurières” of the *seicento*, a period which had the privilege of being richer than any other in adventurers of both sexes.

We have at the present day two principal sources of information as to this remarkable personage: the contemporary chroniclers who give us the details of her “adventures,” and half a dozen Italian sonnets, written by her, and preserved for us in the anthologies of the period. These sonnets have been recently reproduced *in extenso* by Signor Corrado Ricci, in a very interesting volume of historical studies;* and it is also to Signor Ricci that we owe a summary, in a hundred or so of pages, of the curious narratives of the old Bolognese chroniclers about the loves, intrigues, and other doings of the beautiful Christina of Northumberland. Here we have an excellent opportunity of trying to picture to ourselves, by analysing and comparing these different documents, what the soul of one of the great Italian “aventurières” of the seventeenth century can have been like.

First and foremost we may feel surprised—as, indeed, were her contemporaries—that a girl so marvellously gifted and almost of royal blood, should have consented to marry a man of decent birth, but assuredly far beneath her in every respect. The fact is that when Andrea Paleotti met little Christina in Florence, in 1663, she had already “a stain” upon her, which scarcely allowed her to hope

* “La Vita Barocca.” Corrado Ricci. 1 vol. in 8vo. Milan, 1904.

for a marriage more worthy of her rank. At Rome, the year before, when scarcely thirteen years of age, she had allowed herself to be seduced by the Conestabile Colonna, husband of the famous Maria Mancini. A child had been born of this first adventure, a little girl whom the father had kept near him, in Rome. The Duke of Northumberland, therefore, had been only too pleased that the Marchese Paleotti, in consideration for his daughter's charms, was kind enough to forget an accident which, however, had been kept satisfactorily in the dark.

It would seem, as a matter of fact, that Christina was sincerely grateful to her husband and strove for a long time to please him. From 1663 to 1671 the chronicles of Bologna are a good deal concerned with her: but they never speak of her except to sound the praises of her beauty and the unbounded charm of her conversation. "In beauty, grace, wit, and originality no one comes up to her," writes the chronicler Tioli. Ghiselli, who hated her later on, calls her "the fairest and most exquisite of women." Even satirical pamphlets and impromptus treat her with marked respect. In one of them she is represented as "the sweetest and most graceful of the ladies of Bologna"; another defines her as "the angel" by way of contrast to a whole legion of "devils." In 1668, the Emperor Leopold, as a mark of his esteem, solemnly sends her a golden cross. It is true that, about the same time, during a journey she made to Milan with her husband, we learn that she came across her former lover, the Conestabile Colonna, and that the attention he paid her provoked the jealousy of Maria Mancini. "The Marchesa Paleotti, daughter of the Duke of

Northumberland, being then in the flower of life, attracted the eyes of all. Those of the Constable were no exception, and even if I had been content not to take those stolen glances as signs of his passion for this fair lady, the attentions and assiduous compliments he paid her would have left me no room for doubt." That is what we read in Maria Mancini's "Mémoires"; but on the whole there is nothing to prove that Christina's former seducer was not on this occasion obliged to restrict himself to "stolen glances."

It is not till 1671 that the real "adventures" of the fair Marchesa begin. In that year we see that the cardinal-legate locks her up for four months in the convent of Sta. Margherita. Yet this measure seems to have been inspired rather by political considerations, especially by the fear that Christina, "being highly esteemed by all," might make use of her influence to attempt the liberation of her husband, who happened also to be in prison. Then comes a love intrigue in Rome, of which Christina speaks in her sonnets, and for which, amongst other things, her terrible friend the Marchesa Malvezzi will reproach her later on. But on this point we are quite without details, whilst, on the contrary, we are fully informed as to a second journey to Milan in 1679, during which Christina, with the knowledge and approval of her husband, accepted a quantity of presents, in money and in jewellery, from Count Antonio Trotti and other noblemen, so much so that the governor of the town politely suggested her return to Bologna.

From that time the chronicles never cease talking of the "extravagances" of this young woman. We read, for instance, a great deal about a diamond-pin

she complains of having lost at the cathedral: whereupon Senator Hercules Pepoli causes another one to be offered her through the intermediary of a certain poet, Gregorio Casali, to whom, by way of reward, she gives a snuff-box of the value of twenty pistoles. We hear about another Senator, Filippo Barbazza, who abandons his wife and bravely exposes himself to the thunderbolts of the Holy See for the "beaux yeux" of Christina Paleotti. We hear about an actor at the Public Theatre, who, having ventured to make an allusion to the dangers with which a certain lady threatened the peace of men's homes, is attacked one night as he leaves the theatre and has an ear cut off. On July 1, 1681, Senator Barbazza invites his fellow-senators to an official dinner; whilst the guests are at table Christina appears, gorgeously arrayed, and seats herself beside the master of the house, to the utter stupefaction of the other guests. At divine service in the cathedral, when she arrives too late to find a seat in the nave, she boldly pushes her way into the chancel and takes her seat among the canons.

Twenty times she is banished; she goes to Verona, to Venice, and the very next month she is back again in Bologna, with all the husbands in the town crowding round her! Or else, in default of the married men, the children fall in love with her and do all sorts of mad things to win her: amongst others, a young Count Ercolani, who, having come from Parma to Bologna to celebrate his marriage with the daughter of a rich Senator, forgets his *fiancée's* existence and is never out of the Paleotti palace. Not a month, not a week passes now without some fresh scandal proceeding from this palace and filling the old city with rumours. From the cardinal-legate

to the coachmen and the porters no one talks of anything else. Christina of Northumberland has become at once the terror of Bologna and its chief amusement.

And matters are even much worse when the death of her husband in 1689 leaves her free to satisfy her natural hatred of all restraint, moral or social. Henceforth her house becomes a place of resort open to all comers, where the "conversazione" begins afresh every night—that "conversazione" of which "she was the first to introduce into Bologna the accursed habit," says a chronicler. Duels and murders become more frequent, and it is invariably in the *conversazioni* of the Paleotti palace that they have their starting-point. One evening, December 6, 1691, almost all the guests in the house are poisoned by having drunk a certain chocolate served them by a young Turkish woman, the god-daughter and *protégée* of the Marchesa; but the real culprit turns out to be Christina's eldest son, who, "after having concocted some drug for beautifying ladies, forgot to wash the vessel in which it was kept." The accident causes the death of that Marquis Guido Pepoli of whom, eleven years before, Malvezzi had predicted to Christina "that she would never get another sequin out of him." Another of the *habitués* of the house, Count Maxime Caprara, dies of a ghastly disease, which seems, however, to have been at that time very common amongst all ranks of society in Bologna. Immediately there circulates through the town "a sonnet in memory of Count Caprara, who died from having loved Donna Christina." Another nobleman offers a friend in the public streets a pinch of snuff from a piece of paper, and when asked what he has done with his

handsome snuff-box he answers that he has left it at the Marchesa Paleotti's house. "That is a house," says he, "one should beware of entering unless one has made up one's mind to leave one's skin there." All this does not prevent the house being more and more frequented not only by artists and actors, but by the greatest persons. Even the ladies of Bologna regarded the evenings at the Paleotti palace as an institution indispensable to the life of their town. One day Christina having been once more requested to retire to her country-house, the Marchesa Bentivoglio and the Contessa Canossa go and throw themselves at the cardinal-legate's feet, and compel him to recall the banished lady. The Marchesa's house is not only a literary and fashionable salon, a gambling-hell, a house of ill-fame, but, above all, a matrimonial agency. Hundreds of engagements are manufactured there, some of which call forth the surprise of all Italy, like that of Count Ludovico Bentivoglio with the daughter of a little Bologna doctor. I need hardly add that whilst attending to other people's happiness, Christina does not neglect to secure that of her own daughters. Perhaps, even, none of her adventures was such a brilliant success, or brought her more glory in her lifetime, than her long intrigue to marry her daughter Diana to one of the sons of Prince Colonna. Whole books have been devoted to the story of this intrigue by writers who saw in it an incomparable subject for a romance after the tastes of that period—doubtless taking care to enhance its interest by a few additions of their own manufacture.

The facts themselves are, indeed, rather commonplace, and of a kind that we can still see going on around us every day. Young Prince Colonna,

having come to Bologna to be present at a theatrical representation, fell in love with Diana Paleotti. He saw her again next year, and felt that it was impossible for him to live without her. Thereupon Diana and her mother went to join him at Rome, and thus the marriage, after two years' shilly-shallying, was settled. But it was such an unexpected marriage, such a splendid piece of luck for the young girl, that everybody in Bologna as well as in Rome was determined to regard it as a masterpiece of matrimonial cleverness on the part of Donna Christina. This "improvised wedding" of her daughter was the most famous, as well as the last, of her adventures.

II

All this we learn about Christina of Northumberland from the Bolognese chroniclers, most of whom, by the way, appear to have been actuated by exceptional ill-will towards her, probably a mixture of spite and jealousy. It now remains to see what we may glean of her from her sonnets—the only direct evidence she has left us of her feelings and thoughts. We have, indeed, not one of her letters, nor a single portrait from which we might guess what kind of soul resided in her. Her sonnets themselves have only come down to us in very small numbers—a series of four love-sonnets, and two religious sonnets, written probably towards the close of her life. It happens, however, that each of these six poems is of singular beauty, full of colour and music, attesting an admirable instinct for rhythm joined to a consummate knowledge of the great classical models; and each of them, besides, expresses such human

emotion in so natural a manner, that we cannot help recognising in them the confession of the passionate soul which produced them. I will attempt to translate the first two sonnets :

I

Thy brow ever armed with rigour, thy soul ever cruel, deaf to my entreaties and to my clamorous desire, beloved prince, wilt thou never take counsel of thy pity ?

It matters not ! I shall suffer the pain of exile, I shall endure thy cruelty ; and never shall my heart harbour wrath against thee, ever persisting in worshipping its peril—in thee.

And I shall die without ever having changed in my love for thee ; and each of us will have a punishment matched with our pride, thou who wast faithless, and I, alas ! too loving !

And when we both lie prostrate before the God of love, what things shall I have to tell of thee ! but not thou of me, who was constant and faithful.

II

Whilst, in the horror of my long weariness, my soul shuts itself in and tries to flee from those cruel, wicked eyes, the object of its amorous flame :

Suddenly, remembering my idol's soft and beauteous eyes, my fearful soul bridles its desire, and no longer dares to escape those dear tyrants !

Then, thinking once more of those first circumstances, which on the Reno (Bologna), and on the Tiber, robbed it of all hope, thinking once more of that perjurous and treacherous faith,

Again my soul would repent, but does not go further : for it is sufficient to remember that dear face, loving and tender—to arrest once more its haughty will.

Nevertheless M. Ricci, while doing homage to the poetical beauty of these sonnets, laughs at them as a

lie in Christina's mouth. Not for a moment does he admit the idea that the adventuress of Bologna may have been sincere, that a real love may have entered her life. "Rhetoric!" says he; and he wonders whether the four sonnets may not refer to four different persons. Between Christina herself, who complains of being abandoned by the man she worships, and a few obscure chroniclers like Ghiselli or Tioli, or a ridiculous and malevolent coxcomb like Michael Bombaci, who are pleased to see in her only a courtesan and a procuress, he does not hesitate a moment—it is in the chroniclers that he puts all his faith. I confess that for my part I cannot go quite so far: there are in Christina's verses a delicacy of feeling, a distinction of thought, a purity of taste which do not allow me to be content with the ugly picture left us in the coarse narratives of her adventures. And I will go further. It does not seem to me that these very adventures have been quite understood by those who narrated them, blinded as they were by their malevolence, or, perhaps, by their professional habit of attributing the lowest motives to the most innocent actions. Especially do I fail to be startled by the famous episode of Diana's marriage. To be sure Christina desired her daughter's marriage and left no stone unturned to bring it about; but her daughter desired it too, and so did the young prince whom she loved, and who loved her. What Christina did in this matter, the most scrupulous of mothers would have done in her place. And I am bound to add, the marriage thus arranged appears to have been a perfectly happy one, even the chroniclers having been unable to discover the smallest grievance against Diana Colonna. There remain to consider

Christina's first adventures, the sin committed before her marriage, the presents received from Milanese gentlemen, with her husband's consent, the free and easy *conversazioni* of the Paleotti palace—but if we bear in mind the general depravation of Italian morals at that period we may well excuse all that. In Bologna, for instance, in 1686, two great ladies quarrelled, and ended by having a stand-up fight, in public, all about a game of cards. Young men of the best families amused themselves of a night by insulting the women they saw passing in carriages. A husband appeared before the Holy Office, "for having sold his wife to a third party by a contract drawn up in due form, a few days after his wedding." During the three years of Cardinal Vidoni's legation (1692-1695), hundreds of murders took place in Bologna; and the cardinal-legate, when complaints were made to him about this state of things, calmly answered that "such accidents must needs happen in such a populous city, and that there is nothing to be astonished at."

As for murders, we do not find that Marchesa Christina caused any to be committed. For a long time, indeed, she astonished Bologna by the reserve of her conduct; and when at a later period she scandalised the town, it was more by the boldness of her conversation and her manners, by her way of taking her seat at official banquets, by the excessive freedom of those *conversazioni*, open to all comers, of which she was the first to conceive the idea. When we come to look closely into her adventures, we find far less corruption than what English people call "eccentricity." And that reminds us that she was English herself, and sets us asking whether the surprise she caused to her

contemporaries might not have arisen, after all, from difference of race, which, accentuating as she grew older, led her to neglect conventionalities more and more, or even deliberately to affect to despise them. In reality we know nothing about her, I mean of her inner life, nor of what she thought or felt during her adventures. Did she love evil or only pleasure? Was she an ambitious woman, an intriguer, or perhaps only a "révoltée," a rebellious spirit, as some of the extravagances for which she has been most blamed would seem to suggest? In the presence of the contradictory documents we have respecting her, we are free to choose whichever hypothesis we prefer. The real personality of Christina of Northumberland remains one of those "historic mysteries," of which history is full, more impenetrable than the identity of the Man with the Iron Mask, or the origin of Gaspard Hauser.

III

In any case, and whatever her faults may have been, the poor woman paid dearly for them in the evening of her life. Not that her "adventures" led to "a bad end," or that she ever knew want of money or discredit: we are even told that her fellow-citizens and the foreigners delighted more and more to treat her with respectful regard, which again proves the exaggeration of the grievances alleged by the chroniclers against her. But she had always worshipped her children; and it was in her children that she was stricken. One of her daughters went mad in a convent where she had shut herself up. Another, the widow of a Count Roffeni, who

had beaten, ruined, and abandoned her, afterwards married a great English nobleman, the Earl of Shrewsbury, and consequently had to abjure her Catholic faith—a thing which filled the pious heart of her mother with sadness. More cruelly still had Christina to suffer from the follies and crimes of her youngest and favourite son, Ferdinand, an abominable scoundrel, who, expelled from Italy and dismissed with disgrace from the Imperial army, was at last condemned to death and executed in London, 1718, for having killed one of his servants.

The news of this horrible drama seems to have given the finishing blow to the Marchesa. She died a few months after, February 2, 1719. But long before this—ever since the marriage of her daughter Diana—"the adventuress" had detached her soul from earthly intrigues. And even if the unanimous testimony of her contemporaries did not inform us of the change in her feelings from that period, we might gather it from the last two sonnets she has left, published in a Bolognese collection of 1711. Less pure in form than the four love-sonnets, these pieces have the same accent of sincerity, the same elegant and yet familiar turn; they show us, in the same way, a womanly soul accustomed to pour out freely its inmost thoughts. Here is one of them :

When, beneath these myrtles and these laurels, I breathe
in peace and beloved silence, at the foot of the beech-tree, or
under the shade of the pine, I review with abhorrence my
past errors.

But I have not one regret for the loss of the flower of my
youth—my desires are stilled for ever. All my pleasure is

already plunged in oblivion ; my sportive ardours quenched for evermore.

Now, all I love is my disillusion [Or amo solo il disinganno mio]; and as for the short time which remains for me in this world I dedicate it, O God, to thee !

To the end that, the foes of my salvation being removed, and my fallacious and guilty desires conquered, thou may'st deign to open for me the gates of Heaven !

II

THE LITERARY DÉBUT OF FANNY BURNEY

I

THE great literary event of the year 1778 in London was the appearance, at a Fleet Street publisher's, of a novel in the form of a series of letters, in three volumes, entitled: "Evelina, or a Young Lady's Entrance into the World." The three volumes had been published anonymously; and to the inquisitive, who daily entered his shop to question him, the publisher, bursting with pride at his sudden importance, would answer that the anonymous author of "Evelina" was a nobleman living in the aristocratic quarters of the West End, and better acquainted than anybody with the most intimate secrets of society, but withal so firmly resolved to remain for ever concealed, that, judging from all appearances, the mystery would never be revealed. So there was nothing for it but to fall back upon conjectures. Some attributed the new work to Horace Walpole, who had not written a novel since his famous "Castle of Otranto" in 1764. Others thought they discovered the hand of Christopher Anstey, author of a "Guide to Bath," of which "Evelina's" heroine spoke in terms of praise. On the merit of the novel,

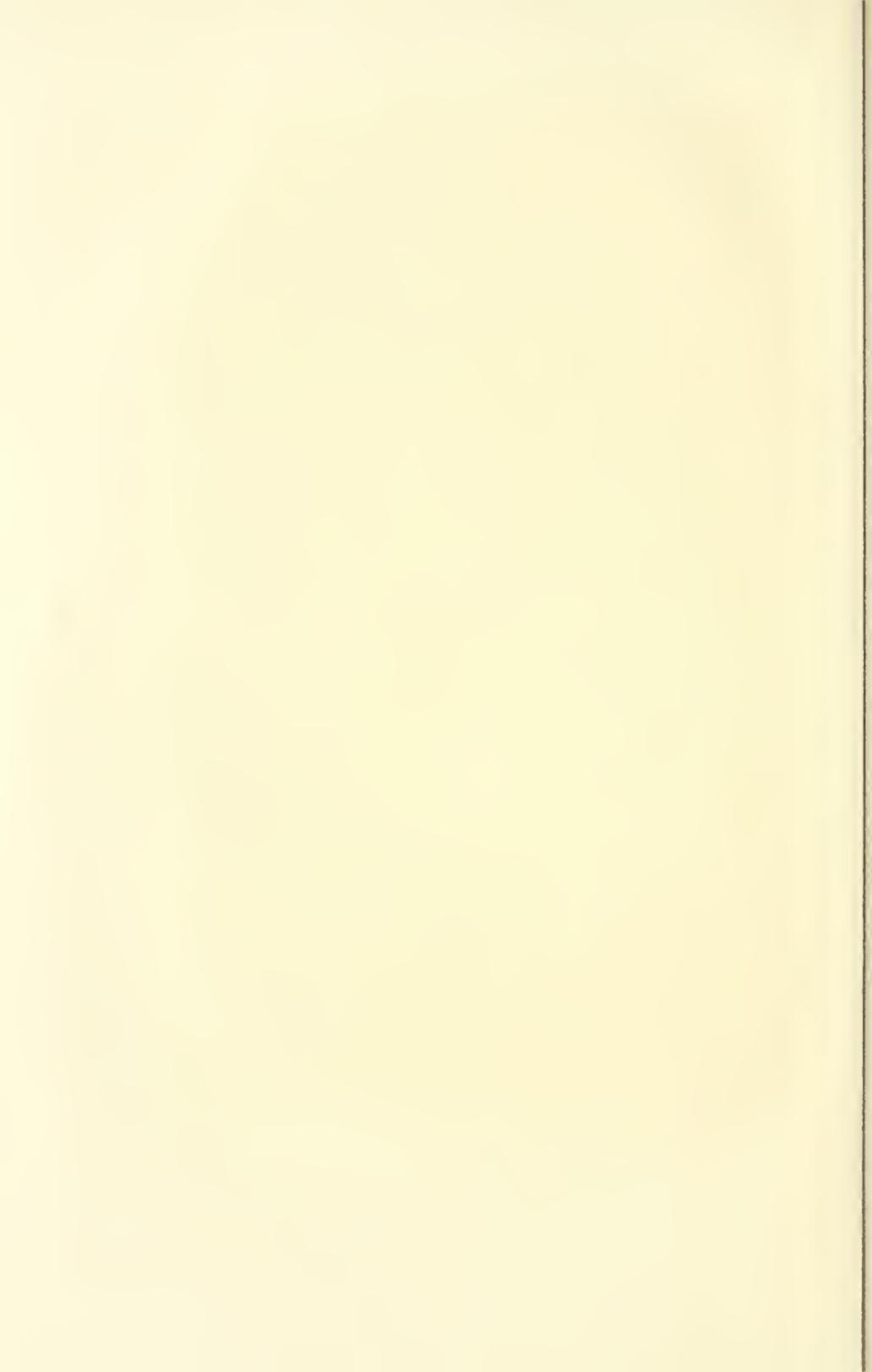
in any case, the opinion of the entire public was unanimous. It was agreed by all that there were, from beginning to end of the three volumes, many highly affecting and amusing scenes, characters which showed great powers of observation, and that for many years past, no novel had been produced which showed such a combination of beautiful and rare literary qualities.

The fact is that the English novel at that time was in rather a deplorable condition, after half a century of marvellous prosperity and brilliancy. All the masters of the preceding generation were dead—Richardson, Fielding, Smollett, Sterne, Goldsmith; and people were reduced to putting up with poor lachrymose and pretentious affairs, like “*Julia of Roubigné*,” by Henry Mackenzie, “*The Champion of Virtue*,” by Miss Clara Reeve, or the translations of the French novels of Mme. Riccoboni; so that they could not fail to welcome with the greatest pleasure a new author, who, though evidently drawing inspiration both from Fielding and Richardson, brought to his art an incontestable originality, and seemed desirous of reviving a branch of literature which peevish minds were already declaring to be defunct. Even the sternest of judges, old Samuel Johnson, had been conquered. “*Truly*,” he said, “Richardson would have dreaded the author of ‘*Evelina*’: there is a worth in this book that would have alarmed him: for all his works contain nothing more delicately finished than certain passages in ‘*Evelina*.’”

The heroine of the novel, *Evelina Anville*, is a young girl of seventeen, whose mother has been seduced and then abandoned—after a marriage of which the legal proofs have unfortunately disap-



FANNY BURNEY
From "Juniper Hall," by Constance Hill



peared—by a rich gentleman, Sir John Belmont. The poor woman died in giving birth to her daughter; and the latter, up to the age of seventeen, was brought up by an excellent old guardian, in the peaceful retreat of a parsonage in Dorset. But one day Evelina, having gone to London with a friend, Mrs. Mirvan, the wife of a captain in the Royal Navy, meets by chance an extremely common and ridiculous old woman, a Mme. Duval, of English origin, but who has passed the greater part of her life in France, and has brought from that country all sorts of habits, feelings and expressions, of which she makes the most extravagant use. This old woman turns out to be Evelina's grandmother, and although hitherto her adventurous life has left her no leisure to pay any attention to her granddaughter, now she wants all at once to compel the girl to live with her. She puts her in communication with some cousins with whom she is living, the Brangtons—coarse, grasping people, whose dream it becomes to marry the young girl to one of their sons, so that they may afterwards claim the inheritance of Sir John Belmont. Then begins a long struggle between Mme. Duval, assisted by her Brangtons, and Captain Mirvan, who generously exerts himself to snatch Evelina from an environment that is degrading to her. And if Mme. Duval consistently shows herself the troublesome and grotesque old mad woman that she is, Captain Mirvan, on his side, does not hesitate to resort to all sorts of stratagems tempered by no scruples of charity or gallantry. All means are good enough for this old retired sea-dog in order to vex and humiliate a woman he hates, all the more because, although she is a fellow-countrywoman, he persists in regarding her as a French woman. And so, through an infinite

variety of episodes, the story of the unfortunate Evelina's "Entrance into the World" proceeds. Failing young Brangton, Mme. Duval is continually introducing fresh suitors to her hand; and the Mirvans, on the other hand, are no less eager to propose matches for her. Both sides also labour to procure her recognition by the father who had formerly abandoned her in such a cowardly way; and he, whom age has brought back to better feelings, would now be quite willing to show favour to her, if, owing to a series of rather cleverly devised circumstances, he had not arrived at the conviction that Evelina is not his real daughter. At last, during a visit made by all the principal characters of the novel to the celebrated Bath waters, Belmont sees Evelina and ascertains, beyond any possibility of mistake, that she really is his daughter; Mme. Duval and the Brangtons are decidedly vanquished; the suitors proposed by the two rival parties are dismissed to the right and left, and Evelina marries a virtuous nobleman, Lord Orville, who all along has been the one elect of her heart.

Such is a very brief summary of the plot of "Evelina." It has, as may be seen, a resemblance to the ordinary subjects of Richardson's novels and of his English or French imitators. But although it offers no greater element of probability, and is equally tiresome, according to our present-day tastes, we are bound to admit that the story is presented with more skill, developed with more consistency, and, in a way, taken more seriously by the authoress herself. With all its faults, it marks an undeniable progress from the point of view of simplification and concentration of romantic plot. The incidents already begin to have some value by virtue of their own interest,

instead of being merely excuses for the analysis of feeling, for the painting of manners or characters, or for moralising digressions, like those in which Richardson and Rousseau delight. Of these digressions "Evelina" does not show a trace, and we must needs admit that analysis of feeling also plays a very small part in it. Evelina and her Lord Orville, the hero and heroine of the story, rarely soar above the level of amiable commonplaceness. But on the other hand the portrayal of manners and characters occupies a considerable place in the new novel; and if the moral of the subject is directly traceable to the author of "Clarissa Harlowe," it is on the contrary the influence of Fielding, of Smollett and of Goldsmith which is to be discovered in the development of the innumerable episodes of the struggle between Mme. Duval's faction and that of Captain Mirvan. This tragi-comical struggle furnishes the authoress with an opportunity of taking the reader into the most widely different strata of the English middle-classes, whilst Evelina is continually meeting in her path fresh faces which seem to interest her much more than her own, judging from the care and talent she expends in describing them. Public and private balls, evenings at the opera and the famous Vauxhall, walks in the elegant gardens of Kensington and Marylebone, familiar conversations in the Brangton's back-shop, and in the salons of the fashionable watering-place—a complete picture of English life in 1778 is unrolled before the reader of the three volumes of "Evelina." Still more living and picturesque are the different types which defile unceasingly before us, from Captain Mirvan, with his oaths, his practical jokes, his noisy hatred of coxcombs, of Frenchmen, down to the extraordinary

dandy, Mr. Smith, "the beau of Holborn," who dresses in the latest fashion, never shows himself without being followed by a groom, and, with his mixture of ignorance and presumption, is perpetually bringing upon himself the most amusing mishaps.

Doctor Johnson used to say that the authoress of "Evelina" was, above all, "a manufacturer of characters"; and in fact the three volumes of the novel are filled with types so varied, so natural, and observed with such charming simplicity that these qualities alone would suffice to justify the enthusiastic reception which the new book received, not only from the public but from the critics of the period. The worst we can say is that this "manufacture of characters" has something artificial and too deliberate about it, as though the authoress, knowing herself to be particularly skilful at this kind of work, had abused her opportunities for displaying it. Besides, however pleasing the types in "Evelina" may be, there is nothing original about her way of presenting them. There is not one of these types which is not obviously an adaptation of the ordinary descriptive process of Fielding and Smollett—just as the arrangement of the plot is directly derived from Richardson's novels. Undeniably, when we come to analyse "Evelina" pretty closely, we find it reduced to a very clever imitation of the work of the great novelists who preceded it. But from the point of view of the historical development of the novel, this imitation has all the value of an innovation. Into the framework of Richardson's sentimental stories, the authoress of "Evelina" introduces, for the first time, a realistic picture, which, hitherto, had only been practised in the less rigid framework of the *picaresque*

novel or Fielding's school, or in the delicate setting of a homely comedy, as in the admirable "Vicar of Wakefield." The innovation is of considerable importance both in itself and in its consequences. We may say that it is to "Evelina" the English novel owes the special style which it assumed in the nineteenth century, that great characteristic style rendered illustrious by men like Dickens and Thackeray. This story, devoid of originality in the strict sense of the word, is in reality the first in which we may observe Fielding's strong methods of observation applied not only to the study of an exceptional world of adventurers and courtesans, but simply to the everyday life and morals of the English middle-classes. The actors, certainly, have not the grand manner of some characters in "Tom Jones" and "Humphrey Clinker"; but they are more familiar and realistic, more accessible to the great public, and could not fail, henceforth, to furnish novelists with a field of observation vastly wider, easier, and richer. Mr. Smith and Mme. Duval, the Brangtons and Captain Mirvan are already summary sketches of the immortal characters soon to be evoked by the genius of Dickens.

All these merits, however, did not prevent "Evelina" from falling into an oblivion from which, seventy years later, the generous efforts of Macaulay himself failed to raise it. But, as I have said, the effect of the novel on contemporaries was considerable. Purchasers swarmed to the Fleet Street shop; the reading-room copies were perpetually in demand, and already the names of several of its characters—the Holborn "Beau," Polly Brangton, Lovelace Lovel—were beginning to become household words

in conversation. But the author's name still remained a secret. It was not till five or six months after the publication of the three volumes that the mystery of the authorship of "Evelina" was at last cleared up, at least for that little group or "initiated" who, under Johnson's guidance, prided themselves on presiding over the republic of letters. And we must add that for many of these connoisseurs the revelation was accompanied by a fresh surprise. "I know somebody," said the witty Mrs. Cholmondeley, "who bet that the author of 'Evelina' was a man. I was ready to bet it was a woman; but we should both have lost, for the author of 'Evelina' is a little girl."

A "little girl" who in 1778 was just six-and-twenty, but really so little, so slender, so slight, and at the same time so timid and gentle, with such an air of childish simplicity in the limpid smile of her large grey eyes, that we have no difficulty in understanding the unanimous amazement of those who had to acknowledge her as the creator of Captain Mirvan and of Mme. Duval. People were amazed that so modest a girl, who blushed and trembled with emotion at the least compliment—a girl who had never, so to speak, been out of her father's house—could have observed all the varied characters which filled her book. They were still more astonished that she, who had never had the opportunity of receiving a literary education, should have succeeded in producing a work of which the most severe critics were unanimous in praising the stylistic qualities. It was no use the fact being true—people refused to believe it; and as the author of "Evelina" on two occasions praised Johnson's talent in her preface, and the latter in return went about spreading

praise of the book everywhere, the rumour soon got abroad that the famous Doctor had, at the very least, aided the author of "Evelina" with his advice.

Yet we know positively at the present day that Johnson never had the smallest share in the composition of the work, and only learned its authorship with all the rest of the world. Nowadays, that which astonished the contemporaries of "Evelina" has become clearly explicable. Twice in the course of the nineteenth century—in 1842 and 1889—documents were published which brought us into close touch with the young "manufacturer of characters" of 1778. These documents inform us not only how she found opportunities of observing all the types she has described, but how she acquired such premature skill in describing them.

II

Frances (or Fanny) Burney was the daughter of one of the most remarkable men in England in the second half of the eighteenth century, who himself well deserves to be rescued from the oblivion into which he has fallen—the composer, professor of music, and musicographer, Charles Burney, who wrote incidental music to the drama *Queen Mab*, a number of sonatas for the harpsichord for two and four hands, and a voluminous "History of Music," which is reckoned one of the best in existence. But above all these must be ranked two narratives of his journeys to France, Italy, Germany, and the Netherlands—an incomparable storehouse of information respecting the manners and the music of the period.

A musician by profession, Burney was also a man of letters, with a love and genius for conversation. Arriving in London in 1760, it was not long before he became intimate with a numerous group of writers, artists and wits. When, in 1774, he settled down in a house in Leicester Square, where Sir Isaac Newton had formerly lived, his drawing-room became one of the curiosities of the town, and also the habitual rendezvous of all the notabilities who visited London. Thus little Fanny, hidden in a corner of the Burneys' drawing-room, saw a wonderful variety of English and foreign celebrities—the actor Garrick, the painter Reynolds, Dr. Johnson, accompanied by his noisy pupil and protectress, Mrs. Thrale, Prince Orloff, who had had the glory of taking part in the murder of a Tzar, and the elegant Omiah, a native of Tahiti, who justly flattered himself that he was better dressed, bowed more gracefully, and danced better than if he had been the son and disciple of Lord Chesterfield. Nobody, to be sure, knew *her*—the frail, timid child, who had not even, like her sisters, the advantage of being able to play a duet by Müthel; but she, from her corner, saw, heard, observed and noted everything.

For she had felt from her childhood an irresistible need to redeem her natural timidity—due, perhaps, partly to her diminutive stature, or her short-sightedness—by committing every evening to paper the details of her impressions and thoughts. The first lines of her “Diary” which have come down to us date from her sixteenth year; but it is supposed that she had begun to keep a diary much earlier, or at least to write an account of the principal facts of her life. Nor is this all. She had formed at a very

early period an intimate friendship with an excellent old man, a friend of her parents, a certain Samuel Crisp, who had failed as a playwright, but was a man of infinite taste and knowledge. This worthy man, vexed at the miserable failure of his work "Virginia," left London and retired to a fine old country-house in the neighbourhood of Kingston. There, the greatest pleasure of his life was to receive long letters from his little Fanny. It was he who had persuaded the child from the first to cultivate her gifts of observation and style—unwearied in his praise and explanation of the art by which the great classic writers managed to sum up in a few lines the *ensemble* of a figure or character. Every week Fanny used to send "Uncle Crisp" a regular chronicle from London, into which she tried her best to put all possible grace and variety. She did it out of attachment to the old man, for she had a good little heart, full of affection and gratitude; but at the same time this correspondence, going on *pari passu* with her private diary, was for her an incomparable school of literature, the happy results of which are sufficiently manifested in her first novel. Such had been her education, whilst her father, her brothers and the friends of the family looked upon her as a nice little girl, but perfectly insignificant, and even rather stupid! The human comedy which she had striven to evoke in "Evelina" she had seen unfolding before her eyes every day with a marvellous diversity of actors of every age and condition, and, on the other hand, the wise remarks of "Uncle Crisp" had not ceased to stimulate, to exercise and to develop her inclination to express in writing everything which struck her, in herself or in her environment.

III

One of the principal consequences of the success of "Evelina" was to alter the obscure and charming life she had led uninterruptedly up to the age of twenty-six. Having become the fashionable authoress, she found herself compelled to come out of her corner and take an active part in the comedy of which hitherto she had been a mere spectator. Her field of observation gradually widened, and in point of fact the part of her diary which covers the years 1778 to 1791, as well as her letters of that period, abound in narratives, scenes and portraits of an incomparable literary and historic interest. There is not a personage of any importance, from the king and queen to the actors of Drury Lane and the writers of the *Morning Herald*, whom she did not know personally. More especially she came in frequent contact with the foremost writers of her country, and all of them seem to have come under the spell of her sweet girlish soul. Henceforth she was in a position to add to "Uncle Crisp's" teaching and advice the assistance of men far better qualified to help her to pursue with profit her literary career—Johnson and Sheridan, Garrick and Burke, the survivors of the old generation and the youthful heralds of new ideas. Were not those excellent conditions under which to produce novels even superior to "Evelina," striking a deeper human note, showing more consummate art—the fine novels which all her friends awaited from her, and twenty publishers were eager to buy beforehand?

Nevertheless, the novel she brought out in 1782, "Cecilia, or the Memoirs of an Heiress," in spite of its considerable sale, did not receive from men of letters, nor even from the public, the enthusiastic reception which had fallen to "Evelina" four years before. Not but what we find in it obvious traces of the progress made by the young novelist in the practice of her craft—the plot of "Cecilia" is undoubtedly simpler and more vigorous than that of "Evelina," the characters more varied, although less numerous. It is the story of an "heiress," who could only keep her inheritance on condition of keeping at the same time her father's name. A young man fell in love with her and wanted to marry her, but met with the downright refusal of his parents, who being very proud of their name were neither willing that their son should renounce it, nor yet that he should marry a portionless girl. A scene follows—quite in the romantic style, with its mixture of passion and brutality—in which the young man's mother quarrels with her son, curses him, and ends by bursting a blood-vessel in the excess of her fury. Another scene, no less bold, represented the suicide of a gambler, in the midst of a great festivity at the Vauxhall Gardens. Harmonious equilibrium of the story as a whole, clearness and precision of the smallest details—everything showed the great effort made by Miss Burney to make the very most of her personal experience and her masters' lessons. But in spite of all this, the work gave an impression of being laboured; it dragged, and was lacking in vitality. Old Johnson, although he sang its praises noisily, confessed that he had never succeeded in reading it through. Another of the admirers of "Evelina,"

Horace Walpole, said that "Cecilia" was "of an interminable length," that "most of the people in it were exaggerated," that all of them "were too much *characters* to be representative of the complexity of real human life"; finally that the whole work had the grave defect of being written "in the style affected by Dr. Johnson." This last reproach, unfortunately well founded, as well as the preceding ones, probably explains the special weakness of "Cecilia." Poor Fanny Burney had yielded too completely to the influence of the great man who had deigned to become her friend. In spite of herself, no doubt, she had forgotten her former models and the wise advice of "Uncle Crisp," and had set herself to imitate a writer who, with all his great intellectual and moral worth, was nevertheless a pedant and the last person to serve as a model to a slight, innocent "little girl" like herself.

Yet the imitation of Johnson, as it appeared in "Cecilia," was infinitely less disastrous to Fanny Burney's talent, than the influences she was presently to fall under, after the death of the author of "Rasselas." And if "Cecilia," with all its merits, runs the risk of boring us more nowadays than the novel which preceded it, her two other novels—"Camilla, or a Picture of Youth" (1796), and "The Wanderer; or Female Difficulties" (1814), were unanimously declared by her own contemporaries to be unreadable. The authoress of "Evelina" had now become romantic—she imitated Ossian, Mrs. Radcliffe, and also Ducray-Duminil, whose countrywoman she had to a certain extent become, having married a French *émigré*, the Vicomte d'Arblay, and settled with him in France. Nothing survived of all the charming qualities which made

her first novel a success; and by a strange irony of fate, the smart "little girl" of 1778 had transformed herself into a sort of Mme. Duval, blending, in a ridiculously affected style, the bad taste of her adopted country with that of her fatherland.

This is so true that Mr. Austin Dobson, speaking of her in a volume of the "English Writers" series, only dwelt upon one of her novels—the only one which justified her presence in that series.*

But, for this reason, the learned and ingenious critic found more space in which to resuscitate, by the help of Fanny Burney's "Diary" and letters, some of the principal historic scenes at which she was present, and the most predominant personalities—princesses, actresses, statesmen and poets—of which she has left us living likenesses, just as her old friend and admirer Sir Joshua Reynolds has done. None of these pictures, however, delights and touches more than that of "little Burney" herself, silent and shy, who still, after nearly a century, is looking about her with a candid but mischievous smile in her large grey eyes.

* "Fanny Burney," by Austin Dobson. 1 vol. London, 1904.

III

THE MOTHER OF FEMINISM :

MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT

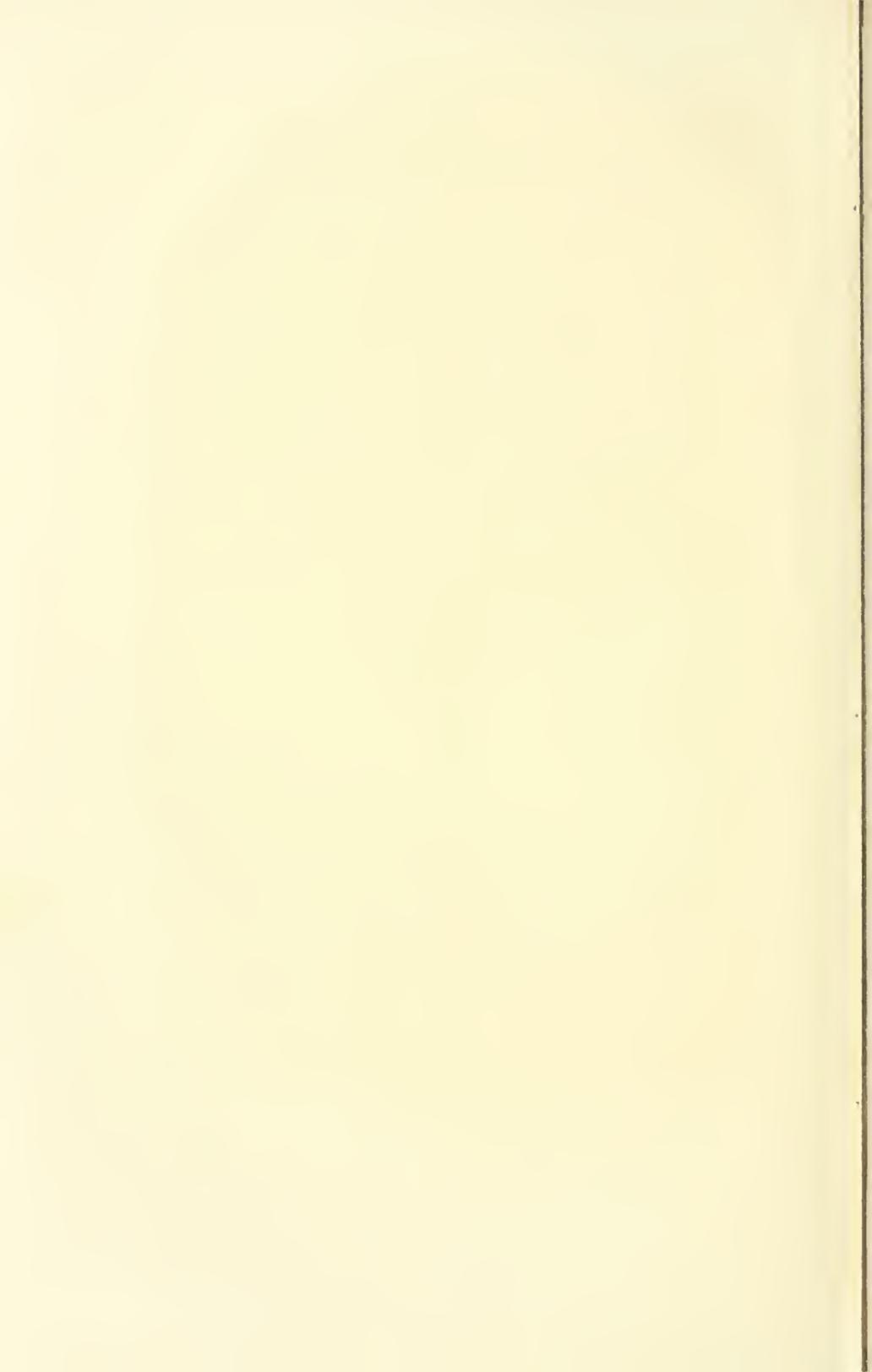
MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT was an apostle. The first to preach the war of the sexes, the revolt of woman against the yoke of man. Her preaching, it is true, had not the good fortune to produce an immediate result, but it gave birth to a struggle which has been going on for the last hundred years with ever-increasing ardour, and no one, as yet, can guess what the issue of that struggle will be. Like many of these rebellious spirits, Mary Wollstonecraft found herself predestined to the part she played: her character, her education, the circumstances of her life, all concurred to make her the passionate apostle of the rights of woman.

I

She was born on April 27, 1759, in the neighbourhood of London, of an Irish family which had once been rich, but which was growing poorer from year to year. Her father, an intelligent and active man, but soured perhaps by bad luck, was a tyrant to his own people. He used to beat his children



MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT GODWIN
From a painting by John Opie, R.A., now in the National Gallery



for the least thing, and even more to his taste was beating his wife, in spite of the tears, entreaties and invectives of little Mary. The latter, indeed, had concentrated on her mother all the ardent passion with which her heart overflowed; she would have laid down her life with joy to protect her; and neither her father's brutality, nor her brother's indifference, nothing in fact appears to have hurt her so cruelly during the long years of childhood and youth, as the coldness and injustice meted out to her by that mother whom she worshipped. But Mrs. Wollstonecraft, though looking upon her daughter as a precious support, could never forgive her for not being a boy. She only loved her sons, and especially the eldest, an egotistical, bad fellow, who no sooner left his father's house than he hastened to break off all connection with his family. "I never had a father nor a brother," wrote Mary Wollstonecraft later on, and she used to say that of all the misfortunes which can overwhelm a woman the most terrible is "never to have known a mother's love."

Thus she grew up, sad and solitary, without a soul to welcome her impulses of tenderness. Early ripened by suffering, it was she who managed the household and brought up her little sisters, but her chief consolation was reading. She read at random all the books she came across, feeding promiscuously on novels, scientific memoirs, and religious dissertations. One day she read a translation of Rousseau's "Émile." She was so profoundly stirred by it that she did not put it aside till she had learnt the whole of it by heart. From that time Rousseau became her favourite author, the inspirer of all her feelings and of all her thoughts. It was doubtless he who,

from the age of eighteen, gave her the taste for independence and determined her to look out for some employment that would enable her to earn her own living.

Employment of that sort was unfortunately difficult to be found by a young girl who, except her parents and a few clergymen, knew not a soul in the world, and whose education, in spite of incessant reading, still remained extremely defective. Mary ended by taking a situation as reader to an old lady. For two years she filled this post, which no girl before her had been able to keep for more than a few weeks. She would have kept it still longer had not her mother, who was dying, recalled her and begged her to take her place and look after the household. So Mary saw her mother die, and saw her father, after being scarcely six months a widower, take another wife, and inform his children that he was no longer in a position to do anything more for them.

She then took refuge with a friend, Fanny Blood, an intelligent and well-educated girl, who, in order to support her mother, had been obliged to give up her studies and open a dressmaker's shop. Fanny was in love with a man of a superior social position to herself, and this man, a certain Hugh Skeys, loved her too, but feared lest his relations and friends might be displeased if he married a milliner. So the years passed without his making up his mind to keep the promise he had made her. The months which Mary Wollstonecraft lived in company with her dear Fanny were the happiest of her life. She continued her literary and moral education, she helped her friend in her needlework, she had the feeling of being free, and

of making herself useful. But she was not born for a quiet life. One day she received a letter from one of her sisters, Eliza, begging her to come to her assistance. In order to escape her father's tyranny, Eliza had married, and now found her husband to be a worse tyrant than her father. Not content with beating her, he was openly unfaithful to her, so that poor Eliza felt herself on the verge of madness. Mary hastened to obey her appeal. After an impartial examination of the situation, she declared that, by all principles of justice, the husband's misconduct had broken every bond that bound him to his wife. She persuaded her sister to regard herself henceforth as free, without troubling herself about a law which her husband had been the first to annul. She induced her to flee, kept her concealed for several months, and ended by obtaining the husband's consent to a separation.

With the aid of her sister and Fanny Blood, Mary Wollstonecraft opened a girls' school in a suburb of London. She immediately got twenty pupils, some of them boarders, and again she ventured to think herself on the road to happiness. But soon Fanny left her, to marry the man she loved; and scarcely had Mary resigned herself to living apart from her, when she learnt that the young woman was hopelessly ill. For a long time past the doctors had declared that the only thing which could restore her strength was a southern climate, and accordingly as soon as she was married she had gone to live in Lisbon. But the marriage had been put off too long, the bridegroom having been deterred too long by respect for social conventions, and Fanny was now dying beneath the sunny sky of Lisbon. As soon as Mary Wollstonecraft learnt the news, she started off, wishing at all

events to be present at the last moments of her friend. She saw her die in her arms. Returning to London, she found her school almost empty. Alone in the world once more, and without resources, she now for the first time had a distinct consciousness of the unjust destiny which weighed upon her.

In the autumn of 1787, after long weeks of distress, she found a situation as governess at Lord Kingsborough's. In this great nobleman's establishment she had to endure the scorn of frivolous and foolish women, but above all she seems to have had to suffer under all sorts of allusions and proposals from men, the memory of which, ten years later, still made her quiver with anger. She ended by being dismissed, simply because Lady Kingsborough's eldest daughter had shown more attachment to her than a girl of noble birth ought to show to a mere governess. So Mary Wollstonecraft had to return to London, where the publisher Johnson entrusted her with various commissions in the way of translation or of adaptation. In spite of herself, as the result of influences from which she had striven to escape in vain, she found herself drifting into becoming a literary woman.

Johnson, to whom chance had directed her steps, was the patron of a whole group of writers, artists, and politicians, representing all the different shades of radicalism. Mary Wollstonecraft had an opportunity of meeting at his house the future *Conventionnel* Tom Paine, the former clergyman Godwin, who boasted of being an artist, the Swiss painter Fuseli, who was an admirer of Rousseau and a passionate defender of revolutionary theories. It was in this environment that she was living, imbuing herself more and more each day with the thoughts

and feelings that were stirring around her, when in 1790 Burke brought out his famous "Reflections on the French Revolution." Without stopping to think, in a sudden impulse, she answered the Irish orator's pamphlet by one still more violent, "The Vindication of the Rights of Man ;" and two years after, by way of complement to this first work, she published her "Vindication of the Rights of Woman.'

She had not however completed her own personal experience of what she called "the misfortune of being a woman." The painter Fuseli, by dint of seeing her and discussing with her, found himself falling in love with her. He was a married man and a father, and in spite of his revolutionary opinions, he greatly valued the respect which he had earned. To spare him the annoyance of a public scandal, Mary Wollstonecraft decided to leave London and go to Paris, on the pretext of studying the progress of the revolution on the spot.

She was then thirty-three years of age, but she had never been more beautiful, nor more attractive. A German, Count Schlabrendorf, who had the opportunity of seeing her in Paris, has left us a curious portrait of her. "She was," he says, "the noblest and the purest woman I ever saw. She was no longer a dazzling beauty, but an adorable gracefulness seemed to emanate from her. Her face, full of expression, showed a style of beauty infinitely superior to mere regularity of features. There was real fascination in her glance, in her voice, in every movement. During my imprisonment she came to see me several times, and I felt her attraction more and more, but it was only after leaving Paris that I became aware I was in love with her." This first of

the *feminists* was in fact an extremely pretty woman. Such she still appears in her portrait painted by Opie in 1797, with a superb mass of fair hair, and large eyes full of sweetness and melancholy. Such, too, she doubtless appeared to an American officer who happened to be in Paris in 1792, and fell passionately in love with her at first sight. This American, Gilbert Imlay, was a very handsome man. Mary Wollstonecraft gradually yielded him her heart: it was her first and last love.

The two lovers would fain have married at once, but were afraid lest Mary, if she allowed herself to be known as an Englishwoman, might have to endure unpleasantness at the hands of the Committee of Public Welfare; and thus their marriage was postponed. None the less they lived as man and wife, and next year Mary gave birth to a daughter who was registered under the name of Fanny Imlay. In 1795 Imlay and his companion went to London, but the American officer was already beginning to weary of a too-exacting love. Instead of marrying Mary Wollstonecraft, he conceived the expedient of sending her with her daughter to Sweden, to settle certain matters of business with which he had been entrusted. The young woman remained away several months, and performed her mission with a success which Imlay himself had hardly hoped for. When she came back to London, full of pride at having rendered her friend such a valuable service, she found another woman installed in her place. She fled, in a fit of frenzy, and threw herself into the Thames. Fortunately a boatman saw her fall in, and managed to drag her out of the water.

The period which ensued was one of terrible sadness; she could not reconcile herself to life, yet she

wished to live to bring up her daughter. Once again poverty descended upon her. Several times Imlay offered her money, but she obstinately refused it. "I have never asked you for anything but your heart," she wrote to him. "You have taken that back, henceforth there is nothing you can give me." She only accepted the right to bear the name of Mrs. Imlay.

To earn a little money, she published a volume containing part of the letters she had written to Imlay during her travels in Sweden, Norway and Denmark. The volume brought her, amongst other compliments, those of the philosopher William Godwin, who had already noticed her four years earlier and soon a close intimacy grew up between them, which even ended, in 1797, in a perfectly regular marriage—yet Godwin had only recently written that "marriage was the most hateful of all laws." Mary Wollstonecraft, however, though a staunch revolutionary, did not carry hatred of the laws to that extent, and her recent experience had taught her to appreciate the importance of that law in particular. The atheistic and anarchist philosopher found himself compelled to take her one morning to the clergyman of St. Pancras Church, and to swear on the Gospel an eternal fidelity. Although he was not a man to keep an oath of that sort without some difficulty, everything leads us to believe that he had no time to break it; for seven months later, on September 7, 1797, Mary Wollstonecraft died, after having given birth to a second daughter, the Mary Godwin who was destined one day to be mated with the poet Shelley.

Did the authoress of the "Vindication of the Rights of Woman" find happiness at last in the

brief months of her married life? Not, at all events, in the romantic and passionate form which was the only one that could really appeal to her. Her husband seems to have inspired her with little more than a cordial friendship—the only feeling, indeed, which he was capable of inspiring. He was a cold and cynical egotist, although highly intelligent, and tolerably honest. But I fancy that many a time Mary Wollstonecraft, when listening to his paradoxes, must have regretted Captain Imlay, the handsome American, who knew how to love. Godwin only knew how to argue, and that only with a view to demolishing everything he touched. His biographer tells us that during the last days of his wife's agony, when in a moment of relief from her terrible sufferings, she held out her hand to him, saying: "William, this is heaven!" William, instead of taking her hand, made a face and merely remarked: "You mean, my dear, that your physical sensations are rather less painful!" Thus, at the age of thirty-eight, died this beautiful young woman, whose whole life was spent in suffering through the faults of men. And we know for certain that her marriage with Godwin did not diminish the ardour of her feminism; for it was during the last weeks of her life that she began the work which, even more than her "Vindication of the Rights of Woman," was intended to convey the exposition of her grievances against man—a novel which she entitled "Maria, or the Misfortune of being a Woman," which death prevented her from finishing.*

Mary Godwin intended to incarnate in the different

* This novel, published by Godwin in 1798, was translated into French the same year.

female characters of this novel every variety of unhappy woman. "The fact of my being so engrossed with my theories," she writes, "restrained my fancy, and I have written the history of woman in general rather than that of one woman in particular." But we feel that there is not one of the figures in the book to which she has not lent some of her own personal feelings, from Mary herself, in despair at finding in her child's face some faint reflexion of its father's, to Jemima, whose misfortunes all come "from not having had a mother's love to support her on her entrance into life." Rich or poor, young or old, beautiful or ugly, the heroines of Mary are all victims of the barbarity of men, or rather victims of their own weakness, or of the tyranny of laws which render fruitless beforehand all their efforts at emancipation. "Against laws made by the strong to oppose the weak," cries the youthful Mary, "I appeal to my natural sense of justice." It was already in the name of this "natural sense of justice" that Mary Wollstonecraft, fifteen years before, had proclaimed her sister's marriage null and void.

Thus her last book is also her last will and testament, the *résumé* of the reflexions, dreams and sufferings of her whole life. It completely proves how much of herself she put into her theories, and that the memory of her own misfortunes made her a *feminist*. But however far she may have pushed in this book her "preoccupation by the theory she had to uphold," the form of the novel did not give her freedom to express her doctrine as a whole. Considered from this point of view her "Mary" is only the commentary, or rather the illustration of the ideas put forth by her in 1792, in her "Vindication of the Rights of Woman." Indeed, this

“Vindication” is the only one of her works which has exercised a real and lasting influence. Translated into all languages, from the very year of its publication * it occasioned a host of replies and controversies. St. Simon, Fourier, John Stuart Mill, found in it a starting-point for some of their theories; and even at the present day all historians of the feminist movement agree in regarding it as a leading authority. The one drawback is that, written too hastily and too much at haphazard, this leading work is rather unreadable. “I shall scorn to deck out my phrases or polish my style,” declares Mary Wollstonecraft in her Introduction; “my only object is to be useful, and my sincerity will dispense me from all affectation.” Godwin informs us that the whole work was written in six weeks. In any case it was written with so much haste that not only are the sentences very little “decked out,” but the ideas themselves are presented in a jumble, without the ghost of a plan or of preparation. Mrs. Emma Rauschenbusch-Clough has recently rendered a real service by taking the trouble to disentangle this obscure medley, so as to throw a clear light on Mary Wollstonecraft’s feminist doctrine.†

* Two French translations appeared simultaneously in 1792, the one published by Buisson, Paris, the other at Lyons, published by Bruyset Bros.

† “A Study of Mary Wollstonecraft and the Rights of Woman.” By Emma Rauschenbusch-Clough. 1 vol. London. 1899.

II

Fundamentally, this doctrine is perfectly simple and a few lines will suffice to sum it up. But first we must bear in mind the date of the work and the circumstances under which it was conceived. Stirred to indignation by Burke's pamphlet against the French Revolution, Mary Wollstonecraft had replied to it by "vindicating the rights of man." From this sprang the idea of vindicating the rights of woman also. So that her book is nothing but a huge pamphlet, written under the immediate influence of current events. In fact the author, though addressing the English public, does not conceal the fact that it is from France she expects the realisation of her plan of reform. Why should not France, the most enlightened of all nations try what reason can do to bring women back to their real nature? Why should she not try, by admitting them to share with men the advantages of government and of education, whether wisdom and liberty would not have the effect of making them better? The experiment, at all events, could hardly have any evil results for woman; for nothing that man can ever do against them will be able to make them more complete ciphers than they are at present? So Mary Wollstonecraft counts upon the French Revolution to proclaim the intellectual and social emancipation of woman; she engages the Revolution to complete thereby its work: that "return to Nature" which Rousseau has taught her to regard as the most sacred duty of mankind. She herself, moreover, has no other object in writing her

book than to complete "Émile" and the "Contrat Social."

She perceived, in fact, that Rousseau, who argued so well on the rights and duties of man, was utterly mistaken when he talked of woman. From her physical inferiority he argued her moral inferiority, and the necessity for her of remaining dependent in relation to man. He added that woman naturally needs to be dominated, that she feels a natural desire to please, and that attention to dress, the household, and family life are better adapted to her than the labours of the mind. "All a mistake!" resolutely maintains Mary Wollstonecraft.

I have probably had more opportunities than Rousseau of observing young girls. I can collect my own personal recollections and join to them numerous experiments made on children whose growth I have watched. Now I am bound to assert that, far from agreeing with him as to the first awakening of female character, I hold that a little girl whose character has not been depressed by inactivity will always be more disposed to play in the open air than to amuse herself in her room with her dolls.

As for the desire to please, and the need to obey, which Rousseau thinks natural to woman, Mary Wollstonecraft sees in that the deplorable results of a condition of slavery and debasement that has lasted for ages.

Formed to live with such an imperfect being as man, they ought to learn from the exercise of their faculties the necessity of forbearance: but all the sacred rights of humanity are violated by insisting on blind obedience. Considering the length of time that women have been dependent, is it surprising that some of them hug their chains and fawn like a spaniel? "These dogs," observes a

naturalist, "at first kept their ears erect ; but custom has superseded nature, and a token of fear has become a beauty."

Mary Wollstonecraft admits, however, with Rousseau, the physical inferiority of women, but she refuses to deduce from that her intellectual and moral inferiority. She asserts that, from both points of view, woman is the equal of man. Reason has in fact been given to woman as well as to man—even Rousseau is forced to admit that ; now reason is a divine emanation, a bond which unites the creature to its creator ; why then should we suppose that it is not always equal to itself, or that it can differ according to the two sexes ? If we admit that there is but one truth, all reason ought to be equally capable of discerning it ; and if we admit that good is distinct from evil, we have no right to suppose that man alone is capable of appreciating the difference.

Such is the theoretical foundation of the feminism of Mary Wollstonecraft, in which we recognise the somewhat superficial rationalism of Rousseau, and of the men who drew up "The Declaration of the Rights of Man." We cannot help thinking that, later on, the atheist Godwin must have often reproached his wife with the weakness of a line of argument based entirely on the supernatural origin of reason and the moral sentiments. However, Mary Wollstonecraft does not lay much stress on her syllogisms. After having rapidly laid down the principle that woman is by nature the equal of man, she busies herself for the future with setting forth the causes which, in our so-called civilised society, prevent woman from turning her natural equality to account.

The chief of these causes is that man, in order to maintain the ascendancy given him by his physical strength, needs to be intellectually superior to woman. Only on these terms can he render his mastery permanent and secure. Weakness, together with submission which results from weakness, suits his tyrannical purposes better than independence, which would infallibly result from equality. Woman, on the other hand, satisfied with the homage that man pays to her, resigns herself to sacrifice her faculties to him. What can be more revolting—from Mary Wollstonecraft's point of view—than to see a man starting up with solicitude to pick up a handkerchief, or close a door, when the woman on whom these attentions are lavished has but to make a step to render them useless. It is by tricks such as these that man for centuries past has been stifling in woman the voice of reason which Nature has put in her as well as in him. He forbids her all serious study, he keeps her away from the great interests of life, he accustoms her to giving her mind to nothing but dress, he depraves her to such a degree that she ends by growing to like her slavery.

I must add that, in a general way, Mary Wollstonecraft is perhaps even more severe to woman than to man, in the picture she has painted of the vices of her time. She is angry with the opinion that attributes more feeling, pity and kindness to woman than to man. "How could women be just and generous," she exclaims, "when they are the slaves of injustice and cruelty?" She accuses her sex of meanness, hypocrisy, selfishness and want of heart; she shows it sunk to the lowest depth of depravation. But she asserts that this depravation is but the result

of her slavery. Let woman be freed, let her be allowed "to come back to her real nature," "to share with man the advantages of education and government, and it will not be long before she becomes better by the very fact of her becoming freer and wiser." Instead of the useless and frivolous creature that represents woman in our degenerate society we shall see a new woman, the equal of man in reason and in virtue. "And doubtless," remarks Mary Wollstonecraft, "she will no longer be correctly defined as the sweet flower which smiles beneath men's feet; but she will have the conscious feeling of being a respectable member of society."

As for the practical reforms which can prepare the coming of this "new woman," two of these appear to Mary Wollstonecraft more urgent than all the rest: they are the two reforms which she points out to the French revolutionists, when she asks them, by way of experiment, to authorise women "to share with men the advantages of education and government." Girls, in her opinion, ought to be brought up in common with boys, in great national schools where no distinctions of sex or fortune exist. She desires also that all careers should be open without distinction to both sexes, and she recommends to women more particularly the medical profession, as being thoroughly suitable to their natural qualities. Her political programme is much more vague. She confines herself to demanding for women civil rights equal to those enjoyed by men, adding that among these, the right of voting cannot fail to be included, any more than that of electing women to public functions; but as to the practical organisation of this right of voting she does not go beyond generalities

and these often contradict each other from one page to another.

The whole book, indeed, is full of contradictions, and its philosophical value is very indifferent. But although "women's rights" since her time have found far more able and eloquent defenders, none, perhaps, have vindicated them with so much passion, nor thrown their whole heart so completely into proclaiming "the misfortune of being a woman."

IV

ONE OF GOETHE'S VICTIMS:

EANNE ECKERMANN*

AT the University of Göttingen, in 1821, was a law-student named Johann Peter Eckermann. Born in 1792, in a little village in Hanover, where his father was a small tradesman, he had been in turns, a shepherd, a soldier, a draughtsman and a clerk, and had only learnt Latin when over twenty-five years of age; but his application and his natural ambition, which had always been great, had been additionally stimulated by the acquaintance which he had made at Hanover, in 1818, with a charming girl, to whom he became engaged the following year. This girl, Fräulein Jeanne Bertram, nine years his junior, was poor like himself, but of excellent family and extremely well educated. She had doubtless been touched with Eckermann's stubborn efforts to emerge from the obscurity to which his birth seemed to condemn him; and perhaps, too, she had been led on from pity to love, after seeing the young man seriously ill, even at death's door, for several months. Anyhow she had given him her whole

* "Aus Goethe's Lebenskreise; J. P. Eckermanns Nachlass." By M. E. Tewes. 1 vol. 8vo. Berlin, Reimer, 1905.

heart, and, with her parents' approval, promised to become his wife, as soon as he should be in a position to earn his living. To please this girl, especially, and to obey her, Eckermann resigned himself to the study of law. His own personal tastes inclined more to literature, and without despising fortune he would rather have owed it to beautiful verses than to briefs, but his future bride, with great wisdom, had pointed out to him that a barrister was not debarred from writing or publishing beautiful verses, whilst, on the other hand, a regular and secure profession would allow him to marry sooner—a happiness which they were both awaiting with great impatience. In 1821, therefore, Eckermann had been living two years at Göttingen, where he astonished his professors by his zeal and docility.

He was in fact an excellent fellow, perfectly upright, and fairly intelligent, yet full of that ingenuous vanity, and excessive belief in himself that are often found in the self-taught. With all that, and in spite of his setting up for a poet, he had a mind so thoroughly prosaic that every idea which emanated from it seem flat and colourless. Every week he wrote his long letters to his bride, trying his best to display the tender affection he felt for her. "In the day-time," he writes, "I have but little time to think of you, amidst the distractions of my new life; in the evening I can think but little about you, for the fatigues of the day prevent me from recalling my fond recollections; but at night, in my dreams, I come back to you, beloved Jeanne, and I feel as though I was really by your side once more." He describes his lodgings, his food, and tells her about his walks. "Yesterday, after my bath, I went to Merseburg, where they brew a pale ale which Jean-

Paul used to adore : I too have drunk a good lot of it." But he knew that nothing interested the girl more than his pursuit of the diploma of Doctor of Laws, and there was no subject which he loved better to talk about to her. "I no longer regard the study of law," writes he on May 19, 1821, "as a dry study, and I get on with it much more easily than I had anticipated." On another occasion he reports the words of one of his professors, who on learning of his wish to become a barrister, had offered to find him plenty of clients. "He told me that if I did not absolutely desire to settle in Hanover, he advised me to choose the neighbourhood of Lüneburg where barristers are scarce and where much more money can be earned than in this country. They have applied to him from Bleckede to ask if he could not send some one there. He thinks I can easily be ready in eighteen months. Who knows where fate may take us? Perhaps we shall soon be able to live in your brother's neighbourhood? But first I must get my doctor's degree!"

Little did the engaged couple dream of the long and troublesome path by which "fate" was from that very moment preparing to lead them. On August 25, 1821, Eckermann sent Goethe, with his respectful homage, a little collection of poems which he had just had printed. On October 2, the old poet sent him a few lines in answer, full of the commonplace, unreserved praise, which he now began to lavish upon his younger *confrères*; and the master's answer had literally turned the law-student's head with pride. "Goethe's letter," he writes on October 29, "continues to keep me in a state of serene delight. The certain knowledge that Goethe is in agreement with me gives me unbounded calm-

ness and assurance." In the beginning of the next letter, December 8, he exclaims: "I must absolutely make some stir! I must this winter produce two things, so as to bring in money and glory—first my tragedy and then my book on poetry considered especially in relation to Goethe!"

The tragedy, at all events, was soon to be put aside. The philosopher Schubart had published about the same time a book entitled "The Appreciation of Goethe," which Eckermann naturally hastened to read. "Schubart," he writes to his fiancée, "has won no end of glory by his book and by his acquaintance with Goethe which it has brought about. The newspapers even announce that he has already got a place." So the idea occurred to our student to write in his turn a book on Goethe which would bring about his acquaintance with the poet, and help him to gain "a place" soon. "There are a good many things in Schubart's book that I should have liked to say, but there are other things which I don't agree with, and which are not quite reasonable—things which Goethe himself can hardly approve of. It is this book which I shall especially keep in view in order to refute its errors. But first I want to know if you are pleased with my plan. However, I'm quite sure it *will* please you, for its aim is our common happiness."

Jeanne Bertram *was*, in fact, pleased with the project, though she had cause enough to deplore it bitterly in the sequel. Interrupting his studies, Eckermann took a year to write his book; then, as soon as it was finished he sent it off to Goethe, who, touched with such a token of homage, invited the young man to come and see him. "Goethe's letter," writes Jeanne Bertram on September 3, 1823, "has

given us all the deepest joy! The poet clearly shows the value he sets on you, and he certainly intends to look after your future." What that future was which she dreamed of for her lover we learn from her in another letter: "Nicola has become an orchestral conductor. He is to have 600 thalers (£90); with his wife's money they will be able to live splendidly. I need hardly say they are both very happy, and they hope that we too will soon meet with a similar piece of good luck."

Goethe, however, on becoming nearer acquainted with his young admirer, had come to the conclusion that, from the point of view of his own interests, a man of that sort might render him the greatest possible service, and had immediately pressed him to come and live in his neighbourhood. "Settle down at Weimar!" said he. "Many good things are combined here, and you will find a society such as the largest towns could not offer you. . . . We have also a very rich library and a first-class theatre. I repeat it: stay near us, not only for this winter, but choose Weimar for your home! In the summer you can travel and see pretty well all you can want to see. I have been living at Weimar for the last fifty years, and yet where have not I been? But I have always been glad to get back here!"

As to settling for good and all at Weimar, without having any other employment than that of (gratuitous) secretary and confidant of Goethe, Eckermann could hardly consent to this; but he fully reckoned—and so did his fiancée—that Goethe, out of gratitude for his services, would find him regular employment, and thus provide him with the means of marrying his dear Jeanne very soon. So it was settled that the young man should pass at least

one winter at Weimar; and this decision, as we may well suppose, was for him a source of vast schemes and ambitious dreams. At Weimar he was fêted by everybody, either because they envied him his privilege of being admitted into Goethe's intimacy, or simply because they wished, by his intermediary, to be admitted to the same privilege. Never had a prince's or a financier's valet more flatterers around him; and he, with the high opinion he had of himself, accepted all compliments as the most natural thing in the world, which, however, did not prevent his finding ever fresh delight in the process. "The day before yesterday," he writes to his Jeanne, "I had a letter from the poet Tieck asking me for information about Kiesewetter, but I can see very well that what he most wants is to get into relations with me. Indeed, I have already been told that last spring he spoke of me with enthusiasm. He begs me to convey his kind greetings to Goethe. You can't imagine what importance it confers on me being so familiar with Goethe! And even elsewhere my book reserves many joys for me; it is going to procure me the friendship of the first men in Germany." He tells her how he is invited to Goethe's table, and how the latter even condescends to receive him in his shirt-sleeves. "At table he gives me bits from his own plate. When I drop in in the evening he has a bottle of wine brought in. Old Councillor Meyer drinks nothing, Chancellor Müller only drinks sugar and water, so Goethe and I drink the wine all to ourselves." He relates also how Goethe has given him proofs to correct or old manuscripts to touch up. Every hour he spends in his own rooms is devoted to working for Goethe; and the winter passes, the spring comes, without his being

able to find even a few days to visit his fiancée in Hanover. "I really do hope to be able to come next month," he writes on April 16, 1824, "if only I can leave Goethe, and have no work on hand for him."

When he *is* able to get away from Weimar, instead of going to Hanover, he runs off to Frankfort, always on Goethe's advice. He puts up at the best inn there, and tells his Jeanne how all his illustrious master's friends treat him with respectful regards. Or else, by way of consoling her, he sends her his impressions as a tourist. "The servant-girls coming back from the market carry their provisions on their heads in baskets. I visited the vegetable market, and fancied myself back in Hamburg. On both sides of the street such an abundance of baskets of vegetables that one has great difficulty in passing. Peas, radishes, cabbages in enormous quantities; numberless baskets of strawberries and cherries perfectly ripe. . . . Coming back from Bornheim I met a herd of brown cows, but so big, so fine, and so heavy that, from a distance, I really took them for oxen; and indeed they all had heads and necks of wonderful size."

To console his future bride, and to induce her to be patient, he sends her a fine bust of Goethe: that is to be the first work of art for their future home. The girl writes back that "the bust has a very noble and venerable expression," and that she intends to put it in the most conspicuous place in the drawing-room. She has ordered a bracket for it, and also a glass globe with which she intends to cover it. "Meanwhile, for fear of the dust, I have hidden it under a piece of fine linen, for I love this bust so much that I would like to keep it always fresh."

But, however precious this bust might be in her eyes, she would greatly have preferred to receive her lover's famous tragedy, or a fresh collection of poems: one of those works he has been so long preparing, and which are to bring him fortune and renown.

Alas! of all the works he has in his head not a single one is ready, not one is even seriously sketched out. In the first place poor Eckermann has hardly any time to work at them—interviews with Goethe, the different tasks to be done for him, the theatre, visits—all this occupied his days; not to mention that in order to earn a little money, he has been obliged to accept an offer to give German lessons to some young Englishmen. Nor is this all; with his master's consent he has now begun to take detailed notes of the conversations in which he has had the honour of taking part. Every day he draws up in writing Goethe's principal reflections on men and things—a practice which will presently enable him to offer to the world a book without a parallel, for which the publishers of all countries will contend; which, at one stroke, will associate his name with that of the greatest of modern poets. If the book is only ready to appear, the marriage will take place at once, and a delightful existence will begin for the young couple! “Who knows but what we may be, without our suspecting it, on the very verge of our mutual happiness?” But above all, dear Jeanne must be resigned and not lose confidence! As for himself, Eckermann, his stay at Weimar becomes more and more profitable. “Not a day without invitations, not an evening without distractions, concert, ball or theatre. Thus I am getting accustomed to high society, I am gaining assurance,

and acquiring a good bearing. . . . Recently a man of note came to Weimar, so he told me, on purpose to make my acquaintance. From Berlin, too, a scholar wrote to Mr. Schutz, to ask him on what work I was at present engaged."

Thus the months and the years pass, and the poor girl, in spite of the optimistic declarations of her lover, begins to feel a vague disquietude. She learns that a post of keeper of the records is vacant at Hanover, why should not Eckermann obtain it with Goethe's support? Eckermann hesitates, promises to take steps, and soon the place is given to another man. If at least, by both working, the young people could marry and live very quietly at Weimar? Eckermann submits this idea to Goethe, and here is the master's answer which he hastens to communicate to Jeanne Bertram on August 18, 1825 :

I have spoken to Goethe about your position, and told him I had serious thoughts of bringing you here. He begged me not to make any hurried decision on that point, so as not to run the risk of plunging us both into want. He thinks it indispensable for me to keep up my existence here in conformity with the position I hold. I replied that we intended to live a very secluded life and keep our expenses down. "No," said he, "that's impossible, seeing the universal regard that you have won! It would be no use your trying, you could not withdraw yourself from Weimar society!" Then he talked to me about the handsome dresses you ought to have and the children who would soon be born to us. "You are an excellent man," added he, "and your fiancée must be perfection. How much I wish it was in my power to do something for you!" After which he set forth the whole state of affairs in Weimar, and how his hands were tied in consequence of the country's indebtedness, and how little money he had at his disposal.

. . . When I told him I was thinking of returning to Hanover, he eagerly tried to dissuade me. In his opinion I should be too much cut off from the society of intelligent and learned people, and perhaps I should find just the same difficulty in getting employment. . . . The upshot of our interview was that I am to refrain from adopting any hasty plan, and go on working and producing fresh proofs of my talents. Finally, he gave me to understand that perhaps something might be found for me even here.

On December 2, 1825, Eckermann writes that "Goethe continues to exhort him to be patient, repeating that nothing in the world is ever got by hurrying matters." On March 3, 1826, he wonders whether Goethe will authorise him to publish at once those extraordinary "Conversations" which will make the happiness of his life and make his name renowned throughout Europe. The letter of May 26, 1825, begins thus: "Once more a letter instead of myself!" On October 20, he writes to Jeanne Bertram: "You are perfectly right, those lessons I am giving do me no good. I shall only be happy when I am in a position to exercise my talents without any impediment." And on December 8, of the same year: "Time seems to drag terribly without you! I delay writing to you, to spare you my lamentations. Jacob served seven years to gain the fair Rebecca, but at all events he was living in her house. . . . I see clearly that I shall never make the most of my talents till you are by my side to guide me to the good, and also to give me tranquillity and cheerfulness. Napoleon was never so great as when he had Josephine as his companion. Schiller only wrote his best works after he was married."

Unfortunately we only possess a few of Jeanne Bertram's answers, but it is not difficult to imagine

the effect produced on her by these incessant fluctuations between hope and discouragement, these vast plans which led to nothing, these tender appeals, invariably followed by exhortations to patience and resignation. However, the few letters we have of the poor young woman are in such simple language, and issue from so pure and candid a soul that they suffice to reveal the whole evolution of her feelings—of which the two principal ones seem to have remained unchanged to the end: her deep love for Eckermann, and her desire to marry him as soon as possible. But she was all the more astonished, grieved, and irritated to see the date of the marriage incessantly postponed, from year to year. Her parents had meanwhile died; she found herself reduced to live in turns with her two brothers; and for the past nine years she had been waiting for her betrothed to be in a position to take her to his home. And here he was, telling her that he felt incapable of gathering the fruits of his genius, for the want of having her by his side. The time was now long past when she piously covered Goethe's bust with a globe—gladly now would she have dashed it to pieces. Goethe was now the wicked old man whom she held responsible for all her misfortunes. Not only did he refuse to make the least effort to procure his young pupil a post—he even hindered him, perhaps out of jealousy, from employing his talents to his own profit! For instance, on January 30, 1827, we find her writing:

I should be glad to know what you are busy with? And then, would it not be possible to make Goethe wait a little, until you have produced something good on your own account? For I suppose it is he who hinders you by

his invitations and the tasks he imposes on you. By this time you must have had enough of glory at Weimar, and I should not be sorry for your fame to spread beyond that town. But if you go on working for Goethe, you will always remain where you are, and I shall be obliged to conclude that your love for me is not strong enough to make you undertake anything. These things pass through my mind sometimes, and leave me no peace. Goethe only pays you in compliments for all your kindnesses to him; he thinks neither of me, nor of your future happiness; he is only too pleased to accept your services, and is not even grateful for them. That is just what I was told at Lüneburg: that Goethe had often before kept young poets about him, employing them for his own profit, and never showing them any gratitude. I have no prejudice whatever against him, but I see now that this is really the case.

I ought at once to add that this tragi-comedy was prolonged another four years, till the last months of the year 1831. At one time Goethe, to keep the precious Eckermann by his side, would promise him a post at the Weimar Library, at another he would consent to revise and correct the manuscript of his "Conversations," and allowed him to believe that one day or other he would authorise him to publish them—after the publication of his "Correspondence with Schiller," or else after the completion of a new edition of his complete works; again, in order that he might not seem to be robbing all his time, he would give him an order for some little fugitive poem, and then tell him with great imperturbability "that he possessed the boldness of Lord Byron with his (Goethe's) serenity." When newspapers asked Eckermann to send them contributions, Goethe with the most ingenious solicitude would prove to him that such tasks were unworthy of him; and the young man, in his turn, would prove it at great length to

his betrothed. He would explain to her in every letter the marvellous advantages he should derive later on from this literary apprenticeship, which was the envy of all young German writers. "Only let me keep this privileged situation one year more," he writes on October 18, 1828, "and I shall become a power. I shall have offers from Berlin, Munich, and heaven knows where!" And when Jeanne Bertram informs him that a post was again vacant in the record-office at Hanover, he answers that Goethe's son had told him that he would be making a great mistake in stooping to solicit such a post, "and I am bound to say that, this time, I consider him to be perfectly right."

Had he, in the secret depths of his heart, ceased to love the girl who for ten years had been waiting and living only for him? No, his letters by their very frequency would suffice to prove that he loved her still. He quite realised what she suffered, and he suffered too; his complaints have an accent of sincerity which sometimes make them almost as touching as those of his dear Jeanne. But notwithstanding all that, Weimar offered so many easy and pleasant satisfactions to his vanity, that he felt he would never have the strength to renounce them. The attentions with which he was surrounded gave him such pleasure that, in the most ingenuous fashion imaginable, he imagined his fiancée, like himself, would derive courage from the situation, to wait and to forget her troubles. So much so that he even went the length of telling her about the "billets-doux" he received from Goethe's lady friends. "There is at the Court a young friend whom I visit at the castle, from time to time. She is one of the Princess's maids of honour—a person

of high rank, superior education and the most refined intelligence. She always lives in the highest society, but she loves a young man who is far away, and she is very unhappy. We pour out our complaints to each other. Last night we talked about you. I know it is not very gallant, in the presence of one charming lady, to praise another excessively, but I could not help describing to her your beauty and perfections—‘But you are not going to leave Weimar?’ said she to me, ‘and give up your great relations with Goethe?’—‘I have not yet made up my mind on that point,’ I answered, ‘but what I do know and feel is that the time is beginning to weigh heavily upon me!’”

We may say with perfect truth, that during these endless years of waiting and of grief, Jeanne Bertram never knew but one moment of pleasure—which was when she learnt on December 3, 1830, that Goethe had just had an apoplectic fit. “At his age, I venture to assure you, people don’t long survive such accidents!” she wrote to Eckermann, without making any effort to accompany this prognostic with a single word of regret. Did not Goethe’s death open deliverance for her and her lover? But her hopes were again disappointed, for, as we all know, Goethe did recover from the attack, and was not long in recovering his extraordinary vigour. Then Jeanne Bertram’s torture began afresh, with every appearance of being prolonged indefinitely. “A few days ago,” she writes on December 13, 1830, “I went to pay a call on Frau Borchers. Several people asked after you, and also as to when I was going to be married, and Frau Bobers sat down by me and told me that I had been wrong to wait so long, and that was

what her Caroline had always said. And yet, thank goodness, these ladies are not aware of the actual time we *have* been waiting!" She no longer even pressed her friend to work for himself, having henceforth renounced the dream of marrying a great man. Only let him consent to leave his accursed Weimar—that was henceforth her sole thought. Here is another of her letters:

What I cannot understand, and a good many other people, too, is that Goethe should not back you more; for everybody is of opinion that he could if he would. But people are quite right in saying that he is a man who promises a great deal without keeping his promises. If you had continued to work at the law, you would long since have got out of your difficulties. I reproach myself very much, now, that I did not insist more than I did, and press you to finish your studies; but unfortunately for both of us, I allowed myself to be too much influenced by your wishes, by your grand ideas and grand hopes. And now we see how mistaken we both were. I never could have believed it would take so long to find a good post.

At last, on October 5, 1831, a sigh of relief goes up from her heart. "Your last letter, my dear Eckermann, gave me very great delight; I now have the strong conviction that we are going to be able to face the future calmly and cheerfully!" Even some months earlier she had thought her trouble was nearly at an end—then fresh obstacles had supervened which had cast her back once more into despair. "I shall be asked when I am going to be married, and then what answer shall I be able to give? To hear oneself constantly questioned about a marriage that seems to be receding indefinitely, is beginning to make me fairly wild!" But

the marriage was not to recede for ever. By a downright miracle, Eckermann had really found "a good post"—he had been appointed under-tutor to the son of the Grand Duchess of Weimar. And thus, on November 9, 1831, the marriage-register of the parish of Nordheim was able to register the marriage of Herr Johann Peter Eckermann, residing at Weimar, with Fräulein Jeanne, Sophie, Katharine Bertram of this parish."

The young woman's martyrdom had lasted thirteen years, and we have every reason to believe that it lasted, partly at all events, for several months longer, until Goethe's death; for two days after the wedding we find in the poet's diary that "Dr. Eckermann came back to dine with me." After which we find almost every day the entry: "Dr. Eckermann to dinner," or else, "Dined with Eckermann." Jeanne Bertram had a husband, but she was compelled to share him with the man who had already too long deprived her of him! We know, besides, that: "Dr. Eckermann" never even had the pleasure of introducing his wife to his old master; for the latter, in his Olympian indifference, had indeed resigned himself to his trusty friend's marriage, but on the condition of never hearing a word spoken on the subject. Once, however, on February 28, 1832, a few days before his death, he notes in his diary that "about midday, having gone to his daughter-in-law's," he there "had a glimpse of Dr. Eckermann's wife."

The latter, moreover, had not been mistaken in thinking that Goethe's death—if, indeed, he ever *should* make up his mind to die—would be a god-send to her Eckermann. It is really only after the death of great men that their friendship begins to be

a "boon from the gods." Having been appointed one of his master's executors, with the promise of a fixed income from the sale of the posthumous edition of his works, Eckermann was henceforth to assume a real and considerable importance at Weimar, which was definitely consecrated in 1838 by the title of Councillor of the Grand-ducal Court. The publication in the same year of his famous "Conversations," though not bringing him in the great sums he had expected, helped to put him, at last, in a position of security from money cares. But fate would not allow his faithful Jeanne to share the days of honour as she had done those of trouble. Doubtless a too long protracted series of disappointments and anxieties had weakened her vitality, and the exhaustion of her first confinement proved fatal to her. She died at Weimar, April 30, 1834, rather more than two years after her marriage.

One more point about this story deserves mention—a point which is at once comic and distressing. When, in 1838, Eckermann brought out the complete edition of his poor poems, he introduced a long piece, entitled "To the Memory of the Unforgettable One," dedicated to the dear wife who had left him. Already, on the day after his wife's death, he had copied out in his best handwriting a stanza of this poem on a blank page and had added, by way of dedication; "To the memory of my dearly beloved wife, who was taken from me after a happiness all too short, in her thirty-second year!" Now the actual fact is that this poem, already several years old, had *not* been written in memory of Jeanne Eckermann, but to lament the death of a Grand-duchess of Weimar, whom, the poet confesses, he "never

knew." It was an old bit of "copy" which he now converted from its original purpose, to transform into an elegy on his wife's death! By dint of listening to Goethe's lectures on the laws of poetry, poor Eckermann had become incapable of writing a single verse!

V

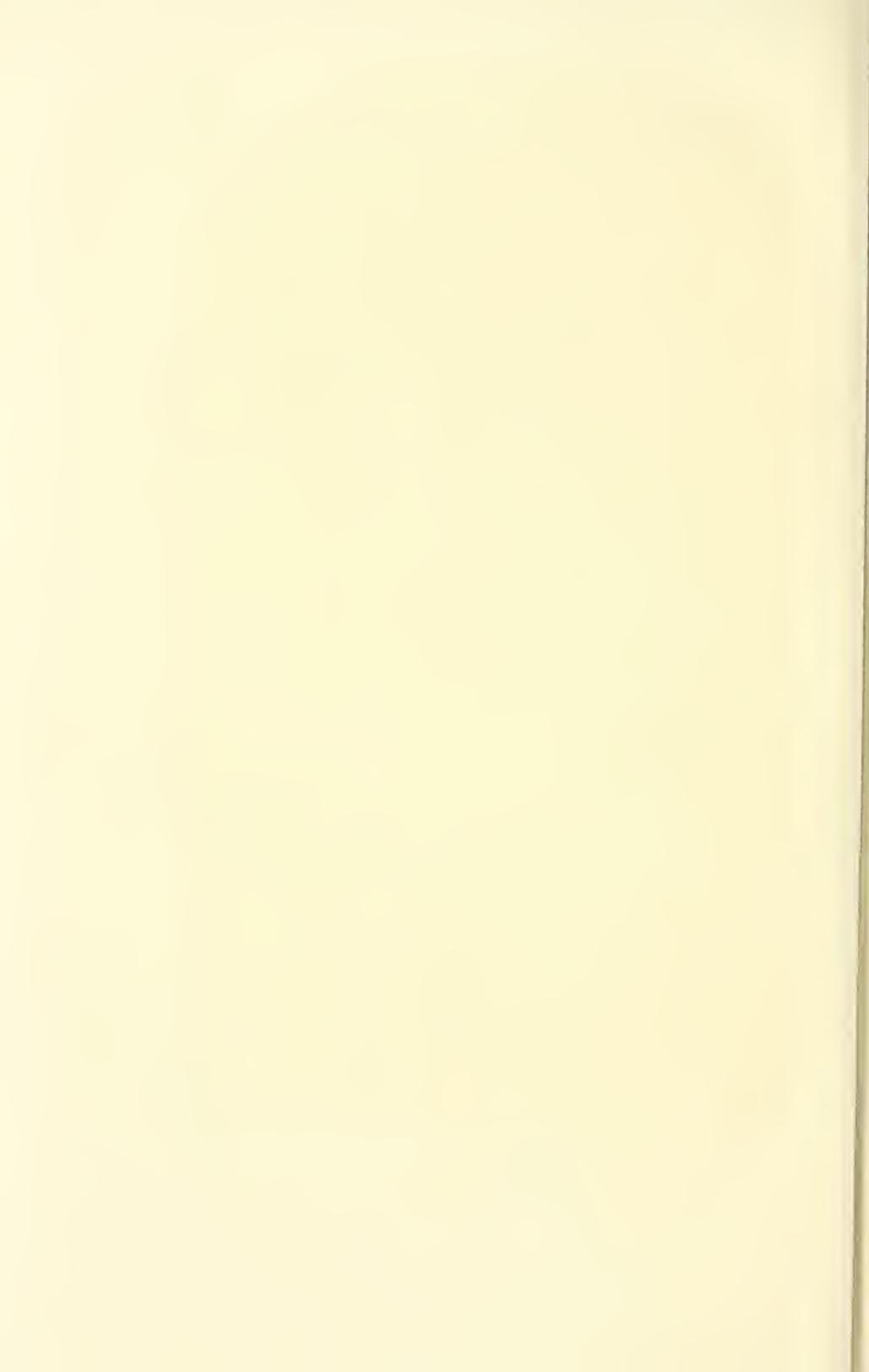
AN EPISTOLARY ROMANCE

ONCE upon a time there was a girl who, being sickly, half-paralysed, and compelled to pass her days on a sofa, used to beguile the sad hours by writing verses. Her sadness, moreover, did not merely arise from ill-health, and the hermit's life to which she was condemned. She had, also, to endure the monstrous tyranny of a selfish, hard old man—her father, who seems to have made it the aim of his life to torment his children, forbidding them to go out, to receive visits, or take part in any pleasure; even going so far as to inform them that he would never give his consent to their marrying. To the weight of this tyranny was added an even heavier load. In the course of a visit to the seaside she had been allowed to take with her her favourite brother, the only friend she had in the world; and then, one day, this brother had been drowned almost before her eyes, so that the unfortunate girl had been haunted from that day by the memory of this tragic catastrophe, of which she accused herself of being the cause. But all her sufferings had only the effect of refining the poet-soul that dwelt in her. Nurtured on Sophocles

and Virgil, she delighted in clothing the most secret dreams of her heart in beautiful verses, of a classical purity and restraint ; and whilst nobody was admitted to her presence her verses were spread abroad, and her name became more and more celebrated amongst men of letters. Thus she lived in her solitude. The years flowed by, slowly and monotonously ; and the young woman was already beginning to be transformed into an old maid, when, at the age of thirty-nine, a strange adventure befell her.

A poet, to whom she had sent a collection of her verses had replied that, not content with admiring her, he loved her, without knowing anything about her except that she was alone, that she suffered, and had genius. After which he had pleaded to be allowed to see her so passionately, and so persistently, that she had ended by granting it. He was a handsome young man of about thirty, fond of society, and not at all the sort of man one would expect to fall in love with this poor, melancholy creature. Not that she was plain. On the contrary, she had large black eyes of marvellous softness, and looked as though her invalidish habits had preserved a kind of childlike freshness in all her features ; but she was much older than the young poet, very weakly, and cut off for ever from worldly intercourse.

No sooner did he see her, however, than he fell in love with her. The evening after his first visit he wrote that he worshipped her, that he was hers for ever, and besought her to be his wife. The young woman tore up his letter, and did her very utmost to set forth to him the reasons of every kind which made such a marriage absurd and impossible. She told him plainly she would not receive him any more, and would break off all relations with him,



unless he would resign himself to be nothing more than a friend and a fellow-worker. All the same, she too loved him from that moment, perhaps even more than he loved her. So every week they saw each other, and every day (sometimes twice a day), they exchanged letters. At the end of the autumn, about six months after the commencement of their correspondence, they had formed the project of meeting in Italy, where the doctor ordered her to pass the winter. But the father, perceiving his daughter's desire to go to Italy, had at once forbidden the journey. In vain she had entreated, in vain sisters, brothers and doctors had insisted on her making this journey, from which it might be hoped she would come back in better health—not only did the terrible old man remain inflexible, he even gave his daughter to understand that she had offended him by her insistence. A deeper gulf had been dug between them.

Then the two lovers became engaged. They had exchanged rings and locks of hair. For a whole year, without the father's knowledge, they had written to each other several times a day, until a day came, at length, in the following autumn, when they began to feel that they could no longer exist separated from each other. Then they married secretly; and the young woman, after passing another week in her father's house, quitted it, never to set foot in it again. She left on foot, accompanied only by her maid; for, for some months previously, she had begun to feel a return of the strength she thought she had lost for ever. She was able to walk, sleep and appetite had come back to her; she had been restored to life by the miracle of love.

II

Here, in truth, we have a charming subject for a tale or a romance, a very simple, very human, and very touching story, well fitted to tempt some poet or psychologist! That meeting of two souls equally noble and proud, the impulse which immediately brought them together, the woman's doubts and scruples, the generous insistence of the man, then the gradually increasing intimacy, their love growing more tender and more passionate, the secret betrothal, the anxious waiting for the miracle which alone could permit them to become one, the slow realisation of this happy miracle, and at last the marriage, with the elopement which followed—have we not here all the elements of a kind of new “Triumph of Love,” and cannot we see the splendid work that a great writer would be able to build upon it?

But no writer could have given to this “Triumph of Love” the intensity of life and the poetic charm of certain portions of a long epistolary romance published in London, some years ago, the subject of which is precisely this romantic adventure which I have just outlined.* If this romance had been published without the authors' names, if it had been presented to us as a romance, concealing the fact that these were the real love-letters of Browning and his wife, doubtless the success would have been less sensational, and the work would have raised fewer discussions; but English literature would

* “The Letters of Robert Browning and Elizabeth Barrett Browning (1845–1846).” 2 vols. Smith, Elder & Co. 1899.

have been enriched by a masterpiece which would have been the envy of all Europe. For my part I confess that many of the young woman's letters seem to me incomparable jewels of emotion and poetry, sweeter, more tender, more profoundly musical, than any love-letters I have ever read in books. They alone would suffice to endear to us and render glorious for all time the admirable woman who wrote them. In them passion is ever steeped in beauty; in every line we find images of enchanting freshness and purity, expressed in words that caress the ear like song, and the feelings revealed are only submission, solicitude, self-abandonment, artless joy at the sight of a Paradise miraculously recovered.

Why should certain of the young woman's letters, published with these others, prevent us from freely enjoying their charm? Why, when our heart is still full of the beautiful song of love we have just heard, must we needs stand by to witness the young woman's recriminations against her father, the statement of her grievances against him, the story of the sufferings with which he has overwhelmed her? Why must we be posted up in all the petty worries of a middle-class household, and be told amongst other things, that the lady's sister is thinking of marrying a fool, and what is worse, a fool she does not love? But above all, why must we have forced upon us at every moment, the reverse side of this love-tale, so full of poetry, heroism and enchantment? For at one moment, Elizabeth Barrett reminds her lover that she is older than he is, and descants on her infirmities; at another she discusses the question whether, after marriage, they are to have one room or two; at another she instructs him

how the circulars announcing their marriage are to be worded ; at another she details all the things she will have to put in her portmanteau on the day of the elopement, and again she entertains him in another letter with the exact figures of her marriage portion, telling him the titles of her investments and the number of her shares, or writing him letters of this kind :

My brother told me this morning, in answer to an enquiry of mine, that certainly I did not receive the whole interest of the fund money . . . could not . . . making ever so much allowance for the income-tax. And now, upon consideration, I seem to see that I cannot have done so. The ship-shares are in the *David Lygon*, a vessel in the West Indian trade, in which Papa also has shares. Stormie said, "There must be three hundred a year of interest from the fund-money—even at the low rate of interest paid there." Now it would be the easiest thing in the world (as I saw even in to-day's newspaper) to have money advanced upon this—only there is a risk of its being known perhaps, which neither of us would at all like. *Burn this letter!*

"Burn this letter!" There are at least thirty letters ending thus : and there are others in which the poetess, after entertaining her lover with matters of such delicacy that they must have been painful for her to discuss—and are, indeed, painful for us to hear discussed by her—begs him never to answer on any of these matters, and never to make any allusion to them. Yet here we have *all* these letters presented to us—all—without a syllable being cut or altered ! All the proper names are given, all the dates, so that there is not one detail of this love-story that is not openly displayed before us. And the chief actors in this story are known to

us—one, indeed, had hardly been dead ten years ! Moreover, it is the son of Robert Browning and of Elizabeth Barrett Browning who himself presents to us the letters in which his father and mother, before marriage, confided to each other the secrets of their hearts !

In a note prefixed to the collection, he says : “ In considering the question of publishing these letters, which are all that ever passed between my father and mother, for after their marriage they were never separated, it seemed to me that my only alternatives were to allow them to be published or to destroy them. I might, indeed, have left the matter to the decision of others after my death, but that would be evading a responsibility which I feel that I ought to accept. Ever since my mother’s death these letters were kept by my father in a certain inlaid box, into which they exactly fitted and where they have always rested, letter beside letter, each in its consecutive order and numbered on the envelope by his own hand. My father destroyed all the rest of his correspondence, and not long before his death he said, referring to these letters : ‘ There they are, do with them as you please when I am dead and gone ! ’ A few of the letters were of little or no interest, but their omission would have saved only a few pages, and I think it well that the correspondence should be given in its entirety.”

Mr. Robert Barrett Browning ought surely to have “ omitted,” at least certain passages in which his parents protested against the publication of letters of extreme intimacy and other documents of the same kind. “ The idea of any kind of publicity horrifies me,” wrote Elizabeth Barrett, “ and there is not one of my papers that I should not wish to see

destroyed after me." She even carried this "horror of publicity" so far, that she objected to Browning dedicating any of his poems to her. "Believe me," she said to him, "I would not for anything in the world see my name printed on the first page of any of your books. I cannot bear to hear words from you that the rest of the world can hear with me!" She, when dying, would never have left her son full liberty to "do what he liked" with their love-letters. Perhaps Browning himself, who reproached Shakespeare for having put too much of himself in his work, would not have interpreted in the same sense as his son "the necessity of choosing between two courses," one of which consisted in destroying this intimate correspondence, and the other in publishing it at once, and entire, without "omitting" a single word. By depositing the letters in an inlaid coffer which he had made on purpose, did he not imply that there was a third course: to leave them there till the moment came when there would be no one left who could be shocked by their publication?

As a matter of fact their publication did shock several members of Mrs. Browning's family, who hastened to qualify as exaggerated, or as untrue, the accusation brought by her against her father's tyranny. But what astonishes me most is the fact that, with the exception of a few people directly concerned, the English public does not seem to have been particularly scandalized by such an exposure of private documents. The romantic interest of these letters, the marvellous beauty of some of them, evidently made them more indulgent and less scrupulous than one would have expected under the circumstances. Out of the innumerable articles

which appeared in the English reviews and newspapers on the appearance of the "Love-letters of Robert and Elizabeth Browning," not more than two or three wholly disapproved of their publication, or even considered it a premature step. Most of them simply regretted that Mr. R. B. Browning had not cut out a few things here and there, which, indeed, "would only have shortened the collection by a few pages," but would have had, among other advantages, that of sparing Elizabeth Browning's son the unpleasantness of hearing his mother's statements disputed.

By an odd and significant coincidence, there was one point on which those English critics who approved of the publication of the letters were in entire agreement with those who disapproved. Both agreed in declaring that such a publication was a novelty in England, but that in France it would have neither surprised nor annoyed anyone, being so to speak, part and parcel of French literary morality.

This, I imagine, did not mean that it was a common thing in France for children to publish *in extenso* their mother's love letters; it would be exceedingly difficult to find a single instance in support of such a fantastic statement. No one troubled, however, to cite examples, for apparently it was taken for granted, and without discussion, that French manners, as opposed to English, lent themselves easily enough to the divulging of documents by no means suited to public perusal. The English have an arbitrary way of their own of attributing to other nations virtues and vices, and even material habits, to which they do not trouble

for a moment to apply the test of facts. Nothing will ever get out of their heads, for instance, the idea that Germans practise in a high degree "the cult of home," that Russians are liars, and that the French, with a thousand other faults, have that of holding all decencies cheap. They would doubtless be greatly scandalized if they were told that as regards the inner feelings and the respect for private life, these have remained relatively more intact in our country than in theirs. Yet it is an undoubted fact. I am not speaking merely of exceptional publications like those of Robert and Elizabeth Browning's letters—though such a publication in France could assuredly never have been made without numerous excisions and the replacement of most of the proper names by initials or asterisks. But generally speaking, it is only during the last few years that the love-letters of some of our writers have been handed over to satisfy our curiosity; and if the correspondence of Musset and George Sand is quite as intimate as that of the famous letters of Keats to his friend Fannie Brawne, it is at all events the only correspondence of this kind which has been laid before us, whilst there is not a single English writer, from Swift to Thackeray, whose love affairs have not been obligingly narrated and analysed. Compare, for instance, what we know of Lamartine's, or Victor Hugo's loves with what every English schoolboy knows of the loves of Byron or Shelley! I will venture further. The common English practice of publishing biographical memoirs, however worthy of respect it may be, tends to prove that the English have less feeling for the sacredness of private life than they imagine. It is well known that every Englishman of fame,

be he poet, scientist, statesman, or philanthropist, becomes after death the subject of one of these memoirs, in which one of his friends, by the help of documents left by him or supplied by his family, tells the history of his life and of his works. There are very few of these memoirs which do not contain copies of love-letters, and in any case this habit of publishing, as a regular custom, intimate biographies of this sort is sufficient to show that Englishmen have not the same idea as ourselves of keeping the man distinct from his work. In addition, if memoirs formerly had the advantage of warding off outside indiscretions, and reduced the amount of private documents to be revealed to the public eye, this advantage exists no longer. Authorised memoirs no longer prevent the publication of other biographies, nor that of letters and things said in confidence. Voluminous memoirs have been published, devoted to Robert Browning and his wife, in which one might suppose everything had been said about their love and their married life that the public could possibly want to know. The fact is that Englishmen, with all their so-called inviolability of the home, are just as keen as other races to penetrate into the intimacy of notabilities. Is it not from them we have got the word "interview?" Have they not even special reviews which present them every month with the biography of a lord, an actress, a bishop and an authoress, with the reproduction of innumerable photographs of these celebrities, at every age and in every position?

III

This explains and justifies the feeling which led Mr. Robert Barrett Browning to publish so early, and so completely, his father's and mother's love-letters. No doubt he said to himself that many other correspondences of the same kind had appeared in England and been read with great pleasure, and that theirs were too beautiful for him to claim the right to conceal them. Doubtless, too, he said to himself that there was nothing after all in these letters, which did not redound to the honour of his famous parents. For Elizabeth Barrett's recriminations against her father only shock us from the literary point of view, so to speak, by their contrast with the poetical tone of the rest of the letters. Scarcely, however, did she emit these reproaches than she repented, and continually makes efforts to excuse her father. It is chiefly to avoid annoying him that she refuses for so long to elope with her betrothed. The same applies to her allusions to money matters: it grieves us to have to read them, as though we were suddenly descending from lovely verse to common-place prose; but we feel that Elizabeth Barrett, in her actual circumstances could hardly avoid filling her letters with such things. Her lover, having offered to renounce her marriage-portion, and to look out for some employment that would enable them to live, she had generously refused to accept his offer. She was therefore obliged to think about her money, to which, until that moment, she had never given a thought. Charitable and disinterested, a true poet both in heart and

mind—such is the impression we get of her from her letters, and it is precisely for that reason that we are pained by certain passages in them, where that ideal creature allows us, all at once, to catch glimpses of the weakness and pitifulness of her humanity. As Mr. Leslie Stephen very rightly remarks, “We feel as if we were listening at the door”; and when we hear Elizabeth Barrett complaining of her father, or find ourselves listening to some episode of her youth, it is not for her, but for ourselves, that we feel ashamed.

Browning’s letters, too, do the greatest honour to that chivalrous man. They bear witness to a sincere and deep love, well worthy of the noble affection he received in return. I do not believe they contain the shadow of any selfish feeling, except perhaps a little suggestion of an author’s vanity, very simple and very excusable. Browning is neither self-interested, nor inquisitive, nor suspicious. With all his soul he aspires to the happiness of uniting his life to that of the woman he loved; meanwhile he never ceases to console and comfort her, and to surround her with respectful and tender care. We guess that, from the day when he met Miss Barrett, that all his thoughts went out to her; all at least that were not concerned with the building up of his own fame. In that indeed he differed from her, who, from the time of their first meeting, had not another thought in the world but for him.

But however worthy of respect Browning’s letters may be, they have the serious drawback of being rather tiresome. The finest sentiments are expressed in them with a pretentiousness which spoils their effect, and we cannot conceive a heavier style of wit, nor a more complete absence of naturalness and

simplicity. We see nothing but laboured similes, awkward metaphors, distorted and obscure allusions, which perpetually give rise to misunderstandings and involve explanations still more confused. Sometimes, even, we find *prosopopœias* mixed up in them ; ceasing suddenly to address his lady-love, Browning abruptly interpellates some Latin poet, or divinity. He thee-and-thous them, and hurls invective at them, as though he were preaching a sermon instead of writing a letter. I am bound also to confess that the fundamental ideas which occur in his letters seem to be of quite a mediocre quality. Browning touches on a thousand subjects, from religion to music, yet his words never once strike us as the result of a personal or serious reflection. We feel that he is improvising his opinions as the moment prompts him, like a man who is easily tired by a sustained effort of thought. For instance, his betrothed having told him that she has been pleased with a Danish novel by Andersen, of which the action is in Italy, he starts off to try and prove that Italy has never been understood except by foreigners. "That a Dane should write like that," he says, "confirms me in an old belief that Italy is merely poetic material for the use of the North, and no more ; for of pure poetry, Italy can show none—even in the works of Dante." But when Mrs. Barrett appears rather astonished to learn that "Dante's poetry is merely a material for Northern versifiers," Browning in his next letter withdraws every word of his paradox : "You know how I love the old Italian poets, and that I rank Dante higher than anyone in the world, my heart and head being full of him."

☛ We feel that he is improvising his opinions, and his letters show that he also improvises his poems

and tragedies. During the eighteen months of his correspondence with Elizabeth Barrett he produces one work after another with a fecundity which nothing can slacken. He tells her about the visits he has paid and received, the dinner parties and soirées at which he has been present ; and from week to week he sends her whole acts, which he then publishes almost without alteration. As for the advice and corrections suggested by his friend, it is as if he had no time to pay any attention to them. This explains the faults of his work, its obscurity and confusion, its want of harmony and of beauty of form. We now understand why Browning did not make as much as he might have done of his gifts as a teller of tales and as a playwright. The fact was he wrote too much and too fast, and too much at hap-hazard—the victim of an unfortunate facility which did not allow him to ripen his ideas or to touch them up. This prevented his being the great poet he wished to be ; and here lies the reason why English men of letters year by year draw farther and farther away from him, while the fame of Tennyson, whose equal he naïvely avowed himself, continually increases !

In comparison we are all the more struck and enchanted by the wonderful literary qualities of Elizabeth Browning. I have already spoken of the treasures of sweet, poetic tenderness which fill most of her love-letters ; but these letters are at the same time masterpieces of intellect, of pertinency, of womanly grace and virile reason. Whether she speaks of literature, of music, of history, or of philosophy, she always maintains before her lover the respectful tone of a pupil towards his master ; but in reality she is the one who reflects and judges.

Her perspicuity is such that, while she passionately admires Browning's poetry, there is not one of its faults that she does not point out to him. She advises him to be simpler, to avoid useless obscurities, to make his imagery more consistent, to write more leisurely and less in quantity.

She understands, she divines everything, guided only by her poetic instinct. On seeing for the first time after twenty years pictures by old masters, she defines their merits with a surprisingly sure touch. It is with the same sureness of judgment that she weighs the works of foreign authors without ever having been out of her own country, hardly indeed out of her own room. What she says about Mme. de Staël, about George Sand, impresses us even now. She admires Ronsard, Montaigne, Malherbe; she regards Balzac as a man of genius and the greatest of French novelists. Here, for instance, are the individual criticisms of herself and her lover upon the author of "Le Père Goriot": "For you, with your love of a story," writes Browning, "what an unceasing delight must be that very ingenious way of his by which he connects the new novel with its predecessors—keeps telling you more and more news yet of the people you have got interested in but seem to have done with. Rastignac, Mme. D'Espard, Desplein, &c., they keep alive, moving. Is it not ingenious?" And she replies: "For Balzac I have had my full or overfull pleasure from that habit of his you speak of . . . which seems to prove his own good faith in the life and reality of his creations in such a striking manner. He is a writer of most wonderful faculty—with an overflow of life everywhere—with the vision and the utterance of a great seer. His French is another language—

he throws new metals into it . . . malleable metals, which fuse with the heat of his genius."

Thus the dialogue goes on from beginning to end of the two volumes. Elizabeth Barrett takes up her friend's ideas, elucidates, illustrates, elevates and transfigures them. And all with a smiling good grace, without a trace of vanity or affectation.

But the most beautiful of these letters are those in which she speaks only of her love. Those are really of incomparable grace, and their very beauty makes us feel some embarrassment as we read them. We cannot help reflecting that these tender confidences are not addressed to us, and that Elizabeth Barrett would never have penned them, if she had foreseen that other eyes but those of Browning would, one day, be allowed to read them. "Burn this letter!" she would say, or else: "Don't answer all this; forget what I have said to you about it!" Never was a soul so deeply in love with silence and privacy. She begged her lover, never to speak to any one about her; she trembled at the thought that a day might come when everybody would know of her love. And not only do we blush at the wretched curiosity which makes us take pleasure in these confidences, but the fact is that they are useless to us, for we know already all that they can tell us. In a series of forty-four sonnets published under the supervision of Robert Browning, Elizabeth Barrett Browning has expressed, in a poetical form, the same feelings which overflow in her letters. It is said that, one evening, shortly after her marriage, she timidly slipped into her husband's pocket a little note-book containing these sonnets which she had written for him; and her husband ended by getting her permission to publish them, but only on

condition of presenting them as an anonymous work, translated from a foreign author. "Sonnets translated from the Portuguese" is the title under which these delicate flowers of a unique love still appear in Mrs. Browning's collected works. They alone would suffice to prove the poetic superiority of their writer over the author of "Sordello" and "Luria," and there is nothing in her letters that is not to be found in the sonnets—refined, ennobled, freed from all indiscreet or jarring details. Whatever pleasure we may derive from the letters recently unearthed from the inlaid coffer, they were already rendered superfluous by the existence of these sonnets—unless people are interested in knowing that Elizabeth Barrett had shares in the *David Lygon*, or in perusing a list of the articles she brought away in her trunk, when she eloped from her father's house!

VI

CAROLINE VON GÜNDERODE AND HER LOVE- AFFAIR WITH FRIEDRICH CREUZER

I

IN a subtle and searching study which M. Cherbuliez devoted not long ago to Caroline von Günderode,* he expressed the regret that so much mystery should still overshadow the relations of Caroline with the philosopher Friedrich Creuzer, of which in fact all that was known was that they had led the young poetess to her tragic suicide. "How did Creuzer become acquainted with Caroline? We do not know; and unfortunately we possess none of the letters they wrote to each other." It is true we were in possession of the stout volume published on Fräulein von Günderode by Bettina von Arnim, who had long been the friend and confidant of the unfortunate girl; but the entire volume contained only her correspondence with Bettina; and, to make matters worse, Bettina, in accordance with her usual custom, had substituted for her friend's real letters prose-poems of her own invention. One thing alone was certain: Caroline

* "Revue des Deux Mondes," February 1, 1895.

von Günderode had loved Friedrich Creuzer passionately enough to die for this passion ; and this was quite sufficient to make this *Canoness* "with her lovely eyes and nymph-like form," an immortal figure of touching and poetical interest. But what part in this sad story had been played by Creuzer the author of the "Symbolik und Mythologie der alten Völker"? Had he merely allowed himself to be loved, or had he given in exchange a little corner of his heart to the woman who with such complete self-abandonment had given him all hers ?

On this point we were in complete ignorance until a short time ago ; but now we know all about it, with absolute certainty. At the same time we learn how Creuzer's relations with Caroline commenced, what they were, and why the girl killed herself with a dagger on the banks of the Rhine, one evening in July. Two series of documents were recently published, almost simultaneously, in Germany, which throw definite light on this drama and all its antecedents. The documents which would have possessed the greatest interest of all, Caroline's letters to Creuzer, appear, indeed, to be lost for ever, but in default of them we find in "Westermann's Monatsheft," for December 1895, a collection of letters in which the girl, addressing a common friend, frequently dwells on the nature of her feelings for the philosopher ; and now, from another source, appear Creuzer's own letters to Caroline von Günderode, just as the author of the "Symbolik" carefully arranged them himself, and annotated with his own hand, with an eye, no doubt, to posterity.*

* These letters of Creuzer were published by Herr Erwin Rohde,

Caroline's letters all date from 1805, the last year but one of her short life. They are addressed to a person of the name of Daub, a professor of theology in the University of Heidelberg, who was therefore one of Creuzer's colleagues and whose wife, on the other hand, was a friend from childhood of Fräulein von Günderode. If these letters help us somewhat to understand the artless and romantic heart of the young Canoness, they also furnish some rather curious information respecting the heart of this theologian whom Caroline took to be her friend. It was an evil heart, cold and hard, the least fitted to receive such confidences as these: "I have been anxious for a long time past, my dear Daub," writes Caroline on September 14, "to explain to you my relations with Creuzer. I quite feel that my conduct is mad, and acknowledge all the reproaches which it deserves; but I love Creuzer so deeply that I can no longer even regret it. My whole life henceforth will be devoted to winning and to keeping his love."

Some days later, as Daub refused to answer: "Desire and doubt," she writes, "love and fear gain, by turns, the mastery over me, so that I myself no longer know what I can, or what I ought, to do. My friend is in a similar state; I cannot trust his judgment any more than my own. You alone, my dear Daub, can say what is the proper decision to make. I implore you, do not refuse your advice!"

It would perhaps be an exaggeration to say that Daub's advice was that Caroline should kill herself;

with interesting notes. The autograph MSS., since 1894, have been the property of the University library of Heidelberg.

but here is the letter he wrote, in July 1806, to Frau Susanne von Heyden, the young girl's friend. After having informed her that Creuzer had been very ill, and that his wife had nursed him with great anxiety: "It is now our friend's deliberate wish," he continues, "that all ties which bound him to Caroline should be broken for ever. This wish is expressed by Creuzer with such calmness, reflection and resolution, that I may say that the ties in question are severed from this moment. He begs you very earnestly, Madam, to be kind enough to inform Fräulein Caroline immediately of this news; and I am the more happy to see you undertake the part of intermediator in this matter, because for many years past I have highly esteemed and valued your young friend, and would not grieve her for anything in the world."

Frau von Heyden replies, on the following day, that her friend is at Winkel on the banks of the Rhine, and that she cannot therefore communicate by word of mouth a message which she dares not, on the other hand, send by letter. "You must feel as I do," says she to Daub, "that *this is a matter of life and death for the poor girl*, and that it is the duty of all of us to see that the truth is made known to her by a person capable at the same time of soothing its rigour."

She asks for some days delay, if only till Caroline's return to Frankfort. But the pitiless professor of theology cannot enter into so many arguments; and Frau von Heyden writes to him on July 24: "*Upon your repeated solicitations*, Herr Professor, I have just announced Creuzer's decision to Caroline, and have sent her at the same time your two letters. It is extremely painful for me not to be able to com-

municate such a terrible piece of news in a less cruel manner; but since, as you are aware, I cannot possibly leave Frankfort at present, and you tell me that Creuzer insists upon her being informed at once, she needs must drain the cup in all its bitterness."

How bitter that cup was for the poor girl, we have already learnt from M. Cherbuliez' article. "The person charged with warning her (we know it was Frau von Heyden), not daring to address her by word of mouth, wrote to her friend Charlotte, taking the precaution of disguising her writing. It was Caroline who received the letter from the postman's hands. This disguised hand-writing roused her suspicions—divining some mystery, she broke open the envelope. After having shut herself up for a few moments in her room, she went out, saying that she was going for a walk along the bank of the Rhine. She never returned. All night they searched for her—and in the morning she was found on the river's edge. This angel had pierced her heart with a dagger."

What then had she done to Daub and to Creuzer himself to be so ruthlessly treated? To the former she had poured out all her secrets in the most artless way, persisting, in spite of the theologian's coldness, in asking his advice and in treating him as a friend. In vain Creuzer had warned her in his letters of the hostility of Frau Daub, in particular, against her. She still hoped, by dint of frankness, to win her favour and that of her husband: and she always replied to their rudeness by more earnest affection.

As for Creuzer, who, as we have seen, demanded that she should be at once warned of his desire to break with her, Caroline had done nothing but love

him with a passion, a submission and a fidelity that knew no bounds. Ugly and ridiculous as he was, with his stumpy legs and his face wearing a perpetual grimace, she really worshipped him as if he were a god. "He has a holy soul, the holiest that exists," she wrote to Daub, to justify her love; "I cannot wish to be more perfect than he is; and henceforth to do what pleases him is for me the sum of all duty, virtue and law. That alone puts my conscience at rest. If you are really angry with me, my dear and excellent Daub, at all events don't let our friend have to pay for it! Remain always kind to him; nobody is worthier of friendship or of love!"

These lines, moreover, are by no means the only testimony that survives of her mad passion for Creuzer. Some time before the rupture the latter had undertaken to print and publish a collection of poems which Caroline had composed under his inspiration. The collection was about to appear when the catastrophe occurred; but Creuzer without asking anybody's permission, immediately hastened to destroy both proofs and manuscripts; so that for a long time it was thought the posthumous works of the young poetess were definitely lost. Yet this was not the case: one copy had survived, piously preserved in a Frankfort family, who recently consented to have it reproduced. From beginning to end it is a song of passion, or rather a respectful and tender hymn; the worship of a young heart poured forth on the altar of a god. In verse and in prose, under Greek, Indian or Scandinavian names, Creuzer is celebrated as a supernatural being. "He alone," says the preliminary sonnet, "he alone knows the ultimate meaning of things. For him they are but symbols,

outward signs, and, even when they are silent, to him they are still speaking." In another sonnet Caroline excuses herself for having dared to open the "deep sanctuary" of Creuzer's heart.

Had she even used force to open "the sanctuary" of that heart! Had she spontaneously imposed herself on the philosopher's friendship! The poor girl herself was half inclined to believe it. In a fragment of her posthumous collection, she recalls the blessed day when her friend appeared to her for the first time. "I had resolved beforehand," she confesses, "to do my utmost to please you; and from that moment I could not resign myself to see you indifferent to me." But doubtless Caroline, in the fever of her love, was mistaken; and at any rate all those who reproached her with having made amorous advances were wrong. The truth on this point is now irrefutably clear—Creuzer himself brings us the proof in those letters which his self-esteem as a literary man prevented him from destroying. They show obviously enough, that he was the first to pursue the girl with the most passionate declarations, that for more than a year he implored her, in ever fresh accents of passion, to yield her heart to him, or rather to yield herself entirely to him—for the heart was only a part of what he asked of her. All those schemes which have been attributed to Caroline, and which he has been praised for rejecting—divorce, elopement, the disguising of the girl in man's attire—all these originated in Creuzer's brain, and were pressed with an insistence that can hardly be conceived. Then, by degrees, weariness came upon him; and, acting on the advice of some theologians amongst his colleagues, one day he let her know it. But before he

killed her, he had committed every imaginable folly for her sake, without counting the supreme madness of keeping the letters he had written her, as lasting proofs of his mental and moral mediocrity.

He has not, it is true, transmitted to us the whole series intact. Two or three of his letters are missing, precisely those which date from the most stormy period of his relations with Caroline. Were they too tender or too harsh? Or did he simply regard them as of inferior poetic value to the others? In any case they could have told us no more about himself than what we already learn from those which he did keep. Henceforth we are thoroughly enlightened as to the part he played in this tragi-comedy of his love for Caroline von G nderode. We have only to turn over the pages of this collection of letters to see the whole tale unfolded before our eyes.

II

Friedrich Creuzer was thirty-three years of age when, in 1804, he was appointed Professor of Philology in the University of Heidelberg. Five years before, he had married the widow of one of his Marburg colleagues, who was the mother of two children and about fifteen years older than himself. His first letters to his cousin Leopold Creuzer, after settling at Heidelberg, are full of trifling details as to his new colleagues and his new pupils, as to the employment of his time, and even as to the prices of commodities and their quality. On August 17, 1804, he announces to his cousin that on the previous day he had been introduced by Clement

Brentano, in an avenue of the park, to a Fräulein von Günderode, who had published verses under the pseudonym of Tian. "But she became endeared to me at once. It was only afterwards that I read her verses. A dear, dear girl whose acquaintance I should like you to make."

On September 1 "his heart is already oppressed by things that he cannot confide in a letter." He begs his cousin to come and see him, but to come alone, for all other society would be intolerable to him. Before a month has passed we find him in regular correspondence with Caroline. "How I counted the days," he writes, "till the arrival of your letter! I envied all those whom I saw in possession of letters from you. The other day, having met Brentano's wife alone at Schwetzingen, I could not refrain from confiding to her my soul's trouble! You will be telling me again that I do not love you calmly enough, that I ask more of you than you can grant, &c. ! But can I hide from you what I feel so deeply? . . . All day I ponder over your letter. At night after having read a page of your collected poems I fall asleep with your image in my heart. So, you see, you sanctify my life!"

Some days afterwards he had a long interview with his beloved, immediately after which he wrote, in Latin, to his cousin Leopold: "Know that I am swimming in a sea of bliss. But the tragedy, as you predicted, is beginning. The die is cast—no midway course—heaven or death. Already I am wearing on my heart a tangible symbol, a gold medallion that she has given me."

The tragedy was indeed to begin on the very morrow of this day of joy. "Listen," he writes to Caroline on October 16, "learn how heaven has

favoured my prayers. I came back here, last night, in an extraordinary state of agitation. My wife came up to me, and asked me sympathetically how I was. A torrent of tears burst from my heart. I summoned courage, and, more truthful to her than I have ever been, I declared in firm but gentle tones that I could no longer regard her as my wife, that indeed I never have regarded her as such, but that I shall always feel profound gratitude to her. This raised her above herself. With an energy of which I should never have suspected her being capable, she consented to my love, spoke highly of you and assured me that from this moment she will be nothing more to me than a friend. . . . You see I am free ; it is now for you to exercise your will. Hitherto you have not been able to will ; that is your misfortune. . . . My colleague Schwartz thinks that our family life might go on as usual, that you might come and live with me and become my real wife, whilst Sophie keeps the title. But I don't like half-measures. Therefore choose for yourself !”

The woman who “knew not how to will” seems to have thought at this moment that her friend was going rather fast, and hated half-measures too much. From what Creuzer has left us of her answers it is easy to guess that at that moment, and even long afterwards, she felt nothing more for him than a wholly intellectual sympathy. It was by pity that she was constrained to love. She had compassion on the great sufferings that Creuzer displayed in his letters with incredible persistence, violence and emphasis. Perhaps, too, the perpetual flatteries of the symbolist may have had some effect upon her. Creuzer plied them without reserve, even adding to his dithyrambs denunciations in this style : “How

accustomed I am already to acknowledge your mastery," he writes in one of his first letters, "was clearly proved by the joy I felt at Goethe's praise of your verses. I could not rest till I had communicated it to Savigny and to Clement Brentano, who, however, received it each in his own way. Savigny told me very kindly that 'such words of praise would make you very happy'; and Clement said that 'no doubt it was only irony on Goethe's part.' His wife, for her part, declared that Goethe had already made use of the same joke for another poetess. This led us on to discuss your poetry. Sophie Brentano said that you were incapable of any original idea. Then they spoke about your character, and Clement explained why it would always be impossible for him to love you." Here we must add, to give this passage of a love-letter its full flavour, that Caroline at this moment was supposed to be in love with Clement Brentano.

But it is time to return to the pathetic note. "How deeply your letter wounded me!" writes Creuzer, a few days later. "You accuse me of having misunderstood your feelings, of having wished to make you happy in my own way! . . . You write to Lisette that it is only from compassion that you are willing to share my trouble! And besides, did you not declare to me the other evening that you could give me your esteem, your confidence, but not your love! For pity's sake, at least, do not abandon me! Continue to write to me!"

He is continually imploring her to consent to a fresh trysting-place, where he can at last realise "his hope of possessing her." Continually the girl refuses. She will write to him no more, except such letters as Frau Creuzer can read. "How horrible,"

exclaims her lover, "to think that you have nothing more to say to me but what others are free to hear!" And when she reproaches him with having called her "thou," he uses the familiar term again with solemn oaths and sobs at every line.

By dint, perhaps, of everlastingly hearing him harp upon his death, Caroline herself drifts into thoughts of suicide: but she enters into the idea so seriously and resolutely that Creuzer abruptly breaks off his dissertations on "the blessedness of returning to the Great All." He advises her to enjoy nature, spring and life. He implores her to live "for her friend Suzanne and for him."

III

On May 2, 1805, he writes to his cousin that he has just arrived at Frankfurt, but that this time his wife herself packed his portmanteau and authorised him to visit Caroline. The latter, however, hardly granted him a moment's interview; and again the philosopher grows desperate at the impossibility of having her all to himself. His wife exacts impossible conditions in regard to the separation. "You see," he says to her, "that two people are being sacrificed because a third person refuses to sacrifice herself. If only you would write to my wife a thoroughly straightforward, warm, and telling letter, setting forth plainly to her that she is forty-seven and I am thirty-four!"

Judging from appearances, however, Frau Creuzer had quite resigned herself from the first to her husband's love for the young Canoness. She wrote her letters of the most cordial description, in which

she expressed the desire "to see the happiness of the loving couple realised as soon as possible." But in order to leave the field clear, she required a pension to enable her to live comfortably with her children. Her marriage with Creuzer had indeed caused her to lose her pension as the widow of a professor; and she also made it clear—this is a rather pungent detail—that in the case of Creuzer dying before her, she could not, if she consented to the divorce, dream of touching a pension as his wife. In a word she wanted money, and her husband who was a very poor man, refused to give her any. Hence all these subterfuges, these schemes and counter-schemes which fill the correspondence between Creuzer and Caroline during the whole of the year 1805. From day to day she grows more in love with him, and although he does not exactly weary of her, yet he gives us the impression that he feels it is more agreeable to be worshipped from afar, without being called upon to make any sacrifice either in money or position. After having himself proposed an elopement to Russia (he was offered a chair in the University of Moscow), he now hesitates, asks for delay, complains of the unsettled state of politics, and writes dissertations on the religions of antiquity.

Yet he appears to love her still, and continues to address her in the most passionate accents. But one day this tone begins to change. He declares that he will no longer put up with Caroline's relations "with that imperious and vain coquette Bettina Brentano." "It is for you to choose," says he: "either you must keep away from the Brentanos' house, or else, if you have not courage to do that, you must contrive to keep me in ignorance of your relations with those people!"

The fact is that, a short time before, a rather unlooked-for scene, of which Bettina herself has left us an account in her "Correspondence" with Goethe, had occurred between Creuzer and Caroline's friend. "Creuzer," says she, "had come to my brother-in-law Savigny, at Marburg. Ugly as the man was, I could not imagine what there was in him that could interest a woman; and my surprise and indignation were great when I heard him speak in familiar terms of the G nderode, as a man might do who had claims upon her heart. In my presence he took one of my nieces on his knee and asked her what her name was. 'Sophie!' said the child. 'Well, all the time I am here you must change your name and be Caroline! Caroline, give me a kiss!' That is what I had to listen to! and at that I seized the child and carried her off to the garden."

This little scene, in which Caroline personally played no part, had nevertheless a decisive influence on her destiny. In vain did she hasten, on receipt of Creuzer's letter, to break off with Bettina. Henceforth the professor vented upon her some of the spite he felt for her friend. In future, in all his letters, and on every possible occasion, he humiliates and insults her, getting angry, for instance, that she does not share his enthusiasm for Empedocles! Or telling her that he is writing an article on tournaments, but that she had better not read it, seeing that "it deals with a time when nobles had some courage."

He even ends by forgetting to use "thee and thou," and when she complains of this, "upon my word!" he exclaims, "I didn't do it on purpose! and I don't even know when or how I happened to do it."

“Your letters,” he writes on June 26, 1806, “prove to me what I have long since been thinking—that you are incapable of understanding me, and of penetrating my soul.” As to what Caroline said to him in her letters, we can form an idea from these few lines which Creuzer reproaches her with having written: “I love thee till death, my dear, sweet friend, thou who art my whole life. I wish to live or die with thee. But death is preferable to living thus.”

Unhappy woman! Creuzer, in reply, would give her Latin lessons and compose little passages for her to translate. Every entreaty for a meeting he evaded by some excuse—he had articles to write, lectures to prepare, “to show celebrities over Heidelberg.” In a letter of June 23, he explains to her the need to “put some restraint upon his feelings for her”; yet he expresses them in terms so coarse and outspoken that we should be ashamed to reproduce them. All this, whilst still pretending to be the friend of the woman who lived only for him; of whom he had written six months earlier, to his cousin Leopold: “Listen to me! One thing alone is certain; my life shall leave my body before my love for Caroline is effaced from my heart—nay, even if the whole universe should stand in my way!”

The girl, however, no longer demanded great sacrifices of him. “Try,” she writes, “to gain still more your wife’s confidence. Tell her that we have renounced each other once for all. If you will allow me, I will write and tell her the same thing, on my own part, so that you may recover the peace of your home-life, and that Sophie may not disturb our union, since it no longer presents the least danger for her.”

But that was not Creuzer’s notion of the way to

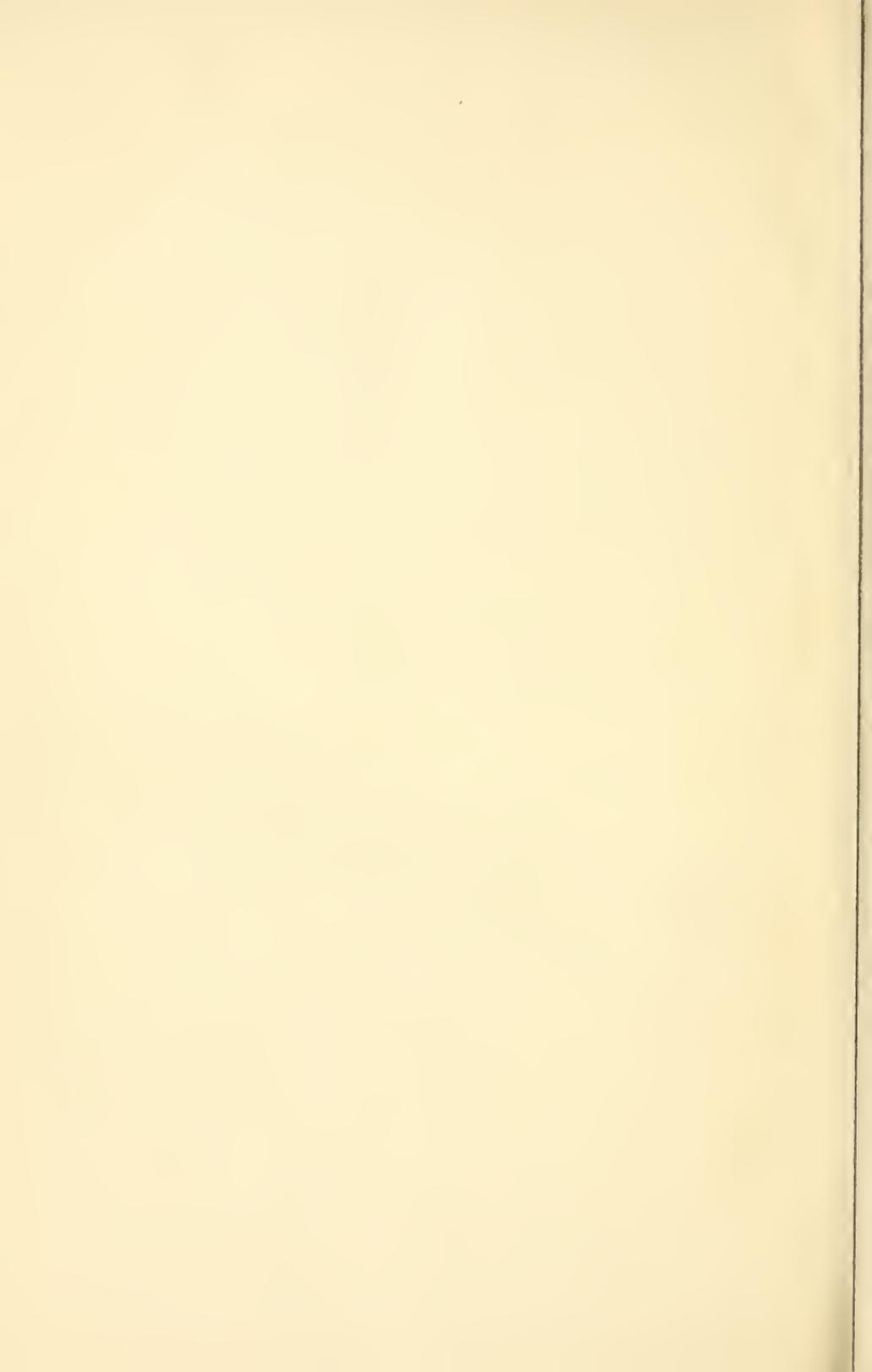
“recover the peace of his home-life.” Having learnt that a young poet, Leo von Seckendorff, had just arrived in Frankfurt and that Caroline had met him there, he conceived the simple idea of getting the girl to marry the young man! Here is an exact translation of the extraordinary letter he wrote to her, some days after receiving from her the touching lines we have just quoted :

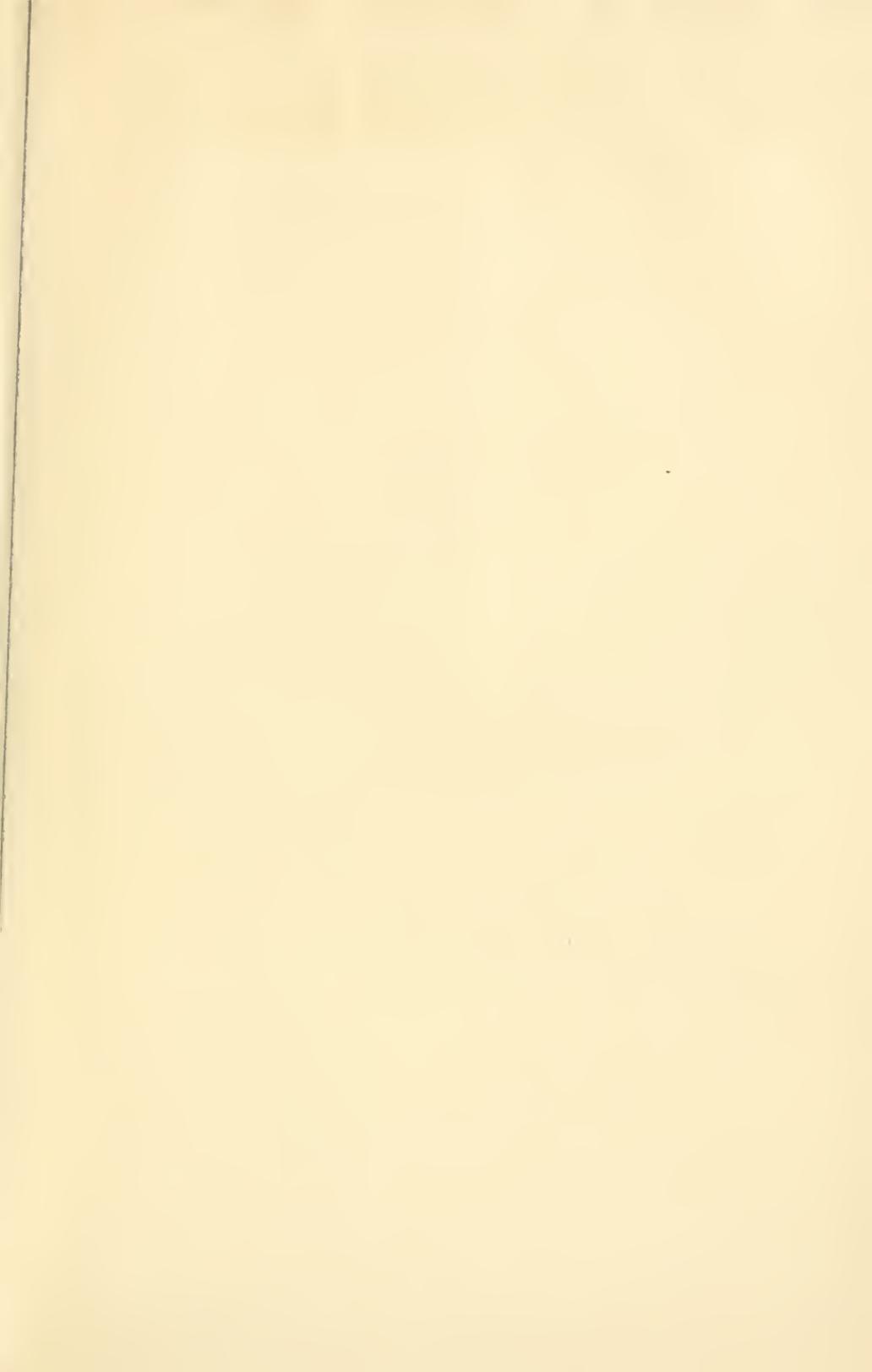
“I have made Seckendorff’s acquaintance here, and I passed a few hours with him at the Brentanos’. I have not yet read any of his books ; but to judge from his conversation, he is a gifted man and well-informed. I consider him very handsome too ; I don’t certainly care much for his features, but his figure, his movements, his style of dress, have all a kind of distinction and elegance. Whilst, for my own part, I am, as you know, poorly endowed by nature in every respect ; and, to make matters worse, I am not a free man, being tied by a marriage from which, as my friends all tell me, I have no right to free myself. Under the circumstances I must perforce accustom myself to the thought of my friend creating fresh ties for herself.”

Thus did Creuzer in his desire to shake off a yoke which he had imposed upon himself, tax his wits to discover all sorts of combinations. And as the girl persisted in not understanding, he decided at last, towards the middle of July, to notify his wish to her in more precise terms. It was then that he begged the theologian Daub to write to Frau von Heyden the letter which was to have such a tragic result.

IV

At all events, this result had an excellent reaction on Creuzer's own destiny. Freed once for all from a too absorbing *liaison*, the philosopher was able to go on leisurely with the preparation of his voluminous work, which, as everybody knows, became a boundless source of wealth and renown. He had, moreover, the satisfaction of marrying a rich widow soon afterwards, his wife having died without being able to get that pension for which she was so anxious. In the "Recollections" which he published dealing with his life in Heidelberg, Caroline von G nderode is not so much as mentioned.





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