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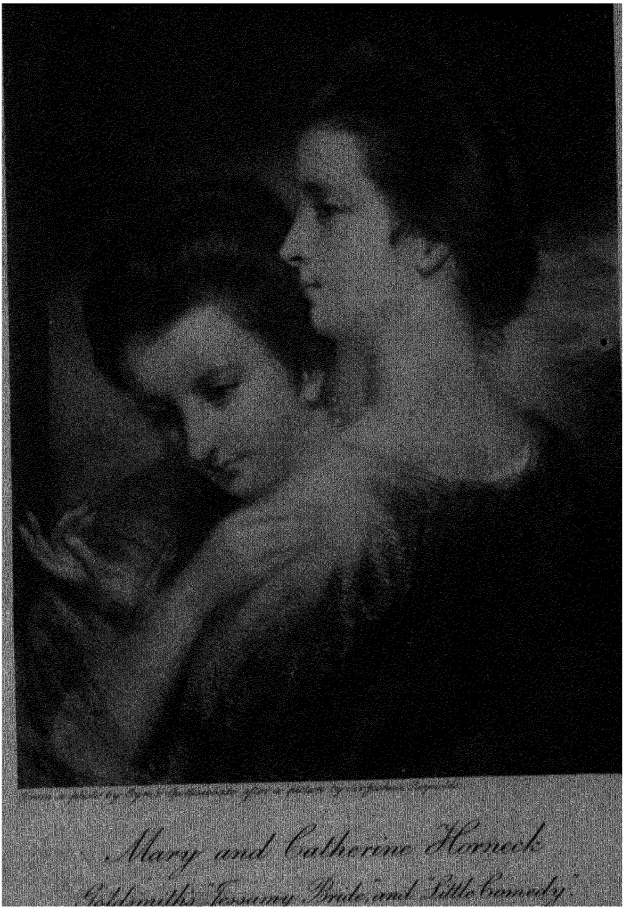
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Mary and Catherine Horneck

Goldsmith's 'Essays' 'Pride and Prejudice' and 'Little Comedy'

A GEORGIAN PAGEANT

A GEORGIAN PAGEANT

BY

FRANK FRANKFORT MOORE

AUTHOR OF

"THE JESSAMY BRIDE," "THE FATAL GIFT," "A NEST OF LINNETS," ETC.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS

London: HUTCHINSON & CO.

Paternoster Row 1908

THE WRITER'S APOLOGY

THE greater number of the papers in this series, dealing with some well-known persons and incidents of the latter half of the Eighteenth Century, are the practical result of a long conversation which the writer had with the late Professor J. Churton Collins upon a very memorable occasion. The writer ventured to contend that the existing views respecting the personality of Oliver Goldsmith, of Henry Thrale, of James Boswell, of Samuel Johnson, and of some others whom he named, were grossly erroneous; as were also the prevalent notions respecting such matters as Fanny Burney's attendance upon the Queen, the "romance" of the Gunnings, and the "elopement" of Richard Brinsley Sheridan with Elizabeth Linley. If Professor Churton Collins had not urged upon the writer the possible interest attaching to the expression of some opinions unbiassed by those conservators of the conventional who have dealt with the same period, every one of them being as careful as Indians on the warpath to tread in the footsteps of the man preceding him, he would not have the courage to set forth his views in the form they now assume.

The non-controversial papers in the series may in-

crease the light and shade in the sketches of this very humble Georgian Pageant. The romance of Lady Susan Fox-Strangways naturally took the shape of a "regulation" story. The details are absolutely correct.

On the very day the writer meant to keep the promise he made to Professor Churton Collins, by sending him the completed proofs of this book, the melancholy news of his death was published—an irreparable loss to the Literature of English Criticism.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
THE MONARCH OF THE PAGEANT	1
A COMEDY IN ST. MARTIN'S STREET	28
A TRAGEDY IN THE HAYMARKET	64
THE FATAL GIFT	95
THE FÊTE CHAMPÊTRE	125
THE PLOT OF A LADY NOVELIST	148
TRAGEDY WITH A TWINKLE	170
THE BEST COMEDY OF THE CENTURY	195
THE JESSAMY BRIDE	221
THE AMAZING ELOPEMENT	232
THE AMAZING DUELS	259
A MELODRAMA AT COVENT GARDEN	283
THE COMEDY AT DOWNING STREET	311

ILLUSTRATIONS

MARY AND CATHERINE HORNECK (Photogravure)	*Frontispiece*
	TO FACE PAGE
FANNY BURNEY (MADAME D'ARBLAY)	20
DR. CHARLES BURNEY	32
HENRY THRALE	46
MRS. THRALE	62
JOSEPH BARETTI	76
JAMES BOSWELL	96
MARIA GUNNING (COUNTESS OF COVENTRY)	112
ELIZABETH GUNNING (DUCHESS OF HAMILTON AND ARGYLL)	126
COUNTESS OF DERBY (ELIZA FARREN)	140
OLIVER GOLDSMITH	170
GEORGE COLMAN	206
SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS	224
ELIZABETH LINLEY (MRS. SHERIDAN) AND HER BROTHER THOMAS LINLEY	238
RICHARD BRINSLEY SHERIDAN	260
MARTHA REAY	284
LADY SUSAN FOX-STRANGWAYS, LADY SARAH LENNOX, AND C. J. FOX	334

A GEORGIAN PAGEANT

THE MONARCH OF THE PAGEANT

ON the morning of February 2nd, 1789, a lady was taking a solitary stroll in Kew Gardens. She was a small person, of dainty features, with a dimple on each side of her mouth that suggested a smile, varying, perhaps out of compliment to the variations of the people with whom she came in contact in her daily life, and shifting doubtless with the movements of the folk of her fancy through her quick brain, but remaining a smile all the time. There was about her a good deal of that doll-like primness which is so pretty an accompaniment of a person of small stature; but with this particular person it had—not quite, but almost—the additional charm of dignity. One could at all times see that she was making a highly intellectual attempt to be dignified; but that she was not really dignified at heart. One could see that she had too fine a sense of humour to be thoroughly dignified; and it may be that some of her closest observers—her closest observers were her greatest admirers—perceived now and again that she had a full sense of the humour

of her efforts in the direction of dignity. She had large eyes, but being very short-sighted, she had a habit of half closing them when looking at anything or any one further away from her than ten feet. But somehow it was never suggested that the falling of her lids brought a frown to her face.

She was a quick walker at all times; but on this winter day the slowest would have had little temptation to dawdle. The usual river mist was thrusting up a quivering cold hand among the gaunt trees of the water boundary of the Gardens, and here and there it flitted like a lean spectre among the clipped evergreens of the shrubberies. There was a maze of yew hedges, in the intricacies of which one mist-spectre had clearly got lost; and the lady, who had some imagination, could see, as she hurried past, the poor thing's wispy head and shoulders flitting about among the baffling central walks. (A defective eyesight is sometimes a good friend to the imagination.)

And all the while she was hurrying along the broad track she was looking with some measure of uneasiness through her half-closed eyes down every tributary walk that ran into the main one, and peering uneasily down every long artificial vista that Sir Thomas Chambers, the Swedish knight and landscape gardener, had planned, through the well-regulated boskage, with an imitation Greek temple or Roman villa at the end. Approaching the widening entrance to each of these, she went cautiously for a few moments until

she had assured herself on some point. Once she started and took a step backward, but raising the lorgnette which she carried, and satisfying herself that the group of men a hundred yards down one of the vistas was composed wholly of gardeners, she resumed her stroll.

Whatever slight apprehension may have been on her mind had vanished by the time she had half completed the circuit made by the main walk. She had reached one of the mounds which at that time were covered with rhododendrons, and paused for a moment to see if there was sign of a bud. A blackbird flew out from among the dense leafage, and she followed it with her eyes as well as she could while she walked on, crossing the narrow path that led to the seats on the mound. But at the moment of crossing she was startled out of her senses by the sound of a shout from some distance down this path—a loud shout followed by several others rather less imperative. She gave a little exclamation of terror, raising her muff to her face. Glancing in the direction whence the commotion was coming, she gave another cry, seeing a tall man rush toward her with outstretched arms—waving arms, frantically beckoning to her while he shouted :

" Miss Burney ! Miss Burney ! "

She waited no longer. She turned and fled along the broad walk, making for one of the many labyrinths not so very far away, and after her ran the man, still

shouting and gesticulating. She could hear the sound of his feet and his voice behind her, as well as the cries of the other men who were endeavouring to keep pace with him. On they came, and there flashed through her active brain, in spite of the horrible apprehension which thrilled through every nerve in her body, as she doubled back upon the path which she had just traversed, the lines written by Dr. Goldsmith and often quoted by her friend Dr. Johnson :

> A hare whom hounds and horns pursue,
> Pants to the place from whence at first he flew.

She realised, all too painfully, the feelings of the poor hare at that moment. She longed for a friendly earth to open up before her. They were behind her—those wild huntsmen, one hoarsely yelling to her she knew not what, the others, more shrill, shouting to her to stop.

She was too frightened to think of obeying any of them. On she ran, and it seemed that she was increasing the distance between her and her panting pursuers, until one of them, having better wind, managed to shoot ahead of the others, and to get close enough to say in a voice that was not all gasps :

"Madam, madam, the doctor begs you to stop!"

She glanced over her shoulder, still flying.

"No, no, I cannot—I dare not!" she gasped.

"Madam, you must—you must : it hurts the King to run!" cried the man.

Then she stopped. The man, an ordinary attendant, stood in front of her. He was more breathless than Miss Burney.

"The doctor, madam," he faltered, "'twas the doctor—he thought at first that His Majesty was—was—but that was at first—now he says you must please not lead His Majesty on—'tis all too much for him. Save us! How you did go, madam! Who would ha' thought it?"

She was paying no attention to him. Her eyes were fixed upon the group of men who were recovering their breath while they walked slowly toward her. The King was between his two physicians—not Physicians in Ordinary; just the contrary—the two physicians who had been summoned from Lincolnshire by some person in authority who possessed intelligence—it should surely be easy to identify such a man at the Court of George III—when, some months earlier, His Majesty gave signs of losing his mental balance. They were the Willises, father and son, the former a clergyman, who was therefore all the more fully qualified to deal with a mind diseased—such a case as was defined as needing more the divine than the physician. The King was between the father and his son, but neither of them was exercising any ostentatious or officious restraint upon him. One of them was smiling while he said some reassuring words to the Royal patient; the other was endeavouring to reassure little Miss Burney from a distance.

And it seemed that the intentions of both were realised, for His Majesty was smiling as benignly as was ever his wont, and little Miss Burney took her courage in both hands and boldly advanced to meet her Sovereign. (She had been for three years the Queen's "Dresser.")

But when they met, after the King had cried, "Why did you run away from me, Miss Burney?" it appeared that the process of reassuring the King had been but too effectually accomplished, for before the lady could frame a diplomatic reply to his inquiry, he had enwound her in his paternal arms and kissed her heartily on the cheek, greatly to her confusion and (she pretends) to her horror. The two doctors stood placidly by. They, poor things, being quite unaccustomed to the ways of the immediate entourage of the Court of George III—though they had doubtless heard something of the practices that prevailed at the Courts of His Majesty's lamented grandfather and great-grandfather—seemed under the impression that there was nothing unusual in this form of salutation. For all they knew it might be regarded as *de rigueur* between a monarch and the ladies of his consort's retinue. Even Dr. Willis, the divine, took a tolerant view of the transaction. He, as Miss Burney afterwards recorded, actually looked pleased!

But, of course, the prim little lady herself was overwhelmed—yes, at first; but soon her good sense came to her rescue. She seems to have come with

extraordinary rapidity to the conclusion that the King was not so mad as she had believed him to be. Her train of reasoning was instinctive, and therefore correct: the King had put his arms about her and kissed her when he had the chance, therefore he could not be so mad after all.

In truth, however, Fanny Burney took the view of her treatment that any sensible modest young woman would take of it. She knew that the King, who had been separated for several months from the people whom he had been daily in the habit of meeting, had shown in the most natural way possible his delight at coming once more in contact with one of them.

And undoubtedly the homely old gentleman was delighted beyond measure to meet with some one belonging to his happy years—a pleasanter face than that of Mrs. Schwellenberg, the dreadful creature who had made Fanny Burney's life miserable. It is not conceivable that the King would have kissed Mrs. Schwellenberg if he had come upon her suddenly as he had upon Miss Burney. People prefer silver rather than iron links with a happy past. He was so overjoyed, that the divine and the physician in attendance soon became anxious. They could not know much of all that he talked about to Miss Burney. They were in the position of strangers suddenly introduced to a family circle, and understanding nothing of the little homely secrets—homely topics upon which all the members of the circle have laughed together for years.

They possibly could not see much sense in his long and rambling chat—it must have been largely in monologue—but they must have observed the face of the lady who was listening to him, and known from the expression which it wore that their patient was making himself intelligible. Only now and again they thought it prudent to check his exuberance. They must have been the most intelligent of men; and their names deserve to stand high in the annals of their country. At a time when the scientific treatment of the insane had not even begun to be formulated—when to be mentally afflicted meant to be on a level with felons and to be subjected to such repressive treatment as was afforded by the iron of the fetters and the hiss of the whipcord—at a time when a lust for office could make a statesman like Burke (a statesman who caused multitudes to weep in sympathy with his harangue on the sufferings of Marie Antoinette) refer to the King as having been "hurled by the Almighty from his throne" (in order to give the Opposition a chance of jumping into place and power over his prostrate body)—at such a time as this Dr. Willis and his two sons undertook the treatment of the King, and in the face of much opposition from the place-hunters in the Prince of Wales's pack, succeeded in restoring their patient to the palace which his happy nature had transformed into a home for every one dwelling under its roof.

They stood by for some time after the King had

greeted Miss Burney; and when he began to speak to her of topics that had a purely domestic ring they showed their good taste, as well as their knowledge of the peculiarities of their "case," by moving away to a little distance, signalling to their attendants to do the same. Their discrimination must have been highly appreciated by the King. The poor restless mind had long wanted such a good long talk with a sympathetic listener, who, he knew, could understand every allusion that he might make to the past. He yearned to talk and to hear of such things as some one living in a distant land looks forward to finding in a letter from home. The *res angusta domi*—that was what he was hungering for—the trivial things in which he delighted—the confidences on simple matters—the sly everyday jests, never acutely pointed even to the family circle, but absolutely pointless to every one outside, yet sounding so delightfully witty when repeated as a sign of a happy intimacy of the past!

Little Miss Burney had never imagined a scene like that in which she played an insignificant part at the moment, but one of enormous importance for posterity. She had, a few years before, been placed upon the porphyry pedestal which is reserved in England for the greatest woman writer of the generation. Seated there quite complacently, without reflecting upon the possibility of her pedestal becoming a trifle rickety, she had clasped her novel *Evelina* to her bosom, and received, without her head being in the

least turned, the adulation—respectful in some cases, almost passionate in others—of the most notable men and women in the most intellectual and artistic society in England. Dr. Samuel Johnson, who was not disposed to overrate the merits of any writer whom the world had praised, was kissing her hands, and Richard Brinsley Sheridan was kissing her feet; Sir Joshua Reynolds was kissing the hem of her garments; while Edmund Burke was weaving a tinsel crown of rhetoric for her shapely head; but there were others equally great at that time who seemed to think that only a nimbus could give the appropriate finish to the little personage on the pedestal. The marvellous story of her success has been often told. It is more easily told than understood in the present day, the fact being that fashion in fiction is the most ephemeral of all human caprices, and Fanny Burney was essentially a fashion. She followed up the marvellous success of *Evelina*, after an interval of four years, with the natural success of *Cecilia*, and, after another four years, she retired from the brilliant world into the obscurity of the palace—the palace wardrobe. She had visited Mrs. Delany, and had been introduced (not presented) to the King and Queen, and the office of Queen's Dresser—Keeper of the Robes was the stately designation of a very humble service—becoming vacant, it was offered to Fanny Burney and accepted by her, acting on the advice of her father, who most certainly hoped that his own interests as a

musician, fully qualified to become leader of the Royal Band, would be materially advanced when his daughter should become one of the Household.

Reams of indignation have been published from time to time in respect of Dr. Burney's conduct in urging on his one brilliant daughter—the others were not brilliant, only mothers—to accept a post the duties of which could be discharged by any lady's maid with far more advantage to the Royal Consort than could possibly result from the ministrations of Fanny Burney. The world has been called on to bemoan the prudent indiscretion of the father, who did not hesitate to fling his gifted daughter's pen out of the window, so to speak, and thereby deprive the waiting world of some such masterpiece as *Camilla*—the novel which she published five years after her release from the burden of the Robes. There can be no doubt that the feeling which prevailed among the circle of the elect—the Reynoldses, the Burkes, and even the frigid Walpole—when it became known that Miss Burney's health was breaking down under the strain of her duties at the Court—she had about two hours' daily attendance of the most ordinary nature upon the Queen—was on the border of indignation. Every one affirmed that it was a disgrace for so lively a genius to be kept at the duties of a lady's maid. It was like turning the winner of the Oaks out to the plough. Edmund Burke, recalling his early approbation of the intentions of Dr. Burney in regard to his daughter,

declared that he had never made so great a mistake in all his life; and we know that he made a few. These excellent people had no reason to speak otherwise than they did on this matter. All they knew was that the pen of the novelist who had given them so much pleasure had been (as they believed) idle for nearly nine years, five of which had been passed at the Court. That reflection was quite enough to rouse their indignation. But what can one say of the indignation on this point of a writer who actually made the fact of his being engaged on a review of the Diary of Fanny Burney—the incomparable Diary which she kept during her five years at Court—an excuse for turning the vials of his wrath upon her father, whose obstinacy gave her a chance of writing the most interesting chapter—the most accurate chapter—of History that was ever penned by man or woman?

Macaulay wrote in all the fullness of his knowledge of what Fanny Burney had written. He knew that for four years after she had published *Cecilia* her pen had been idle so far as fiction was concerned. He knew that for five years after her release from the thraldom of the Queen's closet she had published nothing; he himself felt it to be his duty to point out the comparative worthlessness of *Camilla*, the novel which she then gave to the world, not because she felt upon her the impulse of a woman of genius, but simply because she found herself in great need of

some ready money. Macaulay does not disdain to go into the money question, showing (he fancies) how Dr. Burney had by his obstinacy deprived his gifted daughter of earning the large sum which she would assuredly have obtained by the writing of a novel in the time that she was compelled to devote to the Queen's *toilette*. He found it convenient to ignore the fact that of the fourteen years that elapsed between the publication of *Cecilia* and that of *Camilla* only five were spent at Court. Surely any born novelist could, without running a chance of imperilling a well-earned reputation by undue haste in the dialogue or by scamping the descriptive passages, contrive by dint of hard, but not over-hard, work to produce more than one complete romance within a space of nine years. Many ladies who are not born novelists have succeeded in surpassing this task without physical suffering.

But even assuming that the author of *Evelina*, *Cecilia*, and *Camilla* lost not only time but money while she was at Court, how much money did she lose? She received at least the equivalent of £2000 for her five years' service, and she was granted a pension of £100 a year, which she drew for forty-nine years; so that for her enforced seclusion she was remunerated to the extent of close upon £7000! This sum represents more than all Fanny Burney's literary works yielded to her from the joyous youthful days of *Evelina* down to the somewhat sordid middle age of *Camilla*.

But what has the world gained by the lamentable short-sightedness attributed to Dr. Burney? How is one to estimate the value of that incomparable Diary so admirably "written up" during her tedious five years at Court? How many *Cecilias*, how many *Camillas* would one not give in exchange for a single year of that part of the Diary which deals with the approach of the King's malady? In no work of fiction that ever came from her pen did she ever show such power of observation, not only of incident, but of character as well; nor is there apparent on any page produced by her imagination such perfect artistic effects as appeal to a reader on every page of this Diary of a disease.

At the outset of her account of these dreadful days we are conscious of the vague approach of a shadow—we feel as if we were led into the darkened chamber of a haunted house. Our attendant pauses by our side, listening for strange noises; she lays a hand upon our arm, as it were, and speaks to us in a whisper. We feel that the dread Thing is coming. The King is indisposed—he has not been quite in his usual health for some time past; but of course nothing very alarming has been announced by Sir George Barker, the Physician in Ordinary, although there is an uncertainty as to His Majesty's complaint. But Miss Burney has seen the faces of the people about her who have come more closely in contact with the Sovereign; she has doubt-

less noticed the solemnity of some—the airs of mystery, the head-shakings, and she is capable of drawing her own conclusions. "Heaven preserve him!" she whispers in her Diary for October 19th, 1788. She is very much with the Queen, and she perceives that Her Majesty is extremely uneasy, though saying nothing. There is great alarm during the night. Possibly some one has heard the delirious voice of the King coming from his apartments in that tumble-down palace of his at Kew. The fright is general, and every one is wondering what the morning will bring forth. Hope comes with the light. The bulletin is that the King was ill, but is now so very much better that his physician believes the move to Windsor, to which the Court was looking forward, may be taken. The move is made on the 25th, and then Miss Burney has a chance meeting with the King that causes her to suspect the truth. He talks to her with unnatural vehemence—unnatural volubility—and without cessation for a long time; all is exaggerated, and his graciousness most of all. She has never met with anything like this before, but having heard of the delirium accompanying a high fever, she believes that His Majesty is in the throes of a fever.

The next day is Sunday, and she meets him again in one of the passages, and she finds him rather more coherent in his talk, but still it is the talk of a man in the delirium of a fever. It is all about

himself—his health—his dreadful sleeplessness. He keeps at it for half an hour without making the slightest pause; and yet he manages to convey to her an impression of his benevolence—his consideration for the people around him—his hopes that he may not cause them any uneasiness. When he leaves her she doubtless tells of the meeting to some of her friends in the apartments where the equerries are accustomed to meet, and doubtless there are more head-shakings and airs of mystery; but she records: "Nobody speaks of his illness, nor what they think of it."

Apparently, too, no one felt it to be necessary to subject His Majesty to any course of treatment, although, a few days later, he became so weak that he, who at the beginning of the year thought nothing of walking twelve miles at a stretch—more than his sons could do—hobbled along like a gouty man. Gradually, very gradually, the horror approaches; and nothing that has ever been done in fiction equals in effect the simple record of all that Fanny Burney noticed from day to day. Most touching of all her entries are those relating to the Queen. "The Queen," she writes, "is almost overpowered with some secret terror. I am affected beyond all expression in her presence to see what struggles she makes to support her serenity. To-day she gave up the conflict when I was alone with her; and burst into a violent fit of tears. It was very, very terrible to see! . . . something horrible seemed impending. . .

I was still wholly unsuspicious of the greatness of the cause she had for dread. Illness, a breaking up of the constitution, the payment of sudden infirmity and premature old age for the waste of unguarded health and strength—these seemed to me the threats awaiting her; and great and grievous enough, yet how short of the fact!" . . .

At last the terrible truth was revealed. Miss Burney was dining with one of the Queen's ladies; but there was little conversation between them. It was clear that both had their suspicions of the nature of the dread shadow that was hovering over the castle. They remained together, waiting for the worst. "A stillness the most uncommon reigned over the whole house. Nobody stirred; not a voice was heard; not a motion. I could do nothing but watch, without knowing for what; there seemed a strangeness in the house most extraordinary."

To talk of such passages as these as examples of literary art would be ridiculous. They are transcripts from life itself made by some one with a genius for observation, not merely for recording. Boswell had a genius for recording; but his powers of observation were on a level with those of a sheep. We know perfectly well what his treatment of the scenes leading up to the tragedy of the King would have been. But Fanny Burney had the artist's instinct for collecting only such incidents as heighten the effect.

When she is still sitting in the dim silence of that

November evening with her friend some one enters to whisper that there was to be no playing of the after-dinner music in which the King usually took so much pleasure. Later on the equerries come slowly into the room. There is more whispering—more head-shaking. What was it all about? Had anything happened? What had happened? No one wishes to be the first to speak. But the suspense! The strain upon the nerves of the two ladies! At last it can be borne no longer. The dreadful revelation is made. The King is a madman!

At dinner, the Prince of Wales being present, His Majesty had "broken forth into positive delirium, which long had been menacing all who saw him most closely; and the Queen was so overpowered as to fall into violent hysterics. All the princesses were in misery, and the Prince of Wales had burst into tears. No one knew what was to follow—no one could conjecture the event." Nothing could be more pathetic than the concern of the King for his wife. His delusion is that she is the sufferer. When Fanny Burney went to her room, where she was accustomed to await her nightly summons to attend Her Majesty, she remained there alone for two hours. At midnight she can stand the suspense no longer. She opens the door and listens in the passage. Not a sound is to be heard. Not even a servant crossed the stairs on the corridor off which her apartment opened. After another hour's suspense a page knocks at her door

with the message that she is to go at once to her Royal mistress.

"My poor Royal Mistress!" she writes. "Never can I forget her countenance—pale, ghastly pale she looked . . . her whole frame was disordered, yet she was still and quiet. And the poor King is dreadfully uneasy about her. Nothing was the matter with himself, he affirmed, except nervousness on her account. He insisted on having a bed made up for himself in her dressing-room in order that he might be at hand should she become worse through the night. He had given orders that Miss Goldsworthy was to remain with her; but it seemed that he had no great confidence in the vigilance of any one but himself, for some hours after the Queen had retired he appeared before the eyes of the horrified lady-in-waiting, at the door, bearing a lighted candle. He opened the bed curtains and satisfied himself that his dread of her being carried out of the palace was unfounded; but he did not leave the room for another half-hour, and the terror of the scene completely overwhelmed the unhappy lady."

Truly when this terror was walking by night Fanny Burney's stipend was well earned. But worse was in store for her when it was decided that the King should be removed to Kew Palace, which he detested and which was certainly the most miserable of all the miserable dwelling-places of the Royal Family. It seemed to be nobody's business to make any prepara-

tion for the reception of the Queen and her entourage. The rooms were dirty and unwarmed, and the corridors were freezing. And to the horrors of this damp, unsavoury barrack was added Mrs. Schwellenberg, the German she-dragon who had done her best to make Fanny Burney's life unendurable during the previous three years. Formerly Fanny had dwelt upon the ill-treatment she had received at the hands of this old harridan; but now she only refers to her as an additional element of casual discomfort. The odious creature is "so oppressed between her spasms and the house's horrors, that the oppression she inflicted ought perhaps to be pardoned. It was, however, difficult enough to bear," she adds. "Harshness, tyranny, dissension, and even insult seemed personified. I cut short details upon this subject—they would but make you sick."

Truly little Miss Burney earned her wages at this time. The dilapidated palace was only rendered habitable by the importation of a cartload of sandbags, which were as strategically distributed for the exclusion of the draughts as if they were the usual defensive supply of a siege. But even this ingenious device failed to neutralise the Arctic rigours of the place. The providing of carpets for some of the bare floors of the bedrooms and passages was a startling innovation; but eventually it was carried out. An occasional set of curtains also was smuggled into this frozen fairy palace, and a sofa came now and again.



FANNY BURNEY, AFTERWARDS MADAME D'ARBLAY.

p. 20.

But in spite of all these auxiliaries to luxury—in spite, too, of Mrs. Schwellenberg's having locked herself into her room, forbidding any one to disturb her—the dreariness and desolation of the December at Kew must have caused Miss Burney to think with longing of the comforts of her father's home in St. Martin's Street and of the congenial atmosphere which she breathed during her numerous visits to the Thrales' solid mansion at Streatham.

The condition of the King was becoming worse, and early whispers of the necessity for a Regency grew louder. It was understood that Mrs. Fitzherbert would be made a duchess! Everybody outside the palace sought to stand well in the estimation of the Prince of Wales, and Pitt was pointed out as a traitor to his country because he did his best to postpone the Comus orgy which every one knew would follow the establishing of a Regency. The appointment of the Doctors Willis was actually referred to as a shocking impiety, suggesting as it did a wicked rebellion against the decree of the Almighty, Who, according to Burke, had hurled the monarch from his throne. There were, however, some who did not regard Mr. Burke as an infallible judge on such a point, and no one was more indignant at the mouthings of the rhetorician than Miss Burney. But it seemed as if the approach of the Regency could no longer be retarded. The Willises were unable to certify to any improvement in the condition of the King during the

month of January, 1789. It was really not until he had that chase after Fanny Burney in Kew Gardens that a change for the better came about.

Though she was greatly terrified by his affectionate salutation, she could not but have been surprised at the sanity displayed in the monologue that followed; for one of the first of his innumerable questions revealed to her the fact that he was perfectly well aware of what a trial to her patience was the odious Mrs. Schwellenberg. He asked how she was getting on with Mrs. Schwellenberg, and he did so with a laugh that showed her how well he appreciated her difficulties in this direction in the past. Before she could say a word he was making light of the Schwellenberg—adopting exactly the strain that he knew would be most effective with Miss Burney.

"Never mind her—never mind her! Don't be oppressed! I am your friend! Don't let her cast you down—I know that you have a hard time of it—but don't mind her!"

The advice and the tone in which it was given—with a pleasant laugh—did not seem very consistent with what she expected from a madman. Fanny Burney appears up to that moment to have been under the impression that the King and Queen had known nothing of the tyranny and the insults to which she had been subjected by Mrs. Schwellenberg. But now it was made plain to her that the eyes of the Royal couple had been open all the time. If

Macaulay had noticed the passage touching upon this point he would have had still stronger grounds for his attack upon their Majesties for their want of consideration for the tire-woman who was supposed never to be tired.

But how much more surprised must Fanny Burney have been when the King went on to talk to her in the most cordially confidential way about her father! It must have been another revelation to her when he showed how fully he realised the ambitions of Dr. Burney. He asked her regarding the progress of the *History of Music*, at which Dr. Burney had been engaged for several years, and this gave him a chance of getting upon his favourite topic, the music of Handel. But when he began to illustrate some of his impressions on this fruitful theme by singing over the choruses of an oratorio or two—perhaps such trifles as "All we like Sheep," or "Lift up your Heads," or the "Hallelujah"—he must have gone far toward neutralising the good opinion she had formed as to his sanity. Fortunately the attendant doctors interposed at this point; but the fact that the distinguished amateur suffered their adverse criticism proves to posterity that the King was even more good-natured than he had been painted by Miss Burney.

On then he went to talk of the subject which must never have been far from Dr. Burney's heart—the Mastership of the King's Band: "Your father ought to have had the post, and not that little poor musician

Parsons, who was not fit for it," he cried. " But Lord Salisbury used your father very ill in that business, and so he did me ! However, I have dashed out his name, and I shall put your father's in—as soon as I get loose again. What has your father got at last ? Nothing but that poor thing at Chelsea ! Oh, fie ! fie ! But never mind ! I will take care of him—I will do it myself ! "

Could he have given the devoted daughter of Dr. Burney a more emphatic proof of his complete recovery to sanity than this ? Why, it would have convinced Dr. Burney himself !

Alas ! although the King may have been very resolute at the moment—he had just been making out a list of new officers of State, and was ready to show her that the name of her father's enemy, Lord Salisbury, was not to be found in it, and he assured her that in future he would rule with a rod of iron—yet before he returned to his ordinary way of life he must have mislaid his list, for poor Dr. Burney remained at his post of organist of Chelsea Hospital. He never attained to the place which he coveted and for which his daughter was sent to five years' Royal servitude, and (incidentally) to achieve for herself that immortality as a chronicler which would certainly never have been won by her as a novelist.

But the King did not confine his conversation to the one topic which he knew was of greatest interest to her. He spoke of Mrs. Delany, who had been the

means of introducing Fanny to the Royal circle; and he referred to the ill-treatment which he had received at the hands of one of his pages; but this was the only passage that savoured of unkindness, and the chronicler is unable to do more than hope that the conduct of the pages was one of His Majesty's delusions. Then, with what seems to us to be consummate adroitness, he put some questions to her which she could not but answer. "They referred to information given to him in his illness from various motives, but which he suspected to be false, and which I knew he had reason to suspect," Miss Burney writes. "Yet was it most dangerous to set anything right, as I was not aware what might be the views of their having been stated wrong. I was as discreet as I knew how to be, and I hope I did no mischief: but this was the worst part of the dialogue."

We can quite believe that it was, and considering that it was the part of the dialogue which was most interesting to the King, we think that Miss Burney was to be congratulated upon the tact she displayed in her answers. She did not cause the King to be more perturbed than he was when waxing indignant over the conduct of his pages; and there was no need for Dr. Willis to interfere at this point, though he did a little later on. Then submitting with the utmost docility to the control of his excellent attendant, and with another exhortation not to pay any attention to the whims of the Schwellenberg, the gracious gentle-

man kissed her once more on the cheek and allowed her to take her departure.

So ended this remarkable adventure in Kew Gardens. One can picture Fanny Burney flying to tell the Queen all that had occurred—to repeat everything that her discretion permitted her of the conversation; and one has no difficulty in imagining the effect upon Queen Charlotte of all that she narrated; but it seems rather hard that from Mrs. Schwellenberg should have been withheld the excellent advice given by the King to Miss Burney respecting the German virago.

It would have been impossible either for Fanny Burney or the Queen to come to any conclusion from all that happened except one that was entirely satisfactory to both. King George III was undoubtedly on the high road to recovery, and subsequent events confirmed this opinion. It really seemed that the interview with the author of *Evelina* marked the turning-point in his malady at this time. Every day brought its record of improvement, and within a fortnight the dreaded Regency Bill, which had been sent up to the Lords, was abandoned. On March 1st there were public thanksgivings in all the churches, followed by such an illumination of London as had not been seen since the great fire. The scene at Kew is admirably described by Miss Burney, who had written some congratulatory lines to be offered by the Princess Amelia to the King. A great "transparency" had been painted by the Queen's order, representing the

King, Providence, Health, and Britannia—a truly British tableau — and when this was hung out and illuminated the little Princess " went to lead her papa to the front window." Then she dropped on her knees and gave him the " copy of verses," with the postscript :

> The little bearer begs a kiss
> From dear papa for bringing this.

The " dear papa " took his dear child in his arms, and held her close to him for some time. Nothing could have been more charmingly natural and affecting. For such a picture of Royalty at home we are indebted to Fanny Burney, and, face to face with it, we are selfish enough to feel grateful to Dr. Burney for having given his daughter for five years to discharge a humble duty to her Sovereign and an immortal one to her fellow-countrymen, who have read her Diary and placed it on a shelf between Pepys and de Gramont.

A COMEDY IN ST. MARTIN'S STREET

DR. BURNEY was giving a "command" party at his house in St. Martin's Street, Leicester Fields—the house which Sir Isaac Newton did once inhabit, and which was still crowned with the most celebrated observatory in Europe. In the early years of his musical career he had had a patron, Mr. Fulk Greville, who had done a great deal for him, and in later days he had never quite forgotten this fact, although Dr. Burney had climbed high on the professional as well as the social ladder, and was better known in the world than Mr. Greville himself. He had become quite intimate with many great persons and several curious ones. It is uncertain whether Mr. Greville regarded Dr. Johnson as belonging to the former or the latter class, but at any rate he had heard a great deal about Dr. Johnson, and did not think that, provided he took every reasonable precaution, any harm could come to himself from meeting such a notability. He accordingly instructed Dr. Burney to bring him and Johnson together, and Burney promised to do so. Before the day for this meeting was fixed Mrs. Greville—who, by the way, was Fanny Burney's godmother—had signified her

intention of viewing the huge person also, and of bringing her daughter, the exquisite Mrs. Crewe, to attend the promised exhibition of genius in bulk.

Of course Dr. Johnson was ready to lend himself to any plan that might be devised to increase the circumference of his circle of admirers, and besides, this Mr. Fulk Greville was a descendant of the friend of Sir Philip Sidney, and had large possessions, as well as a magnificent country seat, and altogether he would make a most desirable listener; so he agreed to come to the party to be inspected by the Greville family. Burney, however, wishing, as every responsible proprietor of a menagerie should wish, to be on the safe side and exhibit his bear under the eye and the controlling influence of his favourite keeper, invited Mr. and Mrs. Thrale to the party.

These were to be the "principals" in the comedy of this entertainment; and for the subordinates he selected his married daughter and her husband—both admirable musicians—Mr. Davenant, Mr. Seward, and a certain Italian musician, a vocalist as well as a performer on the violin and that new instrument which was at first called the fortepiano, then the pianoforte, and later on simply the piano. This person's name was Gabrielli Piozzi.

Such were the harmonious elements which Dr. Burney proposed to bring together for the gratification of Mr. Fulk Greville and his wife. Mr. Greville was an amateur of some little capacity, and he had

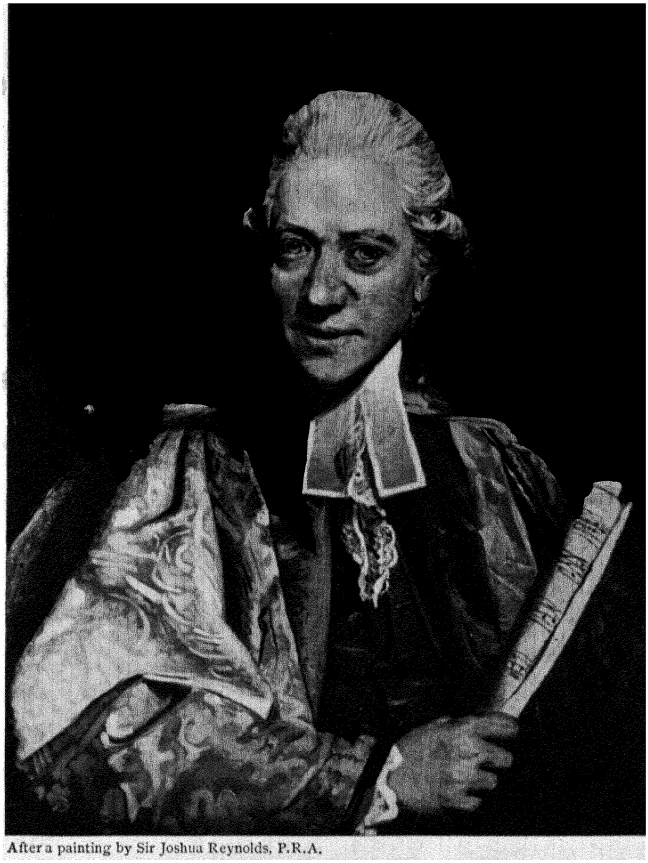
certainly at one time been greatly interested in music. He had paid £300 to Burney's master, the celebrated Dr. Arne, who composed in the masque of "Alfred" the rousing anthem known as "Rule Britannia," for the cancelling of Burney's indentures as an apprentice to the "art of musick," and had taken the young man into his own house in a capacity which may best be described as that of entertaining secretary. Dr. Burney may therefore have thought in his wisdom that, should Johnson be in one of his bearish moods and feel disinclined to exhibit his parts of speech to Mr. Greville, the latter would be certain of entertainment from the musicians. This showed forethought and a good working knowledge of Dr. Johnson. But in spite of the second string to the musician's bow the party was a fiasco—that is, from the standpoint of a social entertainment; it included one incident, however, which made it the most notable of the many of the Burney parties of which a record remains.

And what records there are available to any one interested in the entertainments given by Dr. Burney and his charming family at that modest house of theirs, just round the corner from Sir Joshua Reynolds' larger establishment in Leicester Fields! Hundreds of people who contributed to make the second half of the eighteenth century the most notable of any period so far as literature and the arts were concerned, since the spacious days of Elizabeth, were

accustomed to meet together informally at this house, and to have their visits recorded for all ages to muse upon. To that house came Garrick, not to exhibit his brilliance as a talker before a crowd of admirers, but to entertain the children of the household with the buffooning that never flagged, and that never fell short of genius in any exhibition. He was the delight of the schoolroom. Edmund Burke and his brother, both fond of conversation when oratory was not available, were frequently here; Reynolds came with many of his sitters, and found fresh faces for his canvas among his fellow-guests; and with him came his maiden sister, feeling herself more at home with the simple Burney circle than she ever did with the company who assembled almost daily under her brother's roof. Nollekens, the sculptor; Colman, the dramatist and theatre manager, who was obliged to run away from London to escape the gibes which were flung at him from every quarter when Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer*, which he had done his best to make a failure, became the greatest success of the year; Cumberland, the embittered rival of Goldsmith, who was the person who gave the solitary hiss during the first performance of the same play, causing the timid author to say to the manager on entering the playhouse, "What is that, sir—pray, what is that? Is it a hiss?" To which Colman replied, "Psha! sir, what signifies a squib when we have been sitting on a barrel of gunpowder all night?"

These were among the notabilities ; and the " curiosities " were quite as numerous. The earliest of Arctic voyagers, Sir Constantine Phipps, who later became Lord Mulgrave, put in an appearance at more than one of the parties ; and so did Omai, the " gentle savage " of the poet Cowper, who was brought by Captain Cook from the South Seas in the ship on which young Burney was an officer. The sisters, who, of course, idolised the sailor, sat open-mouthed with wonder to hear their brother chatting away to Omai in his native language. Upon another occasion came Bruce, the Abyssinian traveller, who told the story of how steaks were cut from the live ox when needed by the inhabitants of one region. He was immensely tall, as were some of his stories ; but though extremely dignified, he did not object to a practical joke. Another person of great stature who visited the Burneys was the notorious Count Orloff, the favourite of the Empress Catherine of Russia ; and from the letters of one of the young people of the household one has no difficulty in perceiving with what interest he was regarded by the girls, especially since the report reached them that he had personally strangled his imperial master at the instigation of his imperial mistress.

These are but a few names out of the many on the Burneys' visiting list. Of course, as regards musical artists, the house was the rendezvous of the greatest in London. While the opera-house in the



After a painting by Sir Joshua Reynolds, P.R.A.

DR. CHARLES BURNEY.

Haymarket was open there was a constant flow of brilliant vocalists to these shores, and the young people had many opportunities of becoming acquainted with the ignorance, the capriciousness, the affectations, and the abilities which were to be found associated with the lyric stage in the eighteenth century, as they are in the twentieth. Among the *prime donne* who sang for the Burneys were the Agujari—a marvellous performer, who got fifty pounds for every song she sang at the Pantheon—and her great but uncertain rival, Gabrielli. The former, according to Mozart, who may possibly be allowed to be something of a judge, had a vocal range which was certainly never equalled by any singer before or after his time. She won all hearts and a great deal of money during her visit to London, and she left with the reputation of being the most marvellous and most rapacious of Italians. Gabrielli seems to have tried to make up by capriciousness what she lacked in expression. Her voice was, so far as can be gathered from contemporary accounts, small and thin. But by judiciously disappointing the public she became the most widely talked of vocalist in the country. Then among the men were the simple and gracious Pacchierotti—who undoubtedly became attached to Fanny Burney—Rauzzini, and Piozzi.

The Burneys' house was for years the centre of the highest intellectual entertainment to be found in London, and the tact of the head of the household,

and the simple, natural manners of his daughters, usually succeeded in preventing the intrusion of a single inharmonious note, in spite of the fact that a Welsh harpist named Jones had once been among the visitors.

But upon the occasion of this "command" party, when Greville was to meet Johnson, and the latter had dressed himself with that extreme care which we suspect meant that he tied up his hose, and put on a wig the front of which had not yet been burnt away by coming in contact with his lighted candle, Burney's tact overreached itself. Mr. Greville may have felt that the Thrales had no business to be of the party, or Johnson may have gained the impression that Burney's old patron was anxious to play the same part, in an honorary sort of way, in regard to himself. At any rate, he refused to be drawn out to exhibit his conversational powers to a supercilious visitor; and after a brief space of time he turned his back upon every one and his face to the fire, and there he sat, greatly to the discomfiture, no doubt, of his host. In a very short time a gloom settled down upon the whole party. Mr. Thrale, stiff and reserved, was not the man to pull things together. He sat mute on his chair, making no advance toward Mr. Greville, and Mr. Greville had probably his chin in the air, having come to the conclusion that Dr. Johnson's powers as a conversationalist had been greatly overrated by rumour.

It was when all hope of sociability had vanished that Dr. Burney, who, when a church organist, may have had occasion to cover up the shortcomings of the clergyman by a timely voluntary, begged Signor Piozzi to oblige the company with a song. But Piozzi was a forlorn hope. He was the last man in the world to save the situation. Had he been a vocalist of the calibre of Pacchierotti he could have made no headway against the funereal gloom that had settled down upon the party.

Piozzi had a sweet and highly trained voice, though some years earlier he had lost its best notes, and he sang with exquisite expression; but when playing his own accompaniment, with his back turned to his audience, he was prone to exaggerate the sentiment of the music until sentiment became lost in an exuberance of sentimentality.

This style of singing is not that to which any one would resort in order to dissipate a sudden social gloom. As the singer went on the gloom deepened.

It was just at this moment that one of those ironic little imps that lurk in wainscot nooks looking out for an opportunity to influence an unconscious human being to an act which the little demon, seeing the end of a scene of which mortals only see the beginning, regards with sardonic glee, whispered something in the ear of Mrs. Thrale, and in an instant, in obedience to its prompting, she had left her chair and stolen behind the singer at the piano. Raising her hands

and turning up her eyes in imitation of Piozzi, she indulged in a piece of mimicry which must have shocked every one in the room except the singer, who had his back to her, and Dr. Johnson, who, besides being too short-sighted to be able to see her, was gazing into the grate.

No doubt the flippant little lady felt that a touch of farcical fun was the very thing needed to make the party go with a snap; but such flagrant bad taste as was involved in the transaction was more than Dr. Burney could stand. Keeping his temper marvellously well in hand, considering his provocation, he went gently behind the gesticulating woman and put a stop to her fooling. Shaking his head, he whispered in a "half joke whole earnest" way:

"Because, madam, you have no ear yourself for music, will you destroy the attention of all who, in that one point, are otherwise gifted?"

Or words to that effect, it might be safe to add, for the phrases as recorded in the diary of one of his daughters are a trifle too academic for even Dr. Burney to have whispered on the spur of the moment. But he certainly reproved the lady, and she took his remonstrance in good part, and showed herself to be admirably appreciative of the exact pose to assume in order to save the situation. She went demurely to her chair and sat there stiffly, and with the affectation of a schoolgirl who has been admonished for a fault and commanded to take a seat in silence and

apart from the rest of the class. It must be apparent to every one that this was the precise attitude for her to strike in the circumstances, and that she was able to perceive this in a rather embarrassing moment shows that Mrs. Thrale was quite as clever as her friends made her out to be.

But regarding the incident itself, surely the phrase, "the irony of fate," was invented to describe it. A better illustration of the sport of circumstance could not be devised, for in the course of time the lively little lady, who had gone as far as any one could go in making a mock of another, had fallen as deep in love with the man whom she mocked as ever Juliet did with her Romeo. She found that she could not live without him, and, sacrificing friends, position, and fortune, she threw herself into his arms, and lived happy ever after.

The conclusion of the first scene in this saturnine comedy which was being enacted in the drawing-room in that house in St. Martin's Street, was in perfect keeping with the *mise-en-scène* constructed by Fate, taking the rôle of Puck. It is admirably described in the diary of Charlotte Burney. She wrote that Mr. Greville—whom she nicknamed "Mr. Gruel"—assumed "his most supercilious air of distant superiority" and "planted himself immovable as a noble statue upon the hearth, as if a stranger to the whole set."

By this time Dr. Johnson must have had enough of

the fire at which he had been sitting, and we at once see how utterly hopeless were the social relations at this miserable party when we hear that the men " were so kind and considerate as to divert themselves by making a fire-screen to the whole room." But Dr. Johnson, having thoroughly warmed himself, was now in a position to administer a rebuke to the less fortunate ones, and, when nobody would have imagined that he had known the gentlemen were in the room, he said that " if he was not ashamed he would keep the fire from the ladies too." " This reproof (for a reproof it certainly was, although given in a very comical, dry way) was productive," Charlotte adds, " of a scene as good as a comedy, for Mr. Suard tumbled on to a sopha directly, Mr. Thrale on to a chair, Mr. Davenant sneaked off the premises, seemingly in as great a fright and as much confounded as if he had done any bad action, and Mr. Gruel being left solus, was obliged to stalk off."

A more perfect description of the " curtain " to the first act of this, " as good as a comedy," could not be imagined. In every scene of this memorable evening the mocking figure of an impish Fate can be discerned. There was the tactful and urbane Dr. Burney anxious to gratify his old patron by presenting to him the great Dr. Johnson, and at the same time to show on what excellent terms he himself was with the family of the wealthy brewer, Mr. Thrale. Incidentally he has caused Johnson to put himself to the inconveni-

ence of a clean shirt and a respectable wig; and, like a thoughtful general, lest any of his plans should fall short of fulfilment, he has invited an interesting vocalist to cover up the retreat and make failure almost impossible!

Dr. Burney could do wonders by the aid of his tact and urbanity, but he is no match for Fate playing the part of Puck. Within an hour Johnson has disappointed him and become grumpy—the old bear has found the buns to be stale; Mr. Greville, the patron, is in a patronising mood, and becomes stiff and aloof because Johnson, secure with his pension, resents it; Mrs. Thrale, anxious to do her best for Burney, and at the same time to show Mrs. Greville and her fine daughter how thoroughly at home she is in the house and how delicate is her sense of humour, strikes an appallingly false note, and only saves herself by a touch of cleverness from appearing wholly ridiculous. This is pretty well for the opening scenes, but the closing catastrophe is not long delayed. The men huddle themselves together in stony silence; and they are reproved for impoliteness by—whom? Dr. Johnson, the man who has studied boorishness and advanced it to a place among the arts—the man who calls those who differ from him dolts and fools and rascals—the man whose manners at the dinner table are those of the sty and trough—the man who walks about the streets ungartered and unclean—this is the man who has the effrontery to rebuke for

their rudeness such gentlemen as Mr. Fulk Greville, Mr. Seward, and Mr. Thrale! Puck can go no further. Down comes the curtain when one gentleman collapses upon a "sopha," another into a chair, a third sneaks off like a culprit, and the fourth stalks off with an air of offended dignity!

It might be thought that the imp of mischief who had assumed the control of this evening's entertainment would be satisfied at the result of his pranks so far. Nothing of the sort. He was only satisfied when he had made a match between the insignificant figure who was playing the musical accompaniment to his pranks and the lady who thought that his presence in the room was only justifiable on the ground that he made an excellent butt for her mockery!

And the funniest part of the whole comedy is to be found in the fact that the pair lived happy ever after!

The extraordinary influence which Boswell has had upon almost every student of the life of the latter half of the eighteenth century is shown in a marked way by the general acceptance of his view—which it is scarcely necessary to say was Johnson's view—of the second marriage of Mrs. Thrale. We are treating Boswell much more fairly than he treated Mrs. Thrale when we acknowledge at once that his opinion was shared by a considerable number of the lady's friends, including Dr. Burney and his family. They were all shocked when they heard that the widow

of the Southwark brewer had married the Italian musician, Signor Gabrielli Piozzi. Even in the present day, when one might reasonably expect that, the miserable pettiness of Boswell's character having been made apparent, his judgment on most points would be received with a smile, he is taken very seriously by a good many people. It has long ago been made plain that Boswell was quite unscrupulous in his treatment of every one that crossed his path or made an attempt to interfere with the aim of his life, which was to become the biographer of Johnson. The instances of his petty malevolence which have come to light within recent years are innumerable. They show that the opinion which his contemporaries formed of him was absolutely correct. We know that he was regarded as a cur who was ever at Johnson's heels, and took the insults of the great man with a fawning complacency that was pathetically canine. He was daily called a cur. "Oh, no," said Goldsmith, "he is not a cur, only a burr; Tom Davies flung him at Johnson one day as a joke, and he stuck to him ever since"—a cur, and an ape and a spy and a Branghton —the last by Dr. Johnson himself in the presence of a large company, that included the creator of the contemptible Mr. Branghton. (The incident was not, however, recorded by Mr. Boswell himself.) But as the extraordinary interest in his *Life of Johnson* began to be acknowledged, the force of contemporary opinion gradually dwindled away, until Boswell's verdicts

and Boswell's inferences found general acceptance; and even now Goldsmith is regarded as an Irish *omadhaum*, because Boswell did his best to make him out to be one, and Mrs. Thrale is thought to have forfeited her claims to respect because she married Signor Piozzi.

People forget the origin of Boswell's malevolence in both cases. He detested Goldsmith because Goldsmith was a great writer, who was capable of writing a great biography of Johnson, with whom he had been on the most intimate terms long before Tom Davies flung his burr at Johnson; he hated Baretti and recorded—at the sacrifice of Johnson's reputation for humanity—Johnson's cynical belittling of him, because he feared that Baretti would write *the* biography; he was spiteful in regard to Mrs. Thrale because she actually did write something biographical about Johnson.

The impudence of such a man as Boswell writing about "honest Dr. Goldsmith" is only surpassed by his allusions to the second marriage of Mrs. Thrale. He was a fellow-guest with Johnson at the Thrales' house in 1775, and he records something of a conversation which he says occurred on the subject of a woman's marrying some one greatly beneath her socially. "When I recapitulate the debate," he says, "and recollect what has since happened, I cannot but be struck in a manner that delicacy forbids me to express! While I contended that she ought to be

treated with inflexible steadiness of displeasure, Mrs. Thrale was all for mildness and forgiveness and, according to the vulgar phrase, making the best of a bad bargain." This was published after the second marriage. What would be thought of a modern biographer who should borrow a little of Boswell's "delicacy," and refer to a similar incident in the same style ?

In his own inimitable small way Boswell was for ever sneering at Mrs. Thrale. Sometimes he did it with that scrupulous delicacy of which an example has just been given; but he called her a liar more than once with considerable indelicacy, and his readers will without much trouble come to the conclusion that his indelicacy was preferable to his delicacy—it certainly came more natural to him. He was small and mean in all his ways, and never smaller or meaner than in his references to Mrs. Thrale's second marriage.

But, it must be repeated, he did not stand alone in regarding her union with Piozzi as a *mésalliance*. Dr. Burney was shocked at the thought that any respectable woman would so far forget herself as to marry a musician, and his daughter Fanny wept remorseful tears when she reflected that she had once been the friend of a lady who did not shrink from marrying a foreigner and a Roman Catholic—more of the irony of Fate, for Fanny Burney was herself guilty of the same indiscretion later on : she made a happy mar-

riage with a Roman Catholic foreigner, who lived on her pension and her earnings. Dr. Johnson was brutal when the conviction was forced upon him that he would no longer have an opportunity of insulting a lady who had treated him with incredible kindness, or the guests whom he met at her table. Upon one of the last occasions of his dining at Mrs. Thrale's house at Streatham, a gentleman present—an inoffensive Quaker—ventured to make a remark respecting the accuracy with which the red-hot cannon-balls were fired at the Siege of Gibraltar. Johnson listened for some time, and then with a cold sneer said, "I would advise you, sir, never to relate this story again. You really can scarce imagine how very poor a figure you make in the telling of it." Later on he took credit to himself for not quarrelling with his victim when the latter chose to talk to his brother rather than to the man who had insulted him. Yes, it can quite easily be understood that Johnson should look on the marriage as a sad *mésalliance*, and possibly it is fair to assume from the letter which he wrote to the lady that he felt hurt when he heard that it was to take place.

Mrs. Thrale wrote to tell him that she meant to marry Piozzi, and received the following reply:

"Madam,—If I interpret your letter right, you are ignominiously married; if it is yet undone, let us once more talk together. If you have abandoned your children and your religion, God forgive your

wickedness; if you have forfeited your fame and your country, may your folly do no further mischief!"

Possibly the lady may have gathered from the hint or two conveyed to her, with Boswellian delicacy, in this letter, that Johnson was displeased with her. At any rate, she replied, declining to continue the correspondence.

In her letter she summed up the situation exactly as a reasonable person, acquainted with all the facts, and knowing something of the first husband, would do.

"The birth of my second husband is not meaner than that of my first," she wrote; "his sentiments are not meaner; his profession is not meaner; and his superiority in what he professes acknowledged by all mankind. It is want of fortune, then, that is ignominious; the character of the man I have chosen has no other claim to such an epithet. The religion to which he has always been a zealous adherent, will, I hope, teach him to forgive insults he has not deserved; mine will, I hope, enable [me] to bear them at once with dignity and patience. To hear that I have forfeited my fame is indeed the greatest insult I ever yet received. My fame is as unsullied as snow, or I should think it unworthy of him who must henceforth protect it."

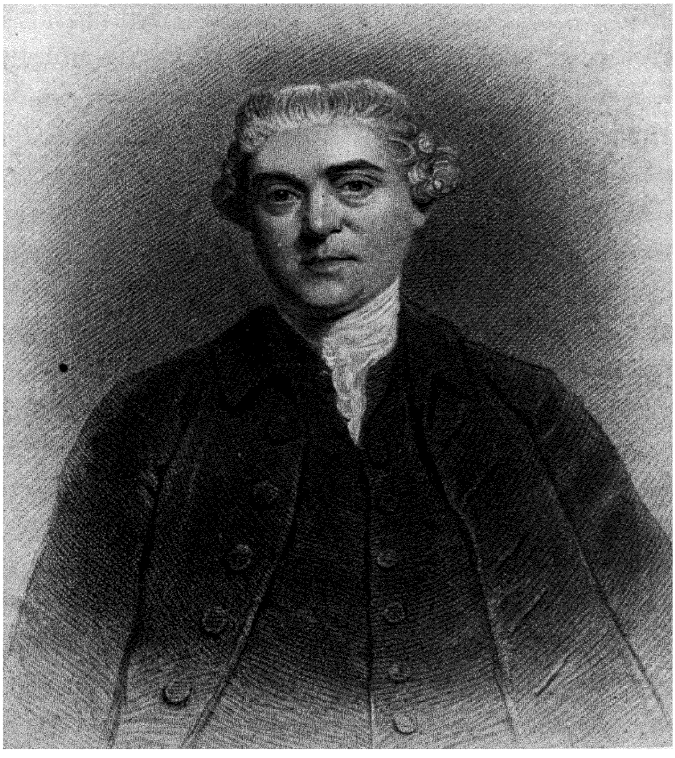
This brought the surly burly mass of offended dignity to his proper level; but still he would not offer the lady who had been his benefactress for twenty years an apology for his brutality. He had the presumption to

offer his advice instead—advice and the story (highly appropriate from his point of view) of Mary Queen of Scots and the Archbishop of St. Andrews. He advised her to remain in England—he would not relinquish his room in her house and his place at her table without a struggle—as her rank would be higher in England than in Italy, and her fortune would be under her own eye. The latter suggestion was a delicate insult to Piozzi.

Mrs. Piozzi, as she then became, showed that she esteemed this piece of presumption, under the guise of advice, at its true value. Immediately after her marriage she went abroad with her husband, though eventually she settled with him in England.

Now, most modern readers will, we think, when they have become acquainted with the whole story of Mrs. Thrale's life, arrive at the conclusion that it was her first marriage that was the *mésalliance*, not her second.

Henry Thrale was a man of humble origin—a fact that revealed itself almost daily in his life—and he was incapable of loving any one except himself. He certainly never made a pretence of devotion to his wife, and it is equally certain that, although she did more for him than any other woman would have done, she never loved him. It might be going too far, considering the diversity of temperament existing among womankind, to assert that he was incapable of being loved by any woman; but beyond a doubt he was



From an engraving by E. **Scriven, after a painting** by Sir Joshua Reynolds, P.R.A.

HENRY THRALE.

not a lovable man. He was a stiff, dignified, morose, uncongenial man, and he was a Member of Parliament into the bargain. What could a pretty, lively, brilliant girl of good family see in such a man as Thrale to make her love him? She never did love him—at times she must have detested him. But she married him, and it was a lucky day for him that she did so. Twice she saved him from bankruptcy, and three times she induced his constituents, who thoroughly hated him, to return him to Parliament as their representative. He never did anything in Parliament, and he did little out of it that was worth remembering. It is customary to make large allowances for a man of business who finds that his wealth and a charming wife serve as a passport into what is called society, though latterly such men do not stand in need of such a favour being shown to them. But if a man betrays his ignorance of certain social usages —not necessarily refinements—his friends excuse him on the ground that he is a first-rate business man. Thrale, however, was unworthy of such a title. He inherited a great scientific business, but he showed himself so incapable of appreciating the methods by which it had been built up, that he brought himself within a week or two of absolute ruin by listening to a clumsy adventurer who advocated the adoption of a system of adulteration of his beer that even a hundred and fifty years ago would have brought him within sight of a criminal prosecution.

if he does not interpose am not likely to have much; but I think he might as well give me a little as give all to the gardener."

There was a double catastrophe threatening, it would appear: the burning of the brewery and the shortage in the supply of Dr. Johnson's peaches.

This is how Mrs. Thrale describes the situation:

"Nothing but the astonishing presence of mind shewed by Perkins in amusing the mob, with meat and drink and huzzas, till Sir Philip Jennings Clerke could get the troops, and pack up the counting-house, bills, bonds etc. and carry them, which he did, to Chelsea College for safety, could have saved us from actual undoing. The villains *had* broke in, and our brew-house would have blazed in ten minutes, when a property of £150,000 would have been utterly lost, and its once flourishing possessors quite undone."

It seems almost incredible that Johnson, living at Streatham as the guardian of Mr. Thrale's interests, should require the lady to write to him, begging him to thank Perkins for his heroism. But so it was.

"Perkins has behaved like an Emperor," she wrote, "and it is my earnest wish and desire—command, if you please to call it so—that you will go over to the brew-house and express *your* sense of his good behaviour."

Mrs. Thrale was unreasonable. How could Johnson be expected to take any action when he was deprived of his peaches?

It will strike a good many modern readers of the account of this and other transactions that if it was Perkins who saved the brewery for Mr. Thrale, it was Mrs. Thrale who saved Perkins for the brewery. Possibly it was her prompt gift of the silver plate to Mrs. Perkins that induced this splendid manager to pocket the insult of the beggarly two hundred guineas given to him by Mrs. Thrale—though this was double the amount authorised by the "master." Thrale never sufficiently valued the services of Perkins. If he had had any gratitude in his composition he would never have made Johnson one of his executors. What a trial it must have been to the competent man of business to see Johnson lumbering about the place with a pen behind his ear and an ink-pot suspended from a button of his coat, getting in the way of everybody, and yet feeling himself quite equal to any business emergency that might crop up. He felt himself equal to anything—even to improve upon the auctioneer's style in appraising the value of the whole concern. "Beyond the dreams of avarice" remains as the sole classic phrase born beneath the shadow of a brew-house.

In the matter of the premium to Perkins, Thrale should have felt that he had a treasure in his wife, to say nothing of all that she had done for him upon another occasion, involving a terrible sacrifice. A quarrel had broken out among the clerks at the brewery, which even the generalship of Perkins was

unable to mollify. Had Mrs. Thrale been an ordinary woman she would not have jeopardised her own life and the life of her child—her thirteenth—in her husband's interests. As it was, however, she felt that the duty was imposed on her to settle the difficulties in the counting-house, and she did so; but only after many sleepless nights and the sacrifice of her child. "The men were reconciled," she wrote, "and my danger accelerated their reconcilement."

If Henry Thrale was deficient in the best characteristics of a business man, his qualifications to shine socially can scarcely be regarded as abundant. There were stories of his having been a gay dog in his youth, but assuredly he and gaiety had long been strangers when he married his wife, and upon no occasion afterwards could he be so described even by the most indulgent of his friends; so that one rather inclines to the belief that the dull dog must have been a dull puppy. We know what his eldest daughter was, and we are convinced that the nature of that priggish, dignified, and eminently disagreeable young lady was inherited from her father. In Miss Thrale as a girl one feels that one is looking at Henry Thrale as a boy. The only story that survives of those mythical gay days with which he was accredited is that relating to the arrival of the Gunnings to take London by storm. It was said that he and Murphy thought to make these exquisite creatures the laughing-stock of the town by introducing them to a vulgar hanger-on of

Murphy, in the character of a wealthy man of title and distinction. Possibly the two young men were put up to play this disgraceful prank upon the Gunnings by some jealous female associate; but however this may be, it not only failed most ignominiously, it recoiled upon the jesters themselves, for Mrs. Gunning, herself the sister of a nobleman, and destined to become the mother-in-law of two dukes and the grandmother of two more—the parent of a peeress in her own right, and an uncommonly shrewd Irishwoman into the bargain—"smoaked," as the slang of the period had it, the trick, and her footman bundled the trio into the street.

The story may be true; but as both the Gunning girls were married in 1752, and Thrale did not meet Hester Lynch Salusbury till 1763, it was an old story then, and it was not remembered against him except by the Duchess of Hamilton. If it represents the standard of his adolescent wildness, we cannot but think that his youth was less meteoric than his wife believed it to be. At any rate, we do not know much about his early life, but we do know a great deal about his latter years, and it is impossible to believe that his nature underwent a radical change within a year or two of his marriage.

He became the host of a large number of the most notable people of that brilliant period at which he lived, and we perceive from the copious accounts that survive of the Streatham gatherings that he

was greatly respected by all his visitors. He never said anything that was worth recording, and he never did anything memorable beyond stopping Johnson when the latter was becoming more than usually offensive to his fellow-guests. He had no ear for music any more than Johnson had, and it does not appear that he cared any more for painting, although he became a splendid patron of Sir Joshua Reynolds, whom he commissioned to paint several portraits of his distinguished friends for the decoration of the library at Streatham. To his munificence in this respect the world owes its finest portraits of Goldsmith, Burke, Garrick, the painter himself, and Mrs. Thrale.

The debt which we feel we owe to Thrale on this account is, however, somewhat discounted when we learn that this enthusiastic patron of art never paid the painter for his work. He left the pictures and the obligation to pay for them as a legacy to his widow—and to pay for them at more than the current rate for each into the bargain. Sir Joshua Reynolds was as good a man of business as Thrale was an indifferent one. At the time of his painting the portraits his price for a three-quarter-length picture was £35, but in the course of a year or two he felt it necessary to charge £50 for the same size, and this was the price which the unfortunate widow had to pay for her husband's pose as the munificent patron of the Arts.

Men of the stamp of Thrale usually have no vices.

They are highly respected. If they had a vice or two they would be beloved. He had a solitary failing, but it did not win for him the affection of any one: it was gluttony. For years of his life he gave himself up to the coarsest form of indulgence. He was not a gourmet: he did not aim at the refinements of the table or at those daintinesses of cuisine which in the days of intemperate eaters and drinkers proved so fatally fascinating to men of many virtues; no, his was the vice of the trough. He ate for the sake of eating, unmindful of the nature of the dish so long as it was plentiful enough to keep him employed for an hour or two.

The dinner-table of the famous Streatham Park must have been a spectacle for some of the philosophers who sat round it. We know what was the food that Johnson's soul loved, and we know how he was accustomed to partake of it. He rioted in pork, and in veal baked with raisins, and when he sat down to some such dainty he fed like a wild animal. He used his fingers as though they were claws, tearing the flesh from the bone in his teeth, and swallowing it not wholly without sound. It is not surprising to learn that his exertions caused the veins in his forehead to swell and the beads of perspiration to drop from his scholarly brow, nor can any one who has survived this account of his muscular feat at the dinner-table reasonably be amazed to hear that when so engaged, he devoted himself to the work before

him to the exclusion of every other interest in life. He was oblivious of anything that was going on around him. He was deaf to any remark made by a neighbour, and for himself articulation was suspended. Doubtless the feeble folk on whom he had been trampling in the drawing-room felt that his peculiarities of feeding, though revolting to the squeamish, were not without a bright side. They had a chance of making a remark at such intervals without being gored—"gored," it will be remembered, was the word employed by Boswell in playful allusion to the effect of his argumentative powers.

Thanks to the careful habits of some of the guests at this famous house we know what fare was placed before the Gargantuan geniuses at one of these dinners. Here is the *carte du jour*, "sufficient for twelve," as the cookery book says :

"First course, soups at head and foot, removed by fish and a saddle of mutton ; second course, a fowl they call galena at head and a capon larger than some of our Irish turkeys at foot ; third course, four different sorts of ices, pine-apple, grape, raspberry and a fourth ; in each remove there were fourteen dishes."

The world is indebted to an Irish clergyman for these details. It will be seen that they did not include much that could be sneered at as bordering on the kickshaw. All was good solid English fare—just the sort to make the veins in a gormandiser's forehead to swell and to induce the lethargy from which Thrale

suffered. He usually fell asleep after dinner; one day he failed to awake, and he has not awakened since.

Of course Johnson, being invariably in delicate health, was compelled to put himself on an invalid's diet when at home. He gives us a sample of a *diner maigre* at Bolt Court. Feeling extremely ill, he wrote to Mrs. Thrale that he could only take for dinner "skate, pudding, goose, and green asparagus, and could have eaten more but was prudent." He adds, "Pray for me, dear Madam,"—by no means an unnecessary injunction, some people will think, when they become aware of the details of the meal of an invalid within a year or two of seventy.

It was after one of the Streatham dinners that Mrs. Thrale ventured to say a word or two in favour of Garrick's talent for light gay poetry, and as a specimen repeated his song in *Florizel and Perdita*, and dwelt with peculiar pleasure on this line:

I'd smile with the simple and dine with the poor.

This is Boswell's account of the matter, and he adds that Johnson cried, "Nay, my dear lady, this will never do. Poor David! Smile with the simple! What folly is that? And who would feed with the poor that can help it? No, no; let me smile with the wise and feed with the rich!"

Quite so; beyond a doubt Johnson spoke from the bottom of his heart—nay, from a deeper depth still.

Boswell was amazed to find that Garrick's "sensibility" as a writer was irritated when he related the story to him, and in Mrs. Thrale's copy of Johnson she made a note—"How odd to go and tell the man!"

It was not at all odd that Boswell, being a professional tale-bearer and mischief-maker, should tell the man; but it is odd that Garrick should be irritated, the fact being that the sally was directed against a line which he did not write. What Garrick did write was something very different. The verse, which was misquoted, runs thus:

> That giant Ambition we never can dread;
> Our roofs are too low for so lofty a head;
> Content and sweet Cheerfulness open our door,
> They smile with the simple and feed with the poor.

Such a muddle as was made of the whole thing can only be attributed to the solidity of the Streatham fare.

It was inevitable that Thrale could not continue over-eating himself with impunity. He was warned more than once by his doctors that he was killing himself, and yet when he had his first attack every one was shocked. He recovered temporarily, and all his friends implored him to cultivate moderation at the dinner-table. A touch of humour is to be found among the details of the sordid story, in his wife's begging Johnson—Johnson of the swollen forehead

and the tokens of his submission to the primeval curse in the eating of his bread—to try to reason the unhappy man out of his dreadful vice. After wiping from the front of his coat the remains of the eighth peach which he had eaten before breakfast, or the dregs of his nineteenth cup of tea from his waistcoat, Johnson may have felt equal to the duty. He certainly remonstrated with Thrale. It was all to no purpose, however; he had a second attack of apoplexy in the spring of 1780, and we hear that he was copiously "blooded." He recovered and went to Bath to recruit. It was during this visit to Bath that the brewery was attacked by the Gordon rioters. On returning to London he failed to induce his constituents to remain faithful to him, and he continued eating voraciously for another year. He began a week of gorging on April 1st, 1781. His wife implored him to be more moderate, and Johnson said very wisely, "Sir, after the denunciation of your physicians this morning, such eating is little better than suicide." It was all to no purpose. He survived the gorge of Sunday and Monday, but that of Tuesday was too much for him. He was found by his daughter on the floor in a fit of apoplexy, and died the next morning.

Such was the man whose memory was outraged by the marriage of his widow with Piozzi, an Italian musician, whose ability was so highly appreciated that his earnings, even when he had lost his voice, amounted

to £1200 a year, a sum equal to close upon £2500 of our money. And yet Johnson had the effrontery to suggest in that letter of his to Mrs. Thrale, which we have quoted, that she would do well to live in England, so that her money might be under her own eye!

The truth is that Mrs. Thrale was in embarrassed circumstances when she married Signor Piozzi. Her worthy husband left her an annuity of £2000, which was to be reduced by £800 in the event of her marrying again; and also £500 for her immediate expenses. Johnson wrote to her, making her acquainted with this fact, in order, it would seem, to allay any unworthy suspicion which she might entertain as to the extent of her husband's generosity. But his last will and testament cannot have wholly dispersed the doubt into which her experience of Mr. Thrale may have led her. For a man who had been making from £16,000 to £20,000 a year to leave his wife only £2000 a year, with a possibility of its being reduced to £1200, would not strike any one as being generous to a point of recklessness. When, however, it is remembered that Thrale's wife plucked him and his business from the verge of bankruptcy more than once, that she bore him fourteen children, and that she lived with him for eighteen years, all question as to the generosity of his bequest to her vanishes. But when, in addition, it is remembered that the lady's fortune at her marriage to Thrale amounted to £10,000, all of which he pocketed, and that later on

she brought him another £500 a year, that it was her mother's money, added to the sum which she herself collected personally, which saved the brewery from collapse—once again at the sacrifice of her infant—all question even of common fairness disappears, and the meanness of the man stands revealed.

It was through the exertions and by the business capacity of his widow that the brewery was sold for £135,000. She was the only one of the trustees who knew anything definite about the value of the property, and had she not been on the spot, that astute Mr. Perkins could have so worked the concern that he might have been able to buy it in a year or two for the value of the building materials. And yet when she became involved in a lawsuit that involved the paying of £7000, she had difficulty in persuading her daughters' trustees to advance her the money, although the security of the mortgage which she offered for the accommodation would have satisfied any bankers. A wretch named Crutchley, who was one of this precious band of incompetents, on the completion of the deed bade her thank her daughters for keeping her out of gaol. It is not recorded that the lady replied, though she certainly might have done so, and with truth on her side, that if her daughters had kept her out of a gaol she had kept her daughters out of a workhouse. She would have done much better to have gone to her friends the Barclays, whose bank had a hundred and fifty years ago as high

a reputation for probity combined with liberality as the same concern enjoys to-day.

Enough of the business side of Mrs. Thrale's second marriage has been revealed to make it plain that Piozzi was not influenced by any mercenary motives in the transaction. On the contrary, it was he who came to her assistance when she was in an extremity, and by the prompt loan of £1000 extricated her from her embarrassment, and left the next day for Italy, without having any hope of marrying her.

Johnson's verdict on Piozzi, communicated to Miss Seward, was that he was an ugly dog, without particular skill in his profession. Unfortunately for this musical enthusiast and devotee to beauty, Miss Seward met Piozzi on his return from Italy with his wife. (His excellent control of her money had resulted in every penny of the mortgage being paid, and of the lodgment of £1500 to their credit in the bank). And Miss Seward, writing from Lichfield—more of the irony of Fate—in 1787, affirmed that the great Lichfield man "did not tell me the truth when he asserted that Piozzi was an ugly dog, without particular skill in his profession. M. Piozzi is a handsome man in middle life, with gentle, pleasing, unaffected manners, and with very eminent skill in his profession. Though he has not a powerful or fine-toned voice, he sings with transcending grace and expression. I was charmed with his perfect expression on his instrument.



From an engraving by E. Finden, after the painting by Sir Joshua Reynolds, P.R.A.

MRS. THRALE.

p. 62.

Surely the finest sensibilities must vibrate through his frame, since they breathe so sweetly through his song."

From this verdict no person who was acquainted with Signor Piozzi differed. Mrs. Thrale's marriage with Piozzi was as fortunate for her as her first marriage was for Thrale.

A TRAGEDY IN THE HAYMARKET

ABOUT half-past nine o'clock on the night of October 6th, 1769, a tall, middle-aged gentleman named Joseph Baretti was walking up the Haymarket. The street was probably as well lighted as any other in London, and this is equivalent to saying that a foot passenger, by keeping close to the windows of the shops and taking cross bearings of the economically distributed oil lamps hung out at the corners of the many lanes, might be able to avoid the deep channel of filth that slunk along the margin of cobble stones. But just at this time the Haymarket must have been especially well illuminated, for the Opera House was in the act of discharging its audience, and quite a number of these fashionable folk went home in their chairs, with link boys walking by the side of the burly Irish chairmen, showing a flaring flame which left behind it a long trail of suffocating smoke, and spluttered resin and bitumen into the faces and upon the garments of all who were walking within range of the illuminant. Then there was the little theatre higher up the street, and its lamps were not yet extinguished; so that Mr. Baretti may have felt that on the whole he was fortunate in the

hour he had chosen for his stroll to the coffee-house where he meant to sup. He may have thought that he had a chance of coming across his friend Sir Joshua Reynolds leaving one of the playhouses, and of being invited by that hospitable gentleman to his house in Leicester Fields; or his still more intimate friend Dr. Samuel Johnson, who would certainly insist on carrying him off to the "Mitre," unless the great man were accompanied by that little Scotch person, James Boswell, who usually wanted him all to himself, after he had given people a chance of seeing him in the company of his distinguished friend, and envying him his position of intimacy—the same position of intimacy that exists between a Duke and his doormat. Mr. Baretti was too short-sighted to have any chance of recognising Sir Joshua Reynolds unless he chanced to be standing under the lamp in the portico of the playhouse, but he felt that he would have no trouble in recognising Dr. Johnson. The latter had characteristics that appealed to other senses than the sense of seeing, and made the act of recognition easy enough to his intimates.

Mr. Baretti, however, passed along the dispersing crowd, and was soon in the dim regions of Panton Street, where pedestrians were few. But before he had turned down this street he found his way barred by a couple of half-drunken women. His infirmity of sight prevented his being aware of their presence until he was almost in the arms of one of them, and

the very second that he made his sudden stop she made a change in the details of the accident that seemed imminent and threw herself into his arms with a yell.

The good man was staggered for a moment, but, recovering himself, he flung her off with an expressive word or two in the Italian tongue. She went limply back and, being adroitly avoided by her companion, gave a circular stagger or two and fell into the gutter with a screech.

Baretti was hurrying on when out of the darkness of Panton Street a big man sprang, followed quickly by two others. The first seized him by the right arm with the oath of a bully, the others tried to trip him up, shouting that he had killed a lady. Baretti was a powerful man and decidedly tough. He struck at the fellow who had closed with him, and used his feet against the attack of the others with considerable effect. He managed to free his arm, but before he could draw his sword he was pulled backward and would have fallen upon his head if he had not clutched the coat of the man from whom he had freed himself. There was a pause of a few seconds, filled up by the wild street yell of the women. The most aggressive of the three men leapt upon the unfortunate Baretti, but before their bodies met, gave a guttural shriek, then a groan. He staggered past, his fingers tearing like talons at his ribs ; he whirled twice round and, gasping, fell on his knees, motionless only for a

few seconds ; his hands dropped limply from his side, and he pitched forward on his head into the gutter.

Baretti was standing, awaiting a further attack, with a knife in his hand, when he was seized by some of the crowd. He offered no resistance. He seemed to be so amazed at finding himself alive as to be incapable of taking any further action.

" He has killed the man—stabbed him with a dagger to the very heart ! " was the cry that came from those of the crowd who were kneeling beside the wretch in the gutter.

" And a woman—he had slain a woman at the outset. Hold him fast. None of us are safe this night. Have a care for the dagger, friends ! "

A sufficiency of advice was given by the excited onlookers to the men who had encircled Baretti—one of them was clinging to him with his arms clasped around his body—until two of the Haymarket watch hurried up, striking right and left with their staves after the wholesome manner of the period, and so making a way for their approach through the crowd.

" 'Tis more than a street brawl—a man has been slain—some say a woman also," a shopkeeper explained to them, having run bareheaded out of his shop ; his apprentice had just put up the last of the shutters.

They had Baretti by the collar in a second, cautiously disarming him, holding the weapon up to the nearest lamp. The blade was still wet with blood.

"A swinging matter this," one of them remarked. "I can swear to the blood. No dagger, but a knife. What man walks the streets at night with a naked knife unless slaughter is his intent?"

"Friends, I was attacked by three bullies, and I defended myself—that is all," said Baretti. He spoke English perfectly.

"You will need to tell that to Sir John in the morning," said one of the watchmen. "You are apprehended in the King's name. Where is the poor victim?"

"There must be some of the crowd who saw how I was attacked," said Baretti. "They will testify that I acted in self-defence. Sirs, hear me make an appeal to you. Out of your sense of justice—you will not see an innocent man apprehended."

"The knife—who carries a bare knife in the streets unless with intent?" said a man.

"'Twas my fruit-knife. I never go abroad without it. I eat my fruit like a Christian, not like a pig or an Englishman," was the defence offered by Baretti, who had now quite lost his temper and was speaking with his accustomed bitterness. He usually sought to pass as an Englishman, but he was now being arrested by the minions of the law as it was in England.

"Hear him! A pig of an Englishman. Those were his words! A foreign hound. Frenchie, I'll be bound."

"A spy—most like a Papist. He has the hanging brow of a born Papist."

"He'll hang like a dog at Tyburn—he may be sure o' that."

"'Tis the mercy o' Heaven that the rascal was caught red-handed! Sirs, this may be the beginning of a dreadful massacring plot against the lives of honest and peaceful people."

The comments of a crowd of the period upon such an incident as the stabbing of an Englishman by a foreigner in the streets of London can easily be imagined.

Even when Baretti was put into a hackney coach and driven off to Bow Street the crowd doubtless remained talking in groups of the menace to English freedom and true religion by the arrival of pestilent foreigners, every man of them carrying a knife. It would be a sad day for England when Jesuitical fruit-knives took the place of good wholesome British bludgeons in the settlement of the ordinary differences incidental to a Protestant people.

It is certain that this was one of the comments of the disintegrating crowd, and it is equally certain that Baretti commented pretty freely to his custodians in the hackney coach upon the place occupied in the comity of nations of that State, the social conditions of whose metropolis made possible so gross a scandal as the arrest of a gentleman and a scholar, solely by reason of his success in snatching his life out of the talons of a ruffian and a bully.

Mr. Baretti was a gentleman and a scholar whose

name appears pretty frequently in the annals of the eighteenth century, but seldom with any great credit to himself. As a matter of fact, this dramatic episode of the stabbing of the man in the Haymarket is the happiest with which his name is associated. He made his most creditable appearance in the chronicles of the period as the chief actor in this sordid drama. He cuts a very poor figure indeed upon every other occasion when he appears in the pages of his contemporaries, though they all meant to be kind to him.

He never could bear people to be kind to him, and certainly, so far as he himself was concerned, it cannot be said that any blame attaches to him for the persistence of his friends in this direction. He did all that mortal man could do to discourage them, and if after the lapse of a year or two he was still treated by some with cordiality or respect, assuredly it was not owing to his display of any qualities that justified their maintenance of such an attitude.

Mr. Baretti was an eminently detestable scholar of many parts. He was as detestable as he was learned—perhaps even more so. Learned men are not invariably horrid, unless they are men of genius as well, and this rarely happens.

Baretti had no such excuse, though it must be acknowledged that his capacity for being disagreeable almost amounted to genius. Such a character as his is now and again met with in daily life. A man who feels himself to be, in point of scholarly attainment, far

above the majority of men, and who sees inferiority occupying a place of distinction while he remains neglected and, to his thinking, unappreciated, is not an uncommon figure in learned or artistic circles. Baretti was a disappointed man, and he showed himself to be such. He had a grievance against the world for being constituted as it is. He had a grievance against society. He had a grievance against his friends who got on in the world. But the only people against whom he was really malevolent were those who were signally and unaccountably kind to him. He accepted their kindness, and then turned and rent them.

Dr. Johnson met him when they were both working for the booksellers, and when the great dictionary scheme was floated his co-operation was welcomed. Johnson's success in life was largely due to his faculty for discovering people who could be useful to him. It can easily be believed that, knowing something of the scholarship of Baretti, he should be delighted to avail himself of his help. Baretti had an intimate knowledge of several languages and their literature; as a philologist he was probably far superior to Johnson; and possibly Johnson knew this, though he was doubtless too wise ever to acknowledge so much openly. We do not hear that the relations between the two ever became strained while the great work was in course of progress. Shortly after it was completed Baretti returned to his native Italy, and began to reproach Johnson for not writing to him more fre-

quently. We have several examples of the cheerfulness with which Johnson set about exculpating himself from such reproaches. The letters which he wrote to him at Italy are among the most natural that ever came from his pen. They are models of the gossipy style which Johnson could assume without once deviating from that dignity which so frequently became ponderous, suggesting the dignity of the elephant rather than that of the lion. Walpole was a master of the art of being gossipy without being dignified. But Johnson's style was not flexible. We have not Baretti's letters to Johnson, but the references made by the latter to some matters communicated to him by his correspondent let us know something of how Baretti was getting on in the land of his birth. He seems to have set his heart upon obtaining some appointment in Italy, and his aspirations included marriage. He was disappointed in both directions; and it would be too much to expect that his temper was improved by these rebuffs.

It may well be believed that he quarrelled his way through Italy. "I have lately seen Mr. Stratico, Professor of Padua, who has told me of your quarrel with an abbot of the Celestine Order, but had not the particulars very ready in his memory," Johnson wrote to him at Milan. Any one who could quarrel with an abbot of the Celestine Order would, we fancy, be *capable de tout*, like the prophet Habakkuk, according to the witty Frenchman. One is not disposed to be

hard upon Professor Stratico for his shortness of memory in regard to this particular quarrel; the strain of remembering the details of all the quarrels of Mr. Baretti would be too great for any man.

Of course, Dr. Johnson gave him some excellent advice. It seems that poor Baretti had been at first so well received on his return to Italy that he became sanguine of success in all his enterprises, and when they miscarried he wrote very bitterly to Johnson, who replied as follows:

"I am sorry for your disappointment, with which you seem more touched than I should expect a man of your resolution and experience to have been, did I not know that general truths are seldom applied to particular occasions; and that the fallacy of our self-love extends itself as wide as our interests or affections. Every man believes that mistresses are unfaithful and patrons capricious; but he excepts his own mistress and his own patron. We have all learned that greatness is negligent and contemptuous, and that in Courts life is often languished away in ungratified expectation; but he that approaches greatness or glitters in a Court, imagines that destiny has at last exempted him from the common lot."

It is doubtful if this excellent philosophy made the person to whom it was addressed more amiable to his immediate entourage; nor is it likely that he was soothed by the assurance that his "patron's weakness or insensibility will finally do you little hurt, if he is

not assisted by your own passions." "Of your love," continued Johnson, "I know not the propriety; we can estimate the power, but in love, as in every other passion of which hope is the essence, we ought always to remember the uncertainty of events." He then hastens to add that "love and marriage are different states. Those who are to suffer the evils together, and to suffer often for the sake of one another, soon lose that tenderness of look, and that benevolence of mind which arose from the participation of unmingled pleasure and success in amusement."

The pleasant little cynical bark in the phrase "those that are to suffer the evils together," as if it referred to love and marriage, is, Malone thinks, not Johnson's, but Baretti's. It is suggested that Johnson really wrote "those that are to suffer the evils *of life* together," and that Baretti in transcribing the letter for Boswell, purposely omitted the words "*of life*." It would be quite like Baretti to do this; for he would thereby work off part of his spite against Johnson for having given him the advice, and he would have had his own sneer against "love and marriage," the *fons et origo* of his disappointment.

But of Dr. Johnson's esteem for the attainments of Baretti there can be no doubt. He thought that the book on Italy which he published on his return to England was very entertaining, adding: "Sir, I know no man who carries his head higher in conversation than Baretti. There are strong powers in his mind.

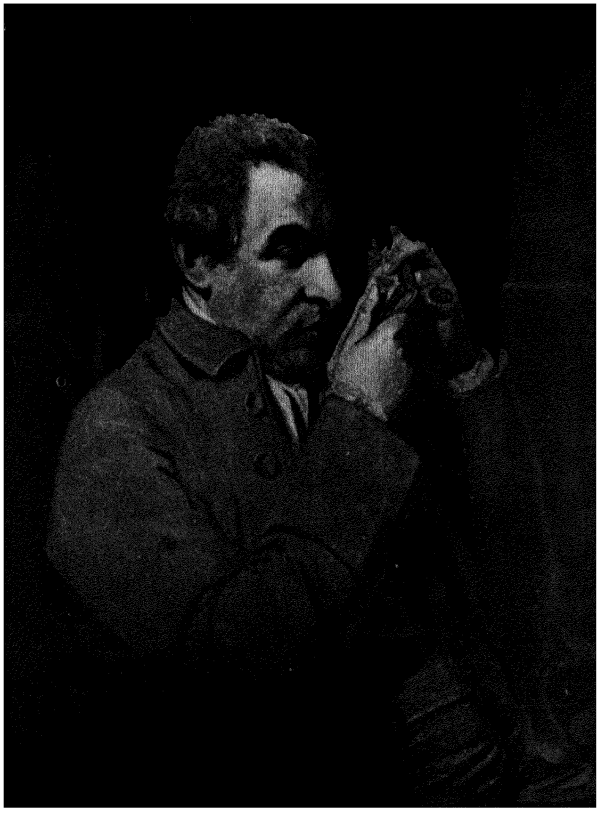
He has not, indeed, many hooks; but with what hooks he has he grapples very forcibly."

It may seem rather strange after this that Baretti was never admitted to the membership of the celebrated club. He was intimate with nearly all the original members, but the truth remained that he was not what Johnson called a clubbable man: he had too many hooks, not too few.

Such was the man who was brought before Sir John Fielding, the magistrate at Bow Street, on the morning after the tragedy, charged with murder; and then it was that he found the value of the friendships which he had formed in England. The first person to hasten to his side in his extremity was Oliver Goldsmith, the man whom he had so frequently made the object of his sarcasm, whose peculiarities he had mimicked, not in the playful manner of Garrick or Foote, but in his own spiteful style, with the grim humour of the disappointed man. Goldsmith it was who opened his purse for him and got a coach for him when he was remanded until the next day, riding by his side to the place of his incarceration. Goldsmith was by his side when the question of bail was discussed before Lord Mansfield. For some reason which does not require any particular explanation, it was not thought that Goldsmith as a bailsman would appeal irresistibly to the authorities, but the names of Sir Joshua Reynolds, Mr. Edmund Burke, Mr. David Garrick, and Mr. H. Fitzherbert were sub-

mitted to Lord Mansfield, and immediately accepted. An amusing anecdote was current regarding the few days of Baretti's incarceration. One morning he was visited by a teacher of languages, who begged a trifling favour of him. This was merely a letter of recommendation to Baretti's pupils, so that the applicant might have a chance of taking them over "when you are hanged, sir." The fact that this sympathetic visitor was allowed to depart without molestation makes people doubt whether Baretti was so bad-tempered after all. He did not assault the man. "You rascal!" he cried. "If I were not in my own room, I would kick you downstairs directly."

The trial was fixed for October 20th at the Old Bailey, and a few days before this date a number of the prisoner's friends met together to consult as to the line which should be taken for his defence. It seems that they were not all agreed on some points; this was only to be expected, considering what an array of wisdom was brought together upon the occasion of these consultations, and considering also the course which was adopted by Dr. Johnson, who thought that the interests of the prisoner would be advanced by getting up an academical discussion with Burke. Johnson and Burke were notorious rivals in conversation in those days when conversation was regarded as an art, and men and women seemed to have plenty of leisure to talk together for the sake of talking, and to argue together for the sake of argument,



From an engraving by J. Watts, after a painting by Sir Joshua Reynolds, P.R.A.

JOSEPH BARETTI.

p. 76.

and to be rude to one another for the sake of wit. Boswell was for ever extolling Johnson at the expense of Burke; and indeed, so far as one can gather from his pages, Johnson was the ruder man.

The example that Boswell gives of his own readiness in making Goldsmith "shut up" when he questioned Johnson's superiority to Burke in discussion is one of the best instances of the little Scotsman's incapacity to perceive the drift of an argument. "Is he like Burke who winds into a subject like a serpent?" asked Goldsmith.

"But" (said I) "Dr. Johnson is the Hercules that strangled serpents in his cradle."

This repartee which Boswell gleefully records is about equal to the reply made by one of the poets who was appealed to in the "Bab Ballads" to say if he wrote "the lovely cracker mottoes my Elvira pulls at supper." It will be remembered that the poet whose name rhymes with "supper" replied:

"'A fool is bent upon a twig, but wise men dread a bandit,'
Which" (the earnest inquirer said) "I felt was very wise,
but I didn't understand it."

It was in regard to this consultation as to the best defence to be made out for Baretti that Johnson admitted to have opposed Burke simply for the sake of showing the rest of the company that he could get the better of Burke in an argument. "Burke and I," he said, "should have been of one opinion if we had had no audience." Such a confession! There was

the life of his friend Baretti trembling in the balance, and yet Johnson, solely for the sake of " showing off," opposed the wisdom and ingenuity Burke exercised to save from the gallows a man whom Johnson professed to admire !

But if we are to believe Boswell, Johnson cared very little whether his friend was hanged or not. As for Boswell himself, he always detested Baretti, and is reported to have expressed the earnest hope that the man would be hanged. However, the " consultations " went merrily on, and doubtless contributed in some measure to a satisfactory solution of the vexed question as to whether Johnson or Burke was the more brilliant talker. They formed a tolerably valid excuse for the uncorking of several bottles, and perhaps these friends of Baretti felt that even though he should die, yet the exchange of wit in the course of these happy evenings would live for ever in the memory of those present, so that after all, let the worst come to the worst, Baretti should have little cause for complaint.

It is reported that the prisoner, upon the occasion of his receiving a visit from Johnson and Burke, cried : " What need a man fear who holds two such hands ? " It may here be mentioned, however, that although it was asserted that Johnson and Murphy were responsible for the line of defence adopted at the trial, yet in after years Baretti was most indignant that it should be suggested that credit should be given to any one but himself for his defence ; and he ridiculed

the notion that Johnson or Burke or Murphy or even Boswell—himself an aspirant to the profession of law in which he subsequently displayed a conspicuous lack of distinction—had anything to do with the instruction either of solicitors or barristers on his behalf.

At any rate, the " consultations " came to an end, and the friends of the accused awaited the trial with exemplary patience. Mr. Boswell seems suddenly to have become the most sympathetic of the friends; for three days before the event he took a journey to Tyburn to witness the hanging of several men at that place, and though it is known that the spectacle of a hanging never lost its charm for him, yet it is generous to assume that upon this occasion he went to Tyburn in order to qualify himself more fully for sympathising with Baretti, should the defence assigned to him break down.

Another ardent sympathiser was Mr. Thomas Davies the bookseller, a gentleman whose chief distinction in the eyes of his contemporaries consisted—if we are to believe one of the wittiest of his associates—in the fact that he had an exceedingly pretty wife; but whose claim to the gratitude of coming generations lies in the circumstance of his having introduced Boswell to Johnson. Tom Davies was terribly cut up at the thought of the possibility of Baretti's being sentenced to be hanged. Boswell, on the day before the trial, after telling Johnson how he had witnessed the executions at Tyburn, and expressing his surprise

that none of the wretches seemed to think anything of the matter, mentioned that Foote, the actor, had shown him a letter which he had received from Tom Davies, and in which the writer affirmed that he had not had a wink of sleep owing to his anxiety in respect of " this sad affair of Baretti," and begging Foote to suggest some way by which he could be of service to the accused, adding that should Mr. Foote be in need of anything in the pickle line, he could strongly recommend him to an industrious young man who had lately set up in that business.

Strange to say, Johnson was not impressed with this marked evidence of Mr. Davies' kind heart.

" Ay, sir, here you have a specimen of human sympathy," he cried. " A friend hanged and a cucumber pickled ! We know not whether Baretti or the pickle man has kept Davies from sleep ; nor does he know himself."

This was rather sweeping, but his dictum showed that he was rather a poor analyser of human emotion. In the minds of the people of to-day who read of Tom Davies' bad nights there is no manner of doubt whatever that the sequence of his emotions was to be attributed to his intimacy with the industrious young pickle maker. Tom had indulged rather too freely in some of the specimens of his art presented to him by the pickler, and the result was a melancholy night ; and, being melancholy, he was led to think of the most melancholy incident that had recently come

under his notice. When a man is full of mixed pickles he is liable to get a little mixed, and so in the morning he attributed his miserable night to his thoughts about Baretti, instead of knowing that his thoughts about Baretti were the natural result of his miserable night. If he had been acquainted with an industrious young onion merchant he might have passed the night in tears.

"As for his not sleeping," said Dr. Johnson, "sir, Tom Davies is a very great man—Tom has been on the stage, and knows how to do those things."

Boswell: "I have often blamed myself, sir, for not feeling for others as sensibly as many say they do."

Johnson: "Sir, don't be duped by them any more. You will find those very feeling people are not very ready to do you good. They pay you by feeling."

Mr. Boswell thought that he would do well to turn his friend from the subject under discussion, so he made the apparently harmless remark that Foote had a great deal of humour and that he had a singular talent of exhibiting character. But Johnson had on him the mood not only of "the rugged Russian bear," but also of "the armed rhinoceros and the Hyrcan tiger."

"Sir, it is not a talent: it is a vice; it is what others abstain from," he growled.

"Did not he think of exhibiting you, sir?" inquired the tactful Mr. Boswell, though he knew all about Foote and Johnson long before.

"Sir, fear restrained him," said Johnson. "He knew I would have broken his bones. I would have saved him the trouble of cutting off a leg: I would not have left him a leg to cut off."

This brutal reference to the fact that Foote's recent accident had compelled him to have a leg amputated should surely have suggested to his inquisitor that he had probably been paying a visit to an industrious young pickle maker without Tom Davies' recommendation, or that he had partaken of too generous a helping of his favourite veal, baked with plums, and so that he would do well to leave him alone for a while. But no, Mr. Boswell was not to be denied.

"Pray, sir, is not Foote an infidel?" he inquired. But as he himself had been dining with Foote the previous day, and as he possessed no more delicacy than a polecat, he could easily have put the question to Foote himself.

But Johnson would not even give the man credit for his infidelity.

"I do not know, sir, that the fellow is an infidel," he said; "but if he is an infidel, he is an infidel as a dog is an infidel, that is to say, he has never thought on the subject."

In another second he was talking of Buchanan, a poet, whom he praised, and of Shakespeare, another poet, whom he condemned, winding up by saying that there were some very fine things in Dr. Young's *Night Thoughts*. But the most remarkable of his

deliverances on this rather memorable evening had reference to Baretti's fate. After declaring that if one of his friends had just been hanged he would eat his dinner every bit as heartily as if his friend were still alive. —"Why, there's Baretti, who is to be tried for his life to-morrow," he added; "friends have risen up for him on every side; yet if he should be hanged, none of them will eat a slice of plum pudding the less."

Happily the accuracy of this tender-hearted scholar's prediction had no chance of being put to the test. Baretti was tried and acquitted.

Boswell gives only a few lines to an account of the trial, and fails to mention that the prisoner declined the privilege of being tried by a jury one half of whom should be foreigners. "It took place," he said, "at the awful Sessions House, emphatically called Justice Hall," and he affirms that "never did such a constellation of genius enlighten the Old Bailey."

He mentions that Mr. Burke, Mr. Garrick, Mr. Beauclerk, and Dr. Johnson gave evidence, the last-named being especially impressive, speaking in a slow, deliberate, and distinct tone of voice. It seems strange that Boswell, who was (nominally) a lawyer, when he wrote his life of Johnson, should say nothing whatever respecting the line of defence adopted by the friends of the prisoner upon this interesting occasion. It might have been expected that he would dwell lovingly, as a lawyer would certainly be pardoned for doing, upon the technical points involved in the trial,

even though he hated Baretti. For instance, it would be interesting to learn why it was thought that the result of the trial might mean the hanging of Baretti, when from the first it was perfectly plain that he had acted in self-defence: not merely was he protecting his purse, he had actually to fight for his life against an acknowledged ruffian of the most contemptible type. In the present day if a short-sighted man of letters—say Mr. Augustine Birrell—were to be attacked in a dark street by three notorious scoundrels and to manage to kill one of them by poking the ferrule end of an umbrella into his eye, no one—not even a Conservative Attorney-General—would fancy that a grand jury at the New Old Bailey would return a true bill against him for the act, putting aside all question of his being found guilty and sentenced to be hanged. And yet in Baretti's time swords were commonly worn, and they were by no means toy weapons. Why should poor Tom Davies have a sleepless night, owing (as he believed) to his apprehension that his friend would be hanged in a day or two? Why was it necessary to dazzle the "awful Sessions House" by such "a constellation of genius" as had never before assembled in that "Hall of Justice"?

Mr. Boswell might certainly have told us something of the actual scene in the court, when he has devoted so much space to the ridiculous dialogues between himself and Johnson, having more or less bearing upon the case. The course he adopted is like laying a

dinner-table with four knives and forks and five wine-glasses for every guest—in having a constellation of genii in plush behind every chair, and then serving a dinner of hashed mutton only. A great number of people believe that whatever Boswell may have been, he was invariably accurate. But in this case he does not even give a true account of the constellation of genius to which he refers. He only says that Burke, Garrick, Beauclerk, and Johnson were called as witnesses. He omits to say a word about Goldsmith, who was something of a genius; or Reynolds, who was quite a tolerable painter; or Fitzherbert, who had a wide reputation as a politician; or Dr. Halifax, whose evidence carried certainly as much weight as Johnson's. He does not even say a word respecting the evidence which Johnson and the others were called on to give on behalf of the prisoner at the bar. What is the good of telling us that the constellation of genius had never been paralleled within the precincts of the "emphatically called Justice Hall" if we are not made aware of some of the flashes of their genius when they were put into the witness-box?

The truth is that Boswell had no sense of proportion any more than a sense of the sublime and beautiful—or, for that matter, a sense of the ridiculous. He was the Needy Knife Grinder—with an occasional axe of his own—of the brilliant circle into which he crawled, holding on to Johnson's skirts and half concealing himself beneath their capacious flaps. He had con-

stant stories suggested to him, but he failed to see their possibilities. He was a knife grinder and nothing more; but at his own trade he was admirable; he ground away patiently at his trivialities respecting the man whom he never was within leagues of understanding, and it is scarcely fair to reproach him for not throwing away his grindstone, which he knew how to use, and taking to that of a diamond cutter, which he was incapable of manipulating. But surely he might have told us something more of the actual trial of Baretti instead of giving us page after page leading up to the trial.

From other sources we learn that what all the geniuses were called on to testify to was the pacific character of Baretti, and this they were all able to do in an emphatic manner. It would seem that it was assumed that the prisoner, a short-sighted, middle-aged man of letters, was possessed of all the dangerous qualities of a bloodthirsty brigand of his own country —that he was a fierce and ungovernable desperado, who was in the habit of prowling about the purlieus of the Haymarket to do to death with a fruit-knife the peaceful citizens whom he might encounter. He was a foreigner, and he had killed an Englishman with an outlandish weapon. That seems to have been the reason there was for the apprehension, which was very general in respect of the fate of Baretti, for it was upon these points that his witnesses were most carefully examined.

Goldsmith, Reynolds, and Garrick were very useful witnesses regarding the knife. They affirmed that in carrying a fruit-knife the prisoner was in no way departing from the recognised custom of his fellow-countrymen. He, in common with them, was in the habit of eating a great deal of fruit, so that the knife was a necessity with him.

Johnson's evidence was as follows :

" I have known Mr. Baretti a long time. He is a man of literature—a very studious man—a man of great intelligence. He gets his living by study. I have no reason to think he was ever disordered with liquor in his life. A man that I have never known to be otherwise than peaceable and a man that I take to be rather timorous. As to his eyesight, he does not see me now, nor do I see him. I do not believe he would be capable of assaulting anybody in the street without great provocation."

It cannot be denied that the reference to Baretti's imperfect sight told upon the jury, and uttered as the words were by Johnson in his dignified way, they could scarcely fail to produce a profound effect upon the court.

Baretti was acquitted, and no one could presume to refer to him for the rest of his life except as a quiet, inoffensive, frugivorous gentleman, since these were the qualities with which he was endowed by a constellation of geniuses on their oath. He was

acquitted by the jury; but the judge thought it well to say a few words to him before allowing him to leave the dock, and the drift of his discourse amounted to a severe censure upon his impetuosity, and the expression of a hope that the inconvenience to which he was put upon this occasion would act as a warning to him in future.

Really one could hardly imagine that in those days, when every week Mr. Boswell had a chance of going to such an entertainment at Tyburn as he had attended forty-eight hours before the opening of the Sessions, the taking of the life of a human being was regarded with such horror. One cannot help recalling the remark made by Walpole a few years later, that, owing to the severity of the laws, England had been turned into one vast shambles; nor can one quite forget the particulars of the case which was quoted as having an intimate bearing upon this contention—the case in which a young wife whose husband had been impressed to serve in His Majesty's Fleet, and who had consequently been left without any means of support, had stolen a piece of bread to feed her starving children, and had been hanged at Tyburn for the crime.

Reading the judge's censure of Baretti, who had, in preventing a contemptible ruffian from killing him, decreased by a unit the criminality of London, the only conclusion that one can come to is that the courts of law were very jealous of their precious

prerogative to kill. Looking at the matter in this light, the bombastic phrase of Boswell does not seem so ridiculous after all; the Old Bailey had certainly good reason to be regarded as the "awful Sessions House." But we are not so fully convinced that it had any right to be referred to as emphatically the Hall of Justice. In the Georgian Pageant the common hangman played too conspicuous a part.

But the unfortunate, if impetuous, Baretti left the court a free man, and we cannot doubt that in the company of his friends who had stood by him in his hour of trial he was a good deal harder upon the judge than the judge had been upon him; and probably he was reproved in a grave and dignified manner by Dr. Johnson, Sir Joshua Reynolds standing by with his ear trumpet, fearful lest a single word of Johnson's wisdom should escape him. Doubtless Mr. Garrick, the moment Johnson's back was turned, gave an inimitable imitation of both Johnson and Baretti—perhaps of the judge as well, and most likely the usher of the court.

Later on, when the avaricious Reynolds had hastened back to his studio in Leicester Fields to daub on canvas the figures of some of his sitters at the extortionate price of thirty-five guineas for a three-quarter length, he and Johnson put their heads together to devise what could be done for Baretti.

For about a year Baretti resumed his old way of living, working for the booksellers and completing his volume

of travel through Europe, by which it is said he made £500. It would appear, however, that all his pupils had transferred themselves to the enterprising gentleman who had appealed to him at an inopportune moment for his recommendation, or to some of his other brethren, for by the end of the year he was in needy circumstances. Meantime he had been made by Sir Joshua Reynolds Honorary Secretary for Foreign Correspondence to the Royal Academy, and then Johnson recommended him to the husband of Mrs. Thrale as tutor to her girls at Streatham. This was very kind to Baretti, but it was rather hard on the Thrales. Apparently from the first day he went to Streatham his attitude in regard to the Thrale family was one of spite and malevolence ; and there can be no doubt that Johnson bitterly regretted his patronage of a man who seemed never to forgive any one who had done him a good turn.

The agreement made by him with the Thrales was that he should practically be his own master, only residing at Streatham as a member of the family with no fixed salary. He was as artful as an Irish cabman in suggesting this "leave it to your honour" contract. He had heard on all hands of the liberality of Mr. Thrale, and he knew that, in addition to being provided with a luxurious home, he would receive presents from him far in excess of what he could earn. He was extremely well treated for the next three years, though he was for ever grumbling when

he had a moment's leisure from insulting the Thrales and their guests. Mrs. Thrale said more in his favour than any one with whom he came in contact. She wrote : " His lofty consciousness of his own superiority which made him tenacious of every position, and drew him into a thousand distresses, did not, I must own, ever disgust me, till he began to exercise it against myself, and resolve to reign in our house by fairly defying the mistress of it. Pride, however, though shocking enough, is never despicable ; but vanity, which he possessed too, in an eminent degree, will sometimes make a man near sixty ridiculous."

Assuredly Mrs. Thrale " let him down " very gently. Dr. Thomas Campbell, a clergyman from Ireland, gives us a glimpse of Baretti's bearing at Streatham. It is clear that Baretti was anxious to impress him with the nature of his position in the house. " He told me he had several families both in town and country with whom he could go at any time and spend a month ; he is at this time on these terms at Mr. Thrale's, and he knows how to keep his ground. Talking, as we were at tea, of the magnitude of the beer vessels, he said there was one thing at Mr. Thrale's house still more extraordinary—his wife. She gulped the pill very prettily. So much for Baretti ! " wrote the clergyman in a very illuminating account of his visit to Streatham.

But not only did Mrs. Thrale bear with this detestable person for nearly two more years, but she and

her husband took him with them and Johnson to Paris, where they lived in a magnificent way, the Thrales paying for everything. It was in a letter to Frank Levet, his domestic apothecary, that Johnson, writing from Paris, said: "I ran a race in the rain this day, and beat Baretti. Baretti is a fine fellow." This is Johnson on Baretti. Here is Baretti on Johnson; on a copy of the *Piozzi Letters* he wrote: "Johnson was often fond of saying silly things in strong terms, and the silly madam"—meaning Mrs. Thrale—"never failed to echo that beastly kind of wit."

It was not, however, until an Italian tour, projected by Mr. Thrale, was postponed, that Baretti became quite unendurable. He had been presented by Mr. Thrale with £100 within a few months, and on the abandonment of the longer tour he received another £100 by way of compensation for the satisfaction he had been compelled to forgo in showing his countrymen the position to which he had attained in England. This was another act of generosity which he could not forgive. He became sullen and more cantankerous than ever, and neglected his duties in an intolerable way. In fact, he treated Streatham as if it were an hotel, turning up to give Miss Thrale a lesson at the most inconvenient hours, and then devoting the most of his time to poisoning the girl's mind against her mother. Upon one occasion he expressed the hope to her that if her mother died Mr. Thrale would marry

Miss Whitbred, who would, he said, be a pretty companion for her, not tyrannical and overbearing as he affirmed her own mother was! Truly a nice remark for a young lady's tutor to make to her under her mother's roof.

The fact was, however—we have Baretti's own confession for it—that he had been led to believe that after being with the Thrales for a year or two, an annuity would be settled on him by the wealthy brewer, and he grew impatient at his services to the family not obtaining recognition in this way. It is extremely unlikely that Johnson ever even so much as hinted at this annuity, though Baretti says his expectations were due to what Johnson had told him; but it is certain that he had so exalted an opinion of himself, he believed that after a year or two of desultory teaching he should receive a handsome pension. And there the old story of the car-driver who left the nomination of the fare to "his honour's honour" was repeated. Baretti one morning packed up his bag and left Streatham without a word of farewell.

Johnson's account of his departure and his comments thereupon are worth notice. He wrote to Boswell:

"Baretti went away from Thrales in some whimsical fit of disgust or ill-nature without taking any leave. It is well if he finds in any other place as good an habitation and as many conveniences."

On the whole it is likely that a good many of

Baretti's friends felt rather sorry than otherwise that the jury at the Old Bailey had taken so merciful a view of his accident. If Johnson and Murphy were really responsible for the line of defence which prevailed at the trial, one can quite believe that the Thrales and a good many of their associates bore them a secret grudge for their pains.

In the year 1782 he was granted by the Government the pension which he had failed to extort from the Thrales. It amounted to £80 per annum, and we may take it for granted that he had nothing but the most copious abuse for the Prime Minister who had only given him £80 when Sheridan was receiving £200 and Johnson £300. He drew his pension for seven years.

Baretti's portrait, painted by Reynolds for the Streatham gallery, fetched £31 10s., the smallest price of any in the whole collection, on its dispersal, years after the principal actors in the scene in the " awful Sessions House " had gone to another world.

THE FATAL GIFT

WHEN Mr. Boswell had been snubbed, and very soundly snubbed too, by a Duchess, one might fancy that his ambition was fully satisfied. But he was possibly the most persevering of the order of *Pachydermata* at that time extant; and in the matter of snubs he had the appetite of a leviathan. He was fired with the desire to be snubbed once more by Her Grace—and he was. Without waiting to catch her eye, he raised his glass and, bowing in her direction, said:

"My Lady Duchess, I have the honour to drink Your Grace's good health."

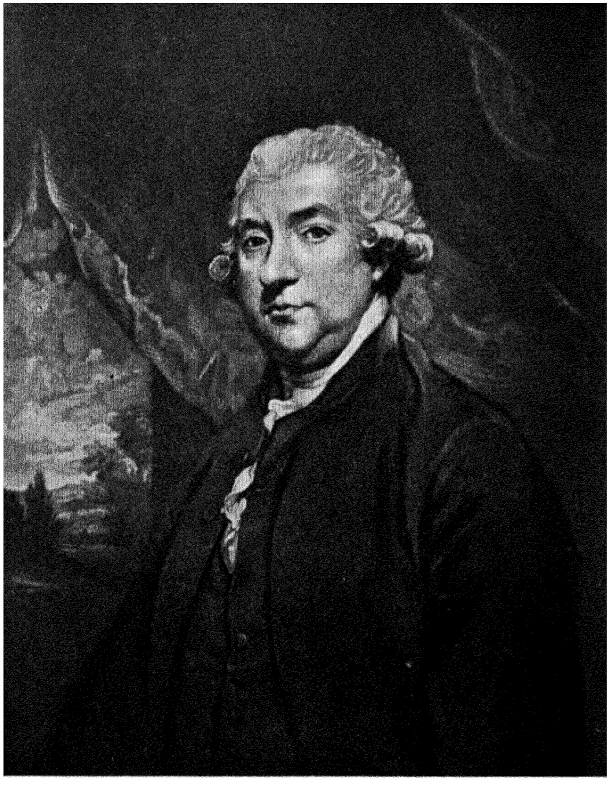
The Duchess did not allow her conversation with Dr. Johnson to be interrupted by so flagrant a piece of politeness; she continued chatting quite pleasantly to the great man, ignoring the little one. That was how she had got on in life; and, indeed, a better epitome of the whole art of getting on in life could scarcely be compiled even by the cynical nobleman who wrote letters to his son instructing him in this and other forms of progress—including the Rake's.

Mr. Boswell, who, as usual, is the pitiless narrator

of the incident, records his satisfaction at having attained to the distinction of a snub from the beautiful creature at whose table he was sitting, and we are, as usual, deeply indebted to him for giving us an illuminating glimpse of the Duchess of whom at one time all England and the greater part of Ireland were talking. He also mentions that Her Grace made use of an idiom by which her Irish upbringing revealed itself. If we had not Mr. Boswell's account of his visit to Inveraray to refer to we might be tempted to believe that Horace Walpole deviated into accuracy when he attributed to the Duchess of Argyll, as well as her sister, the Countess of Coventry, the brogue of a bog-trotter. It was only by her employment of an idiom common to the south and west of Ireland and a few other parts of the kingdom, that Her Grace made him know that she had not been educated in England, or for that matter in Scotland, where doubtless Mr. Boswell fondly believed the purest English in the world was spoken.

Mr. Boswell faithfully records—sometimes with glee and occasionally with pride—many snubs which he received in the course of a lifetime of great pertinacity, and some that he omitted to note, his contemporaries were obliging enough to record; but on none did he reflect with more satisfaction than that, or those, which he suffered in the presence of the Duchess of Argyll.

It happened during that memorable tour to the



From a mezzotint engraving by John Jones, after the painting by Sir Joshua Reynolds, P.R.A.

JAMES BOSWELL.

p. 96.

Hebrides to which he lured Johnson in order to show his countrymen how great was his intimacy with the man who traduced them once in his Dictionary and daily in his life. It was like Boswell to expect that he would impress the Scottish nation by leading Johnson to view their fine prospects—he certainly was never foolish enough to hope to impress Johnson by introducing the Scottish nation to him. In due time, however, the exploiter and the exploited found themselves in the neighbourhood of Inveraray, the Duke of Argyll's Castle, and the stronghold of the Clan Campbell.

It chanced that the head of the great family was in residence at this time, and Mr. Boswell hastened to apprise him of the fact that the great Dr. Johnson was at hand. He called at the Castle very artfully shortly after the dinner hour, when he believed the Duchess and her daughter would have retired to a drawing-room. He was successful in finding the Duke still at the dinner-table, the ladies having retired. In the course of the interview the Duke said: "Mr. Boswell, won't you have some tea?" and Mr. Boswell, feeling sure that the Duchess could not go very far in insulting him when other people were present, followed his host into the drawing-room. "The Duke," he records, "announced my name, but the Duchess, who was sitting with her daughter, Lady Betty Hamilton, and some other ladies, took not the least notice of me. I should," he continues, "have

been mortified at being thus coldly received by a lady of whom I, with the rest of the world, have always entertained a very high admiration, had I not been consoled by the obliging attention of the Duke."

The Duke was, indeed, obliging enough to invite Johnson to dinner the next day, and Mr. Boswell was included in the invitation. (So it is that the nursery governess gets invited to the table in the great house to which she is asked to bring the pretty children in her charge.) Of course, Boswell belonged to a good family, and his father was a judge. It was to a Duke of Argyll—not the one who was now so obliging—that the Laird of Auchinleck brought his son, James Boswell, to be examined in order to find out whether he should be put into the army or some other profession. Still, he would never have been invited to Inveraray at this time or any other unless he had had charge of Johnson. No one was better aware of this fact than Boswell; but did he therefore decline the invitation? Not he. Mr. Boswell saw an opportunity ahead of him. He had more than once heard Johnson give an account of how he had behaved when the King came upon him in the Royal Library; and probably he had felt melancholy at the reflection that he himself had had no part or lot in the incident. It was all Dr. Johnson and the King. But now he was quick to perceive that when, in after years, people should speak with bated breath of Dr. Johnson's visit to Inveraray they would be compelled to say: "And

Mr. Boswell, the son of auld Auchinleck, was there too."

He knew very well that there were good reasons why Mr. Boswell could not hope to be a *persona grata* to the Duchess of Argyll. In the great Douglas lawsuit the issue of which was of considerable importance to the Duke of Hamilton, the son of Her Grace, the Boswells were on the side of the opposition, and had been very active on this side into the bargain. James Boswell himself narrowly escaped being committed for contempt of court for publishing a novel founded on the Douglas cause and anticipating in an impudent way the finding of the judges. Had the difference been directly with the Duke of Argyll some years earlier, no doubt every man in the Clan Campbell would have sharpened his skene when it became known that a friend of an opponent of the MacCailein More was coming, and have awaited his approach with complacency; but now the great chief tossed Boswell his invitation when he was asking Johnson, and Boswell jumped at it as a terrier jumps for a biscuit, and he accompanied his friend to the Castle.

The picture which he paints of his second snubbing is done in his best manner. "I was in fine spirits," he wrote, "and though sensible that I had the misfortune of not being in favour with the Duchess, I was not in the least disconcerted, and offered Her Grace some of the dish which was before

me." Later on he drank Her Grace's health, although, he adds, "I knew it was the rule of modern high life not to drink to anybody." Thus he achieved the snub he sought; but he acknowledges that he thought the Duchess rather too severe when she said: "I know nothing of Mr. Boswell." On reflection, however, he received "that kind of consolation which a man would feel who is strangled by a silken cord."

It seems strange that no great painter has been inspired by the theme and the scene. The days of "subject pictures" are, we are frequently told, gone by. This may be so, generally speaking, but every one knows that a "subject picture," if its "subject" lends itself in any measure to the advertising of an article of commerce, will find a ready purchaser, so fine a perception of the aspirations of art—practical art—exists in England, and even in Scotland, in the present day.

Now, are not the elements of success apparent to any one of imagination in this picture of the party sitting round the table in the great hall of Inveraray—Dr. Johnson chatting to the beautiful Duchess and her daughter at one side, the Duke looking uncomfortable at the other, when he sees Mr. Boswell on his feet with his glass in his hand bowing toward Her Grace? No doubt Her Grace had acquainted His Grace with the attitude she meant to assume in regard to Mr. Boswell, so that he was not astonished—only uncomfortable—when Mr. Boswell fished for

his snub. Surely arrangements could be made between the art patron and the artist to paint a name and a certain brand upon the bottle—a bottle must, of course, be on the table; but if this is thought too realistic the name could easily be put on the decanter —from which Mr. Boswell has just replenished his glass! Why, the figure of Dr. Johnson alone should make the picture a success—i.e. susceptible of being reproduced as an effective poster in four printings. "Sir," said Dr. Johnson, "claret for boys, port for men, but brandy for heroes." Yes, but whose brandy? There is a hint for a great modern art patron—a twentieth-century art patron is a man who loves art for what he can make out of it.

Dr. Johnson was unmistakably the honoured guest this day at Inveraray; and perhaps, while the lovely Duchess hung upon his words of wisdom, his memory may have gone back to a day when he was not so well known, and yet by some accident found himself in a room with the then Duchess of Argyll. Upon that occasion he had thought it due to himself to be rude to the great lady, in response to some fancied remissness on her part. He had nothing to complain of now. The Duchess with whom he was conversing on terms of perfect equality—if Her Grace made any distinction between them it was, we may rest assured, only in a way that would be flattering to his learning—was at the head of the peerage for beauty, and there was no woman in the kingdom more honoured than

she had been. He may have been among the crowds who hung about the Mall in St. James's Park twenty-two years before, waiting patiently until the two lovely Miss Gunnings should come forth from their house in Westminster to take the air. The Duchess of Argyll was the younger of the two sisters.

The story of the capture of the town by the pair of young Irish girls has been frequently told, and never without the word *romantic* being applied to it. But really there was very little that can be called romantic in the story of their success. There is far more of this element in many of the marriages affecting the peerage in these unromantic days. There is real romance in the story of a young duke's crossing the Atlantic with a single introduction, but that to the daughter of a millionaire with whom he falls madly in love and whom he marries as soon as the lawyers can make out the settlements. There is real romance in the idyll of the young marquis who is fortunate enough to win the affection of an ordinary chorus girl; and every year witnesses such-like alliances—they used to be called *mésalliances* long ago. There have also been instances of the daughters of English tradesmen marrying foreign nobles, whom they sometimes divorce as satisfactorily as if they were the daughters of wealthy swindlers on the other side of the Atlantic. In such cases there are portraits and paragraphs in some of the newspapers, and then people forget that anything unusual has

happened. As a matter of fact, nothing unusual has happened.

In the romantic story of the Gunnings we have no elements of that romance which takes the form of a *mésalliance.* Two girls, the granddaughters of one viscount and the nieces of another, came to London with their parents one year, and early the next married peers—the elder an earl, the younger a duke. Like thousands of other girls, they had no money; but, unlike hundreds of other girls who marry into the peerage, they were exceptionally good-looking.

Where is there an element of romance in all this? The girls wedded men in their own station in life, and, considering their good looks, they should have done very much better for themselves. The duke was a wretched *roué*, notable for his excesses even in the days when excess was not usually regarded as noteworthy. He had ruined his constitution before he was twenty, and he remained enfeebled until, in a year or two, he made her a widow. The earl was a conceited, ill-mannered prig—a solemn, contentious, and self-opinionated person who was deservedly disliked in the town as well as the country.

Not a very brilliant marriage either of these. With the modern chorus girl the earl is on his knees at one side, and the gas man on the other. But with the Miss Gunnings it was either one peer or another. They were connected on their mother's side with at least two families of nobility, and on their father's side with the

spiritual aristocracy of some generations back: they were collateral descendants of the great Peter Gunning, Chancellor of Oxford and Bishop of Ely, and he was able to trace his lineage back to the time of Henry VIII. From a brother of this great man was directly descended the father of the two girls and also Sir Robert Gunning, Baronet, who held such a high post in the diplomatic service as Minister Plenipotentiary to Berlin, and afterwards to St. Petersburg. Members of such families might marry into the highest order of the peerage without the alliance being criticised as "romantic." The girls did not do particularly well for themselves. They were by birth entitled to the best, and by beauty to the best of the best. As it was, the one only became the wife of a contemptible duke, the other of a ridiculous earl. It may really be said that they threw themselves away.

Of course, it was Walpole's gossip that is accountable for much of the false impression which prevailed in respect of the Gunnings. From the first he did his best to disparage them. He wrote to Mann that they were penniless, and "scarce gentlewomen." He could not ignore the fact that their mother was the Honourable Bridget Gunning; but, without knowing anything of the matter, he undertook to write about the "inferior tap" on their father's side. In every letter that he wrote at this time he tried to throw ridicule upon them, alluding to them as if they were nothing better than the barefooted colleens of

an Irish mountain-side who had come to London to seek their fortunes. As usual, he made all his letters interesting to his correspondents by introducing the latest stories respecting them; he may not have invented all of these, but some undoubtedly bear the Strawberry Hill mark, and we know that Walpole never suppressed a good tale simply because it possessed no grain of truth.

Now, the true story of the Gunnings can be ascertained without any reference to Walpole's correspondence. Both girls were born in England—the elder, Maria, in 1731, the younger in 1732. When they were still young their father, a member of the English Bar, inherited his brother's Irish property. It had once been described as a "tidy estate," but it was now in a condition of great untidiness. In this respect it did not differ materially from the great majority of estates in Ireland. Ever since the last "settlement" the country had been in a most unsettled condition, and no part of it was worse than the County Roscommon, where Castle Coote, the residence of the Gunning family, was situated. It might perhaps be going too far to say that the wilds of Connaught were as bad as the wilds of Yorkshire at the same date, but from all the information that can be gathered on the subject there does not seem to have been very much to choose between Roscommon and the wilder parts of Yorkshire. The peasantry were little better than savages; the gentry were little worse. Few of the

elements of civilized life were to be found among the inhabitants. The nominal owners of the land were content to receive tribute from their tenantry in the form of the necessaries of life, for money as a standard of exchange was rarely available. Even in the present day in many districts in the west of Ireland cattle occupy the same place in the imagination of the inhabitants as they do in Zululand. The Irish bride is bargained away with so many cows; and for a man to say—as one did in the very county of Roscommon the other day—that he never could see the difference of two cows between one girl and another, may be reckoned somewhat cynical, but it certainly is intelligible.

But if rent was owing—and it usually was—and if it was not paid in the form of geese, or eggs, or pork, or some other products of low farming and laziness, it remained unpaid; for the landlord had no means of enforcing his claims by any law except the law of the jungle. He might muster his followers and plunder his debtors, and no doubt this system of rent-collecting prevailed for several years after one of the many "settlements" of the country had taken place, yet by intermarriage with the natives, and a general assimilation to their condition of life by the newcomers, these raids for rent became unpopular and impracticable. The consequence was that the landlords—such as remained on their estates—were living from hand to mouth.

But if the fact that the King's writ failed to run in these parts was of disadvantage to the landlords in one respect, it was of no inconsiderable advantage to them in another; for it enabled them with a light heart to contract debts in Dublin and in the chief towns. They knew that the rascally process server, should he have the hardihood to make any attempt to present them with the usual summons, would do so at the risk of his life; and a knowledge of this fact made the "gentry" at once reckless and lawless. The consequence was that Ireland was regarded as no place for a man with any respect for his neighbours or for himself to live in. It became the country of the agent and the squireen.

It was to one of the worst parts of this country that John Gunning brought his wife and four children —the eldest was eight years and the youngest three months—and here he tried to support them off the "estate." He might possibly have succeeded if his aspirations had been humble and his property unencumbered. It so happened, however, that his father had been the parent of sixteen children, and the estate was still charged with the maintenance of ten of these. Thus hampered, Mr. Gunning and the Honourable Bridget Gunning were compelled to adopt the mode of life of the other gentry who were too poor to live out of Ireland, and they allowed the education of their family to become a minor consideration to that of feeding them.

Mr. Gunning and his wife were undoubtedly the originals of the type of Irish lady and gentleman to be found in so many novels and plays of the latter part of the eighteenth and the first half of the nineteenth centuries. He was the original " heavy father " who, with the addition of a ridiculous nondescript brogue, was so effectively dealt with by numerous writers until Thackeray took him in hand ; and Mrs. Gunning was the first of the tradition of Irish mothers with daughters to dispose of by the aid of grand manners and a great deal of contriving. True to this tradition, which originated with them, the lady was certainly the head of the household—a sorry household it must have been at Castle Coote—during the ten years that elapsed before the migration to England.

Mr. Gunning was a fine figure of a gentleman, a handsome, loquacious person with a great sense of his own dignity and an everlasting consciousness of the necessity to maintain it at something approximate to its proper level, and, like other persons of the same stamp, never particularly successful in the means employed to effect this object. It is doubtful if a loud conversational style, with repeated references to the brilliant past of his family and predictions as to the still more brilliant future that would have been achieved by its representative but for the outrageous fortune that flung him into the bogs of Roscommon, produced a more vivid impression upon his associates in Ireland than it would be likely to do among a more

credulous community. In Ireland he resembled the young gentleman who went to educate the French, but was discouraged at the outset when he found that even the children in the streets spoke better French than he did. Mr. Gunning could teach the Irish squireens nothing in the way of boasting; and he soon found that they were capable of giving him some valuable instruction as to the acquiring of creditors and their subsequent evasion. Whatever their educational deficiencies may have been, it must be admitted that they had mastered these arts. Much as he despised his ancestral home, he found, after repeated visits to Dublin, that his heart was, after all, in 'Castle Coote, and that, for avoiding arrest for debt, there was no place like home.

The Honourable Mrs. Gunning must have become dreadfully tired of this florid person and of the constant worry incidental to the control of such a household as his must have been. Her life must have been spent contriving how the recurrent crises could be averted, and so long as she was content to remain in the seclusion of the Irish village her efforts were successful. We do not hear that the bailiffs ever got so far as the hall door of their ramshackle mansion; there was a bog very handy, and the holes which served as a rudimentary system of natural drainage were both deep and dark. The topography of the district was notoriously puzzling to the officers from the Dublin courts.

But with all her success in this direction one may be pretty sure that her life must have been very burthensome to the Honourable Mrs. Gunning. She had social ambitions, as befitted a daughter of a noble house, and on this account she never allowed herself to sink to the level of the wives of the squireens around her, who were quite content with the rude jollity of an Irish household—with the " lashings and leavings " to eat, and with the use of tumblers instead of wineglasses at table. She was the daughter of a peer, and she never forgot this fact; and here it must be mentioned that, however culpably she may have neglected the education of her children in some respects, she took care that they avoided the provincial brogue of their Irish neighbours.

Perhaps it was because Walpole knew nothing of the tradition of the English settlers in Ireland that he referred in his letters to various correspondents to the appalling brogue of both the Gunning girls; or perhaps he, as usual, aimed only at making his correspondence more amusing by this device. But every one who knows something of the " settlements " is aware of the fact that the new-comers had such a contempt for the native way of pronouncing English that they were most strenuous in their efforts to hand down to their children the tradition of pronunciation which they brought into the country. They were not always so successful as they wished to be; but within our own times the aspiration after a pure

" English accent " is so great that even in the National Schools the teachers, the larger number of whom bear Celtic names, have been most industrious both in getting rid of their native brogue and in compelling their pupils to do the same ; and yet it is certain that people have been much more tolerant in this respect in Ireland during the past half-century than they were a hundred years earlier.

Of course, a scientific analysis of the pronunciation of the English language by, say, a native of the wilds of Yorkshire and by a native of the wilds of Connemara would reveal the fact that fewer corruptions of the speech are habitual to the latter than to the former; the " brogue " being far less corrupt than the " burr." It was not enough for the settlers, however, that their children should speak English in Ireland more correctly than their forefathers did in England ; they insisted on the maintenance of the English tradition of pronunciation, erroneous though it might be. So that the suggestion that the daughters of the Gunning family, who had never heard English spoken with the brogue of the native Irish until they were eight or nine years of age, spoke the tongue of the stage Irish peasant would seem quite ridiculous to any one who had given even the smallest amount of study to the conditions of speech prevailing in Ireland even in the present tolerant age, when employment is not denied to any one speaking with the broadest of brogues. Some years ago such an applicant would

have had no chance of a " billet "—unless, in a literal sense, to hew, with the alternative of the drawing of water.

The truth, then, is that the Gunning girls had practically neither more nor less of that form of education to be acquired from the study of books or " lessons " than the average young woman of their own day who had been " neglected." Between the years 1750 and 1800 there were in England hundreds of young ladies who were as highly educated as a junior-grade lady clerk in the Post Office Department is to-day; but there were also thousands who were as illiterate as the Gunnings without any one thinking that it mattered much one way or another.

And it really did not matter much that Maria Gunning spelt as vaguely as did Shakespere, or Shakspere, or Shakespeare, or Shakspear, or whatever he chose to write himself at the moment. Correctness of orthography is absolutely necessary for any young lady who wishes to be a success in the Postal Department, but Miss Gunning possessed some qualifications of infinitely greater importance in the estimation of the world. She was of good family and she was beautiful exceedingly. Moreover, she possessed the supreme grace of naturalness—the supreme grace and that which includes all other graces, which, like butterflies, hover over womankind, but seldom descend in a bevy upon any one of the race. She was as natural as a lily flower, and for the same reason. To be natural



From an original painting.

MARIA GUNNING, COUNTESS OF COVENTRY.

p. 112.

came to her by Nature, and that was how she won the admiration of more people than the beauty of Helen of Troy brought to their death. She was not wise. But had she been wise she would never have left Ireland. She would have known that obscurity is the best friend that any young woman so beautiful as she was could have. She would have remained in Roscommon, and she would have been one of those women who are happy because they have no story. But, of course, had she been wise she would not have been natural, and so there her beauty goes by the board in a moment.

The Honourable Mrs. Gunning could not have been startled when the knowledge came to her that she was the mother of two girls of exceptional beauty. The same knowledge comes to every mother of two girls in the world, though this knowledge is sometimes withheld from the rest of the world; but even then the mother's faith is not shaken—except in regard to the eyesight of the rest of the world. Doubtless Mrs. Gunning thought much better of Ireland when she found that her judgment on the beauty of her daughters was shared by all the people who saw the girls. From the daily exclamation of wonder—the exaggerated expressions of appreciation uttered by a fervent peasantry—when the girls were seen in their own kitchen or on the roadside, the mother's ambition must have received a fresh stimulus. And given an ambitious mother, whose life has been one of con-

triving to do things that seem out of her power to accomplish, the achievement of her object is only a matter of time—provided that the father does not become an obstruction. Mrs. Gunning was not extravagant in her longings. Her Delectable Mountains were those which surround the City of Dublin. Her social ambitions did not extend beyond "The Castle."

When the eldest of her three daughters was scarcely nineteen the aggregation of savings and credit—the latter predominant—seemed sufficient to justify the expedition. A house was taken in a fashionable street, close to the most splendid Mall in Europe, and furnished by some credulous tradesmen, and the social campaign was begun by a parade of the two girls and their mother. Alas! the young beauties attracted only too much attention. The inquiries as to their style and title were unfortunately not limited. In Dublin for generations the tradespeople have been accustomed to take an intelligent and quite intelligible interest in the aristocracy and beauty dwelling in their midst; and it took only a few days for the report to go round that the exquisite young ladies were the daughters of Mr. John Gunning, of Castle Coote.

This information meant much more to some of the least desirable of the inquirers than it did to the wealthy and well connected of the population; and among the least desirable of all were some tradesmen who for years had had decrees waiting to be executed against Mr. Gunning at a more convenient place for

such services than Castle Coote. The result was that within a week the beauty of his daughters had made such a stir in Dublin that bailiffs were in the house and Mr. Gunning was out of it.

It is at this point in the history that the Troubadour unslings his lute, feeling the potentialities of Romance in the air; and, given the potentialities of Romance and the wandering minstrel, one may be sure that the atmosphere will resound with Romance. We are told on such high authority as is regarded quite satisfactory (by the Troubadour), that the weeping of the mother and the beautiful girls under the coarse stare of the bailiffs attracted the attention of a charming and sympathetic young actress who was taking the air in the street, and that, as might only be expected, she hastened to enter the house to offer consolation to those who were in trouble—this being unquestionably the mission which is most congenial to the spirit of the *soubrette*. On being at once informed of all by the communicative mother—the Troubadour is not such a fool as to lay down his lute to inquire if it was likely that a lady who possessed her full share of Irish pride would open her heart to a stranger and an actress—the young visitor showed her sympathy by laying herself open to prosecution and imprisonment through helping in a scheme to make away with all the valuables she could lay her hands on. But she went still further, and invited the young ladies to stay at her house so long as it suited them to do so.

We are told that this young actress was George Ann Bellamy, but the information comes from no better source than George Ann Bellamy herself, and the statements of this young person, made when she was no longer young or reputable, do not carry conviction to all hearers. Romance, however, like youth, will not be denied, though the accuracy of an actress may, and people have always been pleased to believe that Miss Bellamy and Mr. Thomas Sheridan, the much-harassed lessee of the Smock Alley Theatre in Dublin, were the means of obtaining for the Honourable Mrs. Gunning and her daughters the invitation to the ball at the Castle which resulted in the recognition of the girls' beauty by the great world of fashion. The suggestion that their aunt, Miss Bourke, or their uncle, Viscount Mayo, might have been quite as potent a factor in solving the problem of how the invitation to a ball given by the Viceroy to the people of Dublin came into the hands of the Miss Gunnings, may, however, be worth a moment's consideration.

At any rate, the success made by the girls upon this occasion was immediate. Before a day had passed all Dublin and Dublin Castle were talking of their beauty, and the splendid Mall was crowded with people anxious to catch a glimpse of the lovely pair when they took their walks abroad. Lady Caroline Petersham, the charming lady whose name figures frequently in Walpole's correspondence—it will be remembered that she was one of that delightful little

supper party at Ranelagh which he describes—was in the entourage of the Viceroy, and quickly perceived the possibilities of social prestige accruing to the hostess who might be the means of introducing them to St. James's. There a new face meant a new sensation lasting sometimes well into a second month, and Lady Caroline had her ambitions as a hostess.

She was the Gunnings' best friend—assuming that social advancement is an act of friendship—and it may safely be assumed that she was mainly responsible for the extension of the area of the campaign entered on by Mrs. Gunning, and that it was her influence which obtained for them the passage to Chester in the Lord Lieutenant's yacht, and a bonus of £150 charged, as so many other jobs were, " upon the Irish Establishment." The " Irish Establishment " was the convenient Treasury out of which money could be paid without the chance of unpleasant questions being asked in Parliament respecting such disbursements.

Of course, it is not to be believed that such success as the young girls encompassed in Dublin was reached without a word or two of detraction being heard in regard to their behaviour. Mrs. Delany, amiable as a moral gossip, or perhaps, a gossipy moralist, wrote to her sister respecting them : " All that you have heard of the Gunnings is true, except their having a fortune, but I am afraid they have a greater want than that, which is discretion." No doubt Mrs. Delany had heard certain whispers of the girlish fun in which the elder

of the sisters delighted; but there has never been the smallest suggestion that her want of discreetness ever approached an actual indiscretion. It may be assumed, without doing an injustice to either of the girls, that their standard of demeanour was not quite so elevated as that which the wife of Dean Delany was disposed to regard as essential to be reached by any young woman hoping to be thought well of by her pastors and masters. But the steelyard measure was never meant to be applied to a high-spirited young girl who has grown up among bogs and then finds herself the centre of the most distinguished circle in the land, every person in which is eagerly striving for the distinction of a word from her lips. Maria Gunning may not have had much discretion, but she had enough to serve her turn. She arrived in London with her sister, and no suggestion was ever made—even by Walpole—that their mother had not taken enough care of them.

In London they at once found their place in the centre of the most fashionable—the most notorious—set; but while we hear of the many indiscreet things that were done by certain of their associates, nothing worse is attributed to either of the girls than an Irish brogue or an Irish idiom—perhaps a word or two that sounded unmusical to fastidious ears. Walpole began by ridiculing them, and, as has already been noted, sneering at their birth; but when he found they were becoming the greatest social success

that his long day had known, he thought it prudent to trim his sails and refer to them more reasonably: they were acquiring too many friends for it to be discreet for him to continue inventing gossip respecting them.

But what a triumph they achieved in town! Nothing had ever been known like it in England, nor has anything approaching to it been known during the century and a half that has elapsed since the beauty of these two girls captured London. The opening of Parliament by the King in State never attracted such crowds as thronged the Park when they walked in the Mall. Never before had the guards to turn out at the Palace to disperse the crowds who mobbed two young ladies who did not belong—except in a distant way—to a Royal House. Upon one occasion the young Lord Clermont and his friend were compelled to draw their swords to protect them from the exuberant attentions of the crowd. "'Tis a warm day," wrote George Selwyn to Lord Carlisle, "and some one proposes a stroll to Betty's fruit shop; suddenly the cry is raised, 'The Gunnings are coming,' and we all tumble out to gaze and to criticise." "The famous beauties are more talked of than the change in the Ministry," wrote Walpole. "They make more noise than any one of their predecessors since Helen of Troy; a crowd follows them wherever they walk, and at Vauxhall they were driven away."

This mobbing must have caused the girls much

delightful inconvenience, and one can see their mother acting the part—and overdoing it, after the manner of her kind—of the distracted parent whose daughters have just been restored to her arms. One can hear the grandiloquent thanks of the father to the eligible young man with titles whose bravery has protected his offspring—that would have been his word—from the violence of the mob. The parents must have been very trying to the young men in those days. But the mother showed herself to be rather more than a match for one young man who hoped to win great fame as a jocular fellow by playing a trick upon the family. Having heard of the simplicity and credulousness of the girls, this gentleman, with another of his kind, asked leave of Mrs. Gunning to bring to her house a certain duke who was one of the greatest *partis* of the day. On her complying, he hired a common man, and, dressing him splendidly, conveyed him in a coach to the Gunnings' house and presented him to the family as the duke. But the man knew as little of the matter as did Walpole; he assumed that she was nothing more than the adventurous wife of an Irish squireen. He soon found out that he had made a mistake. Mrs. Gunning rang the bell, and ordered the footman to turn the visitors out of the house.*

But the family were soon consoled for this incident of the impostor duke by the arrival of a real one, to say nothing of another consolation prize in the form of

* See pp. 52–3.

an earl. In the meantime, however, their popularity had been increasing rather than diminishing. As a matter of fact, although beauty may be reproached for being only skin deep, it is very tenacious of life. A reputation for beauty is perhaps the most enduring of all forms of notoriety. The renown that attaches to the man who has painted a great picture, or to one who has made a great scientific discovery, or to one who has been an eminent churchman or a distinguished statesman, is, in point of popularity and longevity, quite insignificant in comparison with that which is associated with the name of a very beautiful woman. The crowds still surrounded the Miss Gunnings, and the visit which they paid by command to King George II gave them a position in the world of fashion that was consolidated by the report of the charming *naïveté* of the reply made by Maria when the King inquired if they had seen all the sights of London and if there was any in particular which they would like to be shown. "Oh, I should dearly like to see a coronation!" the girl is said to have cried. And as that was just the sight for which the people of England were most eager, she was acclaimed as their mouthpiece.

So they progressed in the career that had been laid out for them. Duels were fought about them, and bets were made about them and their future. For nearly a year there was no topic of the first order save only the Progress of Beauty. The Duke had come

boldly forward. He was a double duke—his titles were Hamilton and Brandon—and he had sounded such depths of depravity that he was possibly sincere in his desire to convince the world that his taste in one direction had not become depraved. Elizabeth Gunning may have accepted his service from a hope of being the means of reforming him. But even if she were not to succeed in doing so, her mother would have reminded her that her failure would not make her the less a duchess. It is open, however, for one to believe that this girl cared something for the man and was anxious to amend his life.

Then we hear of her being with him at Lord Chesterfield's ball given at the opening of his new mansion, her fancy dress being that of a Quakeress. Three days later the world in which they lived awoke to learn the astounding news that the Duke of Hamilton and Brandon had married Elizabeth Gunning the previous night.

Here was romance beyond a precedent; and Walpole romanced about it as usual. In his account of the nuptials he succeeds in making more misstatements than one would believe it possible even for such a worker in the art to encompass in half a dozen lines. "When her mother and sister were at Bedford House," he wrote to Mann, "a sudden ardour, either of wine or love, seized upon him (the Duke); a parson was promptly sent for, but on arriving, refused to officiate without the important essentials of licence or

ring. The Duke swore and talked of calling in the Archbishop. Finally the parson's scruples gave way, the licence was overlooked, and the lack of the traditional gold ring was supplied by the ring of a bed curtain!"

This is very amusing, but it is not history. It is a clumsy fiction, unworthy of the resources of the inventor. Sir Horace Mann must have felt that his friend had a poor opinion of his intelligence if he meant him to accept the assurance that the household of the Gunnings and the fingers of His Grace were incapable of yielding to the fastidious parson a better substitute for the traditional gold ring than the thing he introduced. The facts of the incident were quite romantic enough without the need for Walpole's embellishments. It was Valentine's Day, and what more likely than that the suggestion should be made by the ardent lover that so appropriate a date for a wedding would not come round for another year! To suggest difficulties—impossibility—would only be to spur him on to show that he was a true lover. However this may be, it has long ago been proved that the midnight marriage took place in due form at the Curzon Street Chapel in the presence of several witnesses.

And then Walpole went on to say that the wedding of Lord Coventry and the elder sister took place at the same time. It so happened, however, that a fortnight elapsed between the two ceremonies, and

in the case of the second, the ceremony took place in the full light of day.

The subsequent history of the two ladies is not without a note of melancholy. The elder, pursued to the end by the malevolent slanders of the man with the leer of the satyr perpetually on his face, died of consumption after eight years of wedded life. The younger became a widow two years earlier, and after being wooed by the Duke of Bridgewater, whom she refused, sending him to his canal for consolation, married Colonel Campbell, who in 1770 became the Fifth Duke of Argyll. Six years later she was created a peeress in her own right, her title being Baroness Hamilton of Hameldon in Leicestershire. In 1778 she was appointed Mistress of the Robes. She attained to the additional distinction of making the good Queen jealous, so that Her Majesty upon one occasion overlooked her in favour of Lady Egremont. The Duchess at once resigned, and only with difficulty was persuaded to withdraw her resignation. She died in 1790.

THE FÊTE-CHAMPÊTRE

NO one knows to-day with whom the idea of having an English *fête-champêtre* at The Oaks upon the occasion of the marriage of the young Lord Stanley to Lady Betty Hamilton originated. The secret was well kept; and it can be easily understood that in case of this innovation proving a fiasco, no one would show any particular desire to accept the responsibility of having started the idea. But turning out as it did, a great success, it might have been expected that many notable persons would lay claim to be regarded as its parents. A considerable number of distinguished people had something to do with it, and any one of them had certainly sufficient imagination, backed up by an acquaintance with some of the exquisite pieces of MM. Watteau and Fragonard, to suggest the possibility of perfecting such an enterprise even in an English June. It was the most diligent letter-writer of that age of letter-writing who had referred to the "summer setting in with its customary severity," so that the trifling of the month of June with the assumption of the poets who have rhymed of its sunshine with rapture, was not an experience that was reserved for the century that

followed. But in spite of this, the idea of a *fête-champêtre*, after the most approved French traditions, in an English demesne found favour in the eyes of Lord Stanley and his advisers, and the latter were determined that, whatever price might have to be paid for it, they would not run the chance of being blamed for carrying it out in a niggardly spirit.

The young Lord Stanley had as many advisers as any young nobleman with a large immediate allowance and prospects of a splendid inheritance may hope to secure. There was his fiancée's mother, now the Duchess of Argyll, who was never disposed to frown down an undertaking that would place a member of one of her families in the forefront of the battle of the beauties for the most desirable *parti* of the year. The Duchess had both taste and imagination, so that people called her an Irishwoman, although she was born in England. Then there was Mr. George Selwyn, who said witty things occasionally and never missed a hanging. He was fully qualified to prompt a wealthy companion as to the best means to become notorious for a day. There was also young Mr. Conway, the gentleman who originated the diverting spectacle when Mrs. Baddeley and Mrs. Abington were escorted to the Pantheon. Any one of these, to say nothing of Lady Betty herself, who had some love for display, might have been inclined to trust an English June so far as to believe an *al fresco* entertainment on a splendid scale quite possible.



From a mezzotint engraving by J. Finlayson, after a painting by C. Read.

ELIZABETH GUNNING, AFTERWARDS DUCHESS OF HAMILTON AND BRANDON AND DUCHESS OF ARGYLL.

p. 126.

On the whole, however, one is inclined to believe that it was Colonel Burgoyne who was responsible for the whole scheme at The Oaks. In addition to having become Lord Stanley's uncle by running away with his father's sister, he was a budding dramatist, and as such must have perceived his opportunity for exploiting himself at the expense of some one else—the dream of every budding dramatist. There is every likelihood that it was this highly accomplished and successful "gentleman-adventurer" who brought Lord Stanley up to the point of embarking upon his design for an entertainment such as had never been seen in England before—an entertainment that should include the production of a masque devised by Colonel Burgoyne and entitled *The Maid of The Oaks*. The fête came off, and it was pronounced the most brilliant success of the year 1774.

Lord Stanley was a very interesting young man; that is to say, he was a young man in whom no inconsiderable number of persons—mainly of the opposite sex—were greatly interested. Of this fact he seems to have been fully aware. A good many people —mainly of the opposite sex—felt very strongly on the subject of his marrying: it was quite time that he married, they said. His grandfather, the Earl of Derby, was eighty-four years of age, and it would be absurd to believe that he could live much longer. Lord Stanley being his heir, it was agreed that it was the young man's duty not to procrastinate in the

matter of marriage. It is always understood that a patriarchal nobleman sings " Nunc dimittis " when he holds in his arms the second in direct succession to the title, and this happy consummation could, in the case of the aged Lord Derby, only be realised by the marriage of Lord Stanley.

He was small in stature, and extremely plain of countenance; still this did not prevent his name from being coupled with that of several notable—but not too notable—young women of his acquaintance. But as it was well known that he was greatly interested in the stage, it was thought that, perhaps, he might not be so complaisant as his best friends hoped to find him in regard to marrying. An ardent interest in the progress of the drama, especially in its lighter forms, has been known to turn a young man's attention from marriage, when it does not do what is far worse—turn his attention to it with too great zest. Before long, however, it became apparent that his lordship recognised in what direction his duty lay. There was a young lady connected with the Ducal House of Bedford—a niece of that old Duchess who played so conspicuous a part in the social and political history of the middle of the eighteenth century—and to her Lord Stanley became devoted. But just when every one assumed that the matter was settled, no one thinking it possible that the young lady would be mad enough to refuse such a *parti*, the news came that she had done so; and before people had done

discussing how very eccentric were the Bedford connections, the announcement was made that Lord Stanley was to marry Lady Betty Hamilton, the beautiful daughter of a beautiful mother, the Duchess of Argyll.

There is in existence a letter written by the Duchess to Sir William Hamilton, in which she hints that Lord Stanley was an old suitor for the hand of her daughter. "Lady Betty might have taken the name of Stanley long ago if she had chose it," she wrote, adding: "A very sincere attachment on his side has at last produced the same on hers." This being so, it would perhaps be unsafe to assume that Lord Stanley proposed to Lady Betty out of pique at having been rejected by the other lady, though one might be disposed to take this view of the engagement.

The alternative view is that Lady Betty had been advised by her accomplished mother that if she played her cards well there was no reason why she should not so attract Lord Stanley as to lead him to be a suitor for her hand, and that the girl at last came to see that the idea was worth her consideration. Her portrait, painted by Sir Joshua Reynolds in the year of her marriage, shows her to have been a graceful, girlish young creature; but her beauty could never have been comparable with that of her mother at the same age, or with that of her aunt, Lady Coventry, whom it is certain she closely resembled in character. Her mother, in her letter to Sir William Hamilton,

apologises in a way for her liveliness, assuring him that such a disposition was not incompatible with serious thought upon occasions; and this gives us a hint that the reputation for vivacity which she always enjoyed was closely akin to that which made the life of Lady Coventry so very serious.

This was the young lady in whose honour the first English *fête champêtre* was organised. To be more exact, or to get more into touch with the view of the Derby family, perhaps one should say that the fête was set on foot in consideration of the honour the young lady was doing herself in becoming a member of the great house of Stanley. Different people look at a question of honour from different standpoints. Probably Colonel Burgoyne, although a member of the Derby family by marriage, left honour out of the question altogether, and only thought of his masque being produced at his nephew's expense.

And produced the masque was, and on a scale as expensive as the most ambitious author could desire. It was described, with comments, by all the great letter-writers of the time. Walpole has his leer and his sneer at its expense (literally). It was to cost no less than £5000, he said, and he ventured to suppose that in order to account for this enormous outlay Lord Stanley had bought up all the orange trees near London—no particular extravagance one would fancy—and that the hay-cocks would be of straw-coloured riband. George Selwyn thought it far from divert-

ing. The Dowager Lady Gower affirmed that "all the world was there," only she makes an exception of her relations the Bedfords—she called them "the Bloomsbury lot"—and said that the Duchess would not let any of them go because Her Grace thought that Lord Stanley should have taken his recent rejection by Her Grace's niece more to heart. Lady Betty's stepfather, the Duke of Argyll, said that the whole day was so long and fatiguing that only Lady Betty could have stood it all.

But did Lady Betty stand it all? It was rumoured in the best-informed circles that she had broken off the match the next day; and when one becomes acquainted with the programme of the day's doings one cannot but acknowledge that the rumour was plausible. She probably made an attempt in this direction; but on her fiancé's promising never to repeat the offence, withdrew her resolution.

The famous brothers Adam, whose genius was equally ready to build an Adelphi or to design a fanlight, had been commissioned to plan an entertainment on the most approved French models and to carry it out on the noblest scale, taking care, of course, that the central idea should be the masque of *The Maid of The Oaks*, and these large-minded artists accepted the order without demur. The pseudo-classical feeling entered, largely through the influence of the Adams, into every form of art at this period, though the famous brothers cannot

be accused of originating the movement. Sir Joshua Reynolds painted his most charming ladies in the costume of Greeks, and Angelica Kauffmann depicted many of her early English episodes with the personages clad in togas which seemed greatly beyond their control. But for that matter every battle piece up to the date of Benjamin West's "Death of Wolfe" showed the combatants in classical armour; and Dr. Johnson was more than usually loud in his protests against the suggestion that a sculptor should put his statues of modern men into modern clothing.

But the Adams were wise enough to refrain from issuing any order as to the costume to be worn by the shepherds and shepherdesses who were to roam the mead at The Oaks, Epsom, upon the occasion of this *fête champêtre;* and they were also wise enough to distrust the constancy of an English June. The result was (1) a charming medley of costume, though the pseudo-pastoral peasants, farmers, gardeners, and shepherds were in the majority, and (2) the most interesting part of the entertainments took place indoors, the octagonal hall lending itself nobly—when improved by Messrs. Adam—to the show. The "transparencies" which constituted so important a part of the ordinary birthday celebrations of the time, took the form of painted windows, and, later, of a device showing two of the conventional torches of Hymen in full blaze, supporting a shield with the Oak of the Hamiltons' crest and the usual "gules."

This design occupied the place of the "set piece" which winds up a modern display of fireworks and sets the band playing "God save the King." It could not have been brought on until the morning sunlight was flooding the landscape outside; for supper was not served until half-past eleven, and the company had to witness the representation of an intolerably long masque—the second of the day—after supper, with a procession of Druids, fauns, cupids, and nymphs, all in suitable, but it is to be hoped not traditional, costume.

The entertainment began quite early in the afternoon, when there was a long procession of shepherds and shepherdesses through the lanes to where a pastoral play was produced and syllabub drunk under the trees. But this was only an *hors d'œuvre;* it was not Colonel Burgoyne's masterpiece. This was not produced in the open air. Only when further refreshments had been served and evening was closing in did the guests, who had been sauntering through the sylvan scenes, repair to the great hall, which they found superbly decorated and, in fact, remodelled, for colonnades after the type of those in the pictures of Claude had been built around the great ball-room, the shafts being festooned with roses, and the drapery of crimson satin with heavy gold fringes. There were not enough windows to make excuses for so much drapery, but this was no insuperable obstacle to the artful designers; they so disposed of the

material as to make it appear that it was the legitimate hanging for six windows.

For the procession through the colonnades the young host changed his costume and his fiancée changed hers. He had appeared as Rubens and she as Rubens' wife, from the well-known picture. But now she was dressed as Iphigenia. They led the first minuet before supper, and it was thought that they looked very fine. No one who has seen the two pictures of the scene, for which Zucchi was commissioned, can question this judgment. Lady Betty's portrait in one of these panels makes her even more beautiful than she appears on Sir Joshua's canvas.

With a display of fireworks of a detonating and discomposing type—the explosion, it was said, affected the nerves of nearly all the guests—and the illumination of the "transparency" already alluded to, this memorable fête came to no premature conclusion. Every one was bored to death by so much festivity coming all at once. The idea of twelve hours of masques and minuets is enough to make one's blood run cold. Its realisation may have had this effect upon the heroine of the day, hence the rumour that she found she had had enough of the Derby family to last her for the rest of her life without marrying the young heir. Unfortunately, however, if this was the case, she failed to justify the accuracy of the report; and she was married to Lord Stanley on the 23rd of the same month.

The Fête Champêtre

The union of Maria Gunning with the Earl of Coventry was a miserable one, but this of her niece and Lord Stanley was infinitely worse. Lady Betty soon found out that she had made a mistake in marrying a man so incapable of appreciating her charm of manner as was Lord Stanley. The likelihood is that if she had married any other man she would have made the same discovery. The vivacity for which her mother apologised to Sir William Hamilton was, after her marriage, much more apparent than the thoughtfulness which the Duchess assured her correspondent was one of her daughter's traits. She showed herself to be appallingly vivacious upon more than one occasion. Just at that time there was a vivacious "set" in Lady Betty's world, and every member of it seemed striving for leadership. Few of the ladies knew exactly where the border line lay between vivacity and indiscretion. If Lady Betty was one of the better informed on this delicate question of delimitation, all that can be said is that she overstepped the line upon several occasions. It is not to be thought that her lightness ever bordered into actual vice, but it rarely fell short of being indiscreet.

She was always being talked about—always having curious escapades, none of them quite compromising, but all calculated to make the judicious grieve. But it is one thing to be subjected to the censure of the judicious and quite another to come before a judicial authority, and it is pretty certain that if Lady Derby

—her husband succeeded to the title two years after his marriage—had incriminated herself, she would have been forced to defend a divorce suit.

It is, however, likewise certain that for some time she kept hovering like a butterfly about the portals of the Court, and a good deal of the bloom was blown off her wings by the breath of rumour. She had accepted the devotion of the Duke of Dorset, and, considering the number of eyes that were upon her and the devotion of His Grace, this was a very dangerous thing to do. They were constantly seen together and at all hours. This was in the second year of her marriage, but even in the first her desire to achieve notoriety by some means made itself apparent. But her escapade that was most talked about was really not worthy of the gossip of a Gower. She was at a ball at the house of Mrs. Onslow in St. James's Square, and her chair not arriving in good time to take her back to Grosvenor Square, it was suggested by Lord Lindsay and Mr. Storer that they should borrow Mrs. Onslow's chair and carry her between them to her home. She agreed to this gallant proposal, and off they set together. The young men bore her to her very door in spite of the fact that they had met her own chair soon after they had left Mrs. Onslow's porch.

There was surely not much of an escapade in this transaction. The truth was probably that the chair did not arrive owing to the condition of the bearers,

and when the young gentlemen met it they refused to jeopardise the safety of the lady by transferring her from Mrs. Onslow's chair to her own.

Rumour, however, was only too anxious to put the worst construction upon every act of the merry Countess, and it was doubtless because of this, and of her own knowledge of her daughter's thoughtlessness, that the Duchess of Argyll appeared upon the scene and endeavoured by her presence and advice to avert the catastrophe that seemed imminent. The Duchess insisted on accompanying her to every entertainment, and succeeded in keeping a watchful eye on her, though the Duke, who was at Inveraray, and was doubtless tired of hearing of the vivacity of his step-daughter, wrote rather peremptorily for Her Grace to return to Scotland. She did not obey the summons, the fact being that she was devoted to this daughter of hers, who must have daily reminded her of her own sister Maria, to whom she had been so deeply attached.*

Seeing, however, that she could not continue to look after this lively young matron, and being well aware of the fact that Lord Derby would never consent to live with her again, the Duchess could do no more than condone the separation which was inevitable. The deed was drawn up in 1779, five years

* It was said that she had refused the offer of the Duke of Bridgewater, because of his suggestion that she should break off all intercourse with Lady Coventry.

after Lady Betty had been so inauspiciously bored by the *fête champêtre.*

In the meantime there was a good deal of talk about the Earl of Derby himself. A young nobleman who takes a lively, or even a grave, interest in the personnel of the theatre is occasionally made the subject of vulgar gossip. Lord Derby had a reputation as an amateur actor, and he seemed to think that it would be increased by association with professional actresses. It is doubtful if he was justified in his views on this delicate question. At any rate, rightly or wrongly, on his estrangement from his wife, but two years before the final separation, he showed a greater devotion than ever to dramatic performances and dramatic performers. His uncle by marriage, now General Burgoyne, had written a play that turned out an extraordinary success. This was *The Heiress,* and it had received extravagant praise in many influential quarters. It was while it was still being talked of in society that a company of distinguished amateurs undertook to produce it at Richmond House, in Whitehall Place. In order that the representation might be as perfect as possible, the Duchess of Richmond engaged the actress who had taken the chief part in the original production, to superintend the rehearsals of her amateurs. Miss Farren was a young person of considerable beauty, and more even than an actress's share of discretion. She was in George Colman's company at the Haymarket, and

was rapidly taking the place of Mrs. Abington in the affections of playgoers. She was the daughter of a surgeon in a small way—he may have been one of the barber surgeons of the eighteenth century. Marrying an actress (also in a small way), he adopted the stage as a profession, and became a strolling actor-manager, whenever he got the chance, and died before his drinking habits had quite demoralised his family.

Mrs. Farren was a wise woman—wise enough to know that she was a bad actress, but that there were possibilities in her two daughters. It was after only a brief season of probation that Colman engaged one of the girls to do small parts, promoting her in an emergency to be a "principal." Miss Farren proved herself capable of making the most of her opportunity, and the result was that within a year she was taking Mrs. Abington's parts in the best comedies.

Her mother was sensible enough to perceive that there was room in the best society for an actress of ability as well as respectability—up to that time the two qualities had seldom been found associated—and Mrs. Farren was right. No whisper had ever been heard against the young lady, and a judicious introduction or two brought her into many drawing-rooms of those leaders of society who were also respectable, and this was of advantage to her not only socially, but professionally. Horace Walpole was able to write of her: "In distinction of manner and refinement she excelled Mrs. Abington, who could never go beyond

Lady Teazle, which is a second-rate character." Again, in a letter to Lady Ossory, he ascribed the ability of Miss Farren to the fact that she was accustomed to mingle with the best society.

This theory of Walpole's has been frequently controverted since his day, and now no one will venture to assert that there is really anything in it, although it sounds plausible enough. Miss Farren had, however, ample opportunity of studying " the real thing " and of profiting by her study. She found herself on the most intimate footing with duchesses—not of the baser sort like her of Ancaster, or of the eccentric sort like her of Bedford, but of the most exalted. The Duchess of Richmond and the Duchess of Leinster were among her friends, and thus it was that her appearance at the rehearsals of *The Heiress* of Whitehall Place was not wholly professional. Upon this occasion she met Lord Derby and also Charles James Fox, the latter having accepted the rather onerous duties of stage manager. Before any of the performers were letter perfect in their dialogue, Miss Farren had captured the hearts of both these men. Having some of the qualities necessary to success as a statesman, including caution and an instinct as to the right moment to retire from a contest that must end in some one being made a fool of, Mr. Fox soon withdrew from a position of rivalry with Lord Derby. It was rumoured by the malicious, who had at heart the maintenance of the good name of Miss Farren, that Mr. Fox had

been dismissed by the lady with great indignation on his making a proposition to her that did not quite meet her views in regard to the ceremony of marriage. Miss Farren they asserted to be a paragon of virtue, and so she undoubtedly was. Her virtue was of the most ostentatious type. She would never admit a gentleman to an audience unless some witness of her virtue was present. She accepted the devotion of Lord Derby, but gave him to understand quite plainly that so long as his wife was alive she could only agree to be his fiancée. Truly a very dragon of virtue was Miss Farren!

The Earl, previous to his meeting the actress, had been a dutiful if not a very devoted husband. But as soon as he fell in love with this paragon of virtue he became careless, and made no attempt to restrain his wife in her thoughtless behaviour. He allowed her to go her own way, and he went his way. His way led him almost every evening to the green room at the Haymarket and Drury Lane, where Miss Farren was to be found. The estrangement between himself and his wife that resulted in the final separation was the result not of his infatuation for the actress, but of her virtuous acceptance of him as her moral lover. She took care never to compromise herself with him or any one else, but she did not mind taking the man away from his wife and home in order that she might be accredited with occupying an absolutely unique position in the annals of the English stage.

If Miss Farren had been a little less virtuous and a little more human she would run a better chance of obtaining the sympathy of such people as are capable of differentiating between a woman's virtue and the virtues of womankind. She seemed to think that the sole duty of a woman is to be discreet in regard to herself—to give no one a chance of pointing a finger of scorn at her; and it really seemed as if this was also the creed of the noble people with whom she associated. Every one seemed to be so paralysed by her propriety as to be incapable of perceiving how contemptible a part she was playing. An honest woman, with the instincts of goodness and with some sense of her duty, would, the moment a married man offers her his devotion, send him pretty quickly about his business. The most elementary sense of duty must suggest the adoption of such a course of treatment in regard to an illicit admirer. But Miss Farren had no such sense. She met the philandering of her lover with smiles and a virtuous handshake. She accepted his offer of an adoring friendship for the present with a reversion of the position of Countess of Derby on the death of the existing holder of the title and its appurtenances; and people held her up, and continue to hold her up, as an example of all that is virtuous and amiable in life!

She was also commended for her patience, as Lord Derby was for his constancy. They had both great need of these qualities, for the unhappy barrier to their

union showed no signs of getting out of their way, either by death or divorce. She became strangely discreet, taking, in fact, a leaf out of Miss Farren's book of deportment, and never giving her husband a chance of freeing himself from the tie that bound him nominally to her. It must have been very gratifying to the actress to perceive how effective was the example she set to the Countess in regard to the adherence to the path of rectitude.

What was the exact impression produced upon Lord Derby by all this decorum it would be difficult to say. He may have been pleased to discover that he was married to a lady to whom his honour was more precious than he had any reason or any right to believe it to be. But assuredly a less placid gentleman would have found himself wishing now and again that—well, that matters had arranged themselves differently.

The years went by without bringing about a more satisfactory *modus vivendi* than was in existence when Lord Derby originally offered his heart and hand (the latter when it should become vacant) to the actress. Lady Derby was in wretched health, but still showed no more inclination to die than does a chronic invalid. Miss Farren continued to drive her splendid chariot, with its coachmen on the hammer-cloth and its footmen clinging on to the straps behind, down to the stage-door of the theatre, and to fill the house every night that she played. Her popularity

seemed to grow with years, and she appeared in a wide range of characters, making her audiences accept as correct her reading of every part, though the best critics—Walpole was about the worst—of her art had a good deal to say that was not quite favourable to her style. Only once, however, did she make a flagrant error on the stage, and this was when she was misguided enough to put on men's garments in representing the part of Tracy Lovell in Colman's play, *The Suicide*.

By this unhappy exhibition which she made of herself she disillusioned those of her admirers who fancied that she was a model of grace from the sole of her feet to the crown of her head. She never repeated this performance. Had she done so in Lord Derby's presence, his constancy would have been put to a severer test than any to which he had been previously subjected. The best judges of what constitutes grace in a woman were unanimous in their advice to the lady never to forsake the friendly habiliments which she was accustomed to wear, and never to allow her emulation of the perpetually chaste goddess to lead her to adopt even for an hour the convenient garb in which she went a-hunting.

And while his fiancée was moving from triumph to triumph, putting every other actress in the shade, the Earl of Derby was putting on flesh. But as his flesh became more visible so did his faith. He was a model of fidelity. His name was never associated with the name

of any other lady—not even that of his wife—during his long years of probation, and twenty years form a rather protracted period for a man to wait in order to marry an actress. It was not to be wondered if the spectacle of the devoted young peer waiting for the beautiful girl in the green room, which was allowed to the habitués of that fascinating apartment during the earlier years of this strange attachment, produced quite a different effect upon people from that which was the result of witnessing a somewhat obese, elderly gentleman panting along by the side of a chaste lady of forty. Nor was it remarkable that, on seeing one day by the side of Miss Farren, a gallant young man whose walk and bearing suggested to elderly spectators a rejuvenated Lord Stanley, they should rub their eyes and ask what miracle was this that time and true love had wrought.

The only miracle that time had wrought was to make the son of the Earl of Derby twenty-one years of age and rather interested in the personnel of green rooms. He had been introduced to Miss Farren by his father; but to his honour be it said, he made no attempt to take his father's place in regard to the lady, except as her escort to her house in Green Street. The gossip that suggested such a possibility was just what one might expect to find in one of Walpole's letters.

At last the shameful, if virtuous, devotion of twenty years was rewarded by the announcement of the death

of the wretched Countess whose desertion dated from the day her husband met the actress. Miss Farren, with that extraordinary bad taste which characterised every period of her intimacy with Lord Derby, took an ostentatious farewell of the stage, and proved by the faltering of her voice, her emotion, and her final outburst in tears, that time had not diminished from the arts of her art. Of course, there was a scene of intense emotion in the theatre, which was increased when King led her forward and Wroughton spoke a rhymed and stagey farewell in her presence. Four of its lines were these :

> But ah ! this night adieu the joyous mien,
> When Mirth's lov'd fav'rite quits the mimic scene,
> Startled Thalia would th' assent refuse,
> But Truth and Virtue sued and won the Muse.

Truth and Virtue—these were the patrons of the compact by which Miss Farren waited for twenty years for the death of the wife of the man whom she had promised to marry—when she could.

The scene in the green room when the actress came off the stage was an unqualified success. Tears flowed freely, making channels as they meandered down the paint ; sobs came from the actresses who hoped to get a chance of doing some of her parts now that she had left the stage ; and Miss Farren herself showed that she knew what were the elements of a proper climax, by fainting with a shriek, in the midst of which she made an exit supported by all the actors who were not

already supporting some of the hysterical ladies in the background. They all deserved to have their salaries raised. The whole scene was a triumph—of art.

The exact chronology of the crisis is worth noting. Lady Derby died on March 4th, and was buried on April 2nd. On April 8th Miss Farren took her farewell of the stage, and on May 1st she was married to the Earl of Derby. A satisfactory explanation of the indecent delay in the celebration of the marriage was forthcoming: his lordship had been suffering from an attack of gout.

But if no one ventured to cast an aspersion upon his character or to accuse him of shilly-shallying in regard to the postponement of his nuptials until his wife had been nearly a whole month in her grave, there was a good deal of funny gossip set loose when, after a honeymoon of two days, the Earl and the Countess returned to London. This also was satisfactorily explained: the Countess was devoted to her mother!

The marriage proved a very happy one, and thirty-two years passed before the Countess died. Her husband survived her by five years. He died in 1834, fifty-seven years after his first meeting with the actress, and forty-seven since he instituted "The Derby" race meeting, winning the first cup by his horse Sir Peter Teazle.

THE PLOT OF A LADY NOVELIST

IN the year 1790–1 there was played in real life a singularly poor adaptation of an unwritten novel by one of the Minifie sisters—those sentimental ladies who, during the last quarter of the eighteenth century, provided the circulating libraries with several volumes of high-flown fiction. The adaptation of this unwritten novel possessed a good many of the most prominent features of the original, so that when it was brought to light there could be very little doubt as to the brain out of which it had been evolved. The result of the performance was so unsatisfactory as to compel one to believe that the worst possible way of producing a novel is to adapt it to suit the requirements of one's relations, forcing them to play in real life and in all earnest the parts assigned to them by the inventor of the plot.

Miss Minifie, the second of the sentimental sisters, had married in the year 1769 Colonel John Gunning, the brother of the two beautiful girls one of whom became Duchess of Hamilton, and later Duchess of Argyll, and the other Countess of Coventry. The result of the union was a daughter of considerable plainness, and people said that in this respect she

resembled her mother's rather than her father's family. It seems that while the Gunning tradition was beauty, the Minifie tradition was a nose, and it soon became apparent that it was impossible to combine the two with any satisfactory artistic results. The young lady had made an honest attempt to do so, but her failure was emphatic. She had eyes that suggested in a far-off way the long-lashed orbs of her aunts, but that unlucky Minifie nose was so prominent a feature that it caused the attention of even the most indulgent critic to be riveted upon it, to the exclusion of the rest of her face. The charitably-disposed among her friends affirmed that she would be passably good-looking if it were not for her nose; the others said that she would be positively plain if it were not for her eyes.

Her father was probably that member of his family who had least brains: they made a soldier of him, and he married a lady novelist, closing an inglorious career by running off with his tailor's wife and having a writ issued against him for £5000. He took care to be at Naples, outside the jurisdiction of the English court, when it was issued, and he died before it could be served on him, which suggests that he may not have been so devoid of brains after all.

Her mother (*née* Minifie) seems to have entertained the idea of making the girl work out a "plot" for her when she arrived at the regulation age of the sentimental heroine of those days, and this plot she in-

vented with all her accustomed absence of skill. Her materials were a "glorious child"—this was how she described her daughter—with a gifted mother; a young cousin, heir to a dukedom and a large estate; and, lastly, the Gunning tradition. Could any novelist ask for more? A short time afterwards she did, however, and this was just where her art failed her. She did much to discourage the writers of fiction from endeavouring to work out their plots in real life.

Catherine Gunning, the "glorious child," being the niece of the Duchess of Argyll, her cousin was, of course, the Marquis of Lorne; and as the Duchess had always kept up an intimate connection with the members of her father's family, even to the second generation, her son, Lord Lorne, and Catherine Gunning had been a good deal together, not only when they were children, but also when they had reached the age when the novel-writer's hero and heroine begin to blossom. The girl's mother, doubtless having an idea that these very live young people were as plastic as the creatures of her fancy, thought to hasten on the *dénouement* of her story by whispering it to her friends. She whispered into more than one ear that Lord Lorne and her daughter were betrothed, and such friends as received this information, strictly *sub rosa*, took care to spread it abroad—strictly *sub rosa* also. Now the aggregation of many confidential reports of this sort is what is termed "news," so that in the course of a short time

it was common property that Lord Lorne was to marry his cousin, Catherine Gunning.

Congratulations reached the young lady, which she neither quite accepted nor altogether rejected. She seems to have learned from her mother's novels that in such matters it is wisest for a young woman to be silent but pensive. And on the whole her behaviour was fairly consistent with that of the heroine which her mother meant her to be. Indeed, all that was needed to enable her to take the place of the heroine of a pleasant little love story was the proposal of the hero; and unhappily this formality had still to be reckoned with. Lord Lorne had so paltry an appreciation of what was due to the art of the fiction-writer that he declined to play the part of the young hero of the story, and when people approached him on the subject he said that he had heard nothing about being accepted by Miss Gunning, and that he could not possibly be accepted until he had proposed to her. He seems to have acted with the discretion one would have looked for from the son of the Duchess of Argyll, and in the course of the year the reports of the possible union dwindled away, and people began to feel that their friends were untrustworthy gossips to have circulated a report solely on the evidence of a young lady's pensiveness.

This was, however, as it turned out, but the opening chapter in the romance which the novelist-mother was working out. Indeed, it scarcely bears to be con-

sidered as a regular chapter, it was rather the prologue to the comedy which was played two years later with the same heroine, but for obvious reasons with a different hero. In the prologue there was scarcely visible any of the art of the novelist; in the comedy itself, however, her hand is constantly apparent, controlling the movements of at least one of her puppets; and very jerkily, too, that hand pulled the strings. The clumsiness in the construction of the plot prevented any one from sympathising with the authoress and stage-manager of the piece when its failure became known to the world in general, and to Horace Walpole in particular. Walpole could pretend a good deal. He pretended, for instance, that he knew at once that the Rowley poems, sent to him by Chatterton, were forgeries; and he pretended that he knew nothing of the marriage of his niece to the Duke of Gloucester until the public were apprised of the fact. He could not, however, even pretend that he sympathised with the failure of the Minifie plot. On the contrary, he gloats over the disgrace which, he declared, on this account fell upon the Gunning family. He hated the whole Gunning family, and he was plainly in ecstasies of delight when he believed that ruin had come upon them. "The two beautiful sisters were exalted almost as high as they could go," he wrote. "Countessed and double duchessed, and now the family have dragged themselves down into the very dirt."

The " family " had of course done nothing of the sort. One member of the family had allowed herself to be made a fool of at the suggestion of her very foolish mother; her father had also been indiscreet, but there is a wide difference between all this and the family of Gunning " dragging themselves into the very dirt." The result of the tricks of the lady novelist to marry her daughter to the heir to a dukedom was only to make every one roar with laughter, and no doubt the fatuous ladies felt greatly annoyed. But the Marquis of Lorne did not seem to take the matter greatly to heart, and he was a member of the Gunning family; nor did the Duke of Hamilton show himself to be greatly perturbed, though he must have been somewhat jealous of the honour of the family to which his mother belonged. The position that the Gunning family had taken among the greatest families in the land rested upon too solid a foundation to be shaken by the foolishness of a lady novelist, who had married a Gunning. And now people who read the story of the " dragging in the dirt " only shrug their shoulders at the ridiculous figure cut by the actors in the shallow and sordid comedy, and laugh at the spiteful gibe of the prince of gossips, who played a congenial part in damning the product of the Minifie brain.

Two years after the failure of the Lorne plot startling whispers were once again heard in regard to Miss Gunning and the heir to another dukedom. This

time it was the Marquis of Blandford who attracted the Minifie fancy. He was the Duke of Marlborough's heir, and was twenty-three years of age. Of course it was Mrs. Gunning (*née* Minifie) who was the first to make the announcement that the young people were greatly attached; and then followed—after the interval of a chapter or two—the lady novelist's declaration to her niece, a Mrs. Bowen, that Lord Blandford had proposed, and had been accepted by Miss Gunning. The date of the marriage had been fixed, and the draft deed of the settlements signed; but, as in the former "case," the recipient of the news was told that she must regard the communication as strictly confidential, the fact being that although the arrangements for the match were so fully matured, yet General Gunning—he had recently been made a general—had not been let into the secret.

It must have seemed a little queer to Mrs. Bowen to learn that her uncle had not been made acquainted with the good luck that was in store for his daughter. The signing of marriage deeds in the absence of the bride's father must surely have struck her as being a trifle irregular. However this may be, she seems to have treated the communication as strictly confidential by at once proceeding to spread abroad the news that it contained. It reached the ears of several people of distinction before long. General Conway heard of it, and from a quarter that seemed to him absolutely trustworthy. He passed it round to Wal-

pole and the Court circle. The Duke of Argyll, as the uncle of the young lady most interested in the match, was apprised of it in due course, and on appealing to headquarters—that is to say, to Mrs. Gunning—for confirmation or denial of the report, learned that the marriage had indeed been "arranged," but the question of settlements remained in abeyance.

Shortly afterwards there came rumours that there were obstacles in the way of the marriage, and Miss Gunning, on being questioned by some of her friends, confessed that it was the parents of her lover who were unkind: young Lord Blandford was burning with anxiety to call her his own, but the Duke and Duchess belonged unfortunately to that type of parent to be found in so many novels in which the course of true love runs anything but smooth.

Strange to say, it was just at this point that a letter appeared in the *Advertiser*, signed by General Gunning, apprising the world of the fact that the Gunnings were one of the noblest families in existence, the writer actually being able to trace his ancestry up to Charlemagne.

It was while people were so laughing over this letter as to cause him to declare it to be a forgery, that the General became suspicious of the genuineness of his daughter's statements in regard to her *affaire de cœur*. When a blunt old soldier finds a letter bearing his signature in the papers, well knowing that he never wrote such a letter, he is apt to question the

good faith even of his nearest and dearest. It is certain, at any rate, that the descendant of Charlemagne had an uneasy feeling that any woman who wrote novels was not to be implicitly trusted in the affairs of daily life. His mind running on forged letters, he commanded his daughter to submit to him her correspondence with her lover.

Miss Gunning at once complied, and he sat down to read the lot. The result was not to allay his suspicions. The letters read remarkably well, and contained the conventional outpourings of an ardent lover to the object of his affections. But to the simple soldier's mind they read just too well: some of them were in the style of a novel-writer with whom he was acquainted—imperfectly, it would appear, or he would have suspected something long before. Retaining the precious "pacquet" he awaited developments.

He had not long to wait. Another contribution to the correspondence which he had in his hand came to his daughter, and was passed on to him. Noticing in it some doubtful features, he came to the conclusion that it was necessary to get to the bottom of the affair in the most straightforward way. He leapt to the bottom of it by sending the whole "pacquet" to the young Marquis of Blandford, asking him peremptorily if he had written the letters.

He got a reply to the effect that a few of the letters were his—they were the ordinary ones, courteous, but in no way effusive—but that the greater number

had not come from him. His lordship did not seem to think that common politeness demanded his expressing his hearty concurrence with the tone and sentiments contained in these same letters. Now in the judgment of a novelist of the intellectual calibre of the Minifie sisters this is exactly what a young gentleman would do when playing the part of the hero of a romance, so that it would appear that General Gunning was fully justified in coming to the conclusion that the whole scheme—the whole piece of scheming—was the design of his wife—that it represented an attempt on her part to force one of her " plots " upon some real personages. Dull-minded man though he certainly was, he must have perceived that his wife's plan was to compel Lord Blandford to act the part of the hero of her sentimental imagination, and when confronted with a parcel of forged letters, in every one of which there was a confession of love for Miss Gunning, to bow his head meekly, as any gentleman (of her imagination) would, and say, " Those are my letters, and they express nothing but the most honourable sentiments of my heart."

But as it so happened the young Lord Blandford was not a young gentleman of this particular stamp. He seems to have been almost as practical as his great ancestor, who, out of the proceeds of his first love intrigue, bought an annuity for himself. Hence the fiasco of the Minifie plot.

The Minifie plot, however, was not worked out in one act only, and an insignificant prologue. The resources of the lady's imagination were by no means exhausted by the failure of Lord Blandford to act up to the heroic part assigned to him. He seems to have talked a good deal to his friends about the forged letters, and the Duke of Argyll, the young lady's uncle, took the matter up as an important member by marriage of the family. He applied to his niece for an explanation of the whole affair; and her father seems to have agreed with him in thinking that if the girl was ever to hold up her head again it would be necessary for her to bring forward some evidence to prove what she still asserted, namely, that the letters had been written to her by Lord Blandford—this "pacquet" of letters played as important a part in the story of Miss Gunning as the "Casquet Letters" did in the history of Queen Mary—and that they were written with the concurrence and approbation of the Duke and Duchess of Marlborough. The Duke and Duchess had, she affirmed, encouraged her by the most unmistakable means to believe that they were extremely anxious to see her married to their son.

It was then suggested—Horace Walpole, who gloats over the whole story in a letter to one of the Berrys, does not say by whom—that the young woman should draw up a narrative of the progress of the attachment professed for her by Lord Blandford,

and of the particular acts of encouragement for which she alleged the Duke and Duchess were responsible, leading her to feel sure that she was a *persona grata* with them. It was hoped by the Duke of Argyll and General Gunning that the girl would be rehabilitated in the eyes of society by the production of the Duke of Marlborough's formal assent to the statements made by Miss Gunning in endeavouring to exculpate herself. Miss Gunning assenting—after a consultation with her mother, we may be sure—a "narrative" was accordingly prepared by the young lady, and in it there was the ingenuous confession that although she had been unable to resist so dazzling an offer as that of Lord Blandford, she had not wavered in her affection for her cousin, the Marquis of Lorne.

Here we have the true Minifie touch of sentimentality, and we cannot doubt that the remaining portion of the plot was due to her clumsy ingenuity.

This narrative was sent to the Duke of Marlborough, with the following letter from General Gunning :

"St. James's Place,
"*3rd February*, 1791.

"My Lord,—I have the honour of addressing this letter to your Grace not with the smallest wish after what has passed of having a marriage established between Lord Blandford and my daughter,

or of claiming any promise or proposal to that effect, but merely to know whether your Grace or the Duchess of Marlborough have it in recollection that your Graces or Lord Blandford ever gave my daughter reason to think a marriage was once intended.

"My motive for giving this trouble arises merely from a desire of removing any imputation from my daughter's character, as if she had entertained an idea of such importance without any reasonable foundation.

"For my own satisfaction, and that of my particular friends who have been induced to believe the reports of the intended marriage, I have desired my daughter to draw up an accurate narrative of every material circumstance on which that belief was founded.

"This narrative I have the honour of transmitting to your Grace for your own perusal, and that of the Duchess of Marlborough and Lord Blandford, thinking it highly suitable that you should have an early opportunity of examining it—and I beg leave to request that your Grace will, after examination, correct or alter such passages as may appear either to your Grace, the Duchess of Marlborough, or Lord Blandford, to be erroneously stated.

"I have the honour to be,

"With the greatest respect, my Lord,

"Your Grace's most humble and

"Most obedient servant,

"JOHN GUNNING."

This letter was dispatched by a groom to its destination at Blenheim, and within half an hour of his delivering it, His Grace, according to the groom, had handed him a reply for General Gunning. This document, which the groom said he had received from the Duke, was forwarded, with a copy of the letter to which it constituted a most satisfactory reply, to a small and very select committee that had, it would seem, been appointed to investigate and report upon the whole story. It must also be quoted in full, in order that its point may be fully appreciated by any one interested in this very remarkable story.

"BLENHEIM.

"SIR,—I take the earliest opportunity to acknowledge the receipt of your letter, and to answer it with that explicitness you are so much entitled to. From the first of the acquaintance of the D——s of Marlborough and myself had with Miss Gunning, we were charmed with her, and it was with infinite satisfaction we discovered *Blanford's* sentiments similar to our own. It had long been the wish of both to see him married to some amiable woman. Your daughter was the one we had fixed on, and we had every reason to suppose the object of his tenderest affections, and, from the conduct of both himself and his family, yourself and Miss Gunning had undoubtedly every right to look on a marriage as certain. Indeed when I left town last summer, I regarded her as my future

daughter, and I must say it is with sorrow I relinquish the idea. The actions of young men are not always to be accounted for; and it is with regret that I acknowledge my son has been particularly unaccountable in his. I beg that you will do me the justice to believe that I shall ever think myself your debtor for the manner in which you have conducted yourself in this affair, and that I must always take an interest in the happiness of Miss Gunning. I beg, if she has not conceived a disgust for the whole of my family, she will accept the sincerest good wishes of the Duchess and my daughters.

" I have the honour to remain,
" Sir,
" Your much obliged and
" Most obedient, humble servant,
" MARLBOROUGH."

Now be it remembered that both these letters were forwarded to the committee with the young lady's narrative, to be considered by them in the same connection, at Argyll House, where their sittings were to be held.

What was to be said in the face of such documentary evidence as this? Those members of the committee who hoped that the girl's statement of her case would be in some measure borne out by the Duke of Marlborough could never have hoped for so triumphant a confirmation of her story as was contained

in His Grace's letter. It seemed as if the investigation of the committee would be of the simplest character; handing them such a letter, accompanying her own ingenuous narrative, it was felt that she had completely vindicated her position.

But suddenly one member of the committee—Walpole in the letter to Miss Berry affirms that he was this one—ventured to point out that in the Duke's letter the name *Blandford* was spelt without the middle letter *d*. "That was possible in the hurry of doing justice," wrote Walpole. But the moment that this pin-puncture of suspicion appeared in the fabric of the lady's defence it was not thought any sacrilege to try to pick another hole in it. The wax with which the letter was sealed was black, and the members of the council asked one another whom the Marlborough family were in mourning for, that they should seal their letter in this fashion. No information on this point was forthcoming. (It is strange if Walpole did not suggest that they were in mourning over the defunct reputation of the young lady.) If the Duke of Argyll was present, it can well be believed that, after the members of the council had looked at each other, there should be silence in that room, on one wall of which we may believe there was hanging the splendid portrait of Elizabeth, Duchess of Argyll and Baroness Hamilton of Hameldon, in her own right, painted by Sir Joshua Reynolds. The lady was dying at her Scotch home when this in-

vestigation into the conduct of her niece was being conducted.

It was probably a relief to every one present when the suggestion was made that the Duke of Marlborough's second son was in town, and if sent for he might be able to throw some light upon the subject of the mourning wax or some other questionable point in the same connection. Although it was now close upon midnight a messenger was dispatched for the young man—probably his whereabouts at midnight would be known with greater certainty than at midday. At any rate he was quickly found, and repaired in all haste to Argyll House. He was brought before the committee and shown the letter with the black wax. He burst out laughing, and declared that the writing bore not the least resemblance to that of his father, the Duke of Marlborough.

There was nothing more to be said. The council adjourned *sine die* without drawing up any report, so far as can be ascertained.

But the full clumsiness of the Minifie " plot " was revealed the next day, for General Gunning received a letter from the Captain Bowen whose name has already entered into this narrative, telling him that his wife, the General's niece, had a short time before received from Miss Gunning a letter purporting to be a copy of one which had come to her from the Duke of Marlborough, and begging her to get her husband to make a fair copy of it, and return it by

the groom. Captain Bowen added that he had complied with his wife's request to this effect, but he had written "*copy*" at the top and "*signed M.*" at the bottom, as is usual in engrossing copies of documents, to prevent the possibility of a charge of forgery being brought against the copyist.

The letter which the girl wrote to Mrs. Bowen was made the subject of an affidavit shortly afterwards, and so became public property. It is so badly composed that one cannot but believe it was dictated by her mother, though the marvellous spelling must have been Miss Gunning's own. The fact that, after making up a story of her love for Lord Lorne, and of the encouragement she received from the Marlborough family in respect of Lord Blandford, she instructed Mrs. Bowen to keep the matter secret from her mother, confirms one's impression as to the part the lady must have played in the transaction. Miss Gunning wrote: "Neither papa or I have courage to tell mama, for she detests the person dearest to me on earth."

But however deficient in courage her papa was in the matter of acquainting his wife with so ordinary an incident as was referred to in this letter, he did not shrink from what he believed to be his duty when it was made plain to him that his daughter and his wife had been working out a "plot" in real life that necessitated the forging of a letter. He promptly bundled both wife and daughter out of his house,

doubtless feeling that although the other personages in the romance which his wife was hoping to weave, had by no means acted up to the parts she had meant them to play, there was no reason why he should follow their example. It must be acknowledged that as a type of the bluff old soldier, simple enough to be deceived by the inartistic machinations of a foolish wife, but inexorable when finding his credulity imposed upon, he played his part extremely well. At the same time such people as called him a ridiculous old fool for adopting so harsh a measure toward his erring child, whose tricks he had long winked at, were perhaps not to be greatly blamed.

The old Duchess of Bedford at once received the outcasts and provided them with a home; and then Mrs. Gunning had leisure to concoct a manifesto in form of an open letter to the Duke of Argyll, in which, after exhorting His Grace to devote the remainder of his life to unravelling the mystery which she affirmed (though no one else could have done so) enshrouded the whole affair of the letter, she went on to denounce the simple-hearted General for his meanness—and worse—in matters domestic. He had never been a true husband to her, she declared, and he was even more unnatural as a father. As for Captain Bowen and his wife, the writer of the manifesto showed herself to be upon the brink of delirium when she endeavoured to find words severe enough to describe their treachery. They were inhuman in

their persecution of her "glorious child," she said, and then she went on to affirm her belief that the incriminating letters had been forged by the Bowens, and the rest of the story invented by them with the aid of the General to ruin her and her "glorious child."

Captain Bowen thought fit to reply to this amazing production. He did so through the prosaic form of a number of affidavits. The most important of these was that sworn by one William Pearce, groom to General Gunning. In this document he deposed that when he was about to start for Blenheim with the "pacquet" for the Duke of Marlborough, Miss Gunning had caught him and compelled him to hand over the "pacquet" to her, and that she had then given him another letter, sealed with black, bearing the Marlborough arms, instructing him to deliver it to her father, pretending that he had received it at Blenheim.

In spite of all this Miss Gunning continued to affirm her entire innocence, and even went the length —according to Walpole—of swearing before a London magistrate that she was innocent. "It is but a burlesque part of this wonderful tale," adds Walpole, "that old crazy Bedford exhibits Miss every morning on the Causeway in Hyde Park and declares her *protegée* some time ago refused General Trevelyan." But "crazy old Bedford" went much further in her craziness than this, for she actually wrote to the

Marquis of Lorne trying to patch up a match between Miss Gunning and himself. Immediately afterwards the town was startled by the report that a duel was impending between Lord Lorne and Lord Blandford, the former maintaining that it was his duty to uphold the honour of his cousin, which had been somewhat shaken by the course adopted by the Marlborough heir. Of course no duel took place, and the young men simply laughed when their attention was called to the statement in print.

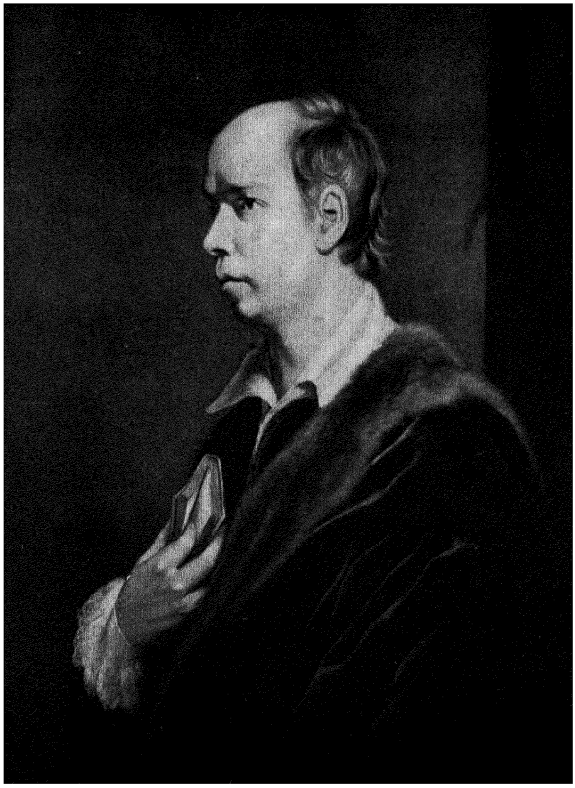
How much further these alarums and excursions (on the Causeway) would have proceeded it would be impossible to tell, the fact being that Captain Bowen and his wife gave notice of their intention to institute proceedings against the Gunnings, mother and daughter, for libel. This brought *l'affaire Gunning* to a legitimate conclusion, for the ladies thought it advisable to fly to France.

"The town is very dull without them," wrote Walpole to one of the Berrys, enclosing a copy of a really clever skit in verse, after the style of "The House that Jack Built," ridiculing the whole affair. When Mrs. Gunning and her daughter returned, after the lapse of several months, the old Duchess of Bedford took them up once more; but the town declined to take any further notice of them. It was not until her father and mother had been dead for some years that Miss Gunning married Major Plunkett, an Irish rebel, who fled after the rising in 1798. She

lived with him happily enough for twenty years, endeavouring to atone for the indiscretion of her girlhood by writing novels. It is doubtful if many of her readers considered such expiation wholly adequate, considering how foolish she had been. One act of folly can hardly be atoned for by another. But her intention was good, and her faults, including her novels, have long ago been forgiven her by being forgotten.

TRAGEDY WITH A TWINKLE

IN the summer of 1770 there arrived at the town of Lisle a coach containing three ladies and one man, followed by a travelling chaise with servants and luggage. Of the ladies, one was approaching middle age, handsome and elegant; the other two were her daughters, and both were extremely beautiful and graceful girls, under twenty years of age. The man was a small, middle-aged person, with a face which one would have called plain if it had not been that the protruding of his upper lip and the twinkle in his eyes suggested not plainness, but comedy. The very soul of comedy was in the gravity of his face; but it was that sort which is not apparent to all the world. It was the soul of comedy, not the material part; and most people are disposed to deny the possibility of comedy's existing except in juxtaposition with the grin through the horse-collar. Solemnity in a face, with a twinkle in the eye—that is an expression which comedy may wear without arousing the curiosity—certainly without exciting the laughter—of the multitude. And this was exactly the form that the drama of this man's life assumed; only it was tragedy



From a mezzotint engraving by G. Marchi, after the painting by Sir Joshua Reynolds, P.R.A.

OLIVER GOLDSMITH.

p. 170.

with a twinkle. Tragedy with a twinke—that was Oliver Goldsmith.

The vehicles drew up in the courtyard of the hotel, in the square, and Dr. Goldsmith, after dismounting and helping the ladies to dismount, gave orders in French to the landlord in respect of the luggage, and made inquiries as to the table d'hôte. Shown to their respective rooms, the members of the party did not meet again for some time, and then it was in the private *salle* which they had engaged, looking out upon the square. The two girls were seated at a window, and their mother was writing letters at a table at one side.

When Dr. Goldsmith entered we may be pretty sure that he had exchanged his travelling dress for a more imposing toilet, and we may be equally certain that these two girls had something merry to say about the cut or the colour of his garments—we have abundant record of their *badinage* bearing upon his flamboyant liking for colour, and of his retorts in the same spirit. We have seen him strutting to and fro in gay apparel, obtrusively calling attention to the beauty of his waistcoat and speaking in solemn exaggeration of its importance. The girls were well aware of this form of his humour; they appreciated it to the full, and responded to it in their merriment.

Then there came the sound of martial music from the square, and the elder of the girls, opening the window on its hinges, looked out. A

regiment of soldiers was turning into the square and would pass the hotel, she said. The two girls stood at one window and Goldsmith at another while the march past took place. It was not surprising that, glancing up and seeing the beautiful pair at the window, the mounted officers at the head of the regiment should feel flattered by the attention, nor was it unlikely that the others, taking the *pas* from their superiors, should look up and exchange expressions in admiration of the beauty of the young ladies. It is recorded that they did so, and that, when the soldiers had marched off, the little man at the other window walked up and down the room in anger "that more attention had been paid to them than to him."

These are the words of Boswell in concluding his account of the episode, which, by the way, he printed with several other stories in illustration of the overwhelming vanity and extraordinary envy in Goldsmith's nature. As if any human being hearing such a story of the most complete curmudgeon would accept the words as spoken seriously! And yet Boswell printed it in all solemnity, and hoped that every one who read it would believe that Goldsmith, the happy-go-lucky Irishman, was eaten up with envy of the admiration given to the two exquisite girls on whom, by the way, be conferred immortality; for so long as English literature remains the names of the Jessamy Bride and Little Comedy will live. Yes, and so

long as discriminating people read the story of Goldsmith's envious outburst they will not fail to see the true picture of what did actually take place in that room in the Lisle hotel—they will see the little man stalking up and down, that solemn face of his more solemn than ever, but the twinkle in his eyes revealing itself all the more brightly on this account, while he shakes his fists at the ladies and affirms that the officers were dolts and idiots to waste their time gazing at them when they had a chance "of seeing me, madam, me—*me!*" Surely every human being with the smallest amount of imagination will see the little man thumping his waistcoat, while the Miss Hornecks hold up their hands and go into fits of laughter at that whimsical Dr. Goldsmith, whom they had chosen to be their companion on that tour of theirs through France with their mother.

And surely every one must see them in precisely the same attitude, when they read the story in Boswell's *Life of Johnson*, and notice what interpretation has been put upon it by the Scotsman —hands uplifted in amazement and faces "o'errunning with laughter" at the thought of how Mr. Boswell has, for the thousandth time, been made a fool of by some one who had picked up the story from themselves and had solemnly narrated it to Boswell. But in those days following the publication of the first edition of the *Life*, people were going about with uplifted hands, wondering if any man

since the world began had ever been so befooled as Boswell.

When the story appeared in *Johnson's Life* the two girls had been married for several years; but one of them at least had not forgotten the incident upon which it was founded; and upon its being repeated in Northcote's *Life of Reynolds*, she wrote to the biographer, assuring him that in this, as well as in other stories of the same nature, the expression on Goldsmith's face when he professed to be overcome by envy was such as left no one in doubt that he was jesting. But Croker, in spite of this, had the impudence to sneer at the explanation, and to attribute it to the good-nature of the lady. Mr. Croker seems to have had a special smile of his own for the weaknesses of ladies. This was the way he smiled when he was searching up old registries of their birth in his endeavour to prove that they had made themselves out to be six months younger than they really were.

(Quite different, however, must his smile have been when he read Macaulay's Essay on Croker's edition of Boswell's *Life of Johnson*).

But, unhappily for poor Goldsmith, Mr. Boswell was able to bring forward much stronger evidence of the consuming Vanity, the parent of Envy, with which his "honest Dr. Goldsmith" was afflicted. There was once an exhibition of puppets in Panton Street, and on some member of the distinguished company in which he, curiously enough for such a

contemptible lout, constantly found himself, admiring the dexterity with which the wooden figure tossed a halbert, Goldsmith, we are gravely told, appeared annoyed and said: "Pshaw! I could do it as well myself!" Supposing that some one had said to Boswell, "After all, sir, perhaps Dr. Goldsmith could have done it as well himself," would the man have tried to explain that the question was not whether Goldsmith or the puppet was the more dexterous, but whether it was possible to put any other construction upon Goldsmith's exclamation than that assumed by Mr. Boswell?

Yet another instance is given of Goldsmith's envy, and this time the object of it is not a wooden figure, but Shakespeare himself. He could not bear, Dr. Beattie tells us, that so much admiration should be given to Shakespeare. Hearing this, we feel that we are on quite a different level. There is no jealousy rankling this time in Goldsmith's heart against a mere puppet. It is now a frantic passion of chagrin that Shakespeare should still receive the admiration of a chosen few!

But such vanity as that so strikingly illustrated by this last told story, is, one must confess with feelings of melancholy, not yet wholly extinct among literary men. It would scarcely be believed—unless by Boswell or Beattie—that even in America a man with some reputation as a writer should deliberately ask people to assume that he himself was worthy of a place in a

group that included not merely Shakespeare, but also Milton and Homer. "Gentlemen," said this egregious person at a public dinner, "Gentlemen, think of the great writers who are dead and gone. There was Shakespeare, he is dead and gone; and Milton, alas! is no longer in the land of the living; Homer has been deceased for a considerable time, and I myself, gentlemen, am not feeling very well to-night."

What a pity it is that Beattie has gone the way of so many other great writers. If he could only have been laid on to Mark Twain we should have the most comic biography ever written.

Goldsmith was, according to the great Boswell and the many lesser Boswells of his day, the most contemptible wretch that ever wrote the finest poem of the century, the finest comedy of the century, the finest romance of the century. He was a silly man, an envious man, an empty-headed man, a stuttering fool, an idiot (of the inspired variety), an awkward lout, a shallow pedant, and a generally ridiculous person; and yet here we find him the chosen companion of two of the most beautiful and charming young ladies in England on their tour through France, and on terms of such intimacy with them and their brother, an officer in the Guards and the son-in-law of a peer, that nicknames are exchanged between them. A singular position for an Irish lout to find himself in!

Even before he is known to fame, and familiar only with famine, he is visited in his garret by Dr. Percy,

a member of the great Northumberland family at whose town house he lived. So much for the empty-headed fool who never opened his mouth except to put his foot in it, as a countryman of his said about quite another person. He was a shallow prig, and yet when " the Club " was started not one of the original members questioned his right to a place among the most fastidious of the community, although Garrick—to the shame of Johnson be it spoken—was not admitted for nine years. Boswell—to the shame of Johnson be it spoken—was allowed to crawl in after an exclusion of ten. According to his numerous detractors, this Goldsmith was one of the most objectionable persons possible to imagine, and yet we find him the closest friend of the greatest painter of the day and the greatest actor of the day. He associates with peers on the friendliest terms, and is the idol of their daughters. He is accused, on the one hand, of aiming at being accounted a Macaroni and being extravagant in his dress, and yet he has such a reputation for slovenliness in this respect that it is recorded that Dr. Johnson, who certainly never was accused of harbouring unworthy aspirations to be accounted a beau, made it a point of putting on his best garments —he may even have taken the extreme step of fastening up his garters—before visiting Goldsmith, in order, as he explained, that the latter might have no excuse for his slovenliness. We are also told that Goldsmith made a fool of himself when he got on his feet to

make a speech, and yet it is known that he travelled through Europe, winning the hospitality of more than one university by the display of his skill as a disputant. Again, none of his innumerable traits of awkwardness is so widely acknowledged as his conversational, and yet the examples which survive of his impromptu wit are of the most finished type; and (even when the record is made by Boswell), when he set himself out to take opposite sides to Johnson, he certainly spoke better sense than his antagonist, though he was never so loud. It is worth noting that nearly all the hard things which Johnson is reported to have said respecting Goldsmith were spoken almost immediately after one of these disputes. Further, we are assured that Goldsmith's learning was of the shallowest order, and yet when he was appointed Professor of History to the Royal Academy we do not hear that any voice was raised in protest.

What is a simple reader to think when brought face to face with such contradictory accounts of the man and his attainments? Well, possibly the best one can do is to say, as Fanny Burney did, that Goldsmith was an extraordinary man.

Of course, so far as his writings are concerned there is no need for one to say much. They speak for themselves, and readers can form their own opinion on every line and every sentence that has come from his pen. There is no misunderstanding the character of *The Traveller* or *The Deserted Village* or *The Vicar of*

Wakefield. These are acknowledged by the whole world to be among the most precious legacies of the eighteenth century to posterity. Who reads nowadays, except out of curiosity, such classics as *Tristram Shandy*, *Clarissa Harlow*, *Evelina*, or *Rasselas?* But who has not read, and who does not still read for pleasure, *The Vicar of Wakefield?* Johnson's laborious poem, *The Vanity of Human Wishes*, now only exists as an example of the last gasp of the didactic in verse; but we cannot converse without quoting—sometimes unconsciously—from *The Deserted Village* When the actor-manager of a theatre wishes to show how accomplished a company he has at his disposal he produces *She Stoops to Conquer*, and he would do so more frequently only he is never quite able to make up his mind whether he himself should play the part of old Hardcastle, Tony Lumpkin, Young Marlow, or Diggory. But what other eighteenth-century comedy of all produced previous to the death of Goldsmith can any manager revive nowadays with any hope of success? Colman of the eighteenth century is as dead as Congreve of the seventeenth; and what about the masterpieces of Cumberland, and Kelly, and Whitehead, and the rest? What about the Rev. Mr. Home's *Douglas*, which, according to Dr. Johnson, was equal to Shakespeare at his best? They have all gone to the worms, and these not even bookworms—their very graves are neglected. But *She Stoops to Conquer* is never revived without success—never

without a modern audience recognising the fact that its characters are not the puppets of the playwright, but the creations of Nature. It is worthy of mention, too, that the play which first showed the capacity of an actress whose name was ever at the head of the list of actresses of the last generation, was founded on *The Vicar of Wakefield.* It was Miss Ellen Terry's appearance in *Olivia* in 1878 that brought about her connection with the ever memorable Lyceum management as an associate of the greatest actor of our day.

These things speak for themselves, and prove incontestably that Goldsmith was head and shoulders above all those writers with whom he was on intimate terms. But the mystery of the contradictory accounts which we have of the man himself and his ways remains as unsolved as ever.

Yes, unless we assume one thing, namely—that the majority of the people about him were incapable of understanding him. Is it going too far to suggest that, as Daniel Defoe was sent to the pillory because his ironic jest in *The Shortest Way with the Dissenters* was taken in earnest, and as good people shuddered at the horrible proposal of Swift that Irish babies should be cooked and eaten, so Goldsmith's peculiarities of humour were too subtle to be in any degree appreciated by most of the people with whom he came in contact in England?

In Ireland there would be no chance of his being misunderstood; for there no form that his humour

assumed would be regarded as peculiar. Irony is a figure of speech so largely employed by the inhabitants in some parts that people who have lived there for any length of time have heard whole conversations carried on by two or three men without the slightest divergence from this tortuous form of expression into the straight path of commonplace English. And all this time there was no expression but one of complete gravity on the faces of the speakers; a stranger had no clue whatsoever to the game of words that was being played before him.

Another fully recognised form of humour which prevails in Ireland is even more difficult for a stranger to follow; its basis consists in mystifying another person, not for the sake of getting a laugh from a third who has been let into the secret, but simply for the satisfaction of the mystifier himself. The forms that such a scheme of humour may assume are various. One of the most common is an affectation of extraordinary stupidity. It is usually provoked by the deliverance of a platitude by a stranger. The humourist pretends that he never heard such a statement before, and asks to have it repeated. When this is done, there is usually a pause in which the profoundest thought is suggested; then the clouds are seen to clear away, and the perplexity on the man's face gives way to intelligence; he has grasped the meaning of the phrase at last, and he announces his victory with sparkling eyes, and forthwith puts quite a wrong con-

struction upon the simplest words. His chuckling is brought to a sudden stop by the amazed protest of the victim against the suggested solution of the obvious. Thus, with consummate art, the man is led on to explain at length, with ridiculous emphasis, the exact meaning of his platitude; but it is all to no purpose. The humourist shakes his head; he pretends that the cleverness of the other is too much for him to grasp all in a moment; it's a fine thing to have learning, to be sure, but these things may be best not meddled with by ignorant creatures like himself; and so he goes off murmuring his admiration for the fine display of wisdom that comes so easy-like from the man whom he has been fooling.

This form of humour is indulged in by some Irishmen simply for the satisfaction it gives them to indulge in it. They never hurry off to acquaint a neighbour with what they have done, and they are quite pleased with the thought that the person on whom they have been imposing will tell the whole story of their extraordinary obtuseness to some one else; it never strikes them that that some one else may fail to see through the trick, and actually be convinced of the existence of their obtuseness. But if such a possibility did occur to them, they would be all the better pleased: they would feel that they had fooled two instead of one.

But, of course, the most widely recognised form of Irish humour is that known as the "bull." This is the

delivery of a paradox so obvious as to be detected—after a brief consideration—by an Englishman or even—after an additional space for thought—by a Scotsman. But where the fun comes in is (in the Irishman's eyes) when the others assume that the humour of the bull is involuntary ; and this is just what the Englishman has been doing, and what the Irishman has been encouraging him to do, for centuries. The Englishman is so busy trying to make it appear that he is cleverer than he really is, he cannot see the humour of any man trying to make out that he is more stupid than he really is. Let no one fancy for a moment that the humour of an Irish bull is involuntary. It is a form of expression that may be due to a peculiar twist in the Irishman's mind—indeed, every form of humour may be said to be due to a peculiar twist of the mind—but it is as much a figure of speech as irony or satire. " Blarney " and " palaver " are other forms of speech in which the Irish of some generations ago indulged with great freedom, and both are essentially Irish and essentially humorous, though occasionally borrowed and clumsily worn on the other side of the Channel, just as the bernous of the Moor is worn by an English missionary when lecturing in the village schoolroom (with a magic-lantern) on The Progress of Christianity in Morocco.

It would be interesting to make a scientific inquiry into the origin and the maintenance of all these forms of expression among the Irish ; but it is unnecessary

to do so in this place. It is enough if we remind English readers of the existence of such forms even in the present day, when there is so little need for their display. It can without difficulty be understood by any one, however superficially acquainted with the history of Ireland for the past thousand years, that "blarney" and "palaver" were as necessary to the existence of the natives of the island as suspicion and vigilance were to the existence of the invaders. But it is not so apparent why Irishmen should be given to rush into the extremes of bragging on the one hand, and self-depreciation on the other. Bragging is, however, as much an endowment of Nature for the protection of a species or a race as is imitation or mimicry. The Irishman who was able by the exercise of this gift to intimidate the invaders, escaped a violent death and transmitted his art to his children. The practice of the art of self-depreciation was quite as necessary for the existence of the Irish race up to the time of the passing of the first Land Act. For several generations an Irishman was not allowed to own a horse of greater value than five pounds; and every Irish agriculturist who improved the miserable cabin which he was supposed to share with his pigs and his fowl, might rest certain that his rent would be raised out of all proportion to his improvements. In these circumstances it can easily be understood that it was accounted a successful joke for a man who was doing tolerably well to put on a poor face when in the

presence of an inquiry agent of the absent landlord—to run down all his own efforts and to depreciate generally his holding, and thus to save himself from the despicable treatment which was meted out to the unfortunate people by the conquerors of their country.

It is not necessary to do more than make these suggestions to a scientific investigator who may be disposed to devote some time to the question of the origin of certain forms of Irish humour; it is enough for us, in considering the mystery of that typical Irishman, Oliver Goldsmith, to know that such forms of humour as we have specified have an actual existence. Such knowledge is a powerful illuminant to a reader of Boswell's and Beattie's stories of the stupidity of Goldsmith. A fine flood of light is thrown upon the apparent mystery of the inspiration of this idiot—of this man "who wrote like an angel and talked like poor poll."

Goldsmith was just too successful in maintaining that gravity which is the very essence of those forms of humour in which he was constantly indulging for his own satisfaction; the mask of gravity was such a good fit that the short-sighted people who were around him never penetrated it. He was making fools of the people about him, never giving a thought to the possibility that they would transmit to posterity the impression which his attitude conveyed to them, which was that he was a shallow fool.

Of course, it would be as absurd to contend that Goldsmith never made a fool of himself as it would be to assume that Johnson never made a fool of himself, or that Boswell ever failed to do so. The occasions upon which he made himself ridiculous must have been numerous, but out of the many incidents which Boswell and Beattie and Cooke and the others bring forward as proofs of his stupidity there are few that will not bear to be interpreted as instances of his practice of a form of humour well known in Ireland. If his affectation of chagrin at the admiration given to the Panton Street puppets, followed by the boast, "I could do it as well myself," was not humorous, then indeed there is nothing humorous under the sun. If his object of setting the room roaring with laughter was not achieved the night when at the club he protested that the oratory of Burke was nothing—that all oratory, as a matter of fact, was only a knack—and forthwith stood upon a chair and began to stutter, all that can be said is that the famous club at Gerrard Street was more stolid than could be believed. If his strutting about the room where he and his friends were awaiting a late-comer to dinner, entreating Johnson and the rest to pay particular attention to the cut of his new peach-bloom coat, and declaring that Filby, his tailor, had told him that when any one asked him who had made the garment he was not to forget Filby's address, did not help materially to enliven the tedium of that annoying wait, all that

can be said is that Thrale, as well as Boswell, must have been of the party.

If a novelist, anxious to depict a typical humorous Irishman, were to show his hero acting as Boswell says Goldsmith acted, would not every reader acknowledge that he was true to the character of a comical Irishman? If a playwriter were to put the scene on the stage, would any one in the audience fail to see that the Goldsmith of the piece was fooling? Every one in the club—Boswell best of all—was aware of the fact that Goldsmith had the keenest admiration for Burke, and that he would be the last man in the world to decry his powers. As for the peach-bloom coat, it had been the butt of much jesting on the part of his friends; the elder of the Miss Hornecks had written him a letter of pretty "chaff" about it, all of which he took in good part. He may have bought the coat originally because he liked the tint of the velvet; but assuredly when he found that it could be made the subject of a jest he did not hesitate to jest upon it himself. How many times have we not seen in Ireland a man behave in exactly the same way under similar conditions—a boisterous young huntsman who had put on pink for the first time, and was strutting with much pride before an admiring group of servants, every one of whom had some enthusiastic remark to make about the fit of the coat, until at last the youth, pointing out the perfection of the gilt buttons, murmured: "Oh, but isn't this a great day for Ireland!"

What a pity it was that Mr. Boswell had not been present at such a scene! Can we not hear his comments upon the character of the young man who had actually been so carried away by his vanity that he was heard to express the opinion that the fortunes of his country would be materially affected by the fact of the buttons of his new coat being gilt?

(It was this same Mr. Boswell, the critic of Goldsmith's all too attractive costume, who, when going to see Pitt for the first time, put on Corsican native dress, pretending that he did so in order to interest Pitt in General Paoli.)

In reading these accounts of Goldsmith's ways and the remarks of his associates it must be noticed that some of these gentlemen had now and again an uneasy impression that there was more in the poet's stupidity than met the eye. Sir Joshua Reynolds was his closest friend, and it was the business of the painter to endeavour to get below the surface of his sitters. The general idea that prevails in the world is that he was rather successful in his attempts to reproduce, not merely their features, but their characters as well; and Sir Joshua saw enough beneath the rude exterior of the man to cause him to feel toward Goldsmith as he felt for none of his other friends. When the news of his death was brought to the painter, he laid down his brushes and spent the day in seclusion. When it is remembered that he spent every day of the week, not even excepting Sunday, in his studio, the depth of

his grief for the loss of his friend will be understood. Upon more than one occasion Reynolds asserted that Goldsmith was diverting himself by trying to make himself out to be more stupid than he really was. Malone, whose judgment was rarely at fault, whether it was exercised in the detection of fraud or in the discovery of genius, was in perfect agreement with Reynolds on this point, and was always ready to affirm that Boswell was unjust in his remarks upon Goldsmith and the conclusions to which he came in respect of his character. It is not necessary for one to have an especially vivid imagination to enable one to see what was the expression on Malone's face when he came upon the patronising passage in the *Life of Johnson* in which Boswell stated that for his part he was always glad to hear "honest Dr. Goldsmith" converse. "Puppy!" cried Johnson upon one occasion when a certain commentator had patronised a text out of all recognition. What would he have said had he heard Goldsmith patronised by Boswell?

So far as Goldsmith's actual vanity is concerned, all that can be said at this time is that had it existed in the offensive form which it assumes in some of Boswell's stories, Goldsmith would never have won the friendship of those men and women who were his friends before he had made a reputation for himself by the publication of *The Traveller*. If he had had an extravagant opinion of his own capacity as a poet, he would certainly never have suffered Johnson to

make an attempt to improve upon one of his poems; but Goldsmith not only allowed him to do so, but actually included the lines written by Johnson when he published the poem. Had he been eaten up by vanity, he would not have gone wandering down the Mall in St. James's Park while his comedy was being played for the first time before a delighted house. The really vain man was the author of *The Vanity of Human Wishes*, who bought the showiest set of garments he could find and sat in all their glory in the front row of the boxes on the night when Garrick produced his tragedy of *Irene*—Garrick whom he kept out of the Club for nine years simply because the actor had expressed a wish to become one of the original members. The really vain man was the one who made his stock story his account of his conversation with the King in the Royal Library. Every one sees this now, and every one saw it, except Boswell, when the *Life* was flung in the face of a convulsed public, for the public of the year 1791 were as little aware of the real value of the book as the author was of the true character of his hero and his hero's friend Goldsmith.

After all, there would be no better way of arriving at a just conclusion on the subject of Goldsmith's stupidity than by submitting the whole of the case to an ordinary man accustomed to the many peculiarities of Irishmen, especially in the exercise of their doubtful gift of humour. "Here is a man," we must say, "who became the most intimate friend of people of title and

the dearest friend of many men of brains. When the most exclusive Club of the day was started his place as a member was not disputed, even by the man who invented the word 'clubbable,' and knew what it meant into the bargain; when the Royal Academy of Arts was started he was invited to become one of its professors. Some of the wittiest things recorded by the most diligent recorder of witty things that the world has ever known, were uttered by him. Upon one occasion when walking among the busts of the poets in Westminster Abbey with a friend, the latter pointing around said:

"'Forsitan et nostrum nomen miscebitur istis.'

"Leaving the Abbey and walking down the Strand to Temple Bar they saw the heads of the men who had been captured and decapitated for taking part in the Rebellion of the year 1745, bleaching in the winds in accordance with the terms of the sentence for high treason.

"'Forsitan et nostrum nomen miscebitur *istis*,' murmured the man of whom we speak. Upon another occasion this same friend of his, who had a unique reputaton for speaking in the most ponderous language, even when dealing with the simplest matters, asserted that the writing of the dialogue in some recently published fables where fish were represented as conversing, was very simple. 'Not so simple at all,' said the other, 'for were you to write them, you would make every minnow talk like a whale.'

In the course of a few years, in addition to compiling histories, which remained standard educational works for more than a century, and several other books, he wrote a novel which received the highest praise from the greatest intellects in Europe, and which is still read with delight by thousands of people of all nationalities; a poem of which almost every line is quoted daily in conversation—a poem which contains metaphors that have been repeated for generations in the Senate, in the Court of Law, and in the Church; and a play which has been pronounced the truest comedy in the English language. He died at an early age, and a memorial of his genius was given a place in Westminster Abbey. The inscription was written by the most distinguished man of letters in England, and although highly eulogistic, was considered by the greatest painter in the world and the greatest orator in the world to fall short of doing justice to the subject.

"But, on the other hand, the man of whom we speak was said by a Scotchman, who himself was occasionally referred to as a cur and sometimes as an ape, and more than once as a coxcomb, to have been roused to a frenzy of envy, because some officers, passing through a square in a French town, looked admiringly at two lovely girls who were at a window, ignoring him at another window; and again because his friends spoke with favour of the dexterity of a wooden figure dressed as a soldier, and yet again (on another

authority) because one of his friends read a passage from Shakespeare, and affirmed that it was magnificent. Now, would you say," we should ask the authority to whom we are supposed to be stating a case—"would you say that this man was in earnest when, in the first of the instances quoted, he walked up and down the room in the French hotel asserting 'that although the young ladies, of whom he was extremely fond, might have their admirers, there were places where he, too, was given admiration'? Would you say that he showed ill-temper or wit when, in the second instance, he declared with warmth that he could toss a halbert quite as well as any wooden figure? Would you say that——"

But we should not get any further than this in stating our case to a man acquainted with the Irish and their humour: he would think that we were taking a leaf out of the book of Irish humour, and endeavouring to fool him by asking him to pronounce a grave opinion upon the obvious; he would not stay to give us a chance of asking him whether he thought that the temptation of making "Noll" rhyme with "Poll," was not too great to be resisted by the greatest farceur of his time, in the presence of a humorous colleague called Oliver; and whether an impecunious but witty Irishman begged his greatest friend not to give him the nickname of Goldy, because his dignity was hurt thereby, or simply because it was tantalising

for one to be called "Goldy," whose connection with gold was usually so transitory.

If people will only read the stories told of poor Goldsmith's vanity, and envy, and coxcombry, with a handbook of Irish humour beside them, the conclusion to which they will come must, we think, be that Goldsmith was an Irishman, and that, on the whole, he made very good fun of Boswell, who was a Scotsman, but that in the long run Boswell got very much the better of him. Scotsmen usually laugh last.

THE BEST COMEDY OF THE CENTURY

HE occupied one room in the farmhouse—the guest-chamber it had probably been called when the farm was young. It was a pretty spacious apartment up one pair of stairs and to the right of the landing, and from its window there was a pleasing prospect of a paddock with wheat-fields beyond; there was a drop in the landscape in the direction of Hendon, and here was a little wood. The farmer's name was Selby, a married man with a son of sixteen, and younger children, and the farmhouse was the nearest building to the sixth milestone on the Edgware Road in the year 1771.

He was invariably alluded to as "The Gentleman," and the name did very well for him, situated as he was in the country; in the town and among his acquaintances it would serve badly as a means of identification. He was never referred to as "The Gentleman" of his circle. In his room in the farmhouse there was his bed and table—a large table littered with books; it took two chaises to carry his books hither from his rooms in the Temple. Here he sat and wrote the greater part of the day, and when

he was very busy he would scarcely be able to touch the meals which were sent up to him from the kitchen. But he was by no means that dignified type of the man of letters who would shrink from fellowship with the farmer or his family. He would frequently come down his stairs into the kitchen and stand with his back to the fire, conversing with the housewife, and offering her his sympathy when she had made him aware of the fact that the privilege of being the wife of a substantial farmer, though undoubtedly fully recognised by the world, carried many troubles in its train, not only in connection with the vicissitudes of churning, but in regard to the feeding of the calves, which no man could attend to properly, and the making of the damson and cowslip wine. He told her that the best maker of cowslip wine whom he had ever met was a Mrs. Primrose; her husband had at one time occupied the Vicarage of Wakefield—he wondered if Mrs. Selby had ever heard of her. Mrs. Selby's knowledge did not go so far, but she thought that Mrs. Primrose's recipe must be a good one indeed if it brought forth better results than her own; and the gentleman said that although he had never tasted Mrs. Selby's he would still have no hesitation in backing it for flavour, body, headiness, and all other qualities associated with the distillation of the cowslip, against the Primrose brand.

And then he would stare at the gammon in the rafter and mutter some words, burst into a roar of

laughter, and stumble upstairs to his writing, leaving the good woman to thank Heaven that she was the wife of a substantial farmer and not of an unsubstantial gentleman of letters, who could not carry on a simple conversation without having some queer thought fly across his brain for all the world like one of the swallows on the water at Hendon, only maybe a deal harder to catch. She knew that the gentleman had hurried to his paper and ink to complete the capture of that fleet-flitting thought which had come to him when he had cast his eyes toward the gammon, though how an idea worth putting on paper—after a few muttered words and a laugh—could lurk about a common piece of hog's-flesh was a mystery to her.

And then upon occasions the gentleman would take a walk abroad; the farmer's son had more than once come upon him strolling about the fields with his hands in his pockets and his head bent toward the ground, still muttering fitfully and occasionally giving a laugh that made the grey pad in the paddock look up slowly, still munching the grass. Now and again he paid a visit to his friend Mr. Hugh Boyd at the village of Kenton, and once he returned late at night from such a visit, without his shoes. He had left them in a quagmire, he said, and it was only with a struggle that he saved himself from being engulfed as well. That was the story of his shoes which young Selby remembered when he was no longer young. And there was another story which he remembered,

but it related to his slippers. The fact was that the gentleman had acquired the bad habit of reading in bed, and the table on which his candlestick stood being several feet away from his pillow, he saved himself the trouble of rising to extinguish it by flinging a slipper at it. In the morning the overturned candle was usually found side by side on the floor with an unaccountably greasy slipper. This method of discharging an important domestic duty differed considerably from Johnson's way of compassing the same end. Johnson, being extremely short-sighted, was compelled to hold the candle close to the book when reading in bed, so that he had no need to use his slipper as an extinguisher. No, but he found his pillow very handy for this purpose. When he had finished his reading he threw away the book and went asleep with his candle under his pillow.

The gentleman at the farm went about a good deal in his slippers, and with his shirt loose at the collar—the latter must have been but one of his very customary negligences, or Sir Joshua Reynolds would not have painted him thus. Doubtless the painter had for long recognised the interpretative value of this loosened collar above that of the velvet and silk raiment in which the man sometimes appeared before the wondering eyes of his friends.

But if the painter had never had an opportunity of studying the picturesqueness of his negligence, he had more than one chance of doing so within the farmhouse.

Young Selby recollected that upon at least one occasion Sir Joshua, his friend Sir William Chambers, and Dr. Johnson had paid a visit to the gentleman who lodged at the farm. He remembered that for that reception of so distinguished a company the farmhouse parlour had been opened and tea provided. There must have been a good deal of pleasant talk between the gentleman and his friends at this time, and probably young Selby heard an astonishingly loud laugh coming from the enormous visitor with the brown coat and the worsted stockings, as the gentleman endeavoured to tell his guests something of the strange scenes which he was introducing in the comedy he was writing in that room upstairs. It was then a comedy without a name, but young Selby heard that it was produced the following year in London and that it was called *She Stoops to Conquer*.

This was the second year that the gentleman had spent at the farm. The previous summer he had been engaged on another work which was certainly as comical as the comedy. It was called *Animated Nature*, and it comprised some of the most charmingly narrated errors in Natural History ever offered to the public, and the public have always been delighted to read pages of fiction if it is only called "Natural History." This is one of the best-established facts in the history of the race. After all, *Animated Nature* was true to half its title: every page was animated.

It was while he was so engaged, with one eye

on Buffon and another on his MS., that he found Farmer Selby very useful to him. Farmer Selby knew a great deal about animals — the treatment of horses under various conditions, and the way to make pigs pay; he had probably his theories respecting the profit to be derived from keeping sheep, and how to feed oxen that are kept for the plough. All such knowledge he must have placed at the disposal of the author, though the farmer was possibly too careless an observer of the simple incidents of the fields to be able to verify Buffon's statement, reproduced in *Animated Nature*, to the effect that cows shed their horns every two years; he was probably also too deficient in the spirit in which a poet sets about the work of compilation to be able to assent to the belief that a great future was in store for the zebra when it should become tame and perform the ordinary duties of a horse. But if the author was somewhat discouraged in his speculations now and again by Farmer Selby, he did not allow his fancy as a naturalist to be wholly repressed. He had heard a story of an ostrich being ridden horsewise in some regions, and of long journeys being accomplished in this way in incredibly short spaces of time, and forthwith his imagination enabled him to see the day when this bird would become as amenable to discipline as the barn-door fowl, though discharging the tasks of a horse, carrying its rider across England with the speed of a racer!

It was while he was engaged on this pleasant work of fancy and imagination that Mr. Boswell paid him a visit, bringing with him as a witness Mr. Mickle, the translator of the Lusiad. "The Gentleman" had gone away for the day, Mrs. Selby explained; but she did not know Mr. Boswell. She could not prevent him from satisfying his curiosity in respect of Dr. Goldsmith. He went upstairs to his room, and he was fully satisfied. He found the walls all scrawled over with outline drawings of quite a number of animals. Having thus satisfied himself that the author of *Animated Nature* was working in a thoroughly conscientious manner he came away. He records the incident himself, but he does not say whether or not he was able to recognise any of the animals from their pictures.

But now it was a professed and not an unconscious comedy that occupied Dr. Goldsmith. Whatever disappointment he may have felt at the indifferent success of the first performance of *The Good-Natured Man* — and he undoubtedly felt some — had been amply redeemed by the money which accrued to him from the "author's rights" and the sale of the play; and he had only awaited a little encouragement from the managers to enable him to begin another comedy. But the managers were not encouraging, and he was found by his friends one day to be full of a scheme for the building of a new theatre for the production of new plays, in order that the existing managers

might not be able to carry on their tyranny any longer. Such a scheme has been revived every decade since Goldsmith's time, but never with the least success. Johnson, whose sound sense was rarely at fault, laughed at the poet's project for bringing down the mighty from their seats, upon which Goldsmith cried : " Ay, sir, this matter may be nothing to you who can now shelter yourself behind the corner of your pension," and he doubtless went on to describe the condition of the victims of the tyranny of which he complained ; but it is questionable if his doing so effected more than to turn Johnson's laughter into another and a wider channel.

But Goldsmith spoke feelingly. He was certainly one of the ablest writers of the day, but no pension was ever offered to him, though on every hand bounties were freely bestowed on the most indifferent and least deserving of authors—men whose names were forgotten before the end of the century, and during the lifetime of the men themselves remembered only by the pay clerk to the almoner.

Of course, the scheme for bringing the managers to their senses never reached a point of serious consideration ; and forthwith Goldsmith began to illustrate, for the benefit of posterity, the depths to which the stupidity of the manager of a play-house can occasionally fall. The public have always had abundant proofs of the managers' stupidity afforded them in the form of the plays which they produce ;

but the history of the production of the most brilliant comedy of the eighteenth century is practically unique; for it is the history of the stupidity of a manager doing his best to bring about the failure of a play which he was producing at his own theatre. He had predicted the failure of the piece, and it must strike most people that the manager of a theatre who produces for a failure will be as successful in compassing his end as a jockey who rides for a fall. Colman believed that he was in the fortunate position of those prophets who had the realisation of their predictions in their own hands. He was mistaken in this particular case. Although he was justified on general principles in assuming his possession of this power, yet he had made no allowance for the freaks of genius. He was frustrated in his amiable designs by this incalculable force—this power which he had treated as a *quantité négligeable*. A man who has been accustomed all his life to count only on simple ability in the people about him, is, on suddenly being brought face to face with genius, like an astronomer who makes out his tables of a new object on the assumption that it is a fixed star, when all the time it is a comet, upsetting by its erratic course all his calculations, and demanding to be reckoned with from a standpoint that applies to itself alone.

The stars of Colman's theatrical firmament were such as might safely be counted on; but Goldsmith's genius was not of this order. The manager's stupidity

lay in his blunt refusal to recognise a work of genius when it was brought to him by a man of genius.

It has been said that the central idea of the plot of *She Stoops to Conquer* was suggested by an incident that came under Goldsmith's notice before he left Ireland. However this may be, it cannot be denied that the playing of the practical joke of Tony Lumpkin upon the two travellers is "very Irish." It would take a respectable place in the list of practical jokes of the eighteenth century played in Ireland. In that island a collector of incidents for a comedy during the past two centuries would require to travel with a fat notebook—so would the collector of incidents for a tragedy. Goldsmith's task may not have been to invent the central idea, but to accomplish the much more difficult duty of making that incident seem plausible, surrounding it with convincing scenery and working it out by the aid of the only characters by which it could be worked out with a semblance of being natural. This was a task which genius only could fulfil. The room whose walls bore ample testimony to its occupant's sense of the comedy of a writer's life, witnessed the supreme achievement in the "animated nature" of *She Stoops to Conquer*. It contains the two chief essentials to a true comedy—animation and nature.

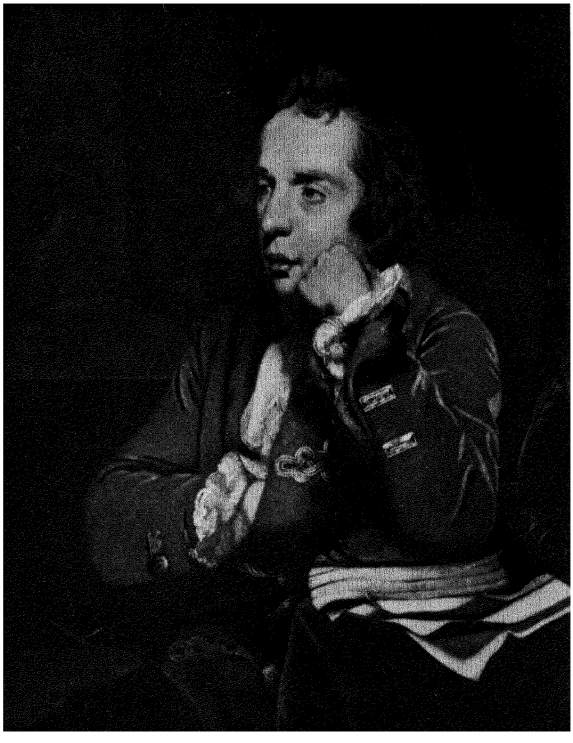
It is certain that the play was constructed and written by Goldsmith without an adviser. He was

possibly shrewd enough to know that if he were to take counsel with any of his friends—Garrick, Johnson, Reynolds, or Colman—he would not be able to write the play which he had a mind to write. The artificial comedy had a vogue that year, and though it may have been laughed at in private by people of judgment, yet few of those within the literary circle of which Johnson was the acknowledged centre, would have had the courage to advise a poet writing a piece in hopes of making some money, to start upon a plot as farcical as Nature herself. At that period of elegance in art everything that was natural was pronounced vulgar. Shakespeare himself had to be made artificial before he could be played by Garrick. Goldsmith must have known that his play would be called vulgar, and that its chances of being accepted and produced by either of the managers in London would be doubtful; but, all the same, he wrote the piece in accordance with his own personal views, and many a time during the next two years he must have felt that he was a fool for doing so.

However this may be, the play was finished some time in the summer of 1771; and on September 7th the author was back at his rooms in the Temple and writing to his friend Bennet Langton, whom he had promised to visit at his place in Lincolnshire. "I have been almost wholly in the country at a farmer's house, quite alone, trying to write a comedy. It is now finished, but when or how it will be acted, or whether

it will be acted at all, are questions I cannot resolve," he told Langton.

The misgivings which he had at this time were well founded. He considered that the fact of his having obtained from Colman a promise to read any play that he might write constituted an obligation on his part to submit this piece to Colman rather than to Garrick. He accordingly placed it in Colman's hands; but it is impossible to say if the work of elaborate revision which Goldsmith began in the spring of 1772 was due to the comments made by this manager on the first draft or to the author's reconsideration of his work as a whole. But the amended version was certainly in Colman's hands in the summer of this year (1772). The likelihood is that Colman would have refused point-blank to have anything to do with the comedy after he had read the first draft had it not been that just at this time Goldsmith's reputation was increased to a remarkable extent by the publication of his Histories. It would be difficult to believe how this could be, but, as usual, we are indebted to Mr. Boswell for what information we have on this point. Boswell had been for some time out of London, and on returning he expressed his amazement at the celebrity which Goldsmith had attained. "Sir," he cried to Johnson, "Goldsmith has acquired more fame than all the officers last war who were not generals!" "Why, sir," said Johnson, "you will find ten thousand fit to do what they did



From a mezzotint engraving by G. Marchi, after a painting by Sir Joshua Reynolds, P.R.A.

GEORGE COLMAN.

p. 206.

before you find one who does what Goldsmith has done "—a bit of dialogue that reminds one of the reply of the avaricious *prima donna* when the Emperor refused to accede to her terms on the plea that were he to pay her her price she would be receiving more than any of his marshals. "Eh bien, mon sire. Let your marshals sing to you."

At any rate, Colman got the play—and kept it. He would give the author no straightforward opinion as to its prospects in his hands. He refused to say when he would produce it—nay, he declined to promise that he would produce it at all. Goldsmith was thus left in torment for month after month, and the effect of the treatment that he received was to bring on an illness, and the effect of his illness was to sink him to a depth of despondency that even Goldsmith had never before sounded. The story told by Cooke of his coming upon the unhappy man in a coffee-house, and of the latter's attempt to give him some of the details of the plot of the comedy, speaks for itself. "I shook my head," wrote Cooke, "and said that I was afraid the audience, under their then sentimental impressions, would think it too broad and farcical for comedy." This was poor comfort for the author; but after a pause he shook the man by the hand, saying piteously: "I am much obliged to you, my dear friend, for the candour of your opinion, but it is all I can do; for alas! I find that my genius, if ever I had any, has of late totally deserted me."

This exclamation is the most piteous that ever came from a man of genius; and there can be no doubt of the sincerity of its utterance, for it was during these miserable months that he began a new novel, but found himself unable to get further than a few chapters. And all this time, when, in order to recover his health, he should have had no worries of a lesser nature, he was being harassed by the trivial cares of a poor, generous man's life—those mosquito vexations which, accumulating, become more intolerable than a great calamity.

He had once had great hopes of good resulting from Colman's taking up the management of Covent Garden, and had written congratulations to him within the first week of his entering into possession of the theatre. A very different letter he had now to write to the same man. Colman had endeavoured to evade the responsibility of giving him a direct answer about the play. He clearly meant that the onus of refusing it should lie at the door of some one else.

"Dear Sir," wrote the author in January, 1773, "I entreat you'll release me from that state of suspense in which I have been kept for a long time. Whatever objections you have made or shall make to my play I will endeavour to remove and not argue about them. To bring in any new judges either of its merits or faults I can never submit to. Upon a former occasion when my other play was before Mr. Garrick

he offered to bring me before Mr. Whitehead's tribunal, but I refused the proposal with indignation. I hope I shall not experience as hard treatment from you as from him. . . . For God's sake take the play and let us make the best of it, and let me have the same measure at least which you have given as bad plays as mine."

Upon receiving this letter, Colman at once returned to him the manuscript of the play, and on the author's unfolding it he found that on the back of almost every page, on the blank space reserved for the prompter's hieroglyphs, some sneering criticism was scrawled. To emphasise this insult Colman had enclosed a letter to the effect that if the author was still unconvinced that the piece would be a failure, he, Colman, would produce it.

Immediately on receipt of this contemptible effort at contempt Goldsmith packed up the play and sent it to Garrick at Drury Lane. That same evening, however, he met Johnson and told him what he had done; and Johnson, whose judgment on the practical side of authorship was rarely at fault, assured him that he had done wrong and that he must get the manuscript back without delay, and submit to Colman's sneers for the sake of having the comedy produced. Upon Johnson's promising to visit Colman, and to urge upon him the claims of Goldsmith to his consideration, the distracted author wrote to Drury Lane:

"Upon more mature deliberation and the advice of a sensible friend, I begin to think it indelicate in me to throw upon you the odium of confirming Mr. Colman's sentence. I therefore request that you will send my play by my servant back; for having been assured of having it acted at the other house, though I confess yours in every respect more to my wish, yet it would be folly in me to forgo an advantage which lies in my power of appealing from Mr. Colman's opinion to the judgment of the town."

Goldsmith got back the play, and Johnson explained to him, as he did some years later to Reynolds, that the solicitations which he had made to Colman to put it in rehearsal without delay amounted almost to force. At any rate, the play was announced and the parts distributed to the excellent company which Colman controlled. It was soon proved that he controlled some members of this company only too well. The spirit in which he set about the discharge of his duties as a manager was apparent to every one during the earliest rehearsals. Johnson, writing to an American correspondent, mentioned that Colman made no secret of his belief that the play would be a failure. Far from it. He seems to have taken the most extraordinary trouble to spread his belief far and wide; and when a manager adopts such a course, what chance, one may ask, has the play? What chance, the players could not but ask, have the players?

This was possibly the only occasion in the history

of the English drama on which such questions could be asked. If managers have a fault at all—a question which is not yet ripe for discussion—it has never been in the direction of depreciating a play which they are about to produce—that is, of course, outside the author's immediate circle. It is only when the play has failed that they sometimes allow that it was a bad one, and incapable of being saved even by the fine acting of the company and the sumptuous mounting.

But Colman controlled his company all too well, and after a day or two it was announced that the leading lady, the accomplished Mrs. Abington, had retired from the part of Miss Hardcastle; that Smith, known as Gentleman Smith, had refused to play Young Marlow; and that Woodward, the most popular comedian in the company, had thrown up the part of Tony Lumpkin.

Here, in one day, it seemed that Colman had achieved his aims, and the piece would have to be withdrawn by the author. This was undoubtedly the managerial view of the situation which had been precipitated by the manager, and it was shared by those of the author's friends who understood his character as indifferently as did Colman. They must all have been somewhat amazed when the author quietly accepted the situation and affirmed that he would rather that his play were damned by bad players than merely saved by good acting. One of

the company who had the sense to perceive the merits of the piece, Shuter, the comedian, who was cast for the part of old Hardcastle, advised Goldsmith to give Lewes, the harlequin, the part of Young Marlow; Quick, a great favourite with the public, was to act Tony Lumpkin; and, after a considerable amount of wrangling, Mrs. Bulkley, lately Miss Wilford, who had been the Miss Richland of *The Good-Natured Man*, accepted the part which the capricious Mrs. Abington resigned.

Another start was made with the rehearsals of the piece, and further efforts were made by Colman to bring about the catastrophe which he had predicted. He refused to let a single scene be painted for the production, or to supply a single new dress; his ground being that the money spent in this way would be thrown away, for the audience would never allow the piece to proceed beyond the second act.

But happily Dr. Johnson had his reputation as a prophet at stake as well as Colman, and he was singularly well equipped by Nature for enforcing his views on any subject. He could not see anything of what was going on upon the stage; but his laugh at the succession of humorous things spoken by the company must have had an inspiring effect upon every one, except Colman. Johnson's laugh was the strongest expression of appreciation of humour of which the century has a record. It was epic. To say that John-

son's laugh at the rehearsals of *She Stoops to Conquer* saved the piece would perhaps be going too far. But can any one question its value as a counteracting agent to Colman's depressing influence on the stage? Johnson was the only man in England who could make Colman (and every one else) tremble, and his laugh had the same effect upon the building in which it was delivered. It was the Sirocco against a wet blanket. When one thinks of the feeling of awe which was inspired by the name of Dr. Johnson, not only during the last forty years of the eighteenth century, but well into the nineteenth, one begins to appreciate the value of his vehement expression of satisfaction upon the people on the stage. Goldsmith dedicated his play to Johnson, and assuredly the compliment was well earned. Johnson it was who compelled Colman to produce the piece, and Johnson it was who encouraged the company to do their best for it, in spite of the fact that they were all aware that their doing their best for it would be resented by their manager.

Reynolds also, another valuable friend to the author, sacrificed several of his busiest hours in order to attend the rehearsals. His sister's sacrifices to the same end were perhaps not quite so impressive, nor were those made by that ingenious "country gentleman," Mr. Cradock, referred to by Walpole. Miss Horneck, his beautiful "Jessamy Bride," and her sister, lately married to Mr. Bunbury, bore testimony to the

strength of their friendship for the poet, by accompanying him daily to the theatre.

But, after all, these good friends had not many opportunities of showing their regard for him in the same way; for the play must have had singularly few rehearsals. Scarcely a month elapsed between the date of Colman's receiving the manuscript on its being returned by Garrick and the production of the piece. It is doubtful if more than ten rehearsals took place after the parts were recast. If the manager kept the author in suspense for eighteen months respecting the fate of his play, he endeavoured to make up for his dilatoriness now. It was announced for Monday, March 15th, and, according to Northcote, it was only on the morning of that day that the vexed question of what the title should be was settled. For some time the author and his friends had been talking the matter over. "We are all in labour for a name to Goldy's play," wrote Johnson. *The Mistakes of a Night*, *The Old House a New Inn*, and *The Belle's Stratagem* were suggested in turn. It was Goldsmith himself who gave it the title under which it was produced.

On the afternoon of this day, March 15th, the author was the guest at a dinner-party organised in his honour. It is easy to picture this particular function. The truth was that Colman's behaviour had broken the spirit not only of the author, but of the majority of his friends as well. They would all make an effort

to cheer up poor Goldsmith; but every one knows how cheerless a function is one that is organised with such charitable intentions. It is not necessary that one should have been in a court of law watching the face of the prisoner in the dock when the jury have retired to consider their verdict in order to appreciate the feelings of Goldsmith when his friends made their attempt to cheer him up. The last straw added on to the cheerlessness of the banquet was surely to be found in the accident that every one wore black! The King of Sardinia had died a short time before, and the Court had ordered mourning to be worn for some weeks for this potentate. Johnson was very nearly outraging propriety by appearing in coloured raiment, but George Steevens, who called for him to go to the dinner, was fortunately in time to prevent such a breach of etiquette. "I would not for ten pounds have seemed so retrograde to any general observance," cried Johnson in offering his thanks to his benefactor. Happily the proprieties were saved; but what must have been the effect of the appearance of these gentlemen in black upon the person whom they meant to cheer up!

Reynolds told his pupil, Northcote, what effect these resources of gaiety had upon Goldsmith. His mouth became so parched that he could neither eat nor drink, nor could he so much as speak in acknowledgment of the well-meant act of his friends. When the party after this entertainment set out for the

theatre they must have suggested, all being in black, a more sombre procession than one is accustomed to imagine when conjuring up a picture of an eighteenth-century theatre party.

And Goldsmith was missing!

Unfortunately Boswell was not present, or we should not be left in doubt as to how it happened that no one thought of taking charge of Goldsmith. But no one seemed to think of him, and so his disappearance was never noticed. His friends arrived at the theatre and found their places, Johnson in the front row of the boxes; and the curtain was rung up, and Goldsmith was forgotten under the influence of that comedy which constitutes his greatest claim to be remembered by theatre-goers of to-day.

He was found by an acquaintance a couple of hours later wandering in the Mall of St. James's Park, and was only persuaded to go to the theatre by its being represented to him that his services might be required should it be found necessary to alter something at the last moment.

Now, among the members of that distinguished audience there was a man named Cumberland. He was the author of *The West Indian* and several other plays, and he was regarded as one of the leaders of the sentimental school, the demise of which was satirised in the prologue to this very play which was being performed. Cumberland was a man who could never see a particle of good in anything that was

written by another. It was a standing entertainment with Garrick to "draw him on" by suggesting that some one had written a good scene in a play, or was about to produce an interesting book. In a moment Cumberland was up, protesting against the assumption that the play or the book could be worth anything. So wide a reputation had he for decrying every other author that when Sheridan produced *The Critic; or, the Tragedy Rehearsed*, his portrait was immediately recognised in Sir Fretful Plagiary.

What must have been the feelings of this man when, from the first, the play, which he had come to wreck, was received by the whole house with uproarious applause? Well, we don't know what he felt like, but we know what he looked like. One of the newspapers described him as "looking glum," and another contained a rhymed epigram describing him as weeping. Goldsmith entered the theatre by the stage door at the beginning of the fifth act, where Tony Lumpkin and his mother appear close to their own house, and the former pretends that the chaise has broken down on Crackscull Common. He had no sooner got into the "wings" than he heard a hiss. "What's that, sir?" he whispered to Colman, who was beside him. "Psha, sir! what signifies a squib when we have been sitting on a barrel of gunpowder all night?" was the reply.* The story is well known; and its accuracy has never been im-

* See p. 31.

peached. And the next day it was well known that that solitary hiss came from Cumberland, the opinion that it was due to the malevolence of Macpherson, whose pretensions to the discovery of *Ossian* were exposed by Johnson, being discredited.

But the effect of Colman's brutality and falsehood into the bargain had not a chance of lasting long. The hiss was received with cries of " Turn him out ! " and, with an addition to the tumultuous applause of all the house, Goldsmith must have been made aware in another instant of the fact that he had written the best comedy of the day and that Colman had lied to him. From the first there had been no question of sitting on a barrel of gunpowder. Such applause could never greet the last act of a play the first four acts of which had been doubtful. He must have felt that at last he had conquered—that he had by one more achievement proved to his own satisfaction—and he was hard to satisfy—that those friends of his who had attributed genius to him had not been mistaken ; that those who, like Johnson and Percy and Reynolds, had believed in him before he had written the work that made him famous, had not been misled.

The next day all London was talking of *She Stoops to Conquer* and of Colman. Horace Walpole, who detested Goldsmith, and who found when he went to see the play that it was deplorably vulgar, mentioned in a letter which he wrote to Lady Ossory on the morning after the production that it had " succeeded

prodigiously," and the newspapers were full of epigrams at the expense of the manager. If Colman had had the sense to keep to himself his forebodings of the failure of the piece, he would not have left himself open to these attacks; but, as has been said, he took as much pains to decry the coming production as he usually did to "puff" other pieces. It would seem that every one had for several days been talking about nothing else save the coming failure of Dr. Goldsmith's comedy. Only on this assumption can one now understand the poignancy of the "squibs"—some of them partook largely of the character of his own barrel of gunpowder—levelled against Colman. He must have been quite amazed at the clamour that arose against him; it became too much for his delicate skin, and he fled to Bath to get out of the way of the scurrilous humourists who were making him a target for their pop-guns. But even at Bath he failed to find a refuge. Writing to Mrs. Thrale, Johnson said: "Colman is so distressed with abuse that he has solicited Goldsmith to take him off the rack of the newspapers."

It was characteristic of Goldsmith that he should do all that was asked of him and that he should make no attempt, either in public or in private, to exult in his triumph over the manager. The only reference which he made to his sufferings while Colman was keeping him on the rack was in a letter which he wrote to his friend Cradock, who had written an epilogue

for the play, to explain how it was that this epilogue was not used at the first representation. After saying simply, "The play has met with a success beyond your expectation or mine," he makes his explanation, and concludes thus: "Such is the history of my stage adventure, and which I have at last done with. I cannot help saying that I am very sick of the stage, and though I believe I shall get three tolerable benefits, yet I shall on the whole be a loser, even in a pecuniary light; my ease and comfort I certainly lost while it was in agitation."

Goldsmith showed that he bore no grudge against Colman; but the English stage should bear him a grudge for his treatment of one of the few authors of real genius who have contributed to it for the benefit of posterity. If *She Stoops to Conquer* had been produced when it first came into the manager's hands, Goldsmith would certainly not have written the words just quoted. What would have been the result of his accepting the encouragement of its production it is, of course, impossible to tell; but it is not going too far to assume that the genius which gave the world *The Good-Natured Man* and *She Stoops to Conquer* would have been equal to the task of writing a third comedy equal in merit to either of these. Yes, posterity owes Colman a grudge.

THE JESSAMY BRIDE

A PERSONAL NOTE

FOR some time after the publication of my novel *The Jessamy Bride* my time was fully occupied by replying to correspondents—strangers to me—who were good enough to take an interest in Mary Horneck, the younger of the two charming sisters with whom Goldsmith associated for several years of his life on terms of the warmest affection. The majority of these communications were of a very interesting character. Only one correspondent told me I should not have allowed Oliver Goldsmith to die so young, though two expressed the opinion that I should have made Goldsmith marry Mary Horneck; nearly all the remaining communications which were addressed to me contained inquiries as to the origin of the sobriquet applied to Mary Horneck in Goldsmith's epistle. To each and to all such inquiries I have, alas! been compelled to return the humiliating reply that I have not yet succeeded in finding out what was the origin of the family joke which made Goldsmith's allusions to "The Jessamy Bride" and "Little Comedy" intelligible to the "Devonshire Crew" of Hornecks

and Reynoldses. I have searched volume after volume in the hope of having even the smallest ray of light thrown upon this matter, but I have met with no success. I began to feel, as every post brought me a sympathetic inquiry as to the origin of the pet name, that I should take the bold step of confessing my ignorance to the one gentleman who, I was confident, could enlighten it. "If Dr. Brewer does not know why Mary Horneck was called 'The Jessamy Bride,' no one alive can know it," was what I said to myself. Before I could write to Dr. Brewer the melancholy news came of his death; and very shortly afterwards I got a letter from his daughter, Mrs. Brewer Hayman, in which she mentioned that her lamented father had been greatly interested in my story, and asked if I could tell her what was the meaning of the phrase.

It does certainly seem extraordinary that no biographer of Goldsmith, of Reynolds, or of Burke, should have thought it worth while writing a letter to the "Jessamy Bride" herself to ask her why she was so called by Goldsmith. The biographers of Goldsmith and the editors of Boswell seem to have had no hesitation in stating that Mary Horneck was the "Jessamy Bride," and that her elder sister was "Little Comedy"; but they do not appear to have taken a wider view of their duties than was comprised in this bare statement. The gossipy Northcote was surely in the secret, and he might have revealed the truth without detracting from the interest of the

many inaccuracies in his volume. Northcote had an opportunity of seeing daily the portrait of Mary which Sir Joshua painted, and which hung in his studio until the day of his death, when it passed into the possession of the original, who had become Mrs. Gwyn, having married Colonel, afterwards General, Gwyn.

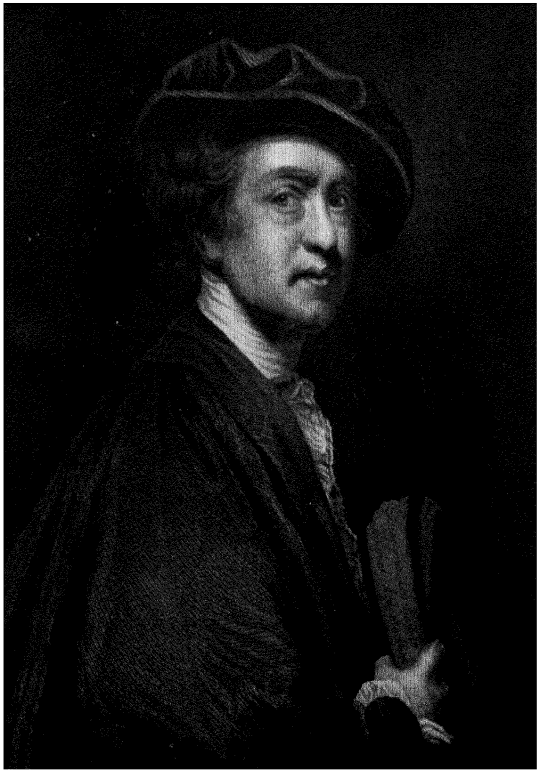
But although up to the present I have not obtained even as much evidence as would be termed a clue by the sanguine officers of Scotland Yard, as to the origin of the sobriquet, I am not without hope that some day one of my sympathetic correspondents will be able to clear up the matter for me. I am strengthened in this hope by the fact that among those who were kind enough to write to me, was a lady who can claim relationship to Mary Horneck, and who did not hesitate to send to me a bundle of letters, written in the early part of the century by the " Jessamy Bride " herself, with permission to copy and print any portion of the correspondence that I might consider of interest. Of this privilege I gladly avail myself, feeling sure that the interest which undoubtedly attaches to many portions of the letters will exculpate me for the intrusion of a personal note into these papers.

The grandfather of my correspondent (Mrs. Corballis, of Ratrath, co. Meath, Ireland) was first cousin to the Hornecks. He was the Rev. George Mangles, chaplain to George III when Mrs. Gwyn (Mary Horneck) was Woman of the Bedchamber to the Queen. As General Gwyn was Equerry to the King

it can easily be understood that the two families should be on terms of the most intimate friendship. My correspondent mentions that her mother, who only died thirteen years ago, was almost every year a visitor at the house of Mrs. Gwyn, at Kew, and said that she retained her beauty up to the very last. Confirmation of this statement is to be found in a passage in the "Jerningham Letters." Lady Bedingfeld's Journal contains the following entry opposite the date "September 19th, 1833":

"When the Queen returned to the drawing-room we found several ladies there. I observed a very old lady with striking remains of beauty, and whose features seemed very familiar to me. I felt to know her features by heart, and at last I heard her name, Mrs. Gwyn, the widow of a General, and near ninety! I had never seen her before, but when I was a girl my uncle the Poet, gave me a portrait of her, copied from Sir Jos. Reynolds, small size in a Turkish costume and attitude. This picture is still at Cossey, and of course must be very like her since it led me to find her out."

The picture referred to must certainly have been "very like" the original, for it was painted by Sir Joshua Reynolds in 1772, sixty-one years before. The engraving of it cannot but make one feel how exquisite must have been the charm of Goldsmith's young friend, who survived him by sixty-six years; for Mrs. Gywn did not die until 1840.



From an engraving by J. Cochran, after the painting by himself.

SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS.

p. 424.

Very pathetic indeed it is to look at the sweet girlish face, which appears in this portrait and also in that of the two sisters done in chalk by the same master-hand, and then to read some of the passages in the letters in which the writer refers to her old age and feebleness. Happily, with Lady Bedingfeld's diary before us, our imagination is not largely drawn on for a picture of the " Jessamy Bride " broken down by age and infirmity. The woman who can be easily recognised by a stranger at seventy-nine by her likeness to a portrait painted at the age of eighteen, would make Ninon de l'Enclos envious.

The letters are written to Mrs. Mangles, the widow of the Chaplain to George III, and the majority touch upon private matters with sprightliness, and occasionally a delicate humour, such as Goldsmith would certainly have appreciated. We seem to hear, while reading these passages, faint echoes of the girlish laughter which must have rung through that room in the inn at Calais, when Goldsmith paced up and down in a mock fury because two officers passing the window looked more eagerly at the girls than at him.

It is obvious, however, that the Queen's Woman of the Bedchamber would write occasionally to her friend on some topic of public interest; consequently we find, in the course of the correspondence, many passages which throw a flood of light upon the incidents of the day. In a letter dated April 10th, 1818,

Mrs. Gwyn describes with great sprightliness the wedding of the Princess Elizabeth, the third daughter of George III, with Prince Hesse-Hombourgh, which took place three days before :

" I delayed to write till after the marriage to tell you about it, as you seemed to wish it. We were all appointed at seven o'clock in the evening, when I went as smart as I could make myself. I wore the lavender sattin robe, the same you saw me wear at Court, as the shape was the same, and it *saved buying*, trimmed with silver, a new white sattin petticoat, with a white net and silver over it, no hoop, but a Court head dress, and lappets down. The Company consisting of the great officers of state, and ambassadors and their wives, and the different households were the Company.

" At 8 all were assembled when the Royal family in procession according to their rank, went into the great drawing-room in the Queen's house. The Duke of York led the Queen, the Prince Regent not being quite recovered of his gout, and it is said the remembrance of his poor daughter's marriage was too painful to him to undertake it. Before the state canopy was set a fine communion table, red velvet and gold, all the gold plate belonging to that service arranged behind it, and 3 Bishops and other clergymen standing behind the table, it looked very magnificent. Then came the *Hero*, the Prince Hesse Hombourgh, he went up to the table and stood there,

I believe 10 minutes alone, he looked well a manly unembarassed figure, then walked in the Bride glittering with silver and diamonds, and really looked very handsome, and her behaviour and manner was as well as possible, grace and quiet, when she knelt she wept, and then he approached nearer her in case her emotion would require his care, which happily was not the case. The Duke of York gave her away, and behaved very *bad.* The Prince Hombourgh thought when he had said *I will* very loud and distinct, all was done, but the Arch Bishop desired him to repeat after him, which he was therefore obliged to do. He cannot speak English and made such works of it, it was then the Duke of York laughed so, he was obliged to stuff his handkerchief in his mouth to conceal it. He promised to *lof her.* When all was over he saluted his bride on each side the face, and then her hand, with a good-natured frank manner, then led her to the Queen, whose hand only he kissed, the rest of the Royal family he embraced after his own fashion, and he led her off with a very good air, and did not seem to trouble his head about his *English performance.*"

The Princess Elizabeth—the shy young bride who was so overcome with emotion—had scarcely more than passed her forty-ninth year when she was borne to the altar, and the hero of the hour was, we learn from other sources than Mrs. Gwyn's letters, most unheroically sick when driving away in a close carriage with his bride.

A Georgian Pageant

The Prince Regent's daughter, the Princess Charlotte, had died the previous year, hence the marrying panic which seized all the other members of the Royal Family, lest the dynasty should become extinct. It is pleasing to reflect that such gloomy apprehensions have since been amply averted.

Regarding the death of the Princess Charlotte Mrs. Gwyn writes :

" . . . While I was at Oatlands the Prince Leopold came to see the Duchess and staid there 3 hours, no one but the Duchess saw him—she told me he is more composed in his manners now when seen by people in general but with her alone his grief seems the same and he is gratified by being allowed to vent it to one who feels for him and knows how to soothe his mind. I can not doubt the Princess's life and his child's were thrown away, by mismanagement—she was so bled and starved she had no strength left—her own fortitude and energy supported her till nature could no more. I could tell you much on the subject but it would take up too much in a letter and besides *it is over.* Dr. Crofts thought he was doing for the best no doubt—It comes to what *I* always say of them—they can't do much and are very often wrong in their opinions as you can vouch. . . ."

In another letter Mrs. Gywn's adopted daughter was her amanuensis. It contains many paragraphs of interest, especially to present-day readers. The girl writes :

" Mamma was of course summoned to attend the Duke of Cambridge's Wedding, but she was not in the room when the Ceremony was performed as before, on account of the Queen having been ill. Mamma admires the Duchess of Cambridge very much : though she is not exactly handsome, she is very pleasing, and a pretty figure, but I understand she must have a new stay maker to set her up etc. The Duke of Kent and his bride are now expected. The Duke of Clarence it is expected will be married shortly afterwards. We hear the Duchess of Kent is a little woman with a handsome face, and the Duchess of Clarence uncommonly ugly. We went to Windsor about a month ago to see Princess Sophia as the Queen was not there, and Princess Sophia has a small party every night. We were there three days, and Mamma went to the party every evening, and indeed it was very very dull for her as they play one pool of Commerce, and then they go to a game called Snip, Snap, Snorum, and which Mamma could not play at well without a great deal of trouble to herself, therefore she was obliged to look on for perhaps an hour and half which you may imagine was terrible for her not hearing a word. I was much pleased in one respect while I was there by seeing Dear Prince Leopold whom I had never seen before, and who must be to every body an object of so much interest. He looked to me the picture of grief and melancholy, but those who have seen him repeatedly

since his misfortune say he improves every time they see him. Mrs. C. . . . went one day to see Claremont and was very much pleased. All remains as Princess Charlotte left it, but nobody sees her room in which she died but himself, even her combs and brushes are untouched, and her hat and cloak are where she laid them the day before she died. There are models of her hand and arm one in particular as it is his hand clasped in hers. I suppose you have often heard she had a very beautiful hand and arm, but I will not go on, on so melancholy a subject; yet I am sure it must interest you."

The Princess Sophia, who instituted the fascinating game referred to in this letter, was, of course, the fifth daughter of George III.

In another letter reference is made to a certain scandal, which Mrs. Gwyn contradicts most vehemently. Even nowadays this particular bit of gossip is remembered by some persons; but at the risk of depriving these pages of the piquancy which attaches to a Court scandal, I will not quote it, but conclude this Personal Note with what seems to me a most pathetic account of the dying king:

"We continue in a state of great anxiety about our dear King, whose state is distressing. Certainly no hope of recovery, and the chances of his continuance very doubtful. His death may be any day, any hour, or he may continue some *little* time longer, it depends on nature holding out against sore disease, which

afflicts him universally, and occasions great suffering, this is heartbreaking to hear! and his patience and courage and sweet and kind behaviour to all about him is most touching, so affectionate to his friends and attendants, and thankful for their attention and feeling for him. He will hold the hand of the Duchess of Gloster or S. H. Halford for an hour at a time out of tenderness, till excessive suffering ends it. He wishes to die in peace and charity with all the world, and has reconciled himself to the Duke of Sussex. He hopes his people have found him a merciful King. He says he never hurt anyone, and that, he may truly say as his first wish to *all* was good and benevolent, and ever ready to forgive."

THE AMAZING ELOPEMENT

ON a certain evening in March, 1772, the fashionable folk of Bath were as earnestly on pleasure bent as they were wont to be at this season—and every other. The Assembly Rooms were open, a performance was going on at the theatre, the Cave of Harmony was as musical as Pyrrha's Grotto, a high-class concert was taking place under the conductorship of the well-known Mr. Linley, and the Countess of Huntingdon was holding a prayer meeting. For people who took their diversions *à la carte*, there was a varied and an abundant menu. Chairs containing precious structures of feathers, lace, and jewels towering over long faces powdered and patched and painted *à la mode*, were swinging along the streets in every direction, some with a brace of gold-braided lackeys by each of the windows, but others in charge only of the burly chairmen.

Unobtrusive among the latter class of conveyance was one that a young gentleman, a tall and handsome lad, called from its rank between Pierrepont Street and the South Parade. He gave the bearers instructions to hasten to the house of Mr. Linley in the Crescent, and to inquire if Miss Linley were ready.

If she were not, he told them that they were to wait for her and carry out her directions. The fellows touched their hats and swung off with their empty chair.

The young man then went to a livery stable, and putting a few confidential inquiries to the proprietor, received a few confidential replies, accentuated by a wink or two, and a certain quick uplifting of a knuckly forefinger that had an expression of secretiveness of its own.

"Mum's the word, sir, and mum it shall be," whispered the man. "I stowed away the trunk, leaving plenty of room for the genuine luggage—lady's luggage, Mr. Sheridan. You know as well as I can tell you, sir, being young but with as shrewd knowingness of affairs in general as might be looked for in the son of Tom Sheridan, to say nought of a lady like your mother, meaning to take no liberty in the world, Mr. Dick, as they call you."

"I'm obliged to you, Denham, and I'll not forget you when this little affair is happily over. The turn by the 'Bear' on the London Road, we agreed."

"And there you'll find the chaise, sir, and as good a pair as ever left my stable, and good luck to you, sir!" said the man.

Young Mr. Sheridan then hastened to his father's house in King's Mead Street, and was met by an anxious sister in the hall.

"Good news, I hope, Dick?" she whispered.

"I have been waiting for you all the evening. She has not changed her mind, I hope."

"She is as steadfast as I am," said he. "If I could not swear that she would be steadfast, I would not undertake this business on her behalf. When I think of our father——"

"Don't think of him except as applauding your action," said the girl. "Surely every one with the least spark of generosity will applaud your action, Dick."

"I wouldn't like to say so much," said Dick, shaking his head. "Mathews has his friends. No man could know so much about whist as he does without having many friends, even though he be a contemptible scoundrel when he is not employed over a rubber."

"Who will dare to take the part of Mr. Mathews against you, Dick?" cried his sister, looking at him proudly as the parlour candles shone upon him. "I would that I could go with you as far as London, dear, but that would be impossible."

"Quite impossible; and where would be the merit in the end?" said Dick, pacing the room as he believed a man of adventure and enterprise would in the circumstances. "You may trust to me to place her in safety without the help of any one."

"I know it, Dick, I know it, dear, and I am proud of you," said she, putting her arms about his neck and kissing him. "And look you here, Dick," she added, in a more practical tone. "Look you here—

I find that I can spare another five pounds out of the last bill that came from Ireland. We shall live modestly in this house until you return to us."

He took the coins which she offered to him wrapped up in a twist of newspaper; but he showed some hesitation—she had to go through a form of forcing it upon him.

"I hope to bring it back to you unbroken," he murmured; "but in affairs of this sort it is safest to have a pound or two over, rather than under, what is barely needful. That is why I take your coins, —a loan—a sacred loan. Good-bye, I returned only to say good-bye to you, my dearest sister."

"I knew your good heart, Dick, that was why I was waiting for you. Good-bye, Dick, and God bless you."

He was putting on his cloak in the hall. He saw that the pistols were in its pockets, and then he suffered his sister to give him another kiss before he passed into the dark street.

He felt for his pistols, and with a hand on each he felt that he was indeed fairly launched upon a great adventure.

He made his way to the London road, and all the time he was wondering if the girl would really come to him in the Sedan chair which he had sent for her. To be sure she had promised to come upon this evening, but he knew enough of the great affairs of this world to be well aware of the fact that the

sincerest promise of a maid may be rendered worthless by the merest freak of Fate. Therefore, he knew that he did well to be doubtful respecting the realisation of her promise. She was the beautiful Miss Linley—every one in Bath knew her, and this being so, was it not likely that some one—some prying person—some impudent fellow like that Mathews who had been making love to her, although he had a wife of his own in Wales—might catch a glimpse of her face through the glass of the chair when passing a lamp or a link, and be sufficiently curious to follow her chair to see whither she was going?

That was a likely enough thing to happen, and if it did happen and the alarm of his flight with her were given, what chance would he have of carrying out his purpose? Why, the chaise would be followed, and even if it was not overtaken before London was reached, the resting-place of the fugitives would certainly be discovered in London, and they should be ignominiously brought back to Bath. Yes, unless Mathews were the pursuer, in which case——

Mr. Richard Brinsley Sheridan grasped more firmly the butt of the pistol in the right-hand pocket of his cloak. He felt at that moment that should Mathews overtake them, the going back to Bath would be on the part only of Mathews.

But how would it be if Mr. Linley had become apprised of his daughter's intention to fly from Bath? He knew very well that Mr. Linley had the

best of reasons for objecting to his daughter's leaving Bath. Mr. Linley's income was increased by several hundred pounds by reason of the payments made to him on account of his daughter's singing in public, and he was—very properly, considering his large family—fond of money. Before he had to provide for his family, he took good care that his family—his eldest daughter particularly—helped to provide for him.

Doubtless these eventualities were suggested to him—for young Mr. Sheridan was not without imagination—while on his way through the dark outskirts of the beautiful city to the London Road. The Bear Inn was just beyond the last of the houses. It stood at the junction of the London Road and a narrower one leading past a couple of farms. It was here that he had given instructions for the chaise to wait for him, and here he meant to wait for the young lady who had promised to accompany him to London —and further.

He found the chaise without trouble. It was under the trees not more than a hundred yards down the lane, but the chair, with Miss Linley, had not yet arrived, so he returned to the road and began to retrace his steps, hoping to meet it, yet with some doubts in his mind. Of course, he was impatient. Young gentlemen under twenty-one are usually impatient when awaiting the arrival of the ladies who have promised to run away with them. He was not, how-

ever, kept in suspense for an unconscionably long time. He met the chair which he was expecting just when he had reached the last of the lamps of Bath, and out of it stepped the muffled form of Miss Linley. The chairmen were paid with a lavish hand, and Dick Sheridan and Betsy Linley walked on to the chaise without exchanging any but a friendly greeting—there was nothing lover-like in their meeting or their greeting. The elopement was not that of a young woman with her lover; it was, we are assured, that of a young woman anxious to escape from the intolerable position of being the most popular person in the most fashionable city in England, to the peaceful retreat of a convent; and the young man who was to take charge of her was one whom she had chosen for her guardian, not for her lover. Dick Sheridan seems to have been the only young man in Bath who had never made love to Elizabeth Linley. His elder brother, Charles by name, had discharged this duty on behalf of the Sheridan family, and he was now trying to live down his disappointment at being refused, at a farmhouse a mile or two away. The burden was greater than he could bear when surrounded by his sisters in their father's house in King's Mead Street.

Elizabeth Linley was certainly the most popular young woman in Bath; she certainly was the most beautiful. The greatest painters of her day made masterpieces of her portrait, and for once, posterity



From a photo by H. Essenhigh Corke, after the painting by Thomas Gainsborough, R.A., by kind permission of the owner, Lord Sackville.

ELIZABETH LINLEY (MRS. R. B. SHERIDAN) AND HER BROTHER THOMAS LINLEY.

p. 238.

acknowledges that the fame of her beauty was well founded. So spiritual a face as hers is to be seen in no eighteenth-century picture except that of Miss Linley; one has need to go back to the early Italian painters to find such spirituality in a human face, and then one finds it combined with absolute inanity, and the face is called Divine. Reynolds painted her as Saint Cecilia drawing down angels, and blessedly unconscious of her own powers, thinking only of raising herself among angels on the wings of song. His genius was never better employed and surely never more apparent than in the achievement of this picture. Gainsborough painted her by the side of her younger brother, and one feels that if Reynolds painted a saint, Gainsborough painted a girl. It was Bishop O'Beirne, an old friend of her family and acquainted with her since her childhood, who said: "She is a link between an angel and a woman."

And this exquisite creature had a voice of so sympathetic a quality that no one could hear it unmoved. Her father had made her technique perfect. He was a musician who was something more than painstaking. He had taste of the highest order, and it is possible to believe that in the training of his eldest daughter he was wise enough to limit his instruction to the technicalities of his art, leaving her to the inspiration of her own genius in regard to the treatment of any theme which he brought before her.

At any rate her success in the sublimest of all

oratorios was far beyond anything that could be achieved by an exhibition of the finest technical qualities; and Mr. Linley soon became aware of the fact that he was the father of the most beautiful and the most highly gifted creature that ever made a father miserable.

Incidentally she made a great many other men miserable, but that was only because each of them wanted her to make him happy at the expense of the others, and this she was too kind-hearted to do. But the cause of her father's grief was something different. It was due to the fact that the girl was so sensitive that she shrank from every exhibition of herself and her ability on a public platform. It was an agony to her to hear the tumultuous applause that greeted her singing at a concert or in an oratorio. She seemed to feel—let any one look at the face which is to be seen in her portrait, and one will understand how this could be—that music was something too spiritual to be made the medium only for the entertainment of the multitude. Taking the highest imaginable view of the scope and value and meaning of music, it can be understood that this girl should shrink from such an ordeal as the concert platform offered to her every time she was announced to sing. No more frivolous and fashionable a population than that of Bath in the second half of the eighteenth century was to be found in any city in the world; and Elizabeth Linley felt that she was regarded by the

concert-goers as no more than one of the numerous agents they employed to lessen the ennui of an empty day. The music which she worshipped—the spirit with which her soul communed in secret—was, she felt, degraded by being sold to the crowd and subjected to the patronage of their applause.

Of course when she spoke to her father in this strain he sympathised with her, and bemoaned the fate that made it necessary for him to have her assistance to save her mother and brothers and sisters from starvation. And so for several years she was an obedient child, but very weary of the rôle. She sang and enchanted thousands. She did not, however, think of them; her mind dwelt daily upon the tens of thousands who regarded her (she thought) as fulfilling no nobler purpose than to divert them for half an hour between taking the waters and sitting down to faro or quadrille.

But it was not alone her distaste for the publicity of the platform that made her miserable. The fact was that she was distracted by suitors. She had, it was said, accepted the offer of an elderly gentleman named Long, the wealthy head of a county family in the neighbourhood; and Foote, with his usual vulgarity, which took the form of personality, wrote a play—a wretched thing even for Foote—in which he dealt with an imaginarily comic and a certainly sordid situation, with Miss Linley on the one side and Mr. Long on the other. Serious biographers have not hesi-

tated to accept this situation invented by the notorious *farceur*, who was no greater a respecter of persons than he was of truth, as a valuable contribution to the history of the Linley family, especially in regard to the love affair of the lovely girl by whose help they were made famous. They have never thought of the possibility of her having accepted Mr. Long in order to escape from her horror of the concert platform. They have never suggested the possibility of Mr. Long's settling a sum of money on her out of his generosity when he found out that Miss Linley did not love him.

It was not Mr. Long, however, but a man named Mathews—sometimes referred to as Captain, occasionally as Major—who was the immediate cause of her running away with young Sheridan. This man Mathews was known to be married, and to be in love with Elizabeth Linley, and yet he was allowed to be constantly in her company, pestering her with his attentions, and there was no one handy to horsewhip him. Sheridan's sister, who afterwards married Mr. Lefanu, wrote an account of this curious matter for the guidance of Thomas Moore, who was preparing his biography of her brother. She stated that Miss Linley was afraid to tell her father of Major Mathews and his impossible suit, and so she was " at length induced to consult Richard Sheridan, whose intimacy with Major Mathews, at the time, she thought might warrant his interference." And then we are told that " R. B. Sheridan sounded Mathews

on the subject and at length prevailed on him to give up the pursuit."

That is how the adoring sister of "R. B. Sheridan," who had been talking to Elizabeth Linley of him as of a knight-errant, eager to redress the wrongs of maidens in distress, wrote of her brother! He "sounded Mathews on the subject." On what subject? The subject was the pursuit of an innocent girl by a contemptible scoundrel. How does the knight-errant "sound" such a person when he sets out to redress the maiden's ill-treatment? One R. B. Sheridan, a dramatist, gives us a suggestion as to what were his ideas on this point: "Do you think that Achilles or my little Alexander the Great ever enquired where the right lay? No, sir, they drew their broadswords and left the lazy sons of peace to settle the rights of the matter." Now young Sheridan, who is reported by his sister as "sounding" Mathews, was no coward. He proved himself to be anything but afraid of Mathews, so that one must, out of justice to him, assume that the only attempt he would have made to "sound" the scoundrel at this time would be through the medium of a sound hiding.

It is at such a point as this in the biography of an interesting man that one blesses the memory—and the notebook—of the faithful Boswell. Thomas Moore was quite intimate with Richard Brinsley Sheridan, but he never thought of asking him for some information on this particular incident in his

life, the fact being that he had no definite intention of becoming his biographer. We know perfectly well how Boswell would have plied Johnson with questions on the subject, had it ever come to his ears that Johnson had undertaken to play the rôle of a knight-errant.

"Pray, sir, what did you say to Mathews when you sounded him?"

"Do you think, sir, that in any circumstances a married gentleman who is showing marked attentions to a virtuous young lady should be sounded by a young gentleman who has been entrusted with the duty of protecting the lady?"

Alas! instead of the unblushing indelicacy of Boswell, who hunted for trifles as a pig hunts for truffles, we are obliged to be content with the vagueness of a sister, whose memory, we have an uneasy feeling, was not quite so good as she thought it was.

And from the memory of this sister we have an account of the amazing elopement of Richard Sheridan with Elizabeth Linley.

When the young gentleman put her into the chaise that was waiting for them on the London road, Miss Linley had never thought of him except as a kind friend. She had accepted his services upon this occasion as she would those of a courier to conduct her to London, and thence to France, where she intended to enter a convent. The Miss Sheridans had lived in France, and had some friends at St.

Quentin, who knew of a very nice clean convent—an establishment which they could strongly recommend, and where she could find that complete seclusion which Miss Linley longed for, and their brother Dick was thought to be a very suitable companion for her on her way thither. Mrs. Lefanu (*née* Sheridan), who wrote out the whole story in after years, mentioned that her chivalrous brother was to provide a woman to act as her maid in the chaise; but as not the least reference to this chaperon is to be found in the rest of the story, we fear that it must be assumed either that her brother forgot this unimportant detail, or that the detail was unavoidably detained in Bath. What is most likely of all is that the solitary reference to this mysterious female was dovetailed, somewhat clumsily, into the narrative, at the suggestion of some Mrs. Grundy, who shook her head at the narrative of so much chivalry unsupported by a responsible chaperon. However this may be, the shadowy chaperon is never alluded to again; she may have faded away into the mists of morning and London, or she may have vanished at the first turnpike. Nothing was seen or heard of her subsequently.

The boy and the girl reached London in safety, and drove to the house of a Mr. Ewart, a relation of the Sheridans, to whom Dick offered the explanation of his unconventional visit on the very plausible grounds of his being engaged to the young lady, a great heiress, whom he was hastening to France to marry. Of

course the Ewart family were perfectly satisfied with this explanation; and another friend, who had indisputable claims to consideration, being, we are told, "the son of a respectable brandy merchant in the City," suggested that they should sail from London to Dunkirk, "in order to make pursuit more difficult." How such an end could be compassed by such means is left to the imagination of a reader. The young pair, however, jumped at the suggestion, and reached Dunkirk after an uneventful crossing.

It is at this point in the sister's account of the itinerary of this interesting enterprise that she mentions that Richard suddenly threw away the disguise of the chivalrous and disinterested protector of the young lady, and declared that he would not consent to conduct her to the convent unless she agreed to marry him immediately. Mrs. Lefanu's exact words are as follows: "After quitting Dunkirk Mr. Sheridan was more explicit with Miss Linley as to his views on accompanying her to France."

This is certainly a very lawyer-like way of condoning the conduct of a mean scoundrel; but, happily for the credit of Richard Brinsley Sheridan, it is the easiest thing in the world to discredit his sister's narrative, although she adds that he urged on the girl what would seem to a casual observer of society in general to be perfectly true—"she must be aware that after the step she had taken, she could not appear in England but as his wife." As the sequel proved this alleged

statement was quite untrue! She did appear in England, and not as his wife, and no one seemed to think anything the worse of her on account of her escapade. But to suggest that Sheridan took advantage of the trust which the innocent girl had reposed in him to compel her to marry him, a penniless minor with no profession and very little education, is scarcely consistent with an account of his high-mindedness and his sense of what was chivalrous.

And then the sister pleasantly remarks that "Miss Linley, who really preferred him greatly to any person, was not difficult to persuade, and at a village not far from Calais the marriage ceremony was performed by a priest who was known to be often employed upon such occasions." Whoever this clergyman may have been, it is impossible for any one to believe that in the discharge of his office he was kept in constant employment; for "such occasions" as answered to the account given by the Sheridan sister of the nuptials of the young couple, must have been extremely rare.

And yet Moore, on whom the responsibilities of a biographer rested very lightly, was quite content to accept as strictly accurate the narrative of Mrs. Lefanu, contradicted though it was by subsequent events in which both her brother and Miss Linley were concerned. Moore does not seem to have troubled himself over any attempt to obtain confirmation of one of the most important incidents in the life of the man of whom he was writing.

He made no attempt to discover if the accommodating priest at the village near Calais was still alive when he was compiling his biography of Sheridan, and it was not beyond the bounds of possibility that he was still alive; nor did this easy-going Irish master of melodies consider that it devolved on him to try to find some record of the marriage in question.

Now what happened after this remarkable union? The narrative of the sister is quite as circumstantial as one could wish it to be, and even more imaginative. But whatever qualities of excellence it possesses, it certainly does not carry to a reader any conviction of accuracy. It states that the interesting young couple went to Lille instead of carrying out their original intention of going to St. Quentin, and that Miss Linley — now Mrs. Sheridan, of course — "immediately secured an apartment in a convent, where it was settled she was to remain either till Sheridan came of age or till he was in a situation to support a wife. He remained a few days at Lille to be satisfied that she was settled to her satisfaction; but, whether from agitation of mind or fatigue, she was taken ill, and an English physician, Dr. Dolman, of York, was called in to attend her. From what he perceived of her case he wished to have her more immediately under his care than he could in the convent, and he and Mrs. Dolman most kindly invited her to their house."

This would seem to have been very kind indeed on the part of the doctor and his wife, but it so happened that a letter turned up some years ago which the late Mr. Fraser Rae was able to print in the first volume of his admirable *Life of Sheridan*, and this letter makes it plain that wherever Mrs. Sheridan (*née* Linley) may have been, she was not sojourning with the Dolmans. It is from Dr. Dolman himself, and it was addressed to "Monsieur Sherridan, Gentilhomme Anglois, à l'Hôtel de Bourbon, Sur la Grande Place." It recommends the administering of certain powders in a glass of white wine twice daily, and sends "compliments and wishes of health to your lady."

The question then remains: Was the lady at this time an inmate of the convent, and did the doctor expect "Monsieur Sherridan" to go to this institution twice a day in order to administer the powders to his lady? Would not the doctor think it somewhat peculiar that the husband should be at the Hôtel de Bourbon and his lady an inmate of the convent?

These questions must be left to be answered according to the experience of life of any one interested in the matter. But it is worth noticing that, on the very day that he received the missive from Dr. Dolman, Sheridan wrote to his brother at Bath and mentioned that Miss Linley—he continued to call her Miss Linley—was now "fixing in a convent, where she has been entered some time." Does the first phrase mean that she was already in the convent, or only

about to take up her residence there? However this question may be answered, it is clear that Sheridan expected to leave her behind him at Lille, for he adds, "Everything is now so happily settled here I will delay no longer giving you that information, though probably I shall set out for England without knowing a syllable of what has happened with you."

So far, then, as his emprise in regard to the lady was concerned, he considered the incident to be closed. "Though you may have been ignorant for some time of our proceedings, you could never have been uneasy," he continues hopefully, "lest anything should tempt me to depart, even in a thought, from the honour and consistency which engaged me at first."

Some people have suggested that Sheridan, when he drew the character of Charles Surface, meant it to be something of an excuse for his own casual way of life. But it must strike a good many persons who believe that he induced the innocent girl, whom he set forth to protect on her way to a refuge from the infamous designs of Mathews, to marry him, that Sheridan approached much more closely to the character of Joseph in this correspondence with his brother. A more hypocritical passage than that just quoted could hardly have been uttered by Joseph Surface. As a matter of fact, one of Joseph's sentiments is only a paraphrase of this unctuous assumption of honour and consistency.

But this criticism is only true if one can believe his sister's story of the marriage. If it is true that Sheridan set out from England with Miss Linley with the intention of so compromising her that she should be compelled to marry him, at the same time pretending to her and to his brother to be actuated by the highest motives in respect of the ill-used girl, it is impossible to think of him except with contempt.

Happily the weight of evidence is overpoweringly in Sheridan's favour. We may think of him as a rash, an inconsiderate, and a culpably careless boy to take it upon him to be the girl's companion to the French convent, but we refuse to believe that he was ever capable of acting the grossly disingenuous part attributed to him by his sister, and accepted without question by his melodious biographer. There are many people, however, who believe that when a man marries a woman, no matter in what circumstances, he has "acted the part of a gentleman" in regard to her, and must be held to be beyond reproach on any account whatsoever so far as the woman is concerned. In the eyes of such censors of morality, as in the eyes of the law, the act of marriage renders null and void all ante-nuptial deeds; and it was probably some impression of this type which was acquired by Sheridan's sister, inducing her to feel sure (after a time) that her brother's memory would suffer if his biographer were to tell the story of his inconsiderate conduct in running away with Elizabeth

Linley, unless it was made clear that he married her the first moment he had to spare. She tried to save her brother's memory by persuading her own to accommodate itself to what she believed to be her brother's emergency. She was a good sister, and she kept her memory well under control.

But what did the father of the young lady think of the matter? What did the people of Bath, who were well acquainted with all the actors engaged in this little comedy, think of the matter? Happily these questions can be answered by appealing to facts rather than to the well-considered recollections of a discreet lady.

We know for certain that Mr. Linley, who was, as one might suppose, fully equipped to play the part of the enraged father of the runaway girl, turned up at the place of her retreat—he had no trouble in learning in what direction to look for her—and having found her and the young gentleman who had run away with her, did he, under the impulse of his anger, fanned by his worldly knowledge, insist with an uplifted horsewhip upon his marrying her without a moment's delay? Mr. Linley knew Bath, and to know Bath was to know the world. Was he, then, of the same opinion as that expressed (according to his sister's narrative) by young Sheridan to persuade Miss Linley to be his bride—namely, that it would be impossible for her to show her face in Bath unless as the wife of Richard Brinsley Sheridan?

Nothing of the sort. Whatever reproaches he may have flung at his daughter, however strong may have been his denunciation of the conduct of the man who had run away with her, they had not the effect either of inducing his daughter or her companion to reveal to him the fact that they had been married for several days, or of interrupting the friendly relations that had existed for nearly two years between himself and young Sheridan. The dutiful memory of Miss Sheridan records that Mr. Linley, "after some private conversation with Mr. Sheridan, appeared quite reconciled to his daughter, but insisted on her returning to England with him (Mr. Linley) to fulfil several engagements he had entered into on her account. The whole party set out together the next day, Mr. Linley having previously promised to allow his daughter to return to Lille when her engagements were over."

The comedy of the elopement had become a farce of the "whimsical" type. Nothing more amusing or amazing has ever been seen on the vaudeville stage. The boy and the girl run off together and get married. The infuriated father follows them, ruthlessly invades their place of refuge, and then, "after some private conversation" with his daughter's husband, who does not tell him that he is her husband, says to the young woman, "My dear, you must come home with me to sing at a concert." "Certainly, papa," replies the girl. "Wait a minute, and I'll go too," cries the

unconfused husband of the daughter. "All right, come along," says the father, and they all take hands and sing the ridiculous trio which winds up the vaudeville after it has run on inconsequentially for a merry forty minutes—there is a *pas de trois*, and the curtain falls!

Alas, for the difference between Boswell the bald and Moore the melodious! The bald prose of Boswell's diaries may have made many of the personages with whom he dealt seem silly, but that was because he himself was silly, and, being aware of this fact, the more discriminating of his readers have no great difficulty in arriving at the truth of any matter with which he deals. He would never have accepted unreservedly such a narrative as that which Moore received from Mrs. Lefanu (*née* Sheridan), and put into his own language, or as nearly into his own language as he could. But Moore found it "so hard to narrate familiar events eloquently," he complained. He actually thought that Mrs. Lefanu's narrative erred on the side of plausibility! The mysterious elopement, the still more mysterious marriage, and the superlatively mysterious return of the fugitives and the irate father hand-in-hand, he regarded as events so commonplace as not to be susceptible of lyrical treatment. But the most farcical of the doings of his own *Fudge Family* were rational in comparison with the familiar events associated with the flight to France of his hero and heroine. The *Trip to*

Scarborough of Sheridan the farce-writer was founded on much more "familiar events" than this extraordinary trip to Lille, as narrated for the benefit of the biographer by Mrs. Lefanu.

What seems to be the truth of the whole matter is simply that Sheridan undertook to be a brother to Elizabeth Linley, and carried out his compact faithfully, without allowing anything to tempt him to depart, as he wrote to Charles, "even in thought from the honour and consistency which engaged [him] at first." It must be remembered that he was a romantic boy of twenty, and this is just the age at which nearly every boy—especially a boy in love—is a Sir Galahad. As for Miss Linley, one has only to look at her portrait to know what she was. She was not merely innocent, she was innocence itself.

When Mr. Linley appeared at Lille he accepted without reserve the explanation offered to him by his daughter and by Sheridan; and, moreover, he knew that although there was a school for scandal located at Bath, yet so highly was his daughter thought of in all circles, and so greatly was young Sheridan liked, that no voice of calumny would be raised against either of them when they returned with him. And even if it were possible that some whisper, with its illuminating smile above the arch of a painted fan, might be heard in the Assembly Rooms when some one mentioned the name of Miss Linley in connection with that of young Sheridan and with the trip to Lille, he felt convinced

that such a whisper would be robbed of its sting when every one knew that the girl and the boy and the father all returned together and on the best terms to Bath.

As the events proved, he had every right to take even so sanguine a view of the limitations of the range of the Pump Room gossips. On the return of the three from Lille no one suggested that Sheridan and Miss Linley should get married. No one except the scoundrel Mathews suggested that Sheridan had acted badly or even unwisely, though undoubtedly he had given grounds for such implications. The little party returned to Bath, and Miss Linley fulfilled her concert and oratorio engagements, went into society as before, and had at her feet more eligible suitors than had ever knelt there. We have it on the authority of Charles Sheridan, the elder brother, that in Bath the feeling was that Richard had acted as a man of honour in taking the girl to the convent at Lille. Writing to their uncle, Mr. Chamberlaine, he expressed surprise that " in this age when the world does not abound in Josephs, most people are (notwithstanding the general tendency of mankind to judge unfavourably) inclined to think that he (Richard) acted with the strictest honour in his late expedition with Miss L., when the circumstances might allow of their being very dubious on this head without incurring the imputation of being censorious."

This testimony as to what was the opinion in Bath

regarding the expedition is extremely valuable, coming as it does from one who was never greatly disposed to take a brotherly or even a friendly view of Richard's conduct at any time—coming as it does also from a man who had been in love with Miss Linley.

At any rate this escapade of young Mr. Sheridan was the most fortunate for him of any in which he ever engaged, and he was a man of many escapades, for it caused Elizabeth Linley to fall in love with him, and never was a man beloved by a sweeter or more faithful woman. To know how beautiful was her nature one has only to look at her face in either of the great portraits of her which are before us to-day. No characteristic of all that is held to be good and gracious and sympathetic—in one word, that is held to be womanly, is absent from her face. No man that ever lived was worthy of such a woman; but if only men who are worthy of such women were beloved by them, mankind would be the losers. She loved Sheridan with the truest devotion—such devotion as might be expected from such a nature as hers—and she died in the act of writing to him the love-letter of a wife to her dearly loved husband.

They did not get married until a year after the date of their flight to the Continent, and then they were described as bachelor and spinster. Neither of them ever gave a hint, even in any of the numerous letters which they exchanged during this period, that they had gone through the ceremony of marriage

at that village near Calais. More than once a strained situation would have been relieved had it been possible to make such a suggestion, for now and again each of the lovers grew jealous of the other for a day or two. But neither said, "Pray remember that you are not free to think of marrying any one. We are husband and wife, although we were married in secret." Neither of them could make such an assertion. It would not have been true. What seems to us to be the truth is that it was Sir Galahad who acted as protector to his sister when Richard Brinsley Sheridan went with Elizabeth Linley to France.

THE AMAZING DUELS

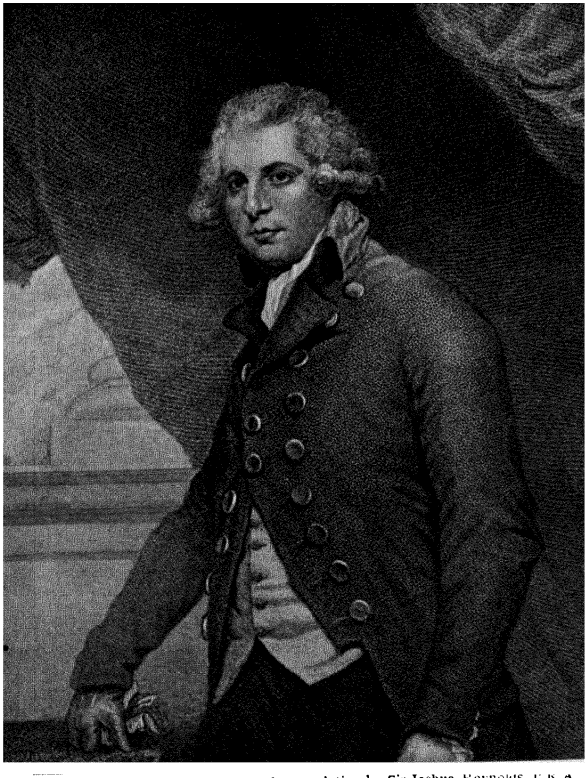
WHEN young Mr. Sheridan returned to Bath after his happy little journey to France with Miss Linley and back with Mr. Linley, he may have believed that the incident was closed. He had done all that—and perhaps a little more than—the most chivalrous man of experience and means could be expected to do for the young woman toward whom he had stood in the position of a protecting brother. He had conducted her to the convent at Lille, on which she had set her heart, and he had been able to explain satisfactorily to her father on his arrival at the hotel where he and Miss Linley were sojourning in the meantime, what his intentions had been when he had eloped with her from Bath. No doubt he had also acted as Miss Linley's adviser in respect of those negotiations with her father which resulted in the happy return of the whole family party to London.

In London he heard that Mathews, the scoundrel who had been pursuing Miss Linley in the most disreputable fashion, was in town also, and that, previous to leaving Bath, he had inserted in the *Chronicle* a defamatory advertisement regarding him (Sheridan);

and on this information coming to his ears he put his pistols into his pocket and went in search of Mathews at the lodgings of the latter.

Miss Sheridan tells us about the pistols in the course of her lucid narrative, and states on her own responsibility that when he came upon Mathews the latter was dreadfully frightened at the sight of one of the pistols protruding from Sheridan's pocket. Mr. Fraser Rae, the competent biographer of Sheridan, smiles at the lady's statement. "The sight of the pistols would have alarmed Sheridan's sisters," he says, "but it is in accordance with probability that he (Mathews) expected a hostile meeting to follow as a matter of course. He must have been prepared for it, and he would have been strangely ignorant of the world in which he lived if he had deemed it unusual."

But Mr. Fraser Rae was not so strangely ignorant of the world in which Sheridan and Mathews lived as to fancy that there was nothing unusual in a gentleman's going to ask another gentleman whom he believed to have affronted him, for an explanation, with a pair of pistols in his pocket. In the circumstances a duel would have been nothing unusual; but surely Mr. Fraser Rae could not have fancied that Sheridan set out with the pistols in his pocket in order to fight a duel with Mathews in the man's lodgings, without preliminaries and without seconds. If Mathews caught sight of the butt of a pistol sticking out of Sheridan's pocket he had every reason to be as fright-



From an engraving by R. Hicks, after a painting by Sir Joshua Reynolds, P.R.A.

RICHARD BRINSLEY SHERIDAN.

p. 260.

ened as Miss Sheridan declared he was, for he must have believed that his visitor had come to murder him. At any rate, frightened or not frightened, pistols or no pistols, Mathews, on being interrogated by Sheridan as to the advertisement in the *Bath Chronicle*, assured him that he had been grossly misinformed as to the character of the advertisement. It was, he affirmed, nothing more than an inquiry after Sheridan, which the family of the latter had sanctioned. He then, according to Miss Sheridan, expressed the greatest friendship for his visitor, and said that he would be made extremely unhappy if any difference should arise between them.

So young Mr. Sheridan, balked of his murderous intentions, returned with unsullied pistols to his hotel, and set out for Bath with Miss Linley and her father.

But if he fancied that Mathews had passed out of his life he was quickly undeceived. Before he had time to take his seat at the family table he had got a copy of the newspaper containing the advertisement, of the tenor of which Mathews had told him in London he had been misinformed; and now his sisters made him fully aware of the action taken by the same man on learning of the flight of Sheridan and Elizabeth Linley. The result was that he now perceived what every one should have known long before—namely, that Mathews was a scoundrel, who should never have been allowed to obtain the footing to which he had been admitted in the Sheridan and Linley families.

It appears that the moment Mathews heard that Miss Linley had been carried beyond his reach, he rushed to the Sheridans' house, and there found the girls and their elder brother, who had been wisely communicated with by the landlord, and had left his retirement in the farmhouse in the country to take charge of the sisters in the absence of their brother Richard. Mathews behaved like a madman—no unusual rôle for him—heaping reproaches upon the absent member of the family, and demanding to be told of his whereabouts. He seems to have been encouraged by Charles Sheridan, who had unwisely said something in disparagement of his brother. Mathews had the effrontery to avow his passion for Elizabeth Linley, and in the bitterest terms to accuse Richard Sheridan of having acted basely in taking her beyond his reach.

Then he hastened to Richard Sheridan's friend and confidant, a young man named Brereton, and to him he sent messages of friendship and, possibly, condolence to Mr. Linley, though his object in paying this visit was undoubtedly not to endeavour to exculpate himself as regards Mr. Linley, but to find out where the fugitives were to be found. He may have had visions of pursuing them, of fighting a duel with Richard Sheridan, and if he succeeded in killing him, of getting the girl at last into his power.

But Mr. Brereton not only did not reveal the whereabouts of his friend—he knew that Sheridan meant

to go to Lille, for he wrote to him there—but he also refused to give his interrogator any sympathy for having failed to accomplish the destruction of the girl. Brereton, indeed, seems to have convinced him that the best thing he could do was to leave Bath as quickly as possible. Mathews had probably by this time discovered, as Brereton certainly had, that the feeling against him in Bath was profound. There can be little doubt that in the course of the day Charles Sheridan became aware of this fact also; he had only a few months before confessed himself to be deeply in love with Elizabeth Linley, and when he heard that his brother had run away with her he could not but have been somewhat incensed against him, for Richard had not taken him into his confidence. By the time his brother returned, however, any ill-feeling that Charles may have felt had disappeared, and as Charles always showed himself to be a cool and calculating gentleman—one who always kept an eye on the jumping cat—it is not going too far to assume that his change of tone in respect of his rather impetuous brother was due to his perception of the trend of public opinion on the subject of the elopement.

Brereton had persuaded Mathews that there was nothing left for him but to quit Bath; but before taking this step the latter had inserted in the *Bath Chronicle* the advertisement of which Richard had heard, but which he had not read when in London,

thus leaving himself in no position to contradict Mathews' assertion as to its amicable wording.

'But now the newspaper was put into his hands by Charles, and he had an opportunity of pronouncing an opinion on this point. It was dated Wednesday, April the 8th, 1772, and it ran as follows:

"Mr. Richard S—— having attempted in a letter left behind him for that purpose, to account for his scandalous method of running away from this place by insinuations derogating from my character and that of a young lady, innocent as far as relates to me, or my knowledge, since which he has neither taken any notice of letters or even informed his own family of the place where he has hid himself; I cannot longer think he deserves the treatment of a gentleman, and in this public method, to post him as a L——, and a treacherous S——.

"And as I am convinced there have been many malevolent incendiaries concerned in the propagation of this infamous lie, if any of them, unprotected by age, *infirmities*, or profession, they are to acknowledge the part they have acted, and affirm *to* what they have said *of* me, they may depend on receiving the proper reward of their villainy, in the most public manner. The world will be candid enough to judge properly (I make no doubt) of any private abuse on this subject for the future, as nobody can defend himself from an accusation he is ignorant of. Thomas Mathews."

Such a piece of maundering imbecility as this had

probably never before appeared in a newspaper. It must have been read in Bath with roars of laughter. But we do not hear that any of the ready writers of the time and the town yielded to the temptation of commenting upon the "malevolent incendiarism" of the composition. A man of the world, had it been written about himself, would possibly have thought that its illiteracy spoke for itself, and so would have refrained from making any move in regard to it or its author. But one can imagine what effect reading it would have upon a boy of Sheridan's spirit. For a youth of twenty to find himself posted as a Liar and a Scoundrel, to say nothing of a "malevolent incendiary," and remain indifferent would be impossible. Sheridan did not take long to make up his mind what he should do in the circumstances.

The dramatic touch which his sister introduces in writing of Richard's perusal of the paragraph is intensely true to nature. He simply put a word or two to Charles relative to what Mathews had told him in London about his, Sheridan's, family sanctioning the insertion of the advertisement. Charles had no difficulty in vindicating his integrity on this point. Richard knew perfectly well that it is one thing to say that a man has acted too hastily, but quite another to suggest that that man is "a L—— and a S——." So apparently the matter ended, and Richard continued chatting with his sisters, giving no sign of what was in his mind. The girls went to their beds,

suspecting nothing. The next morning their two brothers were missing!

Of course the girls were dreadfully alarmed. Some people in the house told them that they had heard high words being exchanged between the brothers after the girls had retired, and shortly afterwards the two former had gone out together. The sister, in her narrative, mentions that she received a hint or two of a duel between Richard and Charles, but she at once put these suggestions aside. The poor girls must have been nearly distracted. Certainly the house of Sheridan was passing through a period of great excitement. The estimable head of the family was himself expecting a crisis in his affairs as manager of the theatre in Dublin—Mr. Thomas Sheridan was never far removed from a crisis—and in his absence his young people were doing pretty much as they pleased. He had no power of controlling them; all that he had to do with them was to pay their bills. Neither of the sons was earning anything, and while one of them was living as a man of fashion, the other had thought it well to cut himself off from his sisters, taking lodgings at a farm some way out of Bath It is the girls of the house for whom one feels most. Alicia, the elder, was seventeen, Elizabeth was but twelve. They must have been distracted. So would their father have been if he had had a chance of learning all that was going on at Bath.

But, of course, when young gentlemen of spirit

are falling in love with beauteous maidens, and retiring to cure themselves by mingling with pastoral scenes reminiscent of the gentle melancholy of Mr. Alexander Pope's shepherds and shepherdesses (done in Dresden), every one of whom murmurs mournfully and melodiously of a rejected suit—when young gentlemen are running away with afflicted damsels and returning to fight their enemies, they cannot be expected to think of the incidental expenses of the business, which are to be defrayed by their father, any more than of the distraction which takes possession of their sisters.

The two young gentlemen were missing, and had left for their sisters no explanation of their absence—no hint as to the direction of their flight. And there were other people in the house talking about the high words that had been exchanged between the brothers at midnight. It is not surprising that the poor girls should be distressed and distracted.

Considering that Miss Linley was the first cause of the excitement in the midst of which the family had been living for some weeks, it was only natural that the elder of the girls should send for her with a view to have some light thrown on this new development of the heroic incident in which Miss Linley had assisted. But Miss Linley, on being applied to, affirmed that she knew nothing of the disappearance of the brothers, that she had heard of nothing that should cause them

to leave Bath at a moment's notice. She was, unfortunately, a young woman of imagination. In a crisis such a one is either very helpful, or very helpless. Poor Miss Linley was the latter. She had just come through a great crisis in her own life, and she had not emerged from it without suffering. It was too much to ask her to face another in the family of her friends. She went off in a fainting fit on hearing the news of the disappearance of the young men, and her father left her in the hands of a medical man, and turned his attention to the condition of Miss Sheridan, who was unable to walk back to her home, and had to be put into a chair, Mr. Linley walking beside her with her young sister. It is more than possible that Mr. Linley was beginning to feel that he had had quite enough of the Sheridan family to last him for the remainder of his life.

For two days nothing whatever was heard of the missing brothers. We have no means of knowing if Miss Sheridan communicated to their father in Dublin the mysterious story she had to tell; the chances are that she was advised by Mr. Linley to refrain from doing so until she might have something definite to tell him. Mr. Linley never had any particular regard for the elder Sheridan, and he had no wish to have him summoned from his theatre at Dublin to make his remarks about the dangerous attractiveness of Elizabeth Linley, and the culpable carelessness of her father in allowing her to be carried

off to France by a young man without a penny except what he got from his own father.

At any rate, Tom Sheridan did not leave his theatre, or his pupils in elocution, and there was no need for him to do so, for on Tuesday evening—they had been missing on the Sunday morning—Dick and his brother returned. They were both greatly fatigued, and said that they had not been in bed since they had left Bath. This meant that Dick had actually not slept in Bath since he had originally left the city in the company of Miss Linley. Between the Friday and the Tuesday he had posted from London to Bath with the Linleys, and had forthwith returned to London with his brother and then back once more to Bath without a pause. He, at least, had very good reason for feeling fatigued.

His first act was to hand his sister an apology which had been made to him by Mathews. This document is worthy of being reprinted. It ran thus :

" Being convinced that the expressions I made use of to Mr. Sheridan's disadvantage, were the effects of passion and misrepresentation, I intreat what I have said to that gentleman's disadvantage, and particularly beg his pardon for my advertisement in the *Bath Chronicle*. Th. Mathews."

He handed this document to his sister, and then it may be supposed that he went to bed. He had certainly good need of a sleep.

Such is the drift of the story up to this point, as

told by Mrs. Lefanu (Elizabeth Sheridan), and it differs in some particulars from that told by her brother Charles in a letter to their uncle, and, in a lesser degree, from the account given of the whole transaction by Richard Sheridan himself, who was surely in the best position to know exactly what happened upon the occasion of his first visit to Mathews in London, as well as upon the occasion of his second, made so hurriedly in the company of his brother.

His second visit was, as might have been expected, the more exciting. It included the fighting of a duel with Mathews. The humours of duelling have been frequently dealt with in prose and comedy, and assuredly the most amusing of all is to be found in Richard Brinsley Sheridan's *The Rivals*. One must confess, however, that the serious account given by the same writer of his hostile meeting with Mathews, on his return from Bath, suggests a much more ludicrous series of situations than are to be found in his play.

In Sheridan's account he mentions that while still in France he received "several abusive threats" from Mathews, and these had such an effect upon him that he wrote to Mathews, swearing that he would not close his eyes in sleep in England till he had treated Mathews as he deserved. In order to carry out this vow he had actually sat up all night at Canterbury, where his party halted on their way

from Dover to London. He called upon Mathews on arriving in London, at the latter's lodging in Crutched Friars; this was at midnight, and the key of the door being mislaid, he had to wait two hours before he was admitted. He found Mathews in bed, but he induced him to rise and dress, though, in spite of his compliance as regards his raiment, he complained bitterly of the cold. There does not seem to have been any great suffering on Sheridan's part through a lack of heat. Then, as his sister's narrative put it, the man declared that his visitor had been grossly misinformed in regard to the libel in the *Chronicle;* and so he left for Bath, as has already been stated.

And now comes the account given by Sheridan of the return visit, and, told in his own laconic style, it suggests such comic situations as border on farce.

"Mr. S.," he wrote, "staid but three hours in Bath. He returned to London. He sent to Mr. M. from Hyde Parck. He came with Captain Knight his second. He objected frequently to the ground. They adjourned to the Hercules Pillars. They returned to Hyde Parck. Mr. M. objected to the observation of an officer. They returned to Hercules Pillars. They adjourned to the Bedford Coffee house by agreement. Mr. M. was gone to the Castel Tavern. Mr. S. followed with Mr. E. Mr. M. made many declarations in favour of Mr. S. They engaged. Mr. M. was disarmed, Captain Knight

ran in. Mr. M. begged his life and afterwards denied the advantage. Mr. S. was provoked by the (really well-meant) interposition of Captain Knight and the illusion of Mr. M. He insisted since Mr. M. denied the advantage, that he should give up his sword. Mr. M. denied, but sooner than return to his ground he gave it up. It was broke, and Mr. M. offered another. He was then called on to retract his abuse and beg Mr. S.'s pardon. With much altercation and much ill grace he complied."

The remainder of this remarkably succinct composition is devoted to the subsequent misrepresentations of the transaction by Mathews, and by the writer's appeal to the seconds to say if his version of the encounter was not correct.

But whatever Mathews' account may have been it could scarcely be more ludicrous than Sheridan's. The marching and countermarching of the four gentlemen—it appears that brother Charles, although accompanying Richard to London, thought it more prudent to remain under cover during the actual engagement; he waited at Brereton's lodgings—the excuses made by Mathews in order to get away without fighting, and then at the last moment, the carrying out (by agreement) of a manœuvre which landed Mathews in one tavern and the rest of the party in another—the set-to of the principals immediately after the "declarations" of one of them in favour of the other, and the final catastrophe could hardly

be surpassed by the actions of a pair of burlesque duellists in what is technically known as a "knock-about" entertainment.

And after all this scrupulousness of detail one is left in doubt as to the exact *locale* of the encounter. Did it take place in the coffee-room of the Castell Inn, or did the eager combatants retrace their steps to the "parck"? The document written by Sheridan, though dealing very fully with the forced marches of the army in the field, throws no light upon this question of the scene of the battle. In respect of the signing of the treaty of peace, and the payment of the indemnity, it is, however, moderately lucid. Sheridan must have told his sister that Mathews signed the apology immediately after the encounter; she states this in her narrative. But Mathews did not merely sign the apology, he wrote every word of it, as one may see by referring to the facsimile, thoughtfully given in Mr. Fraser Rae's *Life of Sheridan*, and it would be impossible to say that the caligraphy of the apology shows the least sign of that perturbation from which one must believe the writer was suffering at the moment. Its characteristic is neatness. It is in the fine old-fashioned Italian hand. Even an expert, who sees possibilities—when paid for it—in handwriting which would never occur to less imaginative observers, would scarcely venture to say that this neat little document was written by a man with another's sword at his throat.

This is another element in the mystery of the duel, and it cannot be said that when we read the letter which the elder of the brothers wrote to his uncle, giving his account of the whole business, we feel ourselves in a clearer atmosphere. It really seems a pity that Mr. Browning did not make another *Ring and the Book* series of studies out of this amazing duel. Charles Sheridan told his uncle that an apology was given to Richard by Mathews as a result of Richard's first visit to him in London, but when Richard read the advertisement in the *Chronicle*, which was the original *casus belli*, he considered this apology so inadequate that he set off for London to demand another. Charles also mentions, what neither his brother nor his sister had stated, that he himself, on reaching London on the Sunday evening, went to Mathews to endeavour to get a suitable apology—according to Richard's narrative Charles had good grounds for sending a challenge to Mathews on his own account—but "after two hours' altercation" he found that he had made no impression upon the man, so that his brother had no alternative but to call him out.

But however the accounts of the lesser details of this affair of honour may differ, there can be no question that public opinion in Bath was all in favour of young Mr. Sheridan. It was acknowledged on every hand that he had acted from the first—that is, from the moment he assumed the duties of the protector

of Miss Linley—with admirable courage, and with a full sense of what honour demanded of him. In short he came back from London, after so many sleepless nights, covered with glory. He was a tall, handsome fellow of twenty, with brilliant eyes; he had run away with the most beautiful girl in the world to save her from the clutches of a scoundrel; he had had four nights without sleep, and then he had fought a duel with the scoundrel and had obtained from him an apology for insertion in the newspapers. Few young gentlemen starting life wholly without means attain to so proud a position of achievement before they reach their majority.

But of course all these feats of errantry and arms run up a bill. Young Mr. Sheridan's posting account must have been by itself pretty formidable, and, knowing that his father had never looked on him with the favour which he gave to his brother, Richard may now and again have felt a trifle uneasy at the prospect of meeting Mr. Sheridan. If his sister's memory is to be trusted, however, this meeting took place within a week or two of his duel, and no bones were broken. Mr. Sheridan had a few chiding words to say respecting the debts which his son had incurred, but these he paid, after obtaining from the boy the usual promise made under similar conditions before a like tribunal. The prodigal invariably acts up to his character for prodigality in the matter of promises of reform.

Richard Sheridan, being something of a wit, though we do not get many examples of his faculty in the accounts extant of his early life, and assuredly not a single example in any of his letters that came into the hands of his biographers, may have sworn to his father never to run away with a girl who might be anxious to enter upon a conventual life. At any rate, his father did not show any great displeasure when he was made aware of the boy's conduct, though it is worth noting that Mr. Sheridan took exception to the general conviction that his son's act had been prompted by the most chivalrous aspirations.

Mathews, however, had not yet been shaken off. He was back in Bath almost as soon as the Sheridans, and " malevolent incendiarism " was in the air. No slander was too base for him to use against Richard Sheridan, no insinuation too vile. But the popularity of the object of his calumny was now too firmly established in Bath to be shaken by the vaporous malevolence of his enemy. Mathews, finding himself thoroughly discredited in every quarter, did the only sensible thing recorded in his squalid history—he ran away to his home in Wales.

He was here unfortunate enough to meet with a man named Barnard, or Barnett, who acted upon him pretty much as Sir Lucius O'Trigger did upon Squire Acres, explaining to him that it was quite impossible that the affair between him and Sheridan should remain as it was. It was absolutely necessary, he said,

that another duel should take place. All the "incendiarism" in Mathews' nature was aroused by the fiery words of this man, and the precious pair hurried to Bath, where a challenge was sent to Sheridan through the hands of his eldest sister, under the guise of an invitation to some festivity.

Sheridan was foolish enough to accept the challenge apparently without consulting with any one competent to advise him. According to his father the challenge had been preceded by several letters of the most scurrilous abuse. His wiser brother, who had just received an appointment as Secretary to the British Legation in Sweden, had gone to London with their father to make preparations for his departure for Stockholm, and immediately on hearing of the duel he wrote to Richard a typical elder brother's letter. It is dated July 3rd, 1772, so that, as the duel had only taken place the previous day, it cannot be said that he lost much time in expressing his deep sense of his brother's foolishness in meeting so great a scoundrel for the second time. "All your friends have condemned you," he wrote. "You risked everything, where you had nothing to gain, to give your antagonist the thing he wished, a chance for recovering his reputation; he wanted to get rid of the contemptible opinion he was held in, and you were good-natured enough to let him do it at your expense. It is not a time to scold, but all your friends were of opinion you could, with the greatest propriety, have refused to meet him."

Without going into the question as to whether this sort of letter was the ideal one for one brother to write to another who was lying on his bed with several wounds in his throat, it is impossible to question the soundness of the opinion expressed by Charles Sheridan in respect of Richard's acceptance of Mathews' challenge. The challenge was, however, accepted, and the duel took place on King's Down, at three o'clock in the morning. Mathews' friend was Barnett, and Sheridan's a young gentleman named Paumier, who, it was said, was quite unacquainted with the rules of the game, and had never even seen a duel being fought. The accounts which survive of this second meeting of Sheridan and Mathews make it apparent that, if the first was a scene of comedy, this one was a tragic burlesque. It is said that Sheridan, on the signal being given, at once rushed in on his antagonist, endeavouring to disarm him as he had done upon the former occasion of their meeting, but, tripping over something, he literally, and not figuratively, fell upon the other, knocking him down with such violence that he was not only disarmed, but his sword was broken as well. Sheridan's own sword was also broken, so that one might fancy that the meeting would have terminated here. It did nothing of the sort. The encounter was only beginning, and anything more savagely burlesque than the sequel could not be imagined.

The combatants must have rolled over, after the

manner of the negro duellists on the variety stage, and when they had settled themselves each made a grab for the most serviceable fragment of his sword. Mathews being the heavier man contrived to keep uppermost in the scuffle, and, what gave him a decided advantage over his opponent, he managed to get his fingers on the hilt of his broken weapon. An appeal at this stage was made by the lad who was acting as Sheridan's second to put a stop to the fight; but the second ruffian, or the ruffian's second—either description applies to Barnett—declared that as both the antagonists were on the ground one could not be said to have any advantage over the other. This delicate question being settled, Mathews held the jagged, saw-like end—point it had none—of the broken sword at the other's throat and told him to beg for his life. Sheridan replied that he should refuse to beg his life from such a scoundrel, and forthwith the scoundrel began jabbing at his throat and face with the fragment of his weapon, a method of attack which was not robbed of its butchery by the appeal that it makes to a reader's sense of its comical aspect.

It is doubtful, however, if the comic side of the transaction appealed very forcibly to the unfortunate boy who was being lacerated to death. He just managed to put aside a thrust or two before the end of the blade penetrated the flesh of his throat and pinned him to the ground. With a chuckle and, according to Tom Sheridan's account, an oath,

Mathews got upon his feet, and, entering the coach which was waiting for him, drove away from the scene of his butchery. Sheridan was thereupon raised from the ground, and driven in his chaise with his second to the White Hart Inn. Two surgeons were immediately in attendance, and it was found that his wounds, though numerous, were not such as placed his life in jeopardy. They were, however, sufficiently serious to prevent his removal to his home that day.

It does not appear that young Paumier told the sisters of the occurrence; but an account of the duel having appeared in the *Bath Chronicle* the same afternoon, every one in the town must have been talking of it, though Mrs. Lefanu says neither she nor her sister heard a word of the matter until the next day. Then they hastened to the White Hart, and prevailed upon the surgeons to allow them to take their brother home. In a surprisingly short time he had quite recovered. Indeed, although there was a report that Sheridan's life was despaired of, there was no excuse for any one taking so gloomy a view of his hurts, for the exact truth was known to Charles Sheridan and his father in London early on the day following that of the fight.

The pathetic part of the story of this ludicrous encounter is to be found in the story of the reception of the news by Elizabeth Linley. Her father had read in some of the papers that Sheridan was at the

point of death, but, like the worldly-wise man that Mr. Linley was, he kept the news from his daughter. They were at Oxford together, and she was announced to sing at a concert, and he knew that had she learned all that the newspapers published, she might possibly not be able to do herself—and her father—justice. But, as one of the audience told his sister afterwards, the fact that every one who had come to hear Miss Linley sing was aware of the serious condition (as the papers alleged) of young Sheridan, and of her attachment to him, a feeling of sympathy for the lovely young creature added immeasurably to the interest of her performance.

At the conclusion of the concert her father set out with her for Bath; and it was not until they had almost reached their home that their chaise was met by a clergyman named Pauton, and he summoned all his tact to enable him to prepare Elizabeth Linley for the news which he was entrusted to communicate to her. It is said that under the stress of her emotion the girl declared that Richard Sheridan was her husband, and that her place was by his side.

Whatever truth there may be in this story it is certain that if she believed at that moment that Sheridan was her husband, she gave no sign of continuing in that belief, for though her numerous letters to him show that she was devoted to him, there is no suggestion in any of them that she believed herself to be his wife. On the contrary, there are many

passages which prove that no idea of the sort was entertained by her.

The exertions of the heads of the two families were for long directed against the union of the lovers. Mr. Linley felt more forcibly than ever that he had had quite enough of the Sheridans, and Tom Sheridan doubtless wished never to hear again the name of Linley. The one made his daughter promise on her knees to give up Richard Sheridan, and Mr. Sheridan compelled his son to forswear any association with Elizabeth Linley. Jove must have been convulsed with laughter. Richard Brinsley Sheridan and Elizabeth Ann Linley were married on the 13th of April, 1773.

A MELODRAMA AT COVENT GARDEN

ON an evening in April, 1779, the play, "*Love in a Village*," was being performed at Covent Garden Theatre before a large audience. In the front row of the boxes sat two ladies, one of them young and handsome, the other not so young and not so beautiful —a dark-faced, dark-eyed woman whom no one could mistake for any nationality except Italian. Three gentlemen who sat behind them were plainly of their party—elegant gentlemen of fashion, one of them an Irish peer. Every person of quality in the theatre and a good many others without such a claim to distinction, were aware of the fact that the most attractive member of the group was Miss Reay, a lady whose name had been for several years closely associated—very closely indeed—with that of Lord Sandwich, the First Lord of the Admiralty, and one of the most unpopular men in England. She had driven to the theatre in his lordship's carriage, and two of the gentlemen with whom she conversed freely in the box were high officials of the department over which his lordship presided.

Almost from the moment of her arrival, Miss Reay

and her friends were watched eagerly by a hollow-eyed, morose gentleman in black. He looked as if he had not slept for many nights; and no one observing him could have failed to perceive that he had come to the theatre not for the sake of the play which was being performed, but to watch the lady. He kept his fierce eyes fixed upon her, and he frowned every time that she turned to make a remark to one of her friends; his eyes blazed every time that one of her friends smiled over her shoulder, and his hands clenched if she smiled in return. Several times it seemed as if he found it impossible to remain in his place in the upper side box, where his seat was, for he started up and hurried out to the great lobby, walking to and fro in great agitation. More than once he strode away from the lobby into the Bedford Coffee House just outside the theatre, and there partook of brandy and water, returning after brief intervals to stare at Miss Reay and her companions in the front row of the boxes.

At the conclusion of the play, he went hastily into the vestibule, standing to one side, not far from the exit from the boxes; but if he intended to be close to Miss Reay while she walked to the main exit, his object was defeated by reason of the crush of people congregating in the vestibule, the people of quality waiting for their carriages to be announced, the others waiting for the satisfaction of being in such close proximity to people of quality.



From a mezzotint engraving by Valentine Green, after a painting by N. Dance.

MARTHA REAY.

p. 284.

Among the crowd there was a lady who had recently become the wife of a curious gentleman named Lewis, who some years later wrote a grisly book entitled *The Monk*, bringing him such great fame as cancelled for posterity the names of Matthew Gregory, given to him by his parents, and caused him to be identified by the name of his book only. This lady made a remark to her neighbour in respect of a lovely rose which Miss Reay was wearing when she left the box exit and stood in the vestibule—a beautiful rose early in the month of April might have excited remark in those days; at any rate, Mrs. Lewis has left the record that at the very moment of her speaking, the rose fell to the floor, and Miss Reay appeared to be profoundly affected by this trifling incident, and said in a faltering voice, "I trust that I am not to consider this as an evil omen!" So Mrs. Lewis stated.

A few moments later Lord Sandwich's carriage was announced, and Miss Reay and her companion made a move in the direction of the door. The gentlemen of the party seem to have left earlier, for on the ladies being impeded by the crush in the vestibule, a stranger, named Mr. Macnamara, of Lincoln's Inn, proffered his services to help them to get to the carriage. Miss Reay thanked him, took his arm, and the crowd opened for them in some measure. It quickly opened wider under a more acute persuasion a few seconds later, when the morose gentleman in black pushed his way among the people

until he was within a few feet of the lady and her escort. Only for a second did he pause—certainly he spoke no word to Miss Reay or any one else—before he pulled a pistol from his pocket and fired almost point-blank at her before any one could knock up his hand. Immediately afterwards he turned a second pistol against his own forehead and pulled the trigger, and fell to the ground.

The scene that followed can easily be imagined. Every woman present shrieked, except Miss Reay, who was supported by Mr. Macnamara. The ghastly effects of the bullet were apparent not only upon the forehead of the lady where it lodged, but upon the bespattered garments of every one about the door, and upon the columns of the hall. Above the shrieks of the terror-stricken people were heard the yells of the murderer, who lay on the ground, hammering at his head with the butt end of his weapon, and crying, "Kill me! Kill me!"

A Mr. Mahon, of Russell Street, who was said to be an apothecary, was the first to lay a hand upon the wretched man. He wrested the pistol from his grasp and prevented him from doing further mischief to himself. He was quickly handed over to the police, and, with his unfortunate victim, was removed to the Shakespeare Tavern, a surgeon named Bond being in prompt attendance. It did not take long to find that Miss Reay had never breathed after the shot had been fired at her; the bullet had smashed

the skull and passed through the brain. The man remained for some time unconscious, but even before he recovered he was identified as James Hackman, a gentleman who had been an officer in the army, and on retiring had taken Orders, being admitted a priest of the Church of England scarcely a month before his crime. There were rumours respecting his infatuation for Miss Reay, and in a surprisingly short space of time, owing most likely to the exertions of Signora Galli, the Italian whom Lord Sandwich had hired to be her companion, the greater part of the romantic story of the wretched man's life, as far as it related to Miss Reay, was revealed.

It formed a nine days' wonder during the spring of the same year (1779). The grief displayed by Lord Sandwich on being made acquainted with the circumstances of the murder was freely commented on, and the sympathy which was felt for him may have diminished in some measure from his unpopularity. The story told by Croker of the reception of the news by Lord Sandwich is certainly not deficient in detail. "He stood as it were petrified," we are told, "till suddenly, seizing a candle, he ran upstairs and threw himself on the bed, and in agony exclaimed, 'Leave me for a while to myself, I could have borne anything but this!' The attendants remained for a considerable time at the top of the staircase, till his lordship rang the bell and ordered that they should all go to bed."

Before his lordship left the scene of his grief in the morning Sir John Fielding, the Bow Street magistrate, had arrived at the Shakespeare Tavern from his house at Brompton, and, after a brief inquiry, ordered Hackman to be taken to Tothill Fields Prison. In due course he was committed to Newgate, and on April 16th his trial took place before Blackstone, the Recorder. The facts of the tragedy were deposed to by several witnesses, and the cause of the lady's death was certified by Mr. Bond, the surgeon. The prisoner was then called on for his defence. He made a brief speech, explaining that he would have pleaded guilty at once had he not felt that doing so "would give an indication of contemning death, not suitable to my present condition, and would in some measure make me accessory to a second peril of my life. And I likewise thought," he added, "that the justice of my country ought to be satisfied by suffering my offence to be proved, and the fact to be established by evidence."

This curious affectation of a finer perception of the balance of justice than is possessed by most men was quite characteristic of this man, as was also his subsequent expression of his willingness to submit to the sentence of the court. His counsel endeavoured to show that he had been insane from the moment of his purchasing his pistols until he had committed the deed for which he was being tried—he did not say anything about "a wave of insanity," however,

though that picturesque phrase would have aptly described the nature of his plea. He argued that a letter which was found in the prisoner's pocket, and in which suicide only was threatened, should be accepted as proof that he had no intention of killing Miss Reay when he went to the theatre.

The Recorder, of course, made short work of such a plea. He explained to the jury that " for a plea of insanity to be successful it must be shown not merely that it was a matter of fits and starts, but that it was a definite thing—a total loss of reason and incapability of reason." Referring to the letter, he said that it seemed to him to argue a coolness and premeditation incompatible with such insanity as he described.

The result was, as might have been anticipated, the jury, without leaving the box, found Hackman guilty, and he was sentenced to be hanged.

Mr. Boswell, who was nearly as fond of hearing death-sentences pronounced as he was of seeing them carried out, was present in the court during the trial, and to him Mr. Booth, the brother-in-law of the prisoner, applied—he himself had been too greatly agitated to be able to remain in the court—for information as to how Hackman had deported himself, and Boswell was able to assure him that he had behaved " as well, sir, as you or any of his friends could wish; with decency, propriety, and in such a manner as to interest every one present. He might have pleaded that he

shot Miss Reay by accident, but he fairly told the truth that in a moment of frenzy he did intend it."

While he was in the condemned cell at Newgate he received a message from Lord Sandwich to the effect that if he wished for his life, he (Lord Sandwich) had influence with the King, and might succeed in obtaining a commutation of his sentence. Hackman replied that he had no wish to live, but he implored his lordship to give him such assurance that those whom Miss Reay had left behind her would be carefully looked after, as would, on meeting her in another world, enable him to make this pleasing communication to her.

He spent the few days that remained to him in writing fervid letters to his friends and in penning moralisings, in a style which was just the smallest degree more pronounced than that which was fashionable at his period—the style of the sentimental hero of Richardson and his inferior followers.

His execution at Tyburn attracted the most enormous crowds ever seen upon such an occasion. The carriage in which the wretched man was conveyed to the gibbet could only proceed at a walking pace; but still, the vehicle which followed it, containing the Earl of Carlisle and James Boswell, arrived in good time for the final scene of this singular tragedy, which for weeks, as the Countess of Ossory wrote to George Selwyn, was the sole topic of conversation.

And, as a matter of course, Horace Walpole had

something to communicate to one of his carefully-selected correspondents. Oddly enough it was to a parson he wrote to express the opinion that he was still uncertain "whether our clergy are growing Mahometans or not"; adding sagely, "they certainly are not what they profess themselves; but as you and I should not agree, perhaps, in assigning the same defects to them, I will not enter on a subject which I have promised you to drop, all I allude to now is the shocking murder of Miss Reay by a divine. In my own opinion we are growing more fit for Bedlam than for Mahomet's paradise. The poor criminal, I am persuaded, is mad, and the misfortune is the law does not know how to define the shades of madness; and thus there are twenty out-pensioners of Bedlam for one that is confined."

Most persons will come to the conclusion that the judge who tried Hackman made a most successful attempt to expound to the jury exactly where the law drew a line in differentiating between the man who should be sent to Bedlam and the man who should be sent to Tyburn, and will agree with the justice of the law that condemned to the gallows this divine of three weeks' standing for committing an atrocious crime, even though the chances are that Hackman spoke the truth when he affirmed that he had brought his pistols down to the theatre with no more felonious intent than to blow out his own brains in the presence of the lady and to fall dead at her

feet. At the same time one is not precluded from agreeing with Walpole's opinion that the people of his period were growing more fit for Bedlam than for Eblis.

The truth is that an extraordinary wave of what was called "sensibility" was passing over England at that time. It was a wave of sentimentality—that maudlin sentimentality which was the exquisite characteristic of the hero and heroine of almost every novel that attained to any degree of success. To people who have formed their ideas of the latter half of the eighteenth century from studying Boswell's *Life of Johnson*, every page of which shows a healthy common sense; or from the plates of Hogarth—robust even to a point of vulgarity—it would seem incredible that there should exist in England at practically the same time a cult of the maudlin and the lachrymose. Such a cult had, however, obtained so great a hold on a large section of society that all the satire of Smollett, Sterne, and Goldsmith, was unable to ridicule it out of existence.

And the worst of the matter was that the types of these weeping sentimentalists were not unreal. They began by being unreal, but in the course of a short time they became real, the fact being that people in all directions began to frame their conduct and their conversation upon these flaccid creatures of the unhealthy fancy of third-rate novelists and fourth-rate poetasters. More than once, it may be remarked,

even in our own time "movements" have had their origin in the fancy of a painter—in one case of a subtle caricaturist. An artist possessed of a distorted sense of what is beautiful in woman has been able to set a certain fashion in the unreal, until people were well-nigh persuaded that it was the painter who had taken the figures in his pictures from the persons who had simply sought a cheap notoriety by adopting the pose and the dress of the scraggy posturantes for whose anatomy he was responsible.

So it was that, when certain novel-writers in the eighteenth century, having no experience of the life which they attempted to depict, brought forth creatures out of their own unhealthy imaginations, and placed them before their readers as types of heroes and heroines, the public never failed to include quite a number of readers who were ready to live up to all those essentials that constituted the personages of the fiction.

And not alone over England had the sighs of a perpetually sighing hero and heroine sent a lachrymose flood; France and Germany, if not actually inundated, were at least rendered humid by its influence. *The Sorrows of Werther* was only one of the many books which helped on the cult of the sentimental, and it was as widely read in England as in Germany. Gessner's *Death of Abel* had an enormous vogue in its English translation. The boarding-school version of the tale of Abelard

and Heloise was also much wept over both in France and Germany; and the true story of James Hackman and Martha Reay, as recorded by the correspondence of the pair, published shortly after the last scene in the tragedy had been enacted, and reissued with connecting notes some twelve years ago, might pass only as a somewhat crude attempt to surpass these masterpieces of fancy-woven woes. James and Martha might have been as happy as thousands of other Jameses and Marthas have been, but they chose to believe that the Fates were bothering themselves with this particular case of James and Martha—they chose to feel that they were doomed to a life of sorrowful love—at any rate, this was Martha's notion —and they kept on exchanging emotional sentiments until James's poor head gave way, and he sought to end up their romance in accordance with the mode of the best models, stretching himself a pallid corpse at the feet of his Martha ; but then it was that Fate put out a meddlesome finger, and so caused the scene of the last chapter to take place at Tyburn.

The romance of Mr. Hackman and Miss Reay would never have taken place, if Lord Sandwich had been as exemplary a husband as George III or Dr. Johnson or Edmund Burke—the only exemplary husbands of the eighteenth century that one can recall at a moment's notice. Unhappily his lordship was one of the many examples of the unexemplary husband of that period. If the Earl of Chesterfield advanced

the ill-treatment of a wife to one of the fine arts, it may be said that the Earl of Sandwich made it one of the coarse. He was brutal in his treatment of the Countess, and never more so than when he purchased the pretty child that Miss Reay must have been at the age of thirteen, and had her educated to suit his tastes. He went about the transaction with the same deliberation as a gourmand might display in ordering his dinner. He was extremely fond of music, so he had the child's education in this direction carefully attended to. His place at Hinchinbrook had been the scene of the performance of several oratorios, his lordship taking his place in the orchestra at the kettledrums; and he hoped that by the time he should have his purchase sent home, her voice would be equal to the demands put upon it by the most exacting of the sacred soprano music of Handel or Gluck.

As it turned out he was not disappointed. Martha Reay, when she went to live at Hinchinbrook at the age of eighteen, showed herself to be a most accomplished young lady, as she certainly was a very charming one. She was found to possess a lovely voice, and was quite fitted to take her place, not merely in his lordship's music-room, but also in his drawing-room to which he advanced her. To say that she was treated as one of his lordship's family would be to convey a wrong impression, considering how he treated the principal member of his family, but certainly he introduced her to his guests, and she took her place at

his table at dinner parties. He even put her next to the wife of a bishop upon one occasion, feeling sure that she would captivate that lady, and as it turned out, his anticipations were fully realised; only the bishop's lady, on making inquiries later on, protested that she was scandalised by being placed in such a position as permitted of her yielding to the fascinations of a young person occupying a somewhat equivocal position in the household.

It was when she was at Hinchinbrook, in October, 1775, that Miss Reay met the man who was to play so important a part in her life—and death. Cradock, the "country gentleman," tells in his *Memoirs* the story of the first meeting of the two. Lord Sandwich was anxious that a friend of his own should be elected to a professorship at Cambridge, and Cradock, having a vote, was invited to use it on behalf of his lordship's candidate, and to stay for a night at Hinchinbrook on his way back to London. He travelled in Lord Sandwich's coach, and when in the act of driving through the gateway at Hinchinbrook, it overtook a certain Major Reynolds and another officer who was stationed on recruiting duty in the neighbourhood. Lord Sandwich, being acquainted with Reynolds, dismounted and invited him and his friend to a family dinner at his lordship's place that evening. Major Reynolds expressed his appreciation of this act of courtesy, and introduced his friend as Captain Hackman. The party was a simple affair.

It consisted of Lord Sandwich, Miss Reay, another lady, the two officers, and Mr. Cradock. After coffee had been served two rubbers of whist were played, and the party broke up.

This was the first meeting of Hackman and Miss Reay. They seem to have fallen in love immediately, each with the other, for the first letter in the correspondence, written in December, 1775, contains a good deal that suggests the adolesence of a passion. Hackman was a man of education and some culture, and he showed few signs of developing into that maudlin sentimentalist who corresponded with the lady a year or two later. He was but twenty-three years of age, the son of a retired officer in the navy, who had sent him to St. John's College, Cambridge, and afterwards bought him a commission in the 68th Foot. He was probably only an ensign when he was stationed at Huntingdon, but being in charge of the recruiting party, enjoyed the temporary rank of captain.

He must have had a pretty fair conceit of his own ability as a correspondent, for he kept a copy of his love letters. Of course, there is no means of ascertaining if he kept copies of all that he ever wrote; he may have sent off some in the hot passion of the moment, but those which passed into the hands of his brother-in-law and were afterwards published, were copies which he had retained. Miss Reay was doubtless discreet enough to destroy the originals

before they had a chance of falling into the hands of Lord Sandwich. It is difficult for us who live in this age of scrawls and "correspondence cards" to imagine the existence of that enormous army of letter-writers who flourished their quills in the eighteenth century, for the entertainment of their descendants in the nineteenth and twentieth; but still more difficult is it to understand how, before the invention of any mechanical means of reproducing manuscript, these voluminous correspondents first made a rough draft of every letter, then corrected and afterwards copied it, before sending it—securing a frank from a friendly Member of Parliament—to its destination.

Superlatively difficult is it to imagine an ardent lover sitting down to transcribe into the pages of a notebook the outpourings of his passion. But this is what Ensign Hackman did, although so far as the consequences of his love-making were concerned, he is deserving of a far higher place among great lovers than Charlotte's Werther, or Mr. Swinburne's Dolores. Charlotte we know "went on cutting bread and butter" after the death of her honourable lover; but poor little Miss Reay was the victim of the passion which she undoubtedly fanned into a flame of madness. Ensign Hackman made copies of his love-letters, and we are grateful to him, for by their aid we can perceive the progress of his disease. They are like the successive pictures in a biograph series

lately exhibited at a conversazione of the Royal Society, showing the development of a blossom into a perfect flower. We see by the aid of these letters how he gave way under the attack of what we should now call the bacillus of that maudlin sentimentality which was in the air in his day.

He began his love-letters like a gallant officer, but ended them in the strain of the distracted curate who had been jilted just when he has laid down the cork lino in the new study and got rid of the plumbers. He wrote merrily of his "Corporal Trim," who was the bearer of a "billet" from her. "He will be as good a soldier to Cupid as to Mars, I dare say. And Mars and Cupid are not now to begin their acquaintance, you know." Then he goes on to talk in a fine soldierly strain of the drum "beating for volunteers to Bacchus. In plain English, the drum tells me dinner is ready, for a drum gives us bloody-minded heroes an appetite for eating as well as for fighting. . . . Adieu—whatever hard service I may have after dinner, no quantity of wine shall make me let drop or forget my appointment with you to-morrow. We certainly were not seen yesterday, for reasons I will give you."

This letter was written on December 7th, and it was followed by another the next day, and a still longer one the day following. In fact, Corporal Trim must have been kept as busy as his original in the service of Uncle Toby, during the month of

December, his duty being to receive the lady's letters, as well as to deliver the gentleman's, and he seems to have been equally a pattern of fidelity.

Hackman's letters at this time were models of good taste, with only the smallest amount of swagger in them. His intentions were strictly honourable, and they were not concealed within any cocoon of sentimental phraseology. One gathers from his first letters that he was a simple and straightforward gentleman, who, having fallen pretty deeply in love with a young woman, seeks to make her his wife at the earliest possible moment. Unfortunately however, the lady had fallen under the influence of the prevailing affectation, and her scheme of life did not include a commonplace marriage with a subaltern in a marching regiment. One might be disposed to say that she knew when she was well off. The aspiration to be made " a respectable woman " by marriage in a church was not sufficiently strong in her to compel her to sacrifice the many good things with which she was surrounded, in order to realise it. But, of course, she was ready to pose as a miserable woman, linked to a man whom she did not love, but too honourable to leave him, and far too thoughtful for the career of the man whom she did love with all her soul ever to become a burden to him. She had read the ballad of " Auld Robin Gray "—she quoted it in full in one of her letters—and she was greatly interested to find how closely her case resembled that of the wife in the

poem. She had brought herself to think of the man who had bought her just as he would buy a peach tree, or a new tulip, as her "benefactor." Did she not owe to him the blessing of a good education, and the culture of her voice, her knowledge of painting—nay, her "keep" for several years, and her introduction to the people of quality who visited at Hinchinbrook and at the Admiralty? She seemed to think it impossible for any one to doubt that Lord Sandwich had acted toward her with extraordinary generosity, and that she would be showing the most contemptible ingratitude were she to forsake so noble a benefactor. But all the same she found Hinchinbrook intolerably dull at times, and she was so pleased at the prospect of having a lover, that she came to fancy that she loved the first one who turned up.

She was undoubtedly greatly impressed by the ballad of "Auld Robin Gray," and she at once accepted the rôle of the unhappy wife, only she found it convenient to modify one rather important line—

"I fain would think o' Jamie, but that would be a sin."

She was fain to think on her Jamie whether it was a sin or not, but she did so without having the smallest intention of leaving her Auld Robin Gray. So whimsical an interpretation of the poem could scarcely occur to any one not under the influence of the sentimental malady of the day; but it served both

for Miss Reay and her Jamie. They accepted it, and became deeply sensible of its pathos as applied to themselves. Ensign Hackman assured her that he was too high-minded to dream of making love to her under the roof of Lord Sandwich, her "benefactor." "Our love, the inexorable tyrant of our hearts," he wrote, "claims his sacrifices, but does not bid us insult his lordship's walls with it. How civilly did he invite me to Hinchinbrook in October last, though an unknown recruiting officer. How politely himself first introduced me to himself! Often has the recollection made me struggle with my passion. Still it shall restrain it on this side honour."

This was in reply to her remonstrance, and probably she regretted that she had been so strenuous in pointing out to him how dreadful it would be were she to show herself wanting in gratitude to Lord Sandwich. She wanted to play the part of Jenny, the lawful wife of Robin Gray, with as few sacrifices as possible, and she had no idea of sacrificing young Jamie, the lover, any more than she had of relinquishing the many privileges she enjoyed at Hinchinbrook by making Jamie the lover into Jamie the husband.

It is very curious to find Hackman protesting to her all this time that his passions are "wild as the torrent's roar," apologising for making his simile water when the element most congenial to his nature was fire. "Swift had water in his brain. I have

a burning coal of fire; your hand can light it up to rapture, rage, or madness. Men, real men, have never been wild enough for my admiration, it has wandered into the ideal world of fancy. Othello (but he should have put *himself* to death in his wife's sight, *not* his wife), Zanga are my heroes. Milk-and-water passions are like sentimental comedy."

Read in the light of future events this letter has a peculiar significance. Although he became more sentimental than the hero of any of the comedies at which he was sneering, he was still able to make an honest attempt to act up to his ideal of Othello. "*He should have put himself to death in his wife's sight.*" It will be remembered that he pleaded at his trial that he had no design upon the life of Miss Reay, but only aimed at throwing himself dead at her feet.

Equally significant are some of the passages in the next letters which he wrote to her. They show that even within the first month of his acquaintance with his Martha his mind had a peculiar bent. He was giving his attention to Hervey's *Meditations*, and takes pains to point out to her two passages which he affirms to be as fine as they are natural. Did ever love-letter contain anything so grisly? "A beam or two finds its way through the grates (of the vault), and reflects a feeble glimness from the nails of the coffins." This is one passage—ghastly enough in all conscience. But it is surpassed by the others which he quotes: "Should the haggard skeleton lift a

clattering hand." Respecting the latter he remarks, "I know not whether the epithet 'haggard' might not be spared." It is possible that the lady on receiving this curious love-letter was under the impression that the whole passage might have been spared her.

But he seems to have been supping off horrors at this time, for he goes on to tell a revolting story about the black hole of Calcutta; and then he returns with zest to his former theme of murder and suicide. He had been reading the poem of "Faldoni and Teresa," by Jerningham, and he criticises it quite admirably. "The melancholy tale will not take up three words, though Mr. J. has bestowed upon it 335 melancholy lines," he tells the young lady. "Two lovers, meeting with an invincible object to their union, determined to put an end to their existence with pistols. The place they chose for the execution of their terrible project was a chapel that stood at a little distance from the house. They even decorated the altar for the occasion, they paid a particular attention to their own dress. Teresa was dressed in white with rose-coloured ribbands. The same coloured ribbands were tied to the pistols. Each held the ribband that was fastened to the other's trigger, which they drew at a certain signal." His criticism of the poem includes the remark that Faldoni and Teresa might be prevented from making proselytes by working up their affecting story so as

to take off the edge of the dangerous example they offer. This, he says, the author has failed to do, and he certainly proves his point later by affirming that " while I talk of taking off the dangerous edge of their example, they have almost listed me under their bloody banners."

This shows the morbid tendency of the man's mind, though it must be confessed that nearly all the remarks which he makes on ordinary topics are eminently sane and well considered.

A few days later we find him entering with enthusiasm into a scheme, suggested by her, of meeting while she was on her way to London, and it is plain from the rapturous letter which he wrote to her that their plot was successful ; but when she reached town she had a great deal to occupy her, so that it is not strange she should neglect him for a time. The fact was, as Cradock states in his *Memoirs*, that the unpopularity of Lord Sandwich and Miss Reay had increased during the winter to such a point that it became dangerous for them to show themselves together in public. Ribald ballads were sung under the windows of the Admiralty, and Cradock more than once heard some strange insults shouted out by people in the park. It was at this time that she spoke to Cradock about appearing in opera, and he states that it reached his ears that she had been offered three thousand pounds and a free benefit (a possible extra five hundred) for one season's performances.

Now if she had really been in love with Hackman this was surely the moment when she should have gone to him, suffered him to marry her, and thus made up by a few years on the lyric stage for any deficiency in his fortune or for the forfeiture of any settlement her "benefactor" might have been disposed to make in her favour. But she seems to have shown a remarkable amount of prudence throughout the whole of her intrigue, and she certainly had a premonition of the danger to which she was exposed by her connection with him. "Fate stands between us," she wrote in reply to one of his impetuous upbraiding letters. "We are doomed to be wretched. And I, every now and then, think some terrible catastrophe will be the result of our connection. 'Some dire event,' as Storge prophetically says in *Jephtha*, 'hangs over our heads.' Oh, that it were no crime to quit this world like Faldoni and Teresa . . . by your hand I could even die with pleasure. I know I could."

An extraordinary premonition, beyond doubt, to write thus, and one is tempted to believe that she had ceased for a moment merely to play the part of the afflicted heroine. But her allusion to Jephtha and, later in the same letter, to a vow which she said she had made never to marry him so long as she was encumbered with debts, alleging that this was the "insuperable reason" at which she had hinted on a previous occasion, makes one suspicious. One feels that if she had not been practising the music of *Jephtha*

she would not have thought about her vow not to marry him until she could go to him free from debt. Why, she had only to sing three times to release herself from that burden.

Some time afterwards she seems to have suggested such a way of getting over her difficulties, but it is pretty certain she knew that he would never listen to her. Her position at this time was undoubtedly one of great difficulty. Hackman was writing to her almost every day, and becoming more high-minded and imperious in every communication, and she was in terror lest some of his letters should fall into the hands of Lord Sandwich. She was ready to testify to his lordship's generosity in educating her to suit his own tastes, but she suspected its strength to withstand such a strain as would be put on it if he came upon one of Mr. Hackman's impetuous letters.

She thought that when she had induced her lover to join his regiment in Ireland she had extricated herself from one of the difficulties that surrounded her; and had she been strong enough to refrain from writing to the man, she might have been saved from the result of her indiscretion. Unhappily for herself, however, she felt it incumbent on her to resume her correspondence with him. Upon one occasion she sent him a bank-note for fifty pounds, but this he promptly returned with a very proper letter. Indeed, all his letters from Ireland are interesting, being far less impassioned than those which she wrote

to him. Again she mentioned having read *Werther*, and he promptly begged of her to send the book to him. "If you do not," he adds, "I positively never will forgive you. Nonsense, to say it will make me unhappy, or that I shall not be able to read it! Must I pistol myself because a thick-blooded German has been fool enough to set the example, or because a German novelist has feigned such a story?"

But it would appear that she knew the man's nature better than he himself did, for she quickly replied: "The book you mention is just the only book you should never read. On my knees I beg that you will never, never read it!" But if he never read *Werther* he was never without some story of the same type to console him for its absence, and he seems to have gloated over the telling of all to her. One day he is giving her the particulars of a woman who committed suicide in Enniskillen because she married one man while she was in love with another. His comment is, "She, too, was *Jenny* and had her *Robin Gray*." His last letter from Ireland was equally morbid. In it he avowed his intention, if he were not granted leave of absence for the purpose of visiting her, of selling out of his regiment. He kept his promise but too faithfully. He sold out and crossed to England without delay, arriving in London only to find Miss Reay extremely ill.

His attempts to cheer her convalescence cannot possibly be thought very happy. He describes his

attendance upon the occasion of the hanging of Dr. Dodd, the clergyman who had committed forgery; and this reminds him that he was unfortunately out of England when one Peter Tolosa was hanged for killing his sweetheart, so that he had no chance of taking part in this ceremony as well, although, he says, unlike George S.—meaning Selwyn—he does not make a profession of attending executions; adding that "the friend and historian of Paoli hired a window by the year, looking out on the Grass Market in Edinburgh, where malefactors were hanged." This reference to Boswell is somewhat sinister. All this letter is devoted to a minute account of the execution of Dodd, and another deals with the revolting story of the butchery of Monmouth, which he suggests to her as an appropriate subject for a picture.

At this time he was preparing for ordination, and, incidentally, for the culmination of the tragedy of his life. He had undoubtedly become a monomaniac, his "subject" being murder and suicide. His last lurid story was of a footman who, "having in vain courted for some time a servant belonging to Lord Spencer, at last caused the banns to be put up at church without her consent, which she forbad. Being thus disappointed he meditated revenge, and, having got a person to write a letter to her appointing a meeting, he contrived to waylay her, and surprise her in Lord Spencer's park. On her screaming he discharged a pistol at her and made his escape." "Oh

love, love, canst thou not be content to make fools of thy slaves," he wrote, "to make them miserable, to make them what thou pleasest? Must thou also goad them on to crimes?"

Only two more letters did he write to his victim. He took Orders and received the living of Wiveton, in Norfolk, seeming to take it for granted that, in spite of her repeated refusals to marry him, she would relent when she heard of the snug parsonage. This was acting on precisely the same lines as the butler of whom he wrote. When he found that Miss Reay was determined to play the part taken by the servant in the same story, the wretched man hurried up to London and bought his pistols.

The whole story is a pitiful one. That the man was mad no one except a judge and jury could doubt. That his victim was amply punished for her indiscretion in leading him on even the strictest censor of conduct must allow.

THE COMEDY AT DOWNING STREET

IT was possibly because she was still conscious of having occupied the commanding position of one of the royal bridesmaids, in spite of the two years that had elapsed since King George III married his homely Mecklenburg princess, that Lady Susan Fox-Strangways, the daughter of the first Earl of Ilchester, became so autocratic during the rehearsal of the Downing Street Comedy. A pretty fair amount of comedy as well as tragedy—with a preponderance of farce—has been played in the same street from time to time, but the special piece in which Lady Susan was interesting herself was to be played at the house of Sir Francis Delaval, and its name was *The School for Lovers*. It had been originally produced by Mr. David Garrick at Drury Lane Theatre, an occasion upon which a young Irish gentleman called O'Brien, who had disgraced himself by becoming an actor, had attained great distinction. The piece had drawn the town during its protracted run of eight nights, and Sir Francis Delaval's company of amateurs perceived that it was just the play for them. It was said by the critics that, for the first time for many years, an actor had been found capable of play-

ing the part of a gentleman of fashion as if to the manner born. They referred to the acting of Mr. O'Brien, about whose gentlemanly qualities there could be no doubt. Even his own brother actors affirmed that no such perfect gentleman as that of O'Brien's creating had ever been seen on the stage. So said Lee Lewes. Another excellent judge, named Oliver Goldsmith, declared that William O'Brien was an elegant and accomplished actor.

Of course this was the character, every aspiring amateur affirmed, to which a gentleman-born would do ample justice. When O'Brien, who was an actor, had represented the part with distinction, how much better would it not be played by the real thing—the real gentleman who might undertake it?

That was the very plausible reasoning of the "real gentleman" who hoped to win applause by appearing in O'Brien's part in the comedy at Downing Street. But when the piece was rehearsed with the young Viscount B—— in the character, Lady Susan threw up her hands, and threatened to throw up her part as well.

"Lud!" she cried to her associates in the temporary green-room, "Lud! you would fancy that he had never seen a gentleman of fashion in his life! Why cannot he act himself instead of somebody else? When he comes from rehearsal he is the very character itself, but the moment he begins to speak his part he is no more the part than the link-boy."

Every one present agreed with her—the young gentlemen who were anxious to have the reversion of the part were especially hearty in their acquiescence.

But there could be no doubt about the matter, Lord B—— was deplorably incompetent. He was not even consistently incompetent, for in one scene in the second act, where there was an element of boisterous humour, he was tame and spiritless; but in the love-making scene, which brought the third act to a close, he was awkward, and so anxious to show his spirit that he became as vulgar as any country clown making advances to his Meg or Polly.

And of course he felt all the time that he was doing amazingly well.

Lady Susan was angry at first, and then she became witty. Her sallies, directed against him in every scene, were, however, lost upon him, no matter how calculated they were to sting him; he was too self-satisfied to be affected by any criticism that might be offered to him by man or woman.

And then Lady Susan was compelled to abandon her wit and to become natural. She flounced off the stage when her lover (in the play) was more than commonly loutish, and burst into tears of vexation in the arms of her dear friend Lady Sarah Lennox.

"I never had such a chance until now," she cried. "Never, oh, never! The part might have been written for me; and I implore of you, Sarah, to tell

me candidly if Mrs. Abington or Mrs. Clive could act it with more sprightliness than I have shown in that last scene ? "

"Impossible, my sweet Sue!" cried her friend. "I vow that I have never seen anything more arch than your mock rejection of your lover, only to draw him on."

"You dear creature!" cried Lady Sue. "You are a true friend and a competent critic, Sarah. But what signifies my acting, perfect though it be, when that—that idiot fails to respond in any way to the spirit which I display ? The whole play will be damned, and people who know nothing of the matter will spread the report that 'twas my lack of power that brought about the disaster."

"They cannot be so vile," said Lady Sarah soothingly.

"But they will. I know how vile some of our friends can be when it suits them, and when they are jealous of the acquirements of another. They will sneer at my best scenes—oh, the certainty that they will do so will be enough to make my best scenes fail. But no! they shall not have the chance of maligning me. I will go to Sir Francis and resign my part. Yes, I will! I tell you I shall!"

The indignant young lady, with something of the stage atmosphere still clinging to her, flung herself with the gesture of a tortured heroine, proud and passionate, toward the door of the room to which

the two ladies had retired. But before she had her fingers on the handle the door opened and Sir Francis Delaval entered.

"A thousand pardons, my dear ladies," he cried, bowing to the carpet. "I had forgot for the moment that when a man turns his house into a theatre he can call no room in it his own. But I should be a churl to suggest that any room in my poor house would not be made beautiful by the presence of your ladyships. After all, this is only my library, and a library is only a polite name for a dormitory, and a—but what is this? I said not a lacrymatory."

He was looking curiously into Lady Susan's face, which retained the marks of her recent tears.

"Dear Sir Francis, you have come in good time," said Lady Sarah boldly. "Here is this poor child weeping her heart out because she is condemned to play the part of—of what's her name?—the lady in the play who had to make love to an ass?"

"Oh, sir, mine is a far worse plight," said Lady Susan, pouting. "It were bad enough for one to have to make love to an ass, but how much worse is't not for one to be made love to by—by—my Lord B——?"

"That were a calculation far above my powers," said Sir Francis. "My lord has never made love to me, but if rumour and the gossip at White's speak even a soupçon of truth, his lordship is well practised in the art—if love-making is an art."

"Sir, 'tis a combination of all the arts," said Lady Susan; "and yet my lord cannot simulate the least of them, which is that of being a gentleman, when he makes love to me on the stage, through the character of Captain Bellaire in our play."

"To be plain, Sir Francis," said Lady Sarah, as though the other had not been plain enough in her explanation, "To be plain, Lady Susan, rather than be associated in any measure with such a failure as your theatricals are bound to be if my Lord B—— remains in the part of her lover, has made up her mind to relinquish her part. But believe me, sir, she does so with deep regret."

"Hence these tears," said Sir Francis. "My poor child, you are indeed in a pitiable state if you are so deeply chagrined at a clumsy love-making merely on the stage."

"Merely on the stage?" cried Lady Susan. "Lud, Sir Francis, have you not the wit to see that to be made love to indifferently on the stage is far more unendurable than it would be in private, since in the one case you have the eyes of all the people upon you, whereas in the other case you are as a rule alone?"

"As a rule," said Sir Francis. "Yes, I perceive the difference, and I mingle mine own turgid tears with your limpid drops. But we cannot spare you from our play."

"No, you cannot, Sir Francis, but you can spare

Lord B——, and so can the play," suggested Lady Sarah.

"What, you would have me turn him out of the part?" said Sir Francis.

"Even so—but with politeness," said Lady Sarah.

"Perhaps your ladyship has solved the problem how to kick a man out of your house politely. If so, I would willingly pay you for the recipe; I have been in search of it all my life," said Sir Francis.

"Surely, sir, if you kick a man hard enough with your slippers on he will leave your house as surely as if you wear the boots of a Life Guardsman," said Lady Susan timidly.

"I doubt it not, madam; but before trying such an experiment it would be well to make sure that the fellow does not wear boots himself."

"Psha! Sir Francis. If a man were to beg leave to measure the thickness of his enemy's soles before offering to kick him there would be very few cases of assault and battery," cried Lady Susan.

"That is good philosophy—see what we have come to—philosophy, when we started talking of love-making," said Sir Francis.

"However we have digressed in conversation, sir, our minds remain steadfast on the point round which we have been circling," said Lady Sarah.

"And that is——"

"That Lord B—— must go."

The door was thrown open and Lord B—— entered.

"A good preliminary—one must come before one goes," whispered Sir Francis to the ladies.

His lordship was evidently perturbed. He scarcely bowed either to Sir Francis or the ladies.

"I was told that you had come hither, Sir Francis," he said, "so I followed you."

"You do me honour, my lord," said Sir Francis.

"I took a liberty, sir; but this is not a time for punctilio. I have come to resign my part in your play, sir," said his lordship.

"Oh, surely not, my lord," cried Sir Francis. "What would the *School for Lovers* be without Bellaire, my lord? Why only now Lady Susan was saying—what is it that your ladyship said?"

"It had something to do with philosophy and the sole of a grenadier," said Lady Sarah interposing.

"Nay, was it not that his lordship's impersonation made you think of a scene from *Midsummer Night's Dream?*" said Sir Francis. "One of the most beautiful of Shakespeare's plays, is't not, my lord?—fantasy mingled with irony, an oasis of fairyland in the midst of a desert of daily life."

"I know nothing about your fairyland, sir, but I have been told within the hour that her ladyship"—he bowed in the direction of Lady Susan—"has, during the three rehearsals which we have had of the play, been sneering in a covert way at my acting of the part of Bellaire, although to my face she seemed delighted, and thus——"

"Are you sure that your informant was right in his interpretation of her ladyship's words? Surely your lordship—a man of the world—would have been sensible of every shade of her ladyship's meaning?"

"I have been told by one on whose judgment I can rely that Lady Susan was speaking in sarcasm when she complimented me before the rest of the company. I did not take her as doing so for myself, I must confess. I have always believed—on insufficient evidence, I begin to fear—that her ladyship was a discriminating critic—even now if she were to assure me that she was not speaking in sarcasm——"

"Oh, lud! he is relenting," whispered Lady Sarah.

"Did you speak, madam?" said his lordship.

"I was protesting against a too early exercise of your lordship's well-known spirit of forgiveness," said her ladyship.

"I thank you, Lady Sarah; I am, I know, too greatly inclined to take a charitable view of—of—— Why, sink me if she, too, is not trying to make me look ridiculous!" cried his lordship.

"Nay, my lord, I cannot believe that Lady Sarah would be at the pains to do for you what you can so well do for yourself," remarked Lady Susan.

His lordship looked at her—his mouth was slightly open—then he gazed at the smiling features of the beautiful Lady Sarah, lastly at the perfectly expressionless features of Sir Francis.

"A plot—a plot!" he murmured. Then he struck

a commonplace theatrical attitude, the "exit attitude" of the man who tells you that his time will come, though appearances are against him for the moment. He pointed a firm forefinger at Lady Susan, saying: "I wash my hands clear of you all. I have done with you and your plays. Get another man to fill my place if you can."

Then he rushed out through the open door. He seemed to have a shrewd suspicion that if he were to wait another moment one at least of the girls would have an effective answer to his challenge, and it is quite likely that his suspicion was well founded. As it was, however, owing to his wise precipitancy he heard no more than the pleasant laughter—it really was pleasant laughter, though it did not sound so to him—of the two girls.

But when the sound of the slamming of the hall-door reached the library the laughter in that apartment suddenly ceased. Sir Francis Delaval looked at each of the ladies, and both of them looked at him. For some moments no word was exchanged between them. At last one of them spoke—it was, strange to say, the man.

"This is vastly fine, ladies," he remarked. "You have got rid of your *bête-noire*, Lady Susan; that, I say, is vastly fine, but where are you to find a *bête-blanche* to take his place?"

"Surely we can find some gentleman willing to act the part of Bellaire?" said Lady Sarah.

"Oh, there is not like to be a lack of young gentlemen willing to take the part, but we want not merely willingness, but competence as well; and the piece must be played on Wednesday, even though the part of Bellaire be left out," said Sir Francis.

Lady Susan looked blankly at the floor. She seemed ready to renew the tears which she had wept on the shoulder of her friend a short time before.

"Have I been too hasty?" she said. "Alas! I fear that I have been selfish. I thought only of the poor figure that I should cut with such a lover—and with all the world looking on, too! I should have given more thought to your distress, Sir Francis."

"Say no more, I pray of you; better have no play at all than one that all our kind friends will damn with the utmost cordiality and good breeding," said Sir Francis.

"True, sir, but think of the ladies' dresses!" said Lady Sarah. "What the ladies say is, 'Better produce a play that will be cordially damned rather than deprive us of our chance of displaying our new dresses.'"

"Heavens!" cried Sir Francis, "I had not thought of the new dresses. Lady Susan, you will e'en have to face the anger of your sisters—'tis not I that will tarry for such an event. I mean to fly to Bath or Brighthelmstone, or perchance to Timbuctoo, until the storm be overpast."

"Nay, nay, 'tis not a time for jesting, sir; let us not look at the matter from the standpoint of men,

who do not stand but run away, let us be women for once, and scheme," said Lady Susan.

"That is woman's special province," said Sir Francis. "Pray begin, my lady—'twill be strange if your ladyship and Lady Sarah do not succeed in——"

"Psha! there is but one man in England who could play the part of Bellaire on Wednesday," cried Lady Sarah. "Ay, sir, and he is the only one in England capable of playing it."

"Then we shall have him on our stage if I should have to pay a thousand pounds for his services," said Sir Francis. "But where is he to be found?"

"Cannot you guess, sir?" asked Lady Sarah, smiling.

Sir Francis looked puzzled, but Lady Sue started and caught her friend by the wrist.

"You do not mean——" she began.

"Lud! these girls! Here's a scheme if you will!" muttered Sir Francis.

"Ay, if you will, Sir Francis. You know that I mean Mr. O'Brien himself and none other," cried Lady Sarah.

"Impossible!" cried Lady Susan. "My father would never consent to my acting in a play with a real actor—no, not even if he were Mr. Garrick himself. How could you suggest such a thing, Sarah?"

"What, do you mean to tell me that you would refuse to act with Mr. O'Brien?" asked Lady Sarah.

"Oh, hear the child!" cried Lady Susan. "She

asks me a question to which she knows only one answer is possible, and looks all the time as though she expected just the opposite answer!"

"I know well that there are a good many ladies who would give all that they possess for the chance of acting with Mr. O'Brien, and you are among the number, my dear," laughed Lady Sarah.

"I dare not—I dare not. And yet——" murmured the other girl.

Sir Francis had been lost in thought while the two had been bickering over the body of O'Brien. He had walked across the room and seated himself for some moments. Now he rose and held up a finger.

"Ladies, this is a serious matter for all of us," he said. And he spoke the truth to a greater depth than he was aware of. "'Tis a very serious matter. If we get Mr. O'Brien to play the part, the piece will be the greatest success of the day. If we fail to get him, our theatricals will be damned to a certainty. Lady Susan, will you consent to play with him if his name does not appear upon the bill?"

"But every one would know Mr. O'Brien," she faltered, after a pause that was overcharged with excitement.

"Yes, in fact; but no one will have official cognizance of him, and, as you must know, in these matters of etiquette everything depends upon official cognizance."

"My father—"

"His lordship will have no *locus standi* in the case. He cannot take notice of an act that is not officially recognisable," suggested Sir Francis, the sophist.

"If you assure me—— But is't true that Mr. O'Brien only ceased to become a gentleman when he became an actor?" said Lady Susan.

"I have not heard that he relinquished the one part when he took up the other," said Sir Francis. "I wonder that you have not met him at the houses of some of our friends—he is more popular even than Mr. Garrick. The family of O'Brien——"

"All kings, I doubt not," said Lady Susan. "There were a good many kings in Ireland in the old days, I believe. I read somewhere that ninety-seven kings were killed in one battle, and still there were quite enough left to carry on the quarrels of the country. Oh, yes, there were plenty of kings, and their descendants have—well, descended. Mr. O'Brien descended pretty far when he became a play-actor."

"If he condescends to take up the part of Bellaire at the eleventh hour to pluck our theatricals out of the fire we shall have every reason to be grateful to him," said Sir Francis with a severe air of reproof. He was beginning to be tired—as others in his place have been from time to time—of the capriciousness of his company of amateurs.

"You are right, sir," said Lady Sarah. "Come, my dear Sue, cease to give yourself the airs of those

ladies who, Mr. Garrick affirms, have been the plague of his life. If Mr. O'Brien agrees to come to our rescue you should have no feeling but of gratitude to him. Surely 'twere churlish on the part of a damsel when a gallant knight rides up to her rescue to look at his horse in the mouth."

"I am thinking of my father," said the other. "But I am disposed to accept the risk of the situation. You will promise that his name will not appear in the bills, Sir Francis?"

"I will promise to do my best to save you from the contamination of having your name made as immortal as Mr. O'Brien's," said Sir Francis.

Lady Sarah laughed, and so did her friend—after a pause sufficient to allow the colour that had come to her face at the stinging reproof to die away.

"I hope that you may catch your bird, sir—your eagle—your Irish eagle."

"If I could tell him that Lady Sarah Lennox was to be in the cast of the play I should need no further lure for him," said Sir Francis, making his most exquisite bow to her.

"Oh, sir, you overwhelm me," said Lady Sarah, sinking in her most ravishing courtesy.

Lady Susan coloured once more, and her foot played a noiseless tattoo on the floor, for she perceived all that Sir Francis's compliment implied. Lady Sarah was the most beautiful girl in England, while

Lady Susan was not even second to her, a fact of which she was as well aware as her friends.

'This was how Lady Susan Fox-Strangways first met Mr. O'Brien, the actor whom Garrick had brought from Ireland in the year 1762. He good-naturedly agreed to help Sir Francis Delaval in his extremity, and his ready Irish tact enabled him to be the first to stipulate that his name should not appear in the bills—a condition with which Sir Francis complied, drawing a long breath.

"Mr. O'Brien," he said, "should the stage ever fail you, a fortune awaits you if you undertake the duty of teaching gentlemen the art of being a gentleman."

"Ah, sir, the moment that art enters the door the gentleman flies out by the window," said the actor. "It is Nature, not art, that makes a gentleman."

One can well believe that Lady Susan Fox-Strangways, with all the pride of her connection with a peerage nearly ten years old, treated Mr. O'Brien's accession to a place in the company of amateurs with some hauteur, though it was said that she fell in love with him at once. On consideration, her bearing of hauteur which we have ventured to assign to her, so far from being incompatible with her having fallen in love with him, would really be a natural consequence of such an accident, and the deeper she felt herself falling the more she would feel it necessary to assert her position, if only for the sake of convincing herself

that it was impossible for her to forget herself so far as to think of an Irish play-actor as occupying any other position in regard to her than that of a diversion for the moment.

It was equally a matter of course that Lady Sarah should have an instinct of what was taking place. She had attended several of the rehearsals previously in the capacity of adviser to her friend, for Lady Susan had a high opinion of her critical capacity; but not until two rehearsals had taken place with O'Brien as Bellaire was she able to resume her attendance at Downing Street. Before half an hour had passed this astute lady had seen, first, that O'Brien made every other man in the cast seem a lout; and, secondly, that Lady Susan felt that every man in the world was a lout by the side of O'Brien.

She hoped to discover what were the impressions of O'Brien, but she found herself foiled: the man was too good an actor to betray himself. The fervour which he threw into the character when making love to Lady Susan had certainly the semblance of a real passion, but what did this mean more than that Mr. O'Brien was a convincing actor?

When she arrived at this point in her consideration of the situation Lady Sarah lost herself, and began to long with all her heart that the actor were making love to her—taking her hand with that incomparable devotion to—was it his art?—which he showed when Lady Susan's hand was raised, with a passionate

glance into her eyes, to his lips; putting his arm about her waist, while his lips, trembling under the force of the protestations of undying devotion which they were uttering, were almost touching Lady Susan's ear. Before the love scene was over Lady Sarah was in love with the actor, if not with the man, O'Brien.

So was every lady in the cast. O'Brien was the handsomest actor of the day. He had been careful of his figure at a time when men of fashion lived in such a way as made the preservation of a figure well-nigh impossible. Every movement was grace itself with him, and the period was one in which the costume of a man gave him every chance of at least imitating a graceful man. All the others in the cast of the play seemed imitating the gracefulness of O'Brien, and every man of them seemed a clown beside him. They gave themselves countless graces, but he was grace itself.

Lady Sarah saw everything that was to be seen and said nothing. She was wise. She knew that in due time her friend would tell her all there was to be told.

She was not disappointed. The play was produced, and of course every one recognised O'Brien in the part, although the bill—printed in gold letters on a satin ground, with a charming allegorical design by Lady Diana Spencer, showing a dozen dainty cupids going to school with satchels—stated that Bellaire would be represented by "a gentleman."

Equally as a matter of course a good many of the spectators affirmed that it was intolerable that a play-actor should be smuggled into a company of amateurs, some of them belonging to the best families. And then to attempt a deception of the audience by suggesting that O'Brien was a gentleman—oh, the thing was unheard of! So said some of the ladies, adding that they thought it rather sad that Lady Susan was not better-looking.

But of the success of the entertainment there could not be a doubt. It was the talk of the town for a month, and every one noticed—even her own father—that Lady Susan was looking extremely thin and very pale.

Lady Sarah said that she had taken the diversion of the theatricals too seriously.

"I saw it from the first, my dear Sue," she said.

Sue sprang from her chair, and it would be impossible for any one to say now that she was over pale.

"You saw it—you—what was it that you saw from the first?" she cried.

Lady Sarah looked at her and laughed.

"Ah, that is it—what was it that I saw from the first?" she said. "What I was going to say that I saw was simply that you were throwing yourself too violently into the production of the play. That was why you insisted on poor Lord B——'s getting his *congé*. It was a mistake—I saw that also."

"When did you see that?"

"When I saw you taking part in that love scene with Mr. O'Brien."

"What mean you by that, Lady Sarah?"

"Exactly what you fancy I mean, Lady Susan."

Lady Susan gazed at her blankly at first, then very pitifully. In another moment she had flung herself on her knees at the feet of her friend and was weeping in her lap.

The friend was full of sympathy.

"You poor child!" she murmured, "how could you help it? I vow that I myself—yes, for some minutes—I was as deep in love with the fellow as you yourself were. But, of course, you were with him longer—every day. Lud! what a handsome rascal he is, to be sure. His lordship must take you to the country without delay. Has the fellow tried to transfer the character in the play beyond the foot-lights?"

"Never—never!" cried Susan. "Sir Francis was right—he is a gentleman. That is the worst of it!"

"Oh, lud! the worst of it? Are you mad, girl?"

"I am not mad now, but I know that I shall be if he remains a gentleman—if he refrains from telling me that he loves me—or at least of giving me a chance of telling him that I love him. That would be better than nothing—'twould be such a relief. I really do not think that I want anything more than to be able

to confess to him that I love him—that 'tis impossible that I should love another."

"The sooner you go to the country the better 'twill be for yourself and all of us—his lordship especially. Good heavens, child, you must be mad! Do you fancy that his lordship would give his consent to your marriage with a strolling player, let him be as handsome as Beelzebub?"

"He is not a strolling player. Mr. O'Brien is in Mr. Garrick's company, and every one knows that he is of good family. I have been searching it out for the past week—all about the O'Briens—there were a great many of them, all of them distinguished. If it had not been that King James was defeated by William, in Ireland, Mr. O'Brien's grandfather would have been made a duke. They were all heroes, the O'Briens. And they were just too sincere in their devotion to the losing side—that was it—the losing side was always the one they took up. And yet you call him a strolling player!"

"I take back the insinuation and offer him my apologies; he is not a strolling player because he doesn't stroll—would to Heaven he did! Oh, my poor Sue, take a stroll into the country yourself as soon as possible and try to forget this dreadfully handsome wretch. You would not, I am sure, force me to tell his lordship what a goose his daughter is like to make of herself."

At this point there was a dramatic scene, one that

was far more deeply charged with comedy of a sort than any to be found in Mr. Whitehead's play. Lady Susan accused her dear friend of being a spy, of extorting a confession from her under the guise of friendship, which in other circumstances—the rack, the wheel, the thumbscrew, in fact the entire mechanism of persuasion employed by the Spanish Inquisition—would have been powerless to obtain. Lady Sarah on her side entreated her friend not to show herself to be even a greater goose than her confession would make her out to be. For several minutes there was reproach and counter-reproach, many home truths followed home thrusts; then some tears, self-accusation, expressions of sympathy and tenderness, followed by promises of friendship beyond the dreams of Damon and Pythias; lastly, a promise on the part of Sue that she would take the advice of her devoted Sarah and fly to the country without delay.

Strange to say, she fled to the country, and, stranger still, the result was not to cure her of her infatuation for the handsome actor. For close upon a year she did not see him, but she was as devoted to him as she had been at first, and no day passed on which she failed to think of him, or to spend some hours writing romantic verses, sometimes in the style of Waller in his lyrics, sometimes in the style (distant) of Mr. Dryden in his pastorals: she was Lesbia, and Mr. O'Brien was Strephon.

But in the meantime she had improved so much in

her acting that when Lady Sarah, who had within the year married Sir Thomas Bunbury, ventured to rally her upon her infatuation of the previous spring, she was able to disarm her suspicions by a flush and a shrug, and a little contemptuous exclamation or two.

"Ah, my dear one, did not I give you good advice?" cried Lady Sarah. "I was well assured that my beloved Sue would never persevere in a passion that could only end in unhappiness. But indeed, child, I never had the heart to blame you greatly, the fellow is handsome as Apollo and as proud as Apolyon. He has broken many hearts not accounted particularly fragile, during the year."

"Is't possible? For example?—I vow that I shall keep their names secret."

Lady Sarah shook her head at first, but on being importuned whispered a name or two of ladies of their acquaintance, all of whom—according to Lady Sarah—had fallen as deep as was possible in love with O'Brien. Her ladyship was so intent on her narration of the scandals that she quite failed to see the strange light that gleamed in her friend's eyes at the mention of every name—a rather fierce gleam, with a flash of green in it. She did not notice this phenomenon, nor did she detect the false note in the tribute of laughter which her friend paid to her powers of narration.

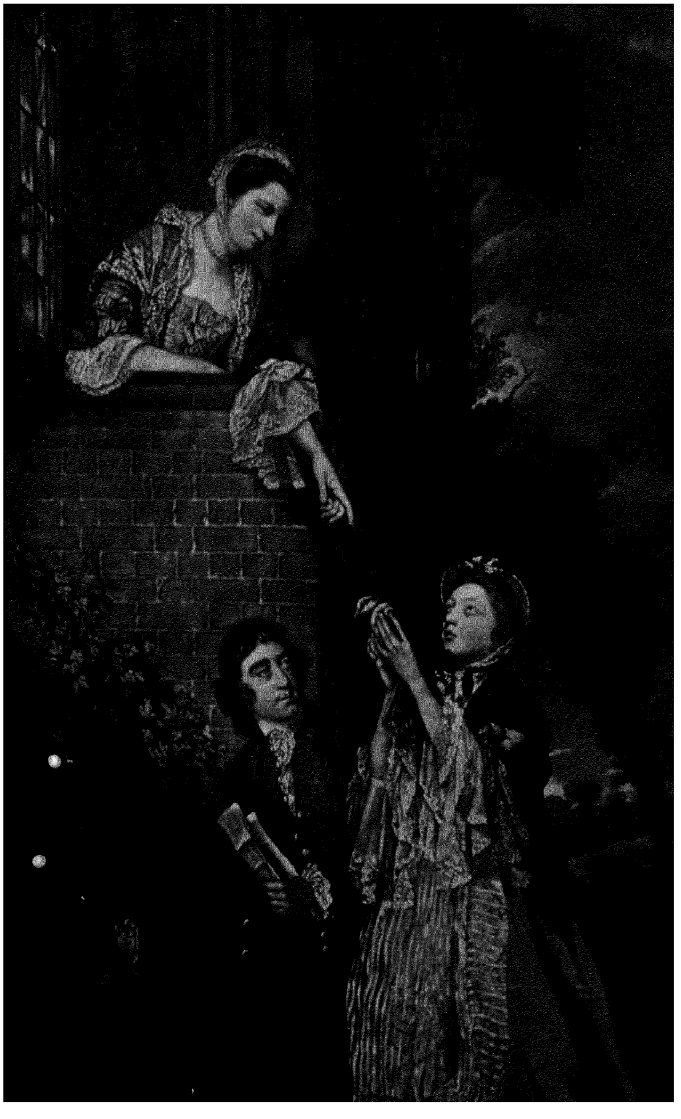
But Lady Sue, when the other had left her, rushed

to her room and flung herself on her bed in a paroxysm of jealousy. She beat her innocent pillow wildly, crying in the whisper that the clenching of her teeth made imperative—

"The hussies! Shameless creatures! Do they hope that he will be attracted to them? Fools!—they are fools! They do not know him as I know him. They think that he is nothing but a vain actor—Garrick, or Barry, or Lewes. Oh, they do not know him!"

She lay there in her passion for an hour, and if it was her maid who discovered her at the end of that time, it is safe to assume that the young woman's flesh was black and blue in places for several days afterwards. The pinch and the slipper were among the most highly approved forms of torture inflicted upon their maids at that robust period of English history. The French Revolution was still some way off.

A few weeks later Lady Susan was sitting to Sir Joshua Reynolds for a group, in which he painted her with her friend Lady Sarah Bunbury and Mr. Henry Fox; and it was the carrying out of this scheme that put quite another scheme into the quick brain of the first-named lady. Painting was in the air. She possessed a poor print of Mr. O'Brien, and she had found an immense consolation in gazing upon it—frequently at midnight, under the light of her bedroom candle. The sight of the life-like portraits



From the picture by Sir Joshua Reynolds, P.R.A.

LADY SARAH LENNOX, LADY SUSAN FOX-STRANGWAYS AND CHARLES JAMES FOX.

p. 334.

in Sir Joshua's studio induced her to ask herself if she might not possess a picture of her lover that would show him as he really was in life, without demanding so many allowances as were necessary to be made for the shortcomings of the engraver of a print. Why should she not get Sir Joshua Reynolds to paint for her the portrait of Mr. O'Brien?

The thought was a stimulating one, and it took possession of her for a week. At the end of that time, however, she came to the conclusion that it would be unwise for her to employ Sir Joshua on a commission that might possibly excite some comment on the part of her friends should they come to learn —and the work of this particular painter was rather inclined to be assertive—that it had been executed to her order. But she was determined not to live any longer without a portrait of the man; and, hearing some one mention at Sir Joshua's house the name of Miss Catherine Read, who was described as an excellent portrait painter, she made further inquiry, and the result was that she begged her father, the Earl of Ilchester, who was devoted to her, to allow her to have her portrait done by Miss Read, to present to Lady Sarah on her birthday.

Of course Miss Read was delighted to have the patronage of so great a family—she had not yet done her famous pastel of the Duchess of Argyll —and Susan, accompanied by her footman, lost no time in beginning her series of sittings to the

artist to whom Horace Walpole referred as "the painteress."

She was both patient and discreet, for three whole days elapsed before she produced a mezzotint of Mr. O'Brien.

"I wonder if you would condescend to draw a miniature portrait of his lordship's favourite actor from so poor a copy as this, Miss Read?" she said. "Have you ever seen this Mr. O'Brien—an Irishman, I believe he is?"

Miss Read assured her that Mr. O'Brien was her favourite actor also. The print produced was indeed a poor one; it quite failed to do justice to the striking features of the original, she said.

"I felt certain that it could bear but a meagre resemblance to Mr. O'Brien if all that I hear of the man be true," said Lady Susan. "His lordship swears that there has never been so great an actor in England, and I should like to give him a surprise by presenting to him a miniature portrait of his favourite, done by the cunning pencil of Miss Read, on his birthday. I protest that 'tis a vast kindness you are doing me in undertaking such a thing. But mind, I would urge of you to keep the affair a profound secret. I wish it as a surprise to my father, and its effect would be spoilt were it to become known to any of his friends that I had this intention."

"Your ladyship may rest assured that no living creature will hear of the affair through me," said the

painteress. "But I heartily wish that your ladyship could procure for me a better copy than this print from which to work," she added.

"I fear that I cannot promise you that; I found two other prints of the same person, but they are worse even than this," said Lady Susan. "You must do your best with the material at your disposal."

"Your ladyship may depend on my doing my best," replied Miss Read. "When does his lordship's birthday take place?"

Her ladyship was somewhat taken aback by the sudden question. It took her some time to recollect that her father's birthday was to be within a month. She felt that she could not live for longer than another month without a portrait of the man whom she loved.

While she was going home in her chair she could not but feel that she had hitherto been an undutiful daughter, never having taken any interest in her father's birthday, and being quite unacquainted with its date. She hoped fervently that Miss Read would not put herself to the trouble to find out exactly on what day of what month it took place. The result of such an investigation might be a little awkward.

It so happened that Miss Read took no trouble in this direction. All her attention was turned upon the task of making a presentable miniature out of the indifferent material with which she had been supplied for this purpose. She began wondering if it might not be possible to get O'Brien to sit to her half a

dozen times in order to give her a chance of doing credit to herself and to the gentleman's fine features.

She was still pondering over this question when her attendant entered with a card, saying that a gentleman had come to wait on her.

She read the name on the card, and uttered an exclamation of surprise, for the name was that of the man of whom she was thinking—Mr. O'Brien, of Drury Lane Theatre.

She had wholly failed to recover herself before he entered the studio, and advanced to her, making his most respectful bow. He politely ignored her flutterings—he was used to see her sex overwhelmed when he appeared.

"Madam, I beg that you will pardon this intrusion," he said. "I have taken the liberty of waiting upon you, knowing of your great capacity as an artist."

"Oh, sir!" cried the fluttered little lady, making her courtesy.

"Nay, madam, I have no intention of flattering one to whom compliments must be as customary as they are well deserved," said the actor. "I come not to confer a favour, madam, but to entreat one. In short, Miss Read, I am desirous of presenting a valued friend of mine with the portrait of a lady for whom he entertains a sincere devotion. For certain reasons, which I need not specify, the lady cannot sit to you; but I have here a picture of her poorly done in chalks, from which I hope it may be

in your power to make a good—a good—— Good heavens! what do I behold? 'Tis she—she—Lady Susan herself!"

He had glanced round the studio in the course of his speech, and his eyes had alighted upon the newly-begun portrait of Lady Susan. It represented only a few days' work, but the likeness to the original had been ably caught, and no one could fail to recognise the features.

He took a hurried step to the easel, and the air made by his motion dislodged a print which the artist had laid on the little ledge that supported the stretcher of the canvas. The print fluttered to the floor; he picked it up, and gave another exclamation on recognising his own portrait in the mezzotint.

Looking from the print to the picture and then at Miss Read, he said in a low voice, after a pause—

"Madam, I am bewildered. Unless you come to my assistance I protest I shall feel that I am dreaming and asleep. Pray, madam, enlighten me—for Heaven's sake tell me how this"—he held up the print—"came into such close juxtaposition with that"—he pointed to the portrait on the easel.

"'Tis easily told, sir," said Miss Read, smiling archly. "But I must leave it to your sense of honour to keep the matter a profound secret."

"Madam," said Mr. O'Brien with dignity, "Madam, I am an Irishman."

"That is enough, sir; I know that I can trust you.

The truth is, Mr. O'Brien, that Lady Susan is sitting to me for her portrait—that portrait. 'Twas marvellous that you should recognise it so soon. I have not worked at it for many hours."

"Madam, your art is beyond that of the magician. 'Tis well known that every form depicted by Miss Read not only breathes but speaks."

"Oh, sir, I vow that you are a flatterer; still, you did recognise the portrait—'tis to be presented to Lady Sarah Bunbury."

"Her ladyship will be the most fortunate of womankind."

"Which ladyship, sir—Lady Susan or Lady Sarah?"

"Both, madam." The Irishman was bowing with his hand on his heart. "But the print—my poor likeness?"

"That is the secret, sir; but you will not betray it when I tell you that Lady Susan entrusted that print to me in order that I might make a copy in miniature for her to present to her father, Lord Ilchester. You are his favourite actor, Mr. O'Brien, as no doubt you are aware."

"'Tis the first I heard of it, madam." There was a suggestion of mortification in the actor's tone.

"Ah, 'twould be impossible for Mr. O'Brien to keep an account of all his conquests. But now you can understand how it is that her ladyship wishes her intention to be kept a secret: she means to add to

the acceptability of her gift by presenting it as a surprise. But her secret is safe in your keeping, sir ? "

" I swear to it, madam." Mr. O'Brien spoke mechanically. His hand was on his chin : he was clearly musing upon some question that perplexed him. He took a turn up and down the studio, and then said :

" Madam, it has just occurred to me that you, as a great artist——"

" Nay, sir," interposed the blushing painteress.

" I will not take back a word, madam," said the actor, holding up one inexorable hand. " I say that surely so great an artist as you should disdain to do the work of a mere copyist. Why should not you confer upon me the honour of sitting to you for the miniature portrait ? "

" Oh, sir, that is the one favour which I meant to ask of you, if my courage had not failed me."

" Madam, you will confer immortality upon a simple man through that magic wand which you wield." He swept his hand with inimitable grace over the mahl-stick which lay against the easel. " I am all impatient to begin my sitting, Miss Read. Pray let me come to-morrow."

" Her ladyship comes to-morrow."

" I shall precede her ladyship. Name the hour, madam."

Without the least demur Miss Read named an hour

which could enable him to be far away from the studio before Lady Susan's arrival.

And yet the next day Lady Susan entered the studio quite half an hour before Mr. O'Brien had left it. Of course she was surprised. Had not Miss Read received a letter, making her aware of the fact that she, Lady Susan, would be forced, owing to circumstances over which she had no control, to sit for her portrait an hour earlier than that of her appointment?

When Miss Read said she had received no such letter, Lady Susan said some very severe things about her maid. Miss Read was greatly fluttered, but she explained in as few words as possible how it was that Mr. O'Brien had come forward in the cause of art, and was sitting for the miniature. Lady Susan quickly got over her surprise. (Had Miss Read seen the letter which her ladyship had received the previous evening from Mr. O'Brien she would not have marvelled as she did at the rapidity with which her ladyship recovered her self-possession.) Her ladyship was quite friendly with the actor, and thanked him for his courtesy in offering to give up so much of his time solely for the sake of increasing the value of her gift to her father.

A few minutes later, while they were discussing some point in the design of the picture, Miss Read was called out of the studio, and in a second Lady Susan was in his arms.

"Fate is on our side, darling girl!" he whispered.

"I could not live without you, my charmer. But I was bold! I took my fate in both hands when I wrote you that letter."

"Dear one, 'twas the instinct of true love that made you guess the truth—that I wanted the portrait because I loved the original. Oh, dear one, what have I not suffered during the year that has parted us!" said Lady Susan, with her head upon his shoulder.

The Irishman found it necessary to fall back upon the seductive tongue of his country for words of endearment to bestow upon her. He called her "Sheila," "a cushla machree," "mavourneen," and also "aroon." But when Miss Read returned to the studio they were still discussing a purely artistic point in connection with the portrait.

Of course now that O'Brien knew the secret of the miniature there was no reason that Miss Read could see why he and Lady Susan should not meet at her studio. To do her justice, neither could her ladyship perceive why they should not come together at this place. They came every day, and every day Lady Susan begged that Miss Read would allow her to rest in her ante-room after the fatigue of the sitting. She rested in that room, and in the company of O'Brien, until at last Miss Read became frightened; and one day told her friend Lord Cathcart something of her fears. Lord Cathcart, in his turn, told Lord Ilchester. His lordship was furious, but cautious.

He wanted evidence of his daughter's infatuation. He got it the next morning, for he insisted on seeing a letter which arrived for Lady Susan, addressed in the handwriting of Lady Sarah. This letter turned out to be from O'Brien, and Susan confessed that her father's surmise was correct—all the letters which she had recently received in Lady Sarah's hand had come from O'Brien.

Her father was foolish enough to grant her permission to say farewell to her lover, and thus the two were allowed to come together once more. They had a long talk, in the course of which O'Brien communicated to her a secret of the theatre, which was that Mr. Garrick and Mr. Colman were engaged in the construction of a comedy to be called *The Clandestine Marriage*, and that Mr. Garrick told him that he, O'Brien, was to play the part of the lover—the gentleman who had married the lady in secret.

Lady Susan parted from her lover, not in tears but in laughter.

. . . . . .

The conclusion of the story is told by Horace Walpole, writing to Lord Hertford.

"You will have heard of the sad misfortune that has happened to Lord Ilchester by his daughter's marriage with O'Brien, the actor," wrote Walpole; and then went on to tell how Lady Susan had made her confession to her father, vowing to have nothing

more to do with her lover if she were but permitted to bid him good-bye. "You will be amazed," continued Walpole, "even this was granted. The parting scene happened the beginning of the week. On Friday she came of age, and on Saturday morning—instead of being under lock and key in the country—walked downstairs, took her footman, said she was going to breakfast with Lady Sarah, but would call at Miss Read's; in the street pretended to recollect a particular cap in which she was to be drawn, sent the footman back for it, whipped into a hackney chair, was married at Covent Garden Church, and set out for Mr. O'Brien's villa at Dunstable."

Unlike many other alliances of a similar type, this marriage turned out a happy one. O'Brien was induced to leave the stage and to depart with his wife for America. He obtained a grant of some forty thousand acres in the province of New York, and had he retained this property and taken the right side during the Revolution his descendants would to-day be the richest people in the world. A few years later he was given a good appointment in Bermuda; and finally, in 1770, he was made Receiver-General of the County of Dorset, and became popular as a country squire. He died in 1815, and Lady Susan survived him by twelve years.

It was Lady Sarah who had made the imprudent marriage. She submitted to the cruelties of her

husband for fourteen years, and on her leaving his roof he obtained a divorce.

In 1781, nineteen years after her first marriage, she wedded the Hon. George Napier, and became the mother of three of the greatest Englishmen of the nineteenth century. She lived until she was eighty. Her friend Lady Susan followed her to the grave a year later, at the age of eighty-four.

THE END

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