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Biography

MEMOIRS OF MARIE CORELLI



MEMOIRS
OF
MARIE CORELLI

BY
BERTHA VYVER

WITH AN EPILOGUE BY
J. CUMING WALTERS

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AGED 2½ YEARS

PREFACE

I SHOULD have hesitated to write any memoir of Marie Corelli, and this volume is nothing more, were it not for the fact that so many have expressed the wish to possess one ; and that I, having known her so intimately, having lived since childhood with her, having seen her hopes come to fruition, and having shared her joys and her sorrows, am the best qualified to do so.

If I have failed in my task, I ask my readers to attribute this to my own lack of literary qualification, added to the fact that Marie kept only fragmentary diaries, preserved few letters, and was not a voluminous correspondent.

The child portraits which I include in this book have never before been published and, taken at the ages of two and three years, they give a very good idea of her. The earnestness and perception contained in those penetrating eyes indicate a quality of character which was to carry her through life to the success which, by her own unaided effort, she attained.

As a child she was bright and winsome. Her clear complexion and grey-blue eyes were crowned with a mass of very fine fair hair. Her mouth was sensitive but showed determination.

My mother first met her as a little child at the Norfolk Hotel, Brighton, and, tossed up in her arms, Marie was attracted by a small gold gondola, an inch

P R E F A C E

long, sewn on a band of red velvet in her hair. My mother gave her the little trinket, and Marie treasured it for many years. Unfortunately, in 1887, she lost it in Cologne, and in one of her letters to me said, "I passed a wretched night. I had a fit of crying again this morning. I cannot help being grieved, as I have lost the little gondola that I have loved since childhood." It was a perfect little model chiselled in gold.

In sorting papers I recently came across a letter, written in French, from my mother to Charles Mackay, thanking him for allowing his little daughter to play with her children. As this letter gives a very accurate impression of the child, I quote a few lines :

"Mais c'est moi, Cher Ami, qui devrait vous remercier d'avoir permis que l'étoile de votre maison vienne ici illuminer notre intérieur. Marie est une délicieuse enfant pétrie de poésie et de tendresse. Elle respire et inspire le beau et l'idéal."¹

From early days my mother was called "Mother-bird" by her, and when Marie's first book, *The Romance of Two Worlds*, was published on the 19th February 1886, the date of my mother's birthday, the young author thought it a lucky omen, and that is why I decided to publish, after Marie's death in 1924, her last unpublished book, *The Open Confession*, on the anniversary of *The Romance of Two Worlds*, 19th February 1925.

¹ Translation : "It is I, dear friend, who must thank you for allowing the Star of your Home to come here and brighten our own. She is a delightful child, steeped in poetry and tenderness. She breathes and inspires the beautiful and the ideal."



AGED $2\frac{1}{2}$ YEARS

CHAPTER IX

IN 1895 *The Sorrows of Satan* appeared and was in immediate demand—adding largely to the number of her readers, and Marie, with true dramatic instinct, set herself to work on a stage version. At the house of our old friend, Henry Labouchere, owner of *Truth*, a radical member of Parliament and once in the Diplomatic Service, who had been in Paris during the siege in 1870, she had met Beerbohm Tree, and had talked with him of plays and of an adaptation of her latest book.

"By a happy accident," he writes on 7th April 1896, "I am one of those benighted creatures who has not yet read the Book—and I shall continue in that ignorance in order to be better able to judge the Play: for when one knows a subject too well one loses the bird's-eye view."

In due course the play was adapted by another hand, and staged, but in many ways its production was not such as Marie approved. The play was a failure, but it had given the critics of the day an opening for renewed attacks on her and her works, though a powerful champion came forward in the person of Mr. Clement Scott, whom playgoers and

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

My thanks are due to owners of the copyright who have permitted me to quote from, or to print in full, letters to Marie Corelli; and to the Proprietors of *Punch* for permission to reprint the verses appearing on pages 190 and 220. Also to the various artists and photographers whose work appears with these pages.

BERTHA VYVER

THE WEE CROODLIN' DOO

There's ae thing keeps my heart right,
Whate'er the world may do,
Six summers old—with locks like gold,
And een o' tender blue.
A wee thing; mine ain thing,
A pledge of Love maist true,
A bonnie, bonnie, bonnie, bonnie
Wee croodlin' doo.

Although my gear be scanty
An' dour the work I do,
I've mair than gear while she is near
An' fouth o' pleasures new;
My wee thing, mine ain thing,
She keeps me pure and true,
My bonnie, bonnie, bonnie, bonnie
Wee croodlin' doo.

CHARLES MACKAY
(*Father of Marie Corelli*).

CHAPTER I

AT the angle of the London road with the road leading up Box Hill, there stood, in the 'seventies, a creeper-covered house, its entrance on the main road.

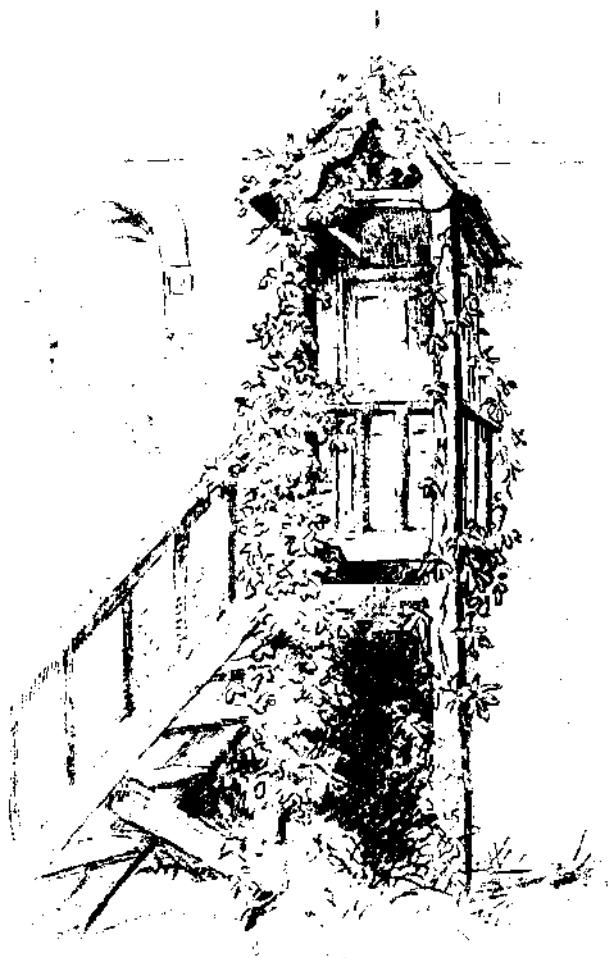
Fern Dell was a charming, old-fashioned house, consisting of drawing-room, dining-room, library, and eight bedrooms; and a long room over the coach-house and stables. This long room was approached by a creeper-covered porch in the garden adjoining the library, and was used as a schoolroom. It was a room of happy memories, where it was not necessary to have everything in apple-pie order. From the windows, the view of the hill and the surrounding country was very beautiful; but to the child the most important room of all was her own little sitting-room, a small attic opposite her bedroom. On opening the door of this sanctum, one went down two steps into a room about three yards square, and she had the sole care of it. The window opened on the drawing-room leads, which formed a balcony where she could sit and dream. I can well remember the furniture of this miniature sanctum. Here were a collection of books and little

oddments such as are dear to children, a felt carpet, a round table in the middle with rose table-cloth, a child's sofa with an old battered doll reclining upon it, an arm-chair upholstered in rose-coloured silk brocade and a papier mâché inlaid chair—these are all still in existence in the tower rooms at her home in Stratford-on-Avon; even her doll's trunk and clothes.

At the back of Fern Dell was a lovely garden, a beautiful lawn surrounded with syringa, lilac, laburnum, roses; and a shrubbery of nut trees and ferns, where the early spring flowers bloomed and flourished, and where Marie always looked eagerly for the first signs of their flowering. She would run into the house delighted to show her father and mother the first aconites or snowdrops, primroses or bluebells. She had no other companion than Nature and a faithful old dog, a black-and-white rough-haired terrier named "Tiney." This dog would sit on a dining-room chair at the table when salad was served, with a serviette tied round his neck, his two little paws leaning on the table waiting for his helping, and when it was placed before him he enjoyed it like any human being.

Unfortunately, the house has gone, having been burnt to the ground.

As a child, on going to bed, she would often put out the lights and sit at her window gazing at the stars, listening to the rustling of the trees, the wind, and the hooting of the owls. The moon and stars had a wonderful fascination for her. Once she asked for a star to be got down for her to see; no



PORCH AT FERN DELL

wonder in her first book, *The Romance of Two Worlds*, she took that wonderful imaginative flight to the world of her creation.

But she was a lonely child, and, feeling her loneliness intensely, she entered into mysterious friendships with the fairies, and she believed that God and an angel were always seeing her—invisible to her, yet there. Gratitude and thanksgiving were two of the keynotes to her happiness, and stimulated her in a lifelong endeavour to do her best. After her death I found these lines on a scrap of paper in her handwriting :

“I roamed through the wild wood,
Belov'd in childhood,
And sought for the fairy
With whom I used to play.”

As she grew in years she had full access to the library, and was allowed to read what she fancied, and to take any book from the shelves. If the weather was fine, she would run to one of her many favourite nooks on the slope of the hill, arbour'd beneath the hawthorns, box trees, and junipers.

She had many such in the side valleys of Box Hill, a few steps from home, where she could read her favourite poets, Shakespeare, Keats, Shelley, and Byron by the hour, and, gifted with a very retentive memory, learn much of them by heart. Those special nooks were her fairy palaces, and there she let her imagination go free and was happy.

I have heard her tell, too, that candle-ends were

saved up by a devoted maid, who secretly gave them to her, so that she might read on when the bedroom candle was getting low—only one candle being allowed her, for gas mains, beyond urban areas, were then unknown.

On such matters as the effect of untrammelled reading upon the youthful mind, Dr. Mackay was ahead of his time.

An intimate friend, the Hon. Francis Lawley, once said to him: "What! do you allow that child to read any book—*The Arabian Nights*, Shakespeare, Voltaire, etc.?"

"Yes, I do," he replied. "I like her to follow her own inclination; her mind will only rest on the beautiful; she does not dwell on the vulgar or commonplace."

But education cannot consist alone of self-made selections from the poets, and an elderly governess was engaged. She came from Dorking three times a week, riding on a pony. It was a ride of some three miles and a half—and this soon proved too long a journey for the old lady, who had to give it up.

Next came a week-end governess from London, arriving on Friday and leaving on Monday evening. Much was expected as a result, but the child soon outpaced the teacher in music and general knowledge. She would give her governess recitations from Lord Byron's poems and act whole passages from memory, much to the bewilderment of that lady, who felt it her duty to complain to Dr. Mackay that Byron was no author for a child of Marie's age;



AGED 3½ YEARS

indeed, he was probably beyond her own understanding.

Later, the child was sent to a convent, and I quote from the only letter I have found dealing with that period of her life :

"I am very content here, but of course I *can't* be happy away from home. But I cannot be positively *unhappy* because every one is so kind. . . . I do not find it at all hard getting up at half-past five ; it is quite a refreshing novelty ! And there is no solemn, cold, immovable gravity here ; in fact, we are all so easily amused, the least thing sets us into a laugh ; but I have never once heard ill-natured merriment at another's expense, which you know often happens in large schools. A good many droll things happen among us, and we are not afraid to laugh. L——, I believe, thinks that a convent is the most *sad* place in the universe—so, if she comes to see you, tell her that a fashionable boarding-school is like sitting on the ice, and this convent like sitting in the sun. You will see from this, dearest Mother, that I am very content. I am grateful for all the kindness and care shown me, so, though I cannot be exactly myself away from home—still, I will be brave and work hard to please you. . . . Write to me, like a darling, soon."

Working hard to please those she loved, and to improve herself, was one of the qualities which characterised her through life ; with her corollary that she always strove to instil ambition of success in every one she met who showed promise of rising above the ordinary level.

George Meredith had a passionate love of music, and even when Marie was but a child, and would

play the piano to herself, he declared to Dr. Mackay that she had the divine fire. Later, she developed a clear and strong mezzo-soprano voice, and would sing to her own accompaniments, her window open to the garden, the old British ballads, or songs from the classical composers.

For one to whom literature, and in particular poetry, meant so much, the very neighbourhood in which she then lived spelt romance.

At what is now the Burford Bridge Hotel, Lord Nelson and Emma Hamilton spent some days before he joined his ship, to meet death at Trafalgar.

In the garden of the then more modest inn, John Keats finished *Endymion*, no doubt wandering the woods and meadows by the river bank,

“ . . . where dank moisture breeds
The pipy hemlock to strange overgrowth.”

The innkeeper used to show the initials, “ J.K. 1816,” carved by the poet on a tree, and Marie delighted to show this to her friends.

“ Camilla Lacey ” had been the home of Madame d'Arblay (“ little Fanny Burney,” authoress of *Evelina*). Unfortunately, that house, like Fern Dell, was burnt to the ground and another literary landmark destroyed.

Rumour had it that Daniel Defoe finished his *Robinson Crusoe* in a house at the corner of West Humble Lane, opposite Sir William Laurence's lodge gate.



From a collection of drawings by H. T. G.

FERN DELL, BOX HILL, SURREY

Fredley, hard by, had been the home of the celebrated "Conversation Sharp" and, for a short period, of his son-in-law, Mr. Thomas Drummond, Secretary for Ireland, and author of the famous saying, "Property has its duties as well as its rights."

When Marie and I in later years revisited the neighbourhood of Box Hill, staying at the Burford Bridge Inn, many memories were recalled.

After the fire, when Fern Dell was burnt to the ground, only the two small garden gates were left. One of them was still covered with a bush of old pink blush rose. Marie remembered and loved it so well that she had a similar rose planted on the back of her Stratford house, and it is flourishing to this day. For this was the gate leading to the hill, and to the summit of which Dr. Charles Mackay and his little daughter used to walk sturdily, often in the company of George Meredith, with his dachshunds at his heels. The two writers were neighbours, and only a thick box hedge separated their gardens.

Many were the literary and political discussions between them.

On this same visit to Box Hill we met the old postman, who remembered her well as a little girl walking into Dorking by the side of the Doctor, "the brightest child he had ever known, laughing, running, and as merry as a lark."

Sometimes in the early dusk she would go hunting for glow-worms, and come home with many, which she placed in a small fernery, with a bell-shaped

M A R I E C O R E L L I

glass over them, thus contriving a miniature fairy scene.

In those days many tramps and gipsies were on the road, but they would pass with a smile at her and she at them, and they would say to her, "Lonely child, lonely woman."

CHAPTER II

IN a late piece of manuscript of Marie's is an apt description of her own early girlhood at Fern Dell, Box Hill. She may have intended to write a volume of reminiscences or to use it in a novel; or, perhaps, she wrote it for the sole pleasure of recollection. Miss Knox, who is referred to, was one of her week-end governesses :

"A dome of pink and white apple blossoms, over an expanse of smooth green lawn, a pair of swallows skimming to and fro, the carol of a thrush on a hawthorn bough, and a clear young voice singing through the still warm air. . . .

"I managed to develop into a curiously determined independent little personality, with ideas and opinions more suited to some clever young man. . . .

"I had grown with the flowers and trees. . . .

"The library was an 'olla-podrida' of random things, good, bad and indifferent—there were 'standard' histories and classics, poets, novelists, and dramatists; there were many volumes of old, forgotten essays and political 'squibs.' Voltaire jostled with Plutarch, and Shakespeare with *The Tatler* and *Rambler*—and a large number of dictionaries, old and new, lumbered the shelves. . . .

"I was fond of alarming the prudery of Miss Knox, and often startled that lady by quotations from Byron's *Don Juan*—which I rendered with a force and fervour as if emanating from

a deep sense of conviction. These verses were among my special selections :

“ ‘The lady watch’d her lover—and that hour
Of Love’s, and Night’s and Ocean’s solitude,
O’erflowed her soul with their united power ;
Amidst the barren sand and rocks so rude,
She and her wave-worn love had made their bower
Where nought upon their passion could intrude ;
And all the stars that crowded the blue space
Saw nothing happier than her glowing face.

‘ Alas ! the love of women ! it is known
To be a lovely and a fearful thing ;
For all of theirs upon that die is thrown,
And if ’tis lost, life hath no more to bring
To them but mockeries of the past alone,
And their revenge is as the tiger’s spring,
Deadly, and quick, and crushing ; yet, as real
Torture is theirs—what they inflict they feel.’

“ ‘ You see that’s what it comes to ! ’ I said dramatically, clenching my little fists. ‘ Their revenge is as the tiger’s spring ! ’ Mine would be like that ! ‘ Deadly, and quick, and crushing ! ’ Oh yes ! Me, all over ! ’

“ I ended with a ripple of laughter, and my eyes danced with amusement. And Miss Knox, on whom I fulminated the *Don Juan* outburst, could do nothing but sit in pained silence, wondering what was to be done with a child like this, who, at twelve years old, talked of love and revenge, and read the improper—‘ yes,’—thought Miss Knox, with a regretful sigh—‘ the highly improper poetry of Lord Byron ! ’

“ I instinctively did all I could to make myself a personality to be reckoned with. For this reason I devoured books what-

ever their qualities, and fed my brain with the thoughts of dead men.

" Submitting myself to the teaching of Miss Knox somewhat under protest, I was quite sharp enough to perceive the limitations of that excellent woman's intellectual ability, and frequently proved to her, by the ease with which I mastered my lessons, that they were all mere child's play for the finer-tempered activity of my brain, though at other times I would feign not to understand anything I was taught and would play the part of the veriest little dunce ever born. I had a true gift for music, but under Miss Knox I had to content myself with the study of Czerny's Exercises and two or three 'show' pieces, these latter always boring me to a degree of impatience which could only find outlet in a burst of temper. . . .

" 'What would you say if I studied Chopin by myself? Suppose I played you one of his waltzes . . . why can't I study Chopin?'

" Miss Knox looked up with mild forbearance.

" 'You are not advanced enough,' she answered, 'and I really fear you never will make sufficient progress to undertake the difficulties of the greater masters.' Here she gave a small nervous cough. As a matter of fact, she could not have taught her pupil how to play half-a-dozen bars of Chopin's music to save her life.

" Without waiting for a reply, I darted away into the drawing-room which fronted the lawn and opened out upon it by means of French windows and three worn, moss-green steps, and in another moment the exquisite rippling melody of a waltz sounded through the still air with clearness, sweetness, and precision. Miss Knox laid down her book and listened, amazed. She could hardly believe her own ears. Such playing was extraordinary; it could not be her pupil. She rose from her chair and moved a step or two towards the drawing-room—

just to where she could see my childish figure seated at the piano. My little fingers flew over the keys as though they revelled in the exercise.

" 'If she can play like that . . .' mused Miss Knox thoughtfully, then drew herself up with a little jerk, as the piece came to its brilliant conclusion, and I sprang up from the piano and ran out into the garden again.

" 'There I' I exclaimed triumphantly. 'What do you think of it?'

" Miss Knox hesitated for a moment, and then spoke out with unusual frankness.

" 'I think it wonderful, my dear,' she said almost humbly. 'Quite wonderful I but don't you think it a little deceitful?'

" 'Simply because I learn by myself what you will not teach me? That's not deceptive; that's plucky and persevering. That's conquering fate! Don't you understand what it is to conquer fate? Oh dear, oh dear! What a queer thing you are.

" Miss Knox looked timidly perplexed. She could not explain exactly what she meant by suggesting any possibility of deceit in the bold, unconventional spirit of her pupil, but she was quite taken aback by the unexpected way in which I had suddenly asserted my supremacy and had proved myself a more accomplished musician than herself.

" I continued, cheeks glowing with scarcely suppressed excitement, 'You *can't* know what such music means to me! It lives! and I live with it! I'm so *dreadfully* alive! And that waltz is like a heart beating and a voice talking, and the heart longs for many things, and the voice asks for joy and peace, and above all there is love crying out for an answer—you can hear it half laughing, half sobbing, and saying such pretty tender words! trying to be merry when it is really sad, or pretending to be sad when it is merry!' . . .

" 'You must not talk of love.'



ALICE BRIDGES

" 'I am too much in love with love to talk of it lightly! It is everything to me! It is beauty and joy and wonder! When I fall in love I shall give all my life! Did you ever do that?'

" Poor Miss Knox grew hot and cold by turns.

" 'No,' she replied stiffly. 'I certainly never did! I cannot imagine where you get such terrible ideas. I must really speak very seriously to the Doctor.'

" Here I got up from the grass and stood looking at my governess with a wistful expression that had something of pathos in it. Miss Knox glanced at me furtively; somehow she could not meet the full gaze of my deep eyes, which were grey as a clouded sea, with a changeful sapphire light in them like occasional reflections from the blue of the sky.

" 'What do you mean?' I asked a trifle nervously; 'what do you want me to do?'

" I was silent a moment, speaking with a hurried, soft eagerness.

" 'It is this way,' I said; 'I don't believe you understand me very well—and then, perhaps, I tease and bother you and you won't *try* to understand. Then again, perhaps, you are not really clever. They say it takes a very clever person indeed to understand a child—especially a child who is showing signs of ambition. You see all the world is new to me—it's quite old to you, but to me it's a novelty, and you can't imagine how much I think about it! I love it all! I love the sunlight, and the trees and the fields and the birds and the flowers—they all say things to me—yes! I even fancy that the sunbeams talk! And then, as you know, I read a lot of poetry, and the most beautiful ideas come into my head. I feel as if I were part of the sunshine and the air and of all the lovely, living, creative things about me—indeed I'm sure I *am*!—and I want—oh, I want to get beauty into my life! beauty, glory, romance! There is something else for me than I see at present—I know there is! Outside this little circle of garden there

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is a wonderful other world! There it is, that other world, where there are thousands of beautiful, brilliant, clever people all working, all striving, all loving, all creating! I want to be among them, doing *my* part—and that's really why I studied that waltz of Chopin's because it *spoke* to me of the things I want. Can you make me out, you poor, dear thing? I know you are good—you are awfully, dreadfully good! and I'm not—you want nothing and I want everything. Yet I go on being naughty and worrying you—just because I can't help it."

"Miss Knox, who had sat in a state of dumb and passive amazement, suddenly found her voice.

"'That's just it,' she said; 'you ought to help it—you *must* help it! You must control yourself and learn to behave, otherwise you will never learn; and as for the things you say you want, you will never get them!'

"'How do you know I won't?' I asked. 'You can't tell! Have you got the things *you* want? I'm already thinking of asking Pa to let me go to a finishing school.'

"I hailed with relief an interruption to the conversation in the appearance of Pa, who just then came out of a side door of the house into the garden, walking slowly, with the somewhat grave and patient air of melancholy which had of late become habitual to him.

"'Pa, dear,' I said, smiling up into his eyes, 'Miss Knox finds me so naughty!'

"The Doctor's worn, intellectual face brightened with a rare tenderness and softness as he looked at me.

"'Well, dear child,' he answered gently. 'Is it your fault?'

"'Quite!' I declared. 'I suppose I shall be loved some day, shan't I?'

"A shadow of trouble crossed his features.

"'You are loved now, little one,' he said. 'I love you very dearly. Isn't that enough for you?'

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" ' Oh yes ! ' and I hugged the hand I held with enthusiastic warmth. ' I mean—oh ! I mean what the poets write about. '

" A startled look came into his mild blue eyes.

" ' You mustn't believe all the poets write of, ' he said. ' It is part of their gift to idealise and exaggerate human emotion, ' pressing the little hand that gripped his own, but I said nothing, and looked a little tired and puzzled.

" ' Isn't she making progress ? ' he asked, addressing Miss Knox.

" Miss Knox thought a moment. ' She is a difficult child. Sometimes she surprises me by her quickness and aptitude, and at others her indifference and indolence are really distressing ! She played a difficult valse by Chopin most brilliantly this morning—she tells me she studied it by herself. That shows she *can* work if she will. Then in history and literature she very often appears to be very well instructed. '

" ' She ought to know something, ' interposed the Doctor, with a slight smile, ' for she is always reading. '

" ' Ah ! ' sighed Miss Knox, ' that is just the trouble ! She reads without method or discernment—not always the right kind of books, I fear ! She was poring over Moore's *Life of Byron* yesterday, and last week I found her actually trying to read Voltaire with the aid of a French dictionary. '

" The Doctor laughed outright.

" ' A little incorrigible puss ! ' he said ; ' I'm afraid that's what she is ! And I'm not sure that I know what to do with her. '

" ' Send me to school. '

" He laid a gentle hand on my head and caressed my hair.

" ' Do you think you would like that ? ' he asked doubtfully ; ' I'm not at all certain that you would be happy. I'll think about it, ' he said after a pause. ' But in the meantime, dear child, do all you can to please Miss Knox, and try and learn what she wishes. Be patient and reasonable ! ' Here

MARIE CORELLI

he stooped and kissed me, and as he did so whispered, 'I understand you!'

"At this I smiled, and then listened with a comic air of penitence as he turned to Miss Knox, saying:

" 'She will be quite good now—for the rest of the day! I don't think you need worry about the books she reads—they will do her no harm because, as yet, she is unconscious of harm. It is as well, perhaps, that no possible harm be even suggested.' He passed a hand across his forehead with a gesture of weariness. 'The world will soon teach her all she wants to know and more than she wishes to learn!'

"He moved away from us, and resumed his slow walk in the garden, stopping to pick off a dead leaf or two from the rose-trees, and apparently absorbed in dreamy musings of his own.

"I watched him for a moment. 'Poor fellow!' I said; 'he's such a dear! He deserves everything and gets nothing!'

"I shook back my fair curls with a little defiant air, glancing back through the trees. The Doctor wondered whether the time had come for a 'parting of the ways,' for he fully realised that his child was no ordinary character to deal with.

" 'Something must be done for her,' he said; 'she cannot be left to herself.' "

"A strange retreat, the 'Dream Hole,' which I had made for myself, was in a little copse situated on the easy slope of 'Nip' Hill, just outside the garden, by the byroad leading round and over this hill, rich in fine trees and commanding a magnificent view from its summit. The hill was my earthly paradise and general playground; every day I climbed to its highest point and then ran all the way down again, knowing every hawthorn and juniper bush upon it; and after many scrambling explorations I had discovered what I called my 'Dream Hole,' where I passed hours in delicious calm and soli-

tude, reading my favourite poets and thinking my own favourite thoughts. The 'Dream Hole' was a deep hollow in the slope of the hill, deep enough to be almost a pit, lined with soft green grass and moss, and set thickly about with trees and shrubs so densely grown and intertwined together that only a small creature like me could have effected an entrance under the branches without difficulty.

"I knew exactly the place to slip in through the overhanging leaves and brambles, and, once in, I felt I had shut out the rest of the world, and was alone with Nature and my own eager, aspiring soul. No one would have given me credit for the quaint, original, and often beautiful ideas which crowded my young brain, still less would they have imagined the quickness of perception and accuracy of appreciation with which I was gifted. My judgment of fine poetry was wellnigh unerring, though no one had ever guided my taste or told me what I ought perforce to admire. I selected beauty simply because to me it seemed beautiful. I sat now in my 'Dream Hole' with *Poems* by John Keats open in my hand, though for the moment I was not thinking so much of the exquisite music struck from the life-chords of that poet's martyred soul, as of the difficulties which were beginning to beset my own young life. I had only lately taken to considering myself seriously; the modern cynic would have told me this was a bad, even a fatal thing to do. But I was a thinking creature—fortunately, or unfortunately, whichever way the satirist chooses to consider it.

"As long as I was in the child stage of life, and could forget myself in the reading of fairy tales and romances and the study of beautiful melodies, I gave no time to any thought of the future or what it might hold in store for me. Only, in these latter days, when the teaching of Miss Knox became more and more monotonous and unimproving, and when a kind of idea entered my mind that I was merely wasting time, a sense of

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rebellion came over me, together with a longing for wider knowledge. And to-day I sat in my 'Dream Hole,' hidden from all observers, puzzling myself over many things, and remaining so very quiet and absorbed in thought that a rabbit came out of its burrow within a foot of me, and sat on its furry haunches, scratching its soft ear and blinking its bright eyes at me without alarm.

"I stretched out my arms with a little sigh, and laughed, yet there were tears in my eyes. The watchful rabbit, startled at my movement, leaped away among the ferns, and a robin came instead, perching confidently on a twig close by, and looking at me with cheerful interest and an occasional twitter of melody.

"I laughed at my own thoughts, and then caught sight of the friendly robin looking at me.

"'You dear,' I said softly, 'you bonnie little thing! You are just perfect!' and then, turning the pages of the Keats volume, I read aloud:

"'Ye who have yearned
With too much passion, will here stay and pity
For the mere sake of truth; as 'tis a ditty
Not of these days, but long ago 'twas told
By a cavern wind unto a forest old:
And then the forest told it in a dream
To a sleeping lake, whose cool and level gleam
A poet caught as he was journeying
To Phœbus' shrine; and in it he did fling
His weary limbs, bathing an hour's space,
And after, straight in that inspired place
He sang the story up into the air,
Giving it universal freedom. There
Has it been ever sounding for those ears
Whose tips are glowing hot.'

"I was pleased and amused to see that my reading had not frightened away the robin which, with its tiny head on one side, appeared to be listening. The bell of some distant church struck the hour slowly through the stillness—it was six o'clock.

"Here I rose, shaking my dress free from some little clinging bits of moss and leaves, and the robin flew away. With reluctance I climbed out of the 'Dream Hole,' and pushed my way through its bramble-guarded entrance up to the smooth ridge of the hill and looked about me. It was a perfect evening, and the pure blue of the sky was scattered over with filmy stretches of rose-tinted cloud, deepening in colour towards the west, where the sun would presently sink behind a fringe of stately elms whose boughs were darkly outlined against the pink flush on the low horizon.

"All so peaceful and lovely!

"Many tears did I shed in this little nook; many prayers did I offer up for release from my loneliness. Many books did I pore over with untiring patience, learning all I could, and craving to be taught more. I was indeed a very lonely child. . . .

"I had to play by myself and invent my own sports and games—and for this reason I had found my best pleasure in books and music. These talked to me—the books spoke to my mind, the music to ear and mind as well, and so I came under influences which were destined to work unexpected results hereafter. . . . 'I'll be something more than pretty!—I'll be clever!'

"Out under a heavenly sky of dense purple, powdered faintly with stars, I went wandering slowly, a little solitary creature, conscious of my own helplessness and of Nature's pitiless vastness—yet thrilled to the very soul by the sense of beauty everywhere—divine beauty and divine power towards which I instinctively endeavoured to lift myself, like a caged bird striving to expand its wings. I trod the dewy grass in

my little thin shoes, glad of the damp that cooled my feet, and heedless of harm ; and as I walked I heard a nightingale singing in one of the shrubs below the trees that grew, tall and upright, near the garden gate. Claspings my hands in an ecstasy, I listened to the rich melodious trill of the poet's bird—and, so standing, suddenly saw the moon rise above the summit of the neighbouring hill like a round white face peering at me, and a flood of silvery radiance began to shed itself over all visible things. There was no wind, not a leaf stirred, but the whole scene became gradually transformed into one delicate glitter of enchantment, like a fairy's bower, in which the nightingale's voice alone made music. My child's heart throbbed with a passion of yearning—involuntary tears rose to my eyes—I stretched out my arms entreatingly.

" ' Oh, I am such a little creature ! ' I murmured. ' Dear God, You who made the beautiful moon and the nightingale, be kind to me ! Help me ! . . . don't let me lose my way ! The nightingale knows where to find its nest—the moon knows where to rise and where to set—but I know nothing. Dear God, be my Friend ! ' "

" The silence of the night alone answered my poor little petition—that deep silence which so often crushes the appeal of the anguished soul. In the years to come I was to learn that from the unreachable vastness of the Eternal no reply is ever vouchsafed to the piteous prayers of ignorant humanity ; even Christ at the last was driven to exclaim, ' My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me ? ' Solitude is the appointed lot of each individual spirit ; it must fight alone, rise or fall alone, and its own unaided struggle is its own ruin or redemption."

" Would she ever find a ' Dream Hole ' like that on the side of the hill again ? She thought not. Yet beyond the ' Dream Hole '—far, far beyond—was the world ! The world

of men and women—the world of struggle and endeavour and conquest—the world!

"Full of healthy vitality, young and audacious enough, she was to believe that she—even she—might evolve for herself a nobler, higher, less servile and dependent way of existence than is found by the majority of men and women. Thoughts ran like quicksilver through the clear channels of her brain, she saw herself famous—rich—by her own unaided exertions—a 'personality'—and she built 'castles in the air' from the fresh material of her own ardent and active fancy. She would 'make money,' she said to herself—she would have a beautiful house of her own—oh, she would do wonders when she had learned a little more about the world, and when she was really 'grown-up'! Meanwhile . . .

"Daisies thick on the lawn like little white stars, and the thrushes and skylarks singing their own special 'Hallelujah Chorus'; the gardener, old Goring, squat and lazy, would be making a great pretence of hard work by weeding one of the flower-beds—and to him she would go gaily, longing to talk to somebody for a few minutes before Miss Knox arrived with 'Henry the Eighth.'

"'Well, Goring,' she would say, 'how are *you* this morning?' and after a short talk run off, her golden curls floating in the light wind and catching glints of the sun, and Goring would stand for a moment looking after her. His brain was thick and his notions were self-centred and hazy, but there was something about the child which forced even his dull wits to realise that she was not quite like other children, and he would watch her out of sight.

"Out in the garden all was fair and bright, a gentle wind rustled the trees and swayed the flowers, catching and wafting abroad their fragrance, and over the deep blue of the sky floated light clouds. The singing of birds and the humming of bees

made pleasant music, and the child moving slowly across the warm grass felt a sense of hope and security; and the deep love of Nature, which was such an essential part of her being, stirred her to a sense of regret, almost a foreboding, that she must one day leave this dear old garden, the happy cradle of her childhood's years. The tremulous, wistful call of a bird came from somewhere in the bushes close by, and she ran to the house."

"Bear with Miss Knox a little longer; this afternoon we'll go for a ramble together up the hill, or over the fields—anywhere you like—and we'll talk out our troubles. Just now I must go to my work."

"She bent her head and touched the Doctor's hand caressingly with her lips. A little sigh escaped her as she thought of that 'work' which the Doctor always had ready as an excuse for shutting himself up alone in his study. It was a learned and copious dictionary of scientific memoranda, which might or might not be of use to a few—a very few—students of very involved and abstract problems—but it was not a book likely to be risked by publishers, or looked upon as necessary to general education. There was certainly no money to be made by it, and the Doctor's finances were daily becoming so straitened that, had he been capable of practical foresight, he would have put this particular 'work' aside for the time being and turned his attention to some better means of gaining the wherewithal to maintain even his small family. But he was a man whose mind, once set on a particular road of study and research, travelled on and on till that road came to an end—never caring much whither it led—to fruitful pastures, stagnant quagmires, or to a dead wall—and he persuaded himself that he was doing something extraordinarily useful, for which the world would some day thank him and give his name a place among the immortals.

"She looked up at him with fun and mischief in her eyes—
'I believe—yes!—I really believe I could be clever—if I only
had the chance!'

"He disengaged his arms from her coaxing clasp.

"'I see,' he said in pained accents; 'it's the same with all
young people nowadays—they tire of home and wish to escape
from it—they want change and excitement.'

"'The man or woman who is born clever seldom waits
for a "chance," as you put it—a well-endowed brain contrives
its own destiny.'

"Miss Knox just then made her appearance and the child
hastened to meet her, giving her good-morning greeting with
a grace which melted the icy primness of that worthy lady.

"'Isn't it a perfectly glorious day, Miss Knox? Just
heavenly! And before we begin lessons I want to talk—yes,
I do! Now don't look cross! I *must* talk or I shall choke!—
I feel it all bubbling here,' and she tapped her little bosom
dramatically. 'Just half an hour!—dear old Knox, be kind
to me!—walk out on the hill with me—where nobody will
interrupt us—we'll get to the books afterwards and I'll be quite
good—but there's something in me that seems more important
than any book—to myself, I mean—there is, really . . .'

"A ripple of laughter interrupted her.

"'Oh, you dear thing! Haven't you *ever* read the bio-
graphies of really famous men and women? I have! And
you will hardly find one of them whose reading has not been
"desultory" or "haphazard," as you call it. Byron read just
whatever books he fancied—so did Keats—'

"'You think too much of the poets,' said Miss Knox.
'Poetry is, of course, very beautiful for those who like it, but
it does not give you the true aspect of things—'

"'Doesn't it? I'm not so sure,' and the child's eyes
raised reflected the blue of the heavens. 'But we won't argue,
Only I want you to understand, Knox dear—you *must* under-

stand—that I've made up my mind to be 'somebody!'—yes. You see, I *must* learn!—I *must* make progress if I am ever to do anything in the world—and I *will* do something!—I *will*!—and I'll be as unlike anybody else as I can!

" 'That would hardly be wise,' said Miss Knox placidly. 'You would then be called eccentric.' "

Such a governess might well have failed to see the spirit in the child, and to enter into her mind and share her interests.

Like many children, she enjoyed acting a part, but unlike many, even at that early age, she could plan a play and put words into the mouths of its characters.

"DEAREST PAPA," runs a letter in very childish handwriting,—"Could you give me *a plot* for a *drama* to write and work out for our private theatricals, a dreadful plot of Love and Murder?"

He replied :

"Don't know. Try me—with the offer of a thousand guineas! or, say, £1000 for the Love, and £3000 for the Murder!"

You mercenary individual! No, Papa, without any nonsense, *do* help me to concoct a drama—the *plot*, at any rate "

"Begin! I'll help—
The plot—the plot's the thing
With which to try the conscience of the King!
I've done the 'Three Wishes' all in rhyme.
No plot from me
Until I see."

PROGRAMME

OPENING FAIRY EXTRAVAGANZA

"THE THREE WISHES!"

Followed by the Sensational Drama
of

To conclude with Six Tableaux Vivants

THEATRE ROYAL, BOX HILL

The School Room at Fern Dell

Sole Lessee and Manageress, Miss M. Copland

On Wednesday Evening, April 12th

Will be performed at the above Theatre by a distinguished
Italian Company from the Grand Theatre of San Carlo
at Milan; the amusing Farce of

"ICI ON PARLE FRANCAIS"!!

To be followed by a succession of most

BRILLIANT AND STARTLING

"TABLEAUX VIVANTS"!!

Magnificent Costumes! Grand Finale! Wonderful Effects!!!

FOR ONE NIGHT ONLY!

ADMISSION FREE

NO FEES! Admission free to witness the unrivalled
STARS of the Season in their unsurpassed
BRILLIANCY AND GLORY!!!

"ICI ON PARLE FRANÇAIS!!!"

A FARCE IN ONE ACT.

Scene : " Spriggins' Cheap Lodgings at the Seaside ! "

Dramatis Personæ

Victor Dubois	SIGNOR LEONARDO JULIO PENONI
Mr. Spriggins	SIGNOR ROBERTO PERRINGHETTI
Major Regulus Rattan	SIGNOR MATTHAI
Mrs. Spriggins	SIGNORINA ANETTA PATTI
Angelina (her daughter)	SIGNORINA MARIA ROSSA
Julia (wife of Major Rattan)	SIGNORINA LIEBE MACLUDI
Anna Maria (maid of all work)	SIGNORINA CAROLINI

Intervals of ten minutes,

during which those Actors who do NOT take part in the tableaux will join the audience. The audience is requested to make room for them to see conveniently. It is hoped that none of the spectators will make audible remarks of a character likely to disturb the self-command of those who perform in the Tableaux Vivants. Any person so offending is liable to being instantly turned out.

GORGEOUS TABLEAUX VIVANTS!!!

I

Two Scenes from *The Sleeping Beauty*

Scene I : " Sleeping ! " Scene II : " Waking ! " Great effects !

II

Three Scenes from the Life of Marie Queen of Scots

Scene I : " Ave Maria ! " Scene II : " Rizzio ! " Scene III : " Adieu ! "

III

Two thrilling Scenes from Shakespeare's *Winter's Tale*

Scene I : The Statue. " O royal piece, there's magic in thy majesty ! "

Scene II : Restored. " It appears she lives, tho' yet she speak not ! "

IV

GRAND FINALE AND CHORUS

At the conclusion, the audience is requested to leave the Theatre as soon as possible. Dancing for everybody free of Charge ! Supper also free of Charge ! (NO CRITICS OR GREAT GENIUSES admitted.)



BUST OF CHARLES MACKAY

[Sculptor, Patrick Park

CHAPTER III

CHARLES MACKAY, LL.D., who loved his daughter so tenderly, and whom I had the honour to know so well and to esteem highly, was, in his day, a well-known figure.

He was educated at Woolwich, London, Brussels, and Paris. Born at Perth in 1812, he, at the age of sixteen, became secretary to Mr. William Cockerill, whose son John founded the great engineering works at Seraing, near Liège. He counted amongst his paternal ancestors the great family of Mackay of Strathnaver, in Sutherlandshire, a branch of a powerful clan, and was descended on his mother's side from the Roses of Kilravock, near Inverness, the owners for many centuries of one of the finest and most interesting feudal strongholds in the Highlands. Charles Mackay was intended for a military career, but literature claimed him at an early age. He became an experienced literary judge, with a refined and cultivated taste in all that related to polished and serious literature. He married early in life, and by his first wife had three sons, Charles, Robert, and Eric, and one daughter, Rosa, who died of fever in Naples at the age of seventeen. Charles and Robert sought careers in Canada, whilst Eric, the

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youngest, lived for the most part in Italy, where he studied as a singer, until the time of his father's illness, when he returned to England and joined us at Fern Dell, moving with us to Longridge Road.

Dr. Mackay's songs and poems came from, and appealed at once to, heart and brain in their glowing kindliness and in their strong love for good men, good thoughts, and good deeds. He was inspired by a passionate love of the people, and in his own words :

"I think I loved my kind
And strove to serve it too,
And in my secret mind
Adored the good and true."

He first published a book of poems, receiving for it the sum of £5.

This first attempt gained for him a post on the staff of John Black, editor of *Morning Chronicle*. He contributed many stirring political ballads and *jeux d'esprit*, besides, owing to his skill in foreign languages, working with the foreign editor. One of his colleagues was Charles Dickens. His early publications in verse were numerous, *The Hope of the World*, *The Salamandrine*, *Egeria*, and *The Legends of the Isles*.

He was essentially a song-writer, and was best known to fame by his ballads, and by these he wielded his greatest influence : "The Souls of the Children," "The Good Time Coming," "Cheer, Boys, Cheer," "Old Opinions," "Cleon and I," "Clear the Way,"

"To the West! To the West!" etc., are perhaps not well known to the present generation, but they were widely popular in their day, and many were set to music by Henry Russell. They used to tell how impressive it was to hear thousands of emigrants, when leaving England to seek their fortunes in foreign lands, singing these stirring songs on the ships as they lifted anchor at the ports. Nor was their help forgotten, and many were those who, on returning home with fortunes made, would call on Mackay and tell him what help and encouragement his songs had been. Among his numerous prose works were *Under the Blue Sky*, *Popular Delusions*, and *Forty Years' Recollections*; and a very early novel, *Long Beard, Lord of London*. His last work, a novel that he wrote in 1889, is still unpublished.

He accepted the position of Special War Correspondent for *The Times* during the American Civil War, held that post for four years, and returned to London when the war ended.

His second marriage, a romantic love union, was to Mary Elizabeth Mills, a widow, whom he had known for a number of years, and who was an extremely good-looking woman of Italian colouring and great charm of manner. To them was born at Gloucester Terrace, Bayswater, his daughter "Marie," in 1855. Christened Mary, after her mother, she was, however, until she adopted her pseudonym of Corelli, invariably called by its Scottish equivalent, Minnie. It was some time after their marriage that the parents left London and settled at Fern Dell, Mickleham, for it was a neighbourhood within easy

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distance by rail of London and his club, "The Reform," the then great Liberal centre. Here he used to be proud to boast that he was elected without a single black ball, though his friends were wont to retort, "It shows what an insignificant little man you are that you should have no enemy."

Many writers and eminent men were his friends, and Alfred Tennyson refers to "your friendly note," and tells him, "I live about two miles from Maidstone—in the village of Boxley. If you ever come my way I will give you a hearty welcome."

But men of letters and artists well know the crippling effect caused by weeks of waiting for money earned but delayed in payment, while their balance, if any, at the bank is growing smaller, and Dr. Mackay was no stranger to this condition. I daresay the popular song-writer often repeated his own lines to himself :

"Never mind;
There's a good time coming."

Mackay had a good claim on his country, and Lord Palmerston was instrumental in obtaining for him a pension from the Civil List of £100 a year. This often came to the rescue in time of trouble, and tided over many a pressing financial difficulty.

Such difficulties were, however, a good schooling for, and proved a great incentive and invaluable experience to, Marie, who was even now bent *à tout prix* on making a position for herself and on helping the beloved home. As she said, "It's liberty I want, just liberty to be somebody, to do something, and



SKETCH OF MRS. MACKAY, MARIE CORELLI'S MOTHER

MARIE CORELLI

I'll strive to obtain it." As a friend wrote to her father: "The little creature is being devoured by her own fancies, longings, and ambitions—and if I don't mistake, there's something out of the ordinary in her temperament—an amazing child."

CHAPTER IV

MARIE'S mother died in 1876 and was buried in Mickleham Churchyard.

Within two years I joined the Doctor and Marie, and became, in fact, one of the family, sharing their ups and downs, their pleasures and vicissitudes alike, and devoting myself completely to Marie and her home.

When the Doctor was fortunate enough to let his charming house for the summer months—and this would bring in some six or seven guineas a week—we would make trips to Scotland, Boulogne, or Brussels; but Scotland was usually our choice. These early journeyings were, to Marie, full of romance and enjoyment. As at home, there was, however, no margin for extravagance, and our plans must be governed by every consideration of economy. The west coast of Scotland offered great advantages, for Dr. Mackay had free passes for himself and his family given to him by his great friend, David Hutchinson, founder of the line of steamers (now Mac-Brayne's) plying the length of the western coast of Scotland, from Glasgow to Inverness, Staffa, Iona, Oban, Skye, Portree, Loch Coruisk, and other favourite resorts.

To Marie the freedom, the novelty, the beauty

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of the scenery was complete enjoyment; and she came deeply to love the Highlands. To a temperament such as hers, the mountains, with the beautiful ever-changing effects of light and shade reflected in the lochs, were enthralling, and when the time came to turn homeward, seeking to be alone, she would sit on deck, bidding silent farewell to loch, glen, and mountain.

She was already well versed in the folk-lore and romance of Scotland, and "bonnie Prince Charlie" and Flora Macdonald were her idols.

In those days, when at Oban, she would constantly row out alone on Oban Bay, and she has rowed me many times across the bay to Kerrera. How delicious the fresh oatcakes and new milk tasted in those days at the farm! I learnt from her how to use an oar, and my instinctive fear of boating and of being on the water vanished when I was out with her.

Edinburgh was always Marie's favourite city, and, little girl as she still was, Professor Donaldson was a cicerone who found delight in taking her about. "Sweety Ferguson" was a great rendezvous in those days. Until his death but a few years ago, Professor Donaldson, then Principal of St. Andrews University, and she remained close friends. Two years before his death, when at Mason Croft, he gave her an excellent portrait of himself, signed "James Donaldson, to his bonnie wee lassie," and told her how pleased and proud Dr. Mackay would have been to see her in her beautiful home at Stratford, with so many of her dreams realised.

On my first visit to Edinburgh, I was a victim, much to Marie's delight and amusement, of what became a great joke at my expense. The day after my arrival we were walking in Princes Street Gardens, listening to the band, and the pipers were playing under the Castle Rock, when I was seen returning the salute of a gentleman who had gallantly raised his hat to me. At once I was asked by Dr. Mackay: "Bertha, whom do you know in Edinburgh?" "I don't know," I answered. But after long thinking, I remembered that I had had my hair shampooed in the morning, and had yielded to the persuasion of the hairdresser to spend 7s. 6d. for a bottle of hair tonic, and it was this same Mr. Sturrock, the fashionable hairdresser of Princes Street, who thus saluted me!

Our first trip to Brussels was most interesting, for we had a splendid guide in Dr. Mackay, who had lived in "le petit Paris" as a boy, and had been at school there. His father, then a retired British officer in the Royal Artillery, used to live in those old days at the top of the Montagne de la Cour, No. 83, at the corner on the left going down the street—a house then still standing; but when I went to Brussels again, three years ago, I found that half the dear old street had been levelled to the ground to make room for a modern boulevard and gardens, though I fancied I could still trace the house that had been shown to me by Dr. Mackay as that of his father.

Everything was new to us and every moment of interest. We found St. Gudule, the Cathedral,

magnificent. One day we had the good fortune to see it packed both inside and out, as the King and Diplomatic Corps were expected to attend a service there, with all the military *fanfare* attached to the ceremony. Dr. Mackay, Marie, and myself all three entered together, but in the crush we soon lost sight of Marie. Being small and alert, she had worked her way ahead and thus obtained a first place, whilst the Doctor and I were left far behind standing crushed and unable to move. A small trait, perhaps, but typical of her. Nothing daunted by the crowd, she had got as far as the front row of the nave, where a dear old lady had given her a *prie-dieu* to sit on. From this post of vantage she had seen everything.

We went, of course, to the field of Waterloo and to every place of interest in and round about Brussels. We had many little dinners at the Café Royale, Galérie de la Reine, then, at any rate, the restaurant *par excellence*. We were shown the house, rue Royale, fronting the park, where Lord Blantyre was killed in 1832. He went up to an attic of his house to get a view of the conflict between the Brussels mob and the troops of the King of the Netherlands, and stretched his head out of the window; a shot went through his neck and he was instantly killed, falling back into the arms of his wife. This is an incident not, I believe, generally known.

If little had, since Mrs. Mackay's death, disturbed the even tenor of life at Fern Dell, clouds were now gathering, and Dr. Mackay showed signs, unmistakable, of failing health. Suddenly, in 1883, he was taken seriously ill with a stroke. The local

physician from Dorking was summoned, but his report gave little encouragement, and he gravely impressed upon us that we must be prepared for the worst, and that arrangements should be made accordingly. The night passed in an agony of anxiety. Towards the dawn a slight improvement was perceptible, and when the doctor called in the morning, to his amazement he found the patient better; but further attacks occurred at intervals, and we were in a terrible predicament, not knowing what to do for the best. After a consultation with Dr. Benjamin Richardson, who staked his professional reputation that the invalid could not live three months, we determined to take him the twenty-two miles to London by carriage and horses.

We took a temporary furnished house in Kensington, just near a doctor, and here we could obtain medical aid within easy call, instead of tramping for it six miles on a long country road.

The change to town proved so beneficial that we decided to live in London, and the home at Box Hill was soon given up for good and all. Dr. Mackay took a lease of 47 Longridge Road, Kensington, and brought all his books and household furniture to London. Where there is life there is hope, and our plucky move had its reward, for he lived more than seven years longer, his mind unclouded and his interests fully alive. When it was fine he would go out to Kensington Gardens in his bath-chair, where he enjoyed the flowers and the happy laughter of the little children; at home he would often have some

of his Reform Club friends to chat with him. But, undaunted though we were, the task before us was no light one.

Marie was determined to succeed, and put her best into all she did with an intensity of purpose that was stimulating to watch. She had great ambition, but no conceit; in fact, her ideals and dreams were always more beautiful to her in the vision than when put into writing. I have often heard her say, "My pen cannot write fast enough, it is so difficult to give the right impression of what I feel and see."

I, for my part, did all I could for love of the dear souls with whom I had thrown my lot.

Marie was our inspiration and rose to every occasion. We soon felt that if our "sunshine," as we called her, were clouded over, the whole household was in shadow.

One of our young maids, "Jane," whom we had brought from the country, was most devoted to us all; she thought we were all too good to be served by her—in fact, we used to call her after Sir Walter Scott's famous retainer, "Caleb Balderstone," in *The Bride of Lammermoor*.

She left us, after many years of faithful service, to be married, and she is still "our faithful Jane," in touch with Mason Croft. After Marie's death she went into deep mourning and could not get over the loss of her beloved little mistress. It is typical of Marie how devoted her servants became to her and how ready to give their lives to her service.

It was, in the early days in London, still to music that Marie looked for her professional career, and she

worked unremittingly. Since childhood she had played brilliantly on the piano, and would accompany her singing, on the balcony at Fern Dell, on the harp—often, too, on the smaller Irish harp—as well as on the mandoline.

One of her first steps was to give a concert in 1884, at 102 Harley Street, under the auspices of her kind friends, Dr. and Mrs. Tanner. She secured a distinguished and fashionable audience. Among those present were Sir Francis and Lady Seymour, Lady Brassey, Lady Wolseley, Lady Reay, the United States Ambassador, the Mexican Minister, and many others. I well remember Swinburne and his friend, Mr. Watts Dunton, who were there, and it was *un succès d'enthousiasme*; the critics of many papers gave her great praise and encouragement.

"It was a remarkable and deeply interesting musical performance," wrote its critic in *The American Register*. "A charmingly pretty and *spirituelle* young lady, Signorina Marie Corelli, gave what she terms an '*improvvisazione*'—that is, she composed, while in the presence of her audience, no less than fifteen original pieces of music and played them off without taking previous thought. Apart from the astonishing boldness and originality of this musical feat, and nervous force and self-concentration required to plan and think out, while playing, all the gradations of light and shade required to create the various effects prove that the young lady is gifted in a very high degree with the rarest attributes of a brilliant artist. She accomplished all she had undertaken to do, without the smallest hesitation or loss of composure, playing with a firm, brilliant touch, and masterly execution. Her running passages were superbly rendered, and the tenderness and pathos of the piece

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improvised on Swinburne's poem of 'Madonna Mia' brought down enthusiastic applause. One could almost hear the exquisite lines throbbing through the music :

' Under green apple boughs
My lady hath her house ;
She wears upon her brows
The flower thereof ;
All saying but what God saith
To her is as vain breath ;
She is more strong than Death,
Being strong as Love ! '

Very inspiring too was ' The King's Hunt,' in the improvised romance of Henry II ; and the ' Funeral March of Rosamond ' was both solemn and weird in its intense melancholy. Splendid *technique* and graceful melody were displayed in the Italian ' Barcarola,' where the splash of the water, the beat of the oars and the voices of the boatmen all mingled in charming unison ; while the piece, ' Sul Mandolin,' was an exceedingly clever and striking imitation of the mandolin's sharp yet plaintive chords. Altogether, Signorina Corelli deserves high praise for the great novelty she has introduced into pianoforte playing, and her complete command over the fine ' Pleyel grand,' on which she performed, proved her a mistress of the art she practises."

And the critic of *The Theatre* wrote :

" A novelty in the musical line took place on the evening of December 4th. Signorina Marie Corelli gave an ' Improvisation '—that is, she undertook to compose, in the presence of her audience, no less than fifteen original pieces ; and she most successfully carried out what she had promised. The uncharitable among the audience said she must have planned out her

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works beforehand, but those who know her are well aware that this is just what she cannot do. She thinks out her subject while at the piano ; this could easily be noticed by any one who took the trouble to follow her through her exquisite improvisation to Swinburne's poem, ' Madonna Mia,' as every verse of the poem had its own special treatment. The names of her subjects are given on her programme simply to guide the minds of her hearers as to what she is thinking about. Her touch is brilliant and her execution marvellous. Considering the physical exertion she went through, and the immense strain on the nerves that it must have been to absorb her whole being into her music as she undoubtedly did, her performance was certainly remarkable. She will no doubt have many cavillers and objectors to her innovation, and she will have much to endure from those who dislike anything new ; but she is certain to please an audience, and the enthusiasm with which she was applauded showed plainly that she had not only excited the sense of wonder, but had also succeeded in touching and awakening the feelings."

Another critic wrote :

"In a performance so unique, and at the same time so varied, in which all was good, it is difficult to make a selection for special praise ; but, in my opinion, the gems of the evening were the impromptu on Swinburne's ' Madonna Mia ' and the ' Barcarola.' The first was tender, pleasing, passionate, and full, *avec des larmes dedans*, as the French would say ; the second was a *pièce de bravura*, full of point and sparkle. . . . A pity that all is lost ! There is no copy. An Italian, who sat near me, deplored this fact in his broken English. As a critic, as one knowing and loving the best music of the Italian school, I offer to Signorina Corelli my hearty congratulations on her success, hoping soon to hear her in larger and ampler halls,"

SIGNORINA MARIE CORELLI'S PIANOFORTE IMPROVISATION

THURSDAY EVENING, DECEMBER 4, 1884

Commencing at 8.30. Carriages at 10.15

PROGRAMME OF SUBJECTS

Note.—As Signorina Corelli will compose all the following pieces while seated at the Pianoforte, it is earnestly requested that perfect silence may be observed while she is playing.

A FOREST SYMPHONY

1. "Among the Trees."
Allegro moderato.
2. "Twilight and Song."
Larghetto cantabile.
3. "Moonrise." *Interlude.*
4. "Night and Storm."
Allegro appassionato.

A ROMANCE OF HENRY II

1. "The King's Hunt."
2. "Rosamond's Song."
3. "Lament for Rosamond" and
"Funeral March."

An Interval of Ten Minutes.

TWO STUDIES FROM SHAKESPEARE

1. "Good - night, good - night."
(*Romeo and Juliet.*)
2. "Pretty Ophelia."

IMPROMPTU ON SWINBURNE'S TWO POEMS

1. "Madonna Mia."
2. "Let us go hence, my Songs."

PICTURES FROM ITALY

1. "Sul Mandolin."
2. "Canzone d'Amore, 'Io ti voglio ben.'"
3. "Barcarola."
4. "L'ultimo bacio, l'ultimopianto."

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Mr. Swinburne was interested and delighted, and he was good enough to write giving Marie permission to publish her accompaniment of his two poems, "Madonna Mia" and "Let us go hence, my songs," should she wish; but unfortunately the music was not recorded and was therefore lost, and the songs were never published. How many of her improvisations have shared the same fate! How many evenings have I sat and listened as she, seated at the piano, would improvise for hours together her thoughts and pictures of the life beyond death!

She also very pluckily sang in London at one of the ballad concerts in the large St. James's Hall, as well as in Edinburgh and at several minor concerts. She was well received everywhere, but the rush and fatigue of the musical profession were beyond her strength, and thus a brilliant beginning to a musical career came to a sudden end—perhaps because better things were in store for her.

She now determined to turn to literature as a career. Dr. Mackay gave her a letter of introduction to George Bentley, and his reply came:

"DEAR DR. MACKAY,—I quite agree with all you say about Mlle Corelli's sonnets. They are much, very much, above the average, and I will look at anything she sends with pleasure. . . ."

On this encouragement she sent an article, "One of the World's Wonders." It was accepted and published in *Temple Bar* in July 1885, and for it she received the sum of £10, 10s.

This first success with the Bentley firm gave her courage to begin her first book, *The Romance of Two Worlds*, and when finished it was sent, at Mr. Bentley's request, direct to his firm, in those days a very important publishing house. His readers disagreed as to whether the firm should publish it, and Mr. Bentley decided to judge for himself.

"I have told my people," he wrote, "to send your story to me; I wish to read it as soon as I can, but I am so shaken by repeated attacks of asthma that my work is not so quickly, and I fear not so well, done as of yore."

After further waiting, the decision of George Bentley proved most favourable. He wrote:

"The book, as a story, is bold, clever, extravagant; it is an effort of wild imagination. Though I think it will provoke much adverse criticism, all must allow it to be the work of an accomplished mind, and its style and writing will commend it. I think it will be considered by some as the production of a visionary. The writer's ecstatic descriptions are scarcely to be paralleled outside the Arabian Nights. What my prosaic nature cannot get over is the belief that a human being, highly endowed with electric power can, by simply willing it, send another human being literally on a Voyage to the Moon. . . .

"Thus, I fear at great length, have I embodied my views on your remarkable work. . . . I shall be willing to publish the work on the royalty system, paying £40 on signature of Agreement, and £60 more if I reach a sale of 550; or, if you prefer it, £40 on signature of an Agreement, £30 more on sale of 450 and £30 on sale of 550; the copyright to remain yours, I only to have the right for one year."

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No better fate awaits a book than that it should excite controversy. Lord Kaimes used to say :

"I never buy a book which all praise, and I never buy one which all condemn, but, when some exalt and others depreciate, then I buy."

She was very proud of that "big sum," as she termed it, but she might have been asked to accept less, according to a letter from Mr. Bentley (November 1885) that I found only recently, for he and his readers appear to have estimated wrongly its length.

"No doubt you did not observe in signing the Agreement that it specified three volumes. Had we known it to be only two volumes, our offer would have been different, as the expense of advertising a two-volume is as great as the advertising of a three-volume book, with but two-thirds of receipt.

"I feel, however, that it is more agreeable to my feeling that the £40 paid should stand, but we shall have to modify the subsequent payments and cancel the present Agreement, substituting a two-volume one. . . ."

A little later he wrote :

"I am glad that all is arranged. Nothing now remains but to try and make a success of your first venture. The work has the merit of originality."

Marie was now the possessor of what was, to her, a very large sum—her first material earnings in literature—£50. She spoke of this to her old friend, Dr. Edward Lane, and asked him to place it for her in his bank, the Charing Cross Branch of the Union Bank.

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"My dear child, though I am on the Board of Directors," he replied, "the custom is not to open an account under £200, but I promise you to see what I can do."

A fortnight afterwards he came in his brougham in high spirits and took us both off to the bank, for Marie's introduction to the manager—with two cheques, namely, £10, 10s. and £40 l

In the bank manager's office a very pleasant interview took place, and with such an introduction all went well. The manager was certainly amused and impressed. All the formalities of opening the account were gone through, and then the cashier proposed the issuing of the cheque-book. "Yes, please," Marie answered, "but 'very small cheques.'"

In later years the manager and herself often laughed at this little incident of the "very small cheques."

She certainly had no extravagant idea of spending it all at once.

Returning home, she felt that she had transacted a most important piece of business and that everything prospered.

The Romance of Two Worlds was published on the 19th February 1886. On the 8th Mr. Bentley writes, "I think politics may hurt the sale." This was not very encouraging, but on the 22nd he wrote in brighter vein :

"DEAR M^{RS} CORELLI,—I shall be perfectly ready to give full consideration to anything which proceeds from your pen ; all the more readily, too, because I see you love wholesome

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thought, and will not lend yourself to corrupt and debase the English mind.

"I have no greater pleasure than to bring to light a bright writer like yourself. After all, the brightness must be in the author, and so the sole praise is to her."

A few days later (April 10th) Bentley writes again :

"DEAR M^{RS} CORELLI,—Have you seen the *Pall Mall Gazette*, 'An Audacious Novel' ? It would be likely to move the book if only the extraordinary Gladstonian excitement was not carrying people off their legs. . . . I expect that our rather 'thick public' will be slow in appreciating the Romance, but, if it once takes, it may go off well."

The late Clement Scott, who prided himself on having been the godfather of many distinguished authors, was interested from the first in Marie Corelli, and claimed her as a literary godchild and none more interesting. To him, he writes, came the ever-haunting voice of his first love saying, "Encourage that girl ! She is clever ! She is brilliant ! She has a pure and delightful mind. She does good ! Accept all you can get from her."

From time to time Clement Scott had received, as he wrote, "some delightful and exquisitely written 'copy' from a young girl called 'Marie Corelli,'" and the pieces were published in the *Theatre Magazine*. He took much pride in his discovery.

Oscar Wilde wrote at the same time :

"I have read the book over again . . . you certainly tell of marvellous things in a marvellous way."

The glorious figure raised me gaily by the hand and we floated on and on, higher and higher past little circles which my guide told me were all solar systems, though they looked nothing but slender garlands of fire, so rapidly did they revolve and so swiftly did we pass them. Higher and higher we went, till even to my untiring spirit the way seemed long. Beautiful creatures in human shape, but as delicate as gossamer, passed us every now and then, some in bands of two and threes, - some alone; and the

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A month later, Mr. Bentley made the personal acquaintance of Marie, and in a letter of 11th July 1886 writes :

"I am anxious for your success. The afternoon at Longridge Road remains with me as a pleasant memory. I am so glad to have seen you. I little expected to see so young a person as the authoress of works involving in their creation faculties which at your age are mostly not sufficiently developed for such works."

The first criticisms she received may perhaps be quoted.

The Athenæum of 13th March 1886 :

"*A Romance of Two Worlds* is so serious and didactic in its tone that one is compelled to accept Marie Corelli and her story in good faith, as being not consciously deceptive or misleading. . . .

"The book will make no converts, but, considered as a romance, pure and simple, it may entertain its readers not a little. The style, at any rate, is unexceptionable, and the ideas are for the most part elevated and refined. Marie Corelli is not the first who has attributed wonderful curative powers to electricity, but she may fairly claim to have done it in an original fashion."

In the *Globe* of 16th March the critic said :

"It embodies this central truth, namely, 'the existence' of powerful electric organs in every human being, which, with proper cultivation, are capable of marvellous spiritual force. As might well be imagined, the story she has based upon this remarkable 'truth' is eminently eccentric. It is wild and fantastic ; but it is also clever and ingenious."

And the *Whitehall Review* of 4th March :

"There is no question as to Marie Corelli's power as a writer, but her choice of subjects is open to question; doubt and mystery march hand in hand, not that *The Romance of Two Worlds* is a novel in the Johnsonian acceptance of the term, it is much more of a treatise on electricity in its bearing on our life and actions. . . . Human electricity is the author's theme, and so thoroughly does she believe in this science herself that she waxes eloquent and impassioned and discourses so fluently that, in spite of himself, the reader is carried away from the world into the land of dreams."

And the reviewer ended his criticism with these words :

"It does not pay in these days of rioting, materialism and socialism to deal with the impossible, save in a fairy-tale; and, great as are this author's talents, she must turn her attention to things terrestrial and leave the forces of the air to fight their own battles."

Yet in a sense Marie saw, with the genius within her, something of what scientific discovery was to lead towards, and, if the book "made no converts," it may be said to fail in this respect only by being written before the minds of the people in general were prepared for many of the scientific truths which are now commonplaces.

Mr. Bentley had written in June :

"I am right glad that Society is paying you the attentions it honours itself by paying you. Every one must recognise ability in your story, and if I am prosaic enough not to expect a marked success from a story founded on the material you

have chosen, *tant pis pour moi*. Our public is an unimaginative public. Emerson long ago said, 'The English mind likes to stand upon a fact,' but I shall be rather surprised if your next book is not a success . . . it is a powerful story and a great stride forward from the first book . . . indeed you are just now under the care of some very good fairy—long may she watch over your destinies."

The "next book" referred to was the manuscript of *Vendetta*. Mr. Bentley thought the story "most varied and ingenious to a degree"—"a great advance" on the first book, a book of "power," and one which "marches on to its awful finale with the grimness of a Greek play."

And again :

"I should have been mortified beyond expression if the public had not responded to the marked power of your first book. May the New Year bring you its best, and across it may no cloud come to you."

Unlike many writers, Marie was scrupulously careful in the preparation of her MSS., and had her reward and encouragement when the printers reported that, "owing to the scarcity of the corrections, and the clearness with which they were made, revision would be unnecessary, which would be both a great gain in time as well as saving of expense."

Of *Vendetta*, Marie wrote me at the time :

"The entire story has passed through the Press in one week! I have never been worked so hard, and I am very tired. The printer's 'devil' was here three times yesterday; this morning he came at ten o'clock for the last time, and I gave him a good breakfast—tea, eggs, bacon, bread and butter

and strawberry jam—you should have seen his dirty little face grinning all over with pleasure.

"My neck aches with bending over the proofs and correcting; I could go to sleep for hours."

Marie took great pleasure in discussing books and writers with Mr. Bentley in her chatty letters to him, and in one of them he answers her :

"I have been an admiring reader of much in Carlyle's works. I think him a heaven-sent man; he was a great prose poet, too, whose images were too rough for rhythm but which had a rugged grandeur."

And of George Eliot :

"It seems to me there are two (if not three) George Eliots.

"We will be content with two : the George Eliot of *Silas Marner* and *Adam Bede*, and the George Eliot of *Middlemarch* and subsequent works, such as *Daniel Deronda*. I remember the feeling I had on reading *Silas Marner*, the conviction that a woman had arisen who had masculine power with the quick instinct of a woman. I remember how richly her imagination painted for us that solitary man, and carved out his character and surroundings with some approach to Balzac's gigantic power.

"Before this, we had been delighted with the humour of Mrs. Poyser in *Adam Bede*.

"George Eliot then marries Lewes, and with him she loses her individuality, which she subordinates to his; and, unfortunately, we have the analysis carried to extremes, and we see the process, which ought not to be.

"In both phases she is a remarkable woman. I do not think her characters are absolutely true to nature. . . . I never feel that I know them with the intimacy with which I know

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Jane Austen's characters, and her own letters appeared to me so commonplace, considering what she has published. I can only imagine that she never revealed herself in letters.

"Her descriptions of scenery in her letters are weak and hardly different from the most ordinary writer.

"Her written life has left no distinct impression on me; we have only got a faint shadow of George Eliot in it."

Then concerning Miss Broughton :

"I see Miss Broughton's defects, but they are outshone by her conspicuous merits, and I know no writer in my forty years' experience who less owes her success to the Press, which is only a herd of sheep—one rings the bell and the rest follow. You are quite at liberty to tell my opinion of Miss Broughton's unindebtedness to the Press to anybody."

Of George Meredith, her old friend and neighbour, he wrote :

"George Meredith has written books of the highest merit, full of original thought—the manner and matter equally original. I have the strongest delight in his books and buy the new edition of each as it comes out."

The friendship with the firm and the family of Bentley grew precious to Marie; visits to Slough were frequent, and when her little dog Patch, her constant companion, died in 1891, it was in Mr. Bentley's garden that it was buried. "So much more than a dog, so much better than a man, his life was spent in devotion to me," she writes on a page of a table calendar; "his last look was for me, and he died at my feet."

CHAPTER V

BEFORE *Thelma* was finished, the long hours of creative work, followed by the uncertainty as to how her books would be received, not to mention monetary anxieties, and the anxiety as to her invalid father, had told on Marie's health. Few who are not writers—and especially not writers of fiction—can know the strain imposed by literary "creation." The long hours at her desk in a London atmosphere—the mind, whether conscious or sub-conscious, never at halt—had made a complete holiday, with change of air and scene, essential; and Marie accepted an invitation to stay for ten days with some friends who had a house at Tighnabruaich, in Argyllshire, seizing the opportunity for an excursion through the Kyles of Bute to Oban, Ballachulish, Staffa and Iona, Inverness, Loch Ness, and the Caledonian Canal—scenery unsurpassed for true Scottish beauty; with changing colour at every turn on the lochs, the mountains rising, deep purple, sheer out of the water.

"TIGHNABRUAICH, ARGYLLSHIRE.

"How I wish you were here," she writes, "enjoying the exquisite scenery that is before me at the large windows fronting the bay. I can see the splendid distant mountains of Arran rising purple and grand like storm-clouds.

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"Tighnabruaich is, of course, not so pretty as Rothesay or Oban—Rothesay looked glorious to-day as we passed it. How I do wish my dearest little Papa were here to feast his eyes on the land he loves so well. I have thought of him all the way; he is so associated with the scenery. . . . I do wish you and Papa and Patch (her 'wee doggie') were here. The mountains of Bute and Arran are green and misty blue. I hear the splashing of the little burn at the side of this house.

"It is quite the fashion now in Scotland to 'camp out.' Over in Bute there are two young men and their sister, the sons and daughter of a rich London banker. They have a beautiful tent which has a floor that folds up like a portmanteau—and they have three hammocks—a curtain to divide the girl's hammock from her brothers—and all the dearest little contrivances you ever saw. They have a guitar and a flute, and they sing together—we hear them every night . . . no hotel bills . . . one of the young men told me that his sister was an excellent cook. . . . It must be great fun. They have books—a game of chess, cards, backgammon—and a beautiful little dog, who keeps guard. . . . I think some day I shall try that way of enjoying a summer trip.

"If by a wish I could transport you and Papa here you would soon be here.

"You must *not worry*, remember, keep bright and cheerful, and I will do my best to get strong and hearty in this magnificent air, and be a comfort to you all when I come home.

"You must not allow anything to fret your sweet nature or you will get old before your time, and what is the good of cultivating wrinkles? *Don't do it*—look at Papa, who, in spite of all his ailments and worries, has such a clear brain and quick sense of humour; and, you know, if we wish to grow old gracefully we must commence by being young cheerfully.

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"On Saturday afternoon we went out fishing . . . we pulled out very softly to a deep place and let down the anchor, and we commenced operations. We baited the lines with mussels—it was quite exciting to sit waiting for a nibble. I caught the first fish—he came up wriggling and shining; he was what they call a *gildie*, delicious to eat (for I ate him the next morning at breakfast). But, alas! he was the only one I caught, for some big fish or other seized my bait and made off with the hook and all!

"What are so wonderful in this bay are the sea anemones—they float past our boat like immense scarlet flowers or pink and blue cups—most delicate in colour; I never saw such exquisite things.

"I do not get tired here at all. I was climbing and rowing all day yesterday and was not a bit fatigued. I can pull the oar as well as ever, quite strongly and evenly, feathering the blade in true style.

"I wish you were here.

"Inverness is a very lovely city, but not at all Highland in appearance; one would hardly think it was Scotland at all if one did not see the towering form of Ben Wyvis in the background.

"The air here is magnificent—strong, fresh, and bracing—it seems to invigorate the lungs with every breath.

"Last night, coming home from a walk, I saw a crowd of people standing on the bridge, gesticulating and giving themselves over to great excitement. On asking 'what was up?' 'It's just the saumon (salmon); they're coming by the two or three hundred at a time.' As it was Sunday, no one could attempt to catch them, so the fish had it all their own way. The Ness is very shallow, therefore the salmon were plainly visible, swimming leisurely by scores from Loch Ness into the Beaully Firth, their long shining bodies glittering like

gold and silver as they passed along in full view of all the people. Now and then one of the fish would *jump* over some little obstacle with a big splash, and the people on the bridge all laughed and shouted as if they were at a play."

Writing to her father she says :

"Inverness is a place that grows on one; it really looks lovely from the suspension bridge that leads to the 'Islands,' which I daresay you know well. No doubt all this scenery is familiar to you, and you know the pretty nooks and corners better than I can image them.

"It has made a very pleasant impression on my mind, though it is not at all *Highland* in appearance to one who admires, as I do, the mountains of Mull, and the great dark, gigantic 'sugar loaf' hills that guard Glencoe.

"The 'Islands' of the River Ness! You walk out from the town about half a mile along the banks of the river and then you see two fairy-like wooded islands right in the middle of the rushing stream. These are connected with the mainland by graceful suspension bridges over which you cross, and at once find yourself in a perfect little paradise of wood and ferns, where there are cool arbours, seats, and shady avenues, through the thick foliage of which you see the Ness sparkling and gambolling over the stones—the water so astonishingly clear that you can watch the salmon trout disporting themselves as gaily as if there were no such things in the world as a rod and line.

"Twice a day, with the tide, the Ness becomes full and deep, with a strong current flowing towards the 'Beauly,' then it subsides and the children paddle across it, actually trying to catch small fish with their fingers!

"There are no end of sportsmen down from London enjoying themselves in this river. They wade into it up to

their waists and stand in it for hours catching trout. These anglers are dressed first of all in wool from head to foot, and over the woollen things they have a complete suit of mackintosh. These are the 'swell' fishermen, but I have seen many who go into the water bare-legged with just a wool jacket on. They all look very funny. If you look at the river, you just see the upper half of their bodies above the water, and, though the wind blows strongly and the river is cold, they do not seem to tire in the least, and remain there hour after hour like Patience on a monument. It is quite a craze, and I cannot understand the fascination they find in it. The train from London to-day has emptied hundreds of gentlemen into the queer little streets of Inverness—this is the 12th of August—and the hotels are full. I see some very handsome specimens of the gentleman Britisher—fine, broad-shouldered, erect, keen-eyed fellows, talking unmistakable English, and laughing good-humouredly at everything.

"Inverness is too far for people who have not much money (all are not allowed free passes like me!).

"Just look at the atlas and see how far north we are, and what a long way your 'jolly beggars' have ventured. Be sure you look at the route—I like to think you will do so.

"The little wild roses enclosed I gathered on the 'Islands' for you—they grew in a spot fit for Titania herself to live in—so lovely and romantic.

"Walking along the High Street, a superb rainbow suddenly shone out high over my head—I do not remember ever to have seen such a peculiarly brilliant one. Of course, I accepted the omen—and visions of my 'Victoria' and trotting ponies, with my little Papa inside it, covered with a splendid rug of black fox fur (nothing cheaper would suit us, then), came before my eyes. . . . But who shall satisfy my far-reaching Monte Cristo land of ambition ! ! !"

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She reread *Macbeth* through carefully while there on the scene of the tragedy, and doubly appreciated it.

"Cheer up; I believe we shall all be quite rich before we know where we are. I am going to work desperately the week after I get home and I intend to chatter incessantly like Tennyson's brook.

"I came across an American edition of Tennyson in the library and this I copied for you both:

"TO CHRISTOPHER NORTH

You did late review my lays,
Crusty Christopher;
You did mingle blame and praise,
Rusty Christopher.
When I learnt from whom it came,
I forgave you all the blame,
Musty Christopher;
I could *not* forgive the praise,
Fusty Christopher!

'TENNYSON.'

To her father she again wrote:

"I am very glad to hear that my darling little Papa is a good boy and is writing his 'Literary life' as he *ought to do*, for a more interesting one will scarcely be found. Make it gossipy, because you know how every one likes well-told personalities. . . .

"I have been reading your *Dream*, by Beaucl, and I smile over the lines where you wish to be

'Far from the bustling crowds that swarm
'Mid the great city's endless riot!'

Ah, a poetical but not a wise wish! And

'How happily my days would flow
In converse with these woodlands quiet!'

You would simply become an oyster, and as for the 'hollow pomp' and 'festering Coronet' alluded to further on—'if so be, why not?' as Bunsby remarks in *Dombey & Son*. The 'hollow pomp' would support the Coronet, and we could very well support them both with £20,000 a year!

"Nevertheless it is a graceful poem and descriptive of the scenery all round here."

In another letter she expresses some fear of running short of funds, and they were not very considerable so early in her career.

"I am rather anxious and my mind is worried, in spite of all this loveliness here. Can Papa lend me £2, 10s. as a little loan? but don't worry him. That tiresome Bentley! not a word from him since his last letter. However, I am keeping my spirits up and look at the bright side always. I shall be rich some day soon. God bless you both and pity the sorrows of a poor novelist.

"I have not told you about the splendid Benedictine Monastery at Fort William. It is so quaintly built that it looks quite old and hoary, like a relic of long-past ages; and to see the monks sitting in their picturesque court, or strolling meditatively through the beautiful cloisters, makes one fancy oneself back in the middle ages, surrounded with all the repose of that unhasty time; and one forgets for a few minutes all the heat and scramble and selfishness of the nineteenth century.

"When we visited the Benedictine Monastery a young, pale, æsthetic-looking monk, very like the pictures of Fra Angelico, gave me a superb cluster of white moss roses—twenty of them at least. I do not know why he should have selected me as the person to receive these lovely flowers."

In Oban she had made many friends, and one was so glad to see her that he showed his pleasure by

meeting her with a present of a large basket of fine grapes and bouquet of magnificent roses.

Through the purser of the steamer comfortable apartments were found with a strange Scotch body, a Miss Maggie McKl——, as her letter told us.

"I could fill sheets of paper telling you of the oddities of our landlady; she is the queerest soul you ever met! . . . This morning when I came down I found her staring at a kipper. I had bought two kippered herrings last night for breakfast. Well, the cat ran away with one, and Maggie stood staring at the other with tears in her eyes!

"I ran into the kitchen and asked her what was the matter.

" 'I canna tell what's come o' the ither kipper!' she moaned. 'I wadna tell ye a lee. I ha'ena ate the kipper! I canna think what's come till't! I wad deserve to dee if I had ate the kipper!' She was so overcome at the fate of the one kipper that I saw she was never going to cook the other—so I toasted it myself, she staring at me all the time.

"It reminded me of the Irish tramp who passed a fashionable hotel and picked up the head of a herring and put it in his pocket. Later on he had a *force majeure* to contend with, according to his conscience and way of thinking! A terrific thunderstorm broke out. Pat could not stand it any longer and, walking back, threw the head of the herring disdainfully away where he found it, muttering, 'Such a d—— fuss for nothing.' "

"The day I took the steamer to Staffa it was a grand experience for me when the first mate of the *Chevalier* proposed that the third boat should row into the cave—so we went right into it to the very end—and I stood up in the boat and sang, 'Praise God from whom all blessings flow' and 'God save the Queen.'

"It did indeed look magnificent—the water was of an

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emerald green, sparkling into shades of coral pink and pale blue—the basaltic columns shone and glittered with a kind of prismatic light caught from the sunshine and water—it was in truth a Cathedral of the Queen, where one might expect to see old Neptune himself holding a choral service.

“The first mate, before I left Staffa, insisted that I should sit in Fingal’s ‘Wishing Chair’; a kind of arm-chair made by the columns and hollowed out like a seat, but a place that is *inaccessible* at high tide, and even at low tide is dangerous to get at.

“But, with the mate, I was not nervous, and I was the only one out of a party of three hundred tourists to whom he proposed this idea, so I took his hand and clambered to quite a dizzy height, and sat there enthroned, looking down in triumph on all the people who stared up at me.

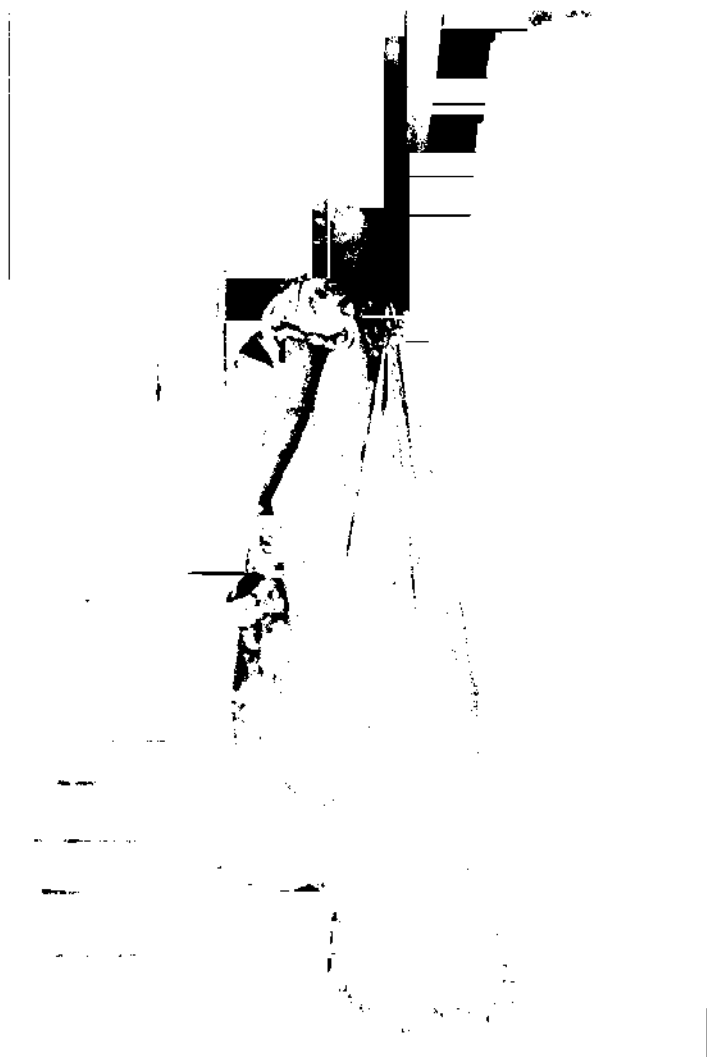
“The mate then told me I might have three wishes—so I thought very carefully and made three very prudent wishes in secret. Then the mate said, ‘Ask loudly to have them granted within the year!’ I did, so it happened that I was the only one who took away Fingal’s promise.

“It rained in torrents at Ballachulish, and I thought of our trip there when we had that joyous ramble and got so drenched, and the dear cottager dried our shoes and stockings, fed us with oat-cake and milk and wished us well, begging us to come back again.

“I ought to describe all these grand mountains to you, but I cannot; they seem to silence all the gabble of little humanity—Ben Nevis, in especial, giving a good sight of his grandeur, though he did not condescend to take off his cloud hat.”

“On my return journey, on arriving at Oban, I was *dead beat* and had to go to bed at once.

“I think I have seen enough mountains to last me for a



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long time. It is such a dreary wet day in Oban that it is quite miserable. It is too bad that our last day in the Highlands should be so wet and wretched.

"I am rather tired of knocking about the world and shall be glad to get home and settle down. You must not worry about money, my dear darling Mamasita. I shall enjoy returning to the old scenes and the pleasant routine of my work, which has been sadly neglected. Perhaps the best part of a holiday is the return to work after it is over. When I come home I will set to, like a Trojan. I cannot do any work at all here. Not an idea comes to me! But when I get back to my dear desk, with Patch [her dog] to help me, I daresay I shall soon finish *Buried Alive* [afterwards called *Vendetta*]. I long to see Papa and you and all the pleasant surroundings of home. Kiss Papa fondly for me, and tell him the trip to the Highlands shall come off next year if 'Marie Corelli' has any luck at all, and we will take a house at Oban.

"The world seems to me to be going all immoral together, I confess. I don't understand some people's reasoning. True, I used to be a flirt—but I think I never was a bad flirt—it was all play with me, all on the surface."

I find in some of her letters written to me from France: "*La petite voyageuse* on her own bat feels very proud to be going to France on her own earnings." So she wrote. Landing at Dieppe after a very rough passage, she had felt disappointed with the town, finding no national costume of the fisher folk and no beauty in the place. No doubt searching for suitable rooms till four o'clock did not enhance the comfort of the party, especially in the wet, with no umbrella, but, as she cheerfully wrote, "I did not

spoil my dress or hat in the least." I had rather looked forward to hearing that she and her friends appreciated Dieppe. I had early childhood recollections of the place, having been three years there at a boarding-school. The school-house was on the Falaise at the top of the Faubourg de la Barre. We were three sisters at the school, and I can remember our little red-riding-hood cloaks and our long curls. In winter it was bitterly cold. How we did tuck into our beds! No heat or fire in the dormitories, and our poor little toes and hands were always covered with chilblains.

In those days the beautiful carvings in ivory, done by true artists, were an attraction of the town, but now the industry has almost died out. It does not pay, so the art of carving, which descended from father to son, is given up. None of the beautiful shops that used to be such an attraction are left. I still have my carved ivory confirmation rosary with the infant Jesus lying on the Cross.

Marie writes to her father :

" On to Rouen we came. Between ourselves, I shall not be sorry when L—— returns to England, for her idea of enjoyment is to be on foot all day, seeing everything in a rush and hurry—a very fatiguing and most unprofitable way of doing things. She seems to have a sort of nervous old-maidish horror of missing anything. I like to take my pleasure tranquilly and also studiously. I think of you, dear Papa, and Bertha very often, with all love and tenderness. You must not allow yourself to be depressed about anything—we are going to fight for you, and in a very little time, I feel that Marie Corelli will be quite rich, able to do all sorts of good

things for her darlings. Bright days are coming, of that I am quite certain.

"'There's a good time coming. Wait a little longer.'

"A thousand kisses and fond embrace from your loving child,
'MIMONA.'"

To Marie Rouen was a very fascinating old town. She little dreamt then that she would open her book, *The Master Christian*, in Rouen with the words :

"All the bells were ringing the Angelus. The sun was sinking ; and from the many quaint and beautiful grey towers which crown the ancient city of Rouen the sacred chime pealed forth melodiously, floating with sweet and variable tone far up into the warm autumnal air. . . . The last echo of the last bell died away—the last words enunciated by devout priests in their cloistered seclusions were said, '*In hora mortis nostræ ! Amen.*'"

She wrote to me that

"The country is a mass of fruit and verdure—the orchards are laden with apples and pears just turning rosy in the sun, and the effects of the landscape, with the Seine glittering through it like a silver snake, is exceedingly lovely. Rouen, from the heights, looks most picturesque, with the towers of St. Ouen and the spire of the cathedral standing well out from all the rest of the city."

She also visited the church of Notre Dame de Bon Secours, which has been famous for its miracles ever since the days of Francis I.

"The wonderful statue of our Lady literally blazes with jewels, and in the sacristy we were shown more magnificent ornaments, gifts from kings and emperors who had gained favour through this particular shrine. The church is perfectly

lovely inside and out—one of the most beautiful little gems I have ever seen.

"The view of Rouen from the heights of the Bon Secours is the grandest here; the hills are high and steep and are covered with magnificent rowan trees, all laden with bright scarlet berries.

"It is quite a business to get up to Bon Secours."

In those days one went in a great clumsy omnibus drawn by six horses :

"The driver cracks his whip and talks all the time, and it is a very slow journey. But coming down into Rouen is quite a different matter; fifteen minutes, and it is a wonder the whole omnibus, horses, and passengers are not tumbled down the road into the city. We come at such a break-neck speed, with the driver lashing his whip, and standing on his box and yelling at the top of his voice to his horses, '*Holà, mes amis ! Plus vite alors ! Plus vite ! C'est ça, Sap-r-r-isti ! Plus vite, Holà.*' One was resigned to the idea of an upset, but all was safe ! It was an exciting ride and we laughed till our sides ached ! It really was fun ! . . .

"*Cheer up*; I shall come back so jolly plump and rosy, and ready to fight no end of battles. I will try to be such a loving tender little person. I feel very ready for work, and shall not be at home two days before going on bravely with *Thelma*, which in many ways I shall make still better—that is to be your book, and the world will know that Bertha is Marie Corelli's dearest friend. It is my opinion that it will be my best, as it will certainly be my most elaborate work. I mean the best of the three, till I write a fourth. I had a letter from Bentley just now, he is really fanatical about his new novelist. 'It fascinates me more each time I glance through its pages.' Yes, bright days are coming for all, all. 'Marie Corelli' will attain her highest ambition when she can make those she loves free from worry, and can surround them with proofs of her devotion."

CHAPTER VI

MARIE'S third novel, *Thelma*, proved a great stepping-stone to the success at which she aimed. I remember well our old friend, Dr. Norman McLeod, who called at Longridge Road to congratulate her immediately after its publication, saying, "I have been waiting for your third book with great interest, as the test of your place in literature. It has indeed surpassed *The Romance of Two Worlds* and *Vendetta*. Brava, little one! it has settled your fame and your future. You will never want. Your reputation is assured, and, like Lord Byron, you woke up one morning and found yourself famous." Such appreciation impressed and rejoiced us all. Mrs. Tom Kelly, herself a journalist, wrote of her :

"A romanticist, who, in weaving fiction's magic web, mingled reverently the dreams of the poet with the wisdom of philosophy and the inspiration of religion."

By some of Marie's intimates she was playfully called *La Mascotte*, owing to the singular spell she seemed to exercise in regard to fate and fortune :

"Who, in the magic of her powers,
Changes the day to night, the night to day."

Many of her friends, and even those most intimate in her home circle, marvelled at her great vitality. A rare and ardent sincerity was the secret of her personal charm and of her success. She could talk on almost any subject with a fluency that was both eloquent and fascinating, and she never lost the charm and persuasive manner with which Nature had so richly endowed her. She herself said of her work :

"I attribute my good fortune to the simple fact that I have always tried to write straight from my own heart to the hearts of others, regardless of opinions and indifferent to results."

But one secret of her success was undoubtedly her wonderful versatility—and her freedom from repetition.

Her theory, for instance, in *The Romance of Two Worlds* was so novel, yet so rational, that many readers wished to know more of her wonderful creed. Her correspondence on the subject was overwhelming.

One day I heard Mr. FitzGerald Molloy, a well-known name in those days, asking her, "Do you sit in a dark room to think your plots out and prepare them? I have to."

"Oh dear, no," she replied; "I can write anywhere, but I love sunshine best. The sun has a great effect on me. It is sublime; I love it. Several of my friends write that they wish they could send me some of the sunshine they are experiencing on the Riviera, knowing me to be in foggy London."

I remember her writing *Thelma* in her study (which was the back drawing-room) at Longridge

Road, so engrossed in her writing that she had not noticed the density of a fog which had settled down, one of London's worst. It was so bad and the darkness so intense, that I could not distinguish a penny from half a crown in the omnibus. On reaching the house I ran upstairs to announce my safe return, knowing how anxious she always was if those she cared for were out in a dense fog. I found the gas lit, and, to my surprise, herself absorbed in writing one of the opening chapters of the "Land of the Midnight Sun" in *Thelma* :

"Midnight without darkness, without stars! Midnight, and the unwearied sun stood, yet visible in the heavens, like a victorious king throned on a dais of royal purple bordered with gold."

It was here, in this back room, that she evolved *Thelma*; she, who had never been to Norway in her life; nevertheless, so vivid were the descriptions, and the colour, and the atmosphere, and the surroundings so true to nature, that guides in Norway to this day point out the scenes; even the very rock where Sygurd leaped to his death for love of *Thelma*. *Thelma*, delightful heroine, the beautiful and unsophisticated daughter of a Norwegian landowner farmer, the blood of the old Norse kings flows in her veins.

She planned the scenes, looking at a map for locality, and even that very casually; but her intuition and imagination were so great that she was unerring in the localities she chose. "Genius is the faculty, carried to an extreme, of seeing and thinking justly.

Many roads lead to the truth ; the man of genius is he who opens these roads."

Marie, like many people of artistic temperament and keen sensibility, had her times of natural depression, and in a letter from a friend I find these words :

"I was both amused and charmed by your modest doubt whether I should like your book. It was so like you—the sort of diffidence in your own power which occasionally sweeps across your mind like a cloud in summer, and sometimes saddens a landscape heretofore all hopeful."

But she was always busy and full of ambition. I have a precious notebook, with lock and key, wherein she would often write down the outline of a plot as it suggested itself to her. Her brain was so active and clear that a few condensed lines gave her the nucleus of a story she might one day write. Often people have said, even to me : "But who helped her ?" and my invariable answer has been, "Herself, and nobody but herself."

Yet she found delight in helping others. Soon after her own illness and severe operation at Hove, in Brunswick Terrace, in December 1897, she wrote and presented a plot, perhaps one of her finest, to her great friend, Clifford Harrison, whose talents she admired immensely. So great a giver was Marie Corelli that she was glad to give not only her thoughts but something of the immortality to which she believed herself destined, by preparing, and making over to that other the plot of what she thought should prove a great novel.

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Clifford Harrison, the popular and talented reciter, musician, and artist, always maintained stubbornly that he was quite unable to invent or to handle a plot. Marie supplied this deficiency. She feared that a severe illness, from which he was but slowly recovering, would put an end to his reciting and piano-playing, even prevent his working at his beautiful pen-and-ink drawings; and no one knew better than she the difficulty of living on such slender support, so she urged him to try writing a novel. What loving pains she had lavished upon that plot! Not only is it most completely detailed, but the writing of it was evidently a labour of love. In all those eight long foolscap pages of manuscript there is not one erasure, nor one slip of the pen. I have never seen a manuscript so beautifully prepared.

Every word is penned in her own beautiful handwriting—the plot itself in black, the headings and sidenotes in red ink, and the pages are fastened together with care by little bows of silk ribbon. The manuscript opens with:

“Lo! here behold—Ye plot.”

She gave him four titles for the book:

“THE DIVINE SYMPHONY”

A Romance

BY CLIFFORD HARRISON

“A RESOLUTION IN HARMONY”

An Idyll

BY CLIFFORD HARRISON

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"THE ANGEL DOMINANT"

A Love Story

BY CLIFFORD HARRISON

OR

"THE PERFECT CHORD"

A Fantasy

BY CLIFFORD HARRISON

Marie Corelli penned many novels, but perhaps none more romantic or more beautiful than this wasted effort of hers, the novel that never was written. She ended the MS. plot with these words :

"And the real nucleus of the whole slight idea, dear Poet, is this—that—supposing God purposes to give humanity something valuable or lasting, either in art or science, He will use indifferently two or two thousand lives to accomplish His purpose. The 'symphony' was a gift to the world of music. It needed two *lives* to begin it, and two *lives* to perfect it. There is no reason that it should end sadly; the two lives, thus fused into an immortal sweetness, could go on sharing happiness with one another. This you must decide. Whether to draw out the whole soul of the woman in a passion of love and imprison it in the Symphony, or to link that Soul with her lover's and inspire him to more music still. This, Poet, is *your* Problem!"¹

In August 1887, and again in 1889, Marie visited the Rhine, and during those travels she wrote almost daily to me. To my intense regret I have not kept

¹ A very interesting article on this subject was written by Coulson Kernahan after Marie's death, in the *Strand Magazine* for January 1925, with portraits and facsimile reproductions of manuscripts.

all these letters. In one she says: "Here I am reveling in the magnificence of the Cologne Cathedral. It is the most superb thing in architecture I have ever seen; it is a perfect poem. To hear the organ thunder through this sculptured forest called a cathedral bewilders me. I could wander about it for hours and get lost in thought and dreams." She also notes that the whole congregation joined in singing the Mass—but she felt that the effect was somewhat spoiled.

In her fourth novel, *Ardath*, she places the last striking scenes of the book in Cologne Cathedral. The following quotation from the Book of "Esdras" suggested to her the name of *Ardath*.

"So I went my way into the field which is called 'Ardath' . . . and there I sat among the flowers."

It was to *Ardath* and, in part, to the inspiration of Cologne, that she owed the appreciation which she now met with from fellow-workers eminent in literature.

Lord Tennyson wrote:

"I thank you heartily for your kind letter and your gift of *Ardath*. You do well not to care for fame. Modern fame is too often a crown of thorns, and brings all the vulgarity of the world upon you. I sometimes wish I had never written a line."

Theodore Watts, writing from Putney, said that he did not wonder that Lord Tennyson was an admirer of her work. He described Tennyson as a great reader of fiction and an admirable judge. As

for himself, he would have much to say about *Ardath*. She had praised some of his sonnets and this had clearly given him great pleasure. "Fame I do not want," he said, "but the appreciation of good and 'gifted' women is worth striving for."

The book brought both Gladstone and Sir Drummond Wolff, then British Ambassador at Madrid, to her feet. They wished to meet a writer who had given such a vivid description of the East, and they could scarcely believe that she had never been there. As with Norway, her imagination alone had pictured it.

"And what of Edris? What of the flower-crowned Wonder of the Field of Ardath, strayed for a while out of her native Heaven? . . . Edris is not so much sweet woman as most perfect Angel!"

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The last words of the novel run :

"A Dream of Heaven made human! . . . Let some of us hesitate ere we doubt the miracle; for we are sleepers and dreamers all, and the hour is close at hand when—we shall wake."

When in Cologne she was interested, like most visitors, in the Church of St. Ursula, and wished to see the bones of the eleven thousand Virgin Martyrs. "A very curious sight they are, arranged in patterns all over the walls; the skulls are covered with embroidery and precious stones. The 'Golden Chapel' is full of relics and wonderful pieces of lace studded with jewels. The church itself is very ugly—it is only the fresco of human bones that makes it in-

teresting, but it would be no comfort to me to say my prayers among all those skulls ; a most uncanny spectacle."

But she was not content to stay in cities. The country called her, and she loved to explore and see all that was of beauty in Nature.

There is a nook in the mountains of Siegengeborge unknown to most tourists, a hollow in the hills through which the Rhine flows. In a letter to me Marie describes it :

"The 'Rheingold' . . . and at sunset and sunrise this small *basin* set in the dark hills becomes pure gold in the light—you stand on the summit of the rock and look down some thousand feet, and the effect is, *not* as if it were water, but as if it were a solid block of gold thrown down there and lying motionless for some one to pick it up. No one could wish a wilder or more romantic effect. This golden lump of sunshine and water is called the 'Rheingold.'

"On the rocks all around the vines are grown in baskets fastened into the crags, and the wine produced from these heights is called 'Rheingold.' It is a most beautiful piece of landscape."

On 25th August 1887 she arrived at Bonn :

"The air is delicious, the gardens of the hotel are lovely and a mass of flowers, especially white roses—it is a perfect haven of rest, and the most enjoyable time I have had since I left home.

"I am writing this in the garden ; it is a beautiful morning and the Rhine sparkles brightly before me in the dancing sunbeams. Oh ! if I had only known what the actual beauties of the Rhine were I should never have gone to Spa. The Rhine

has not been overrated, but *Spa bas*; it is just like Dorking. It is a waste of time and money.

"The market-place of Bonn is exceedingly pretty—there are no two houses in it alike—they are the quaintest, funniest little zigzag buildings, many of them all awry, seeming about to tumble, with the oldest little windows and balconies; in fact, it looks just like a scene on the stage arranged for effect. One of the pleasantest things in Germany is the universal sweet good-humour and politeness of the people. In passing in and out the hotel, no waiter will push on his way before a lady—they all stand aside and bow and wait till the lady has passed. Then the German gentlemen are the same on entering a train or steamer; no man elbows or jostles a woman—he stands back instantly, often taking off his hat as one of the 'gentler sex' goes on before him. It is quite remarkable and very pretty to observe the universal respect and almost reverence with which women are treated here. . . .

"Two officers have just passed me on the terrace, with their swords clashing and the sun sparkling on their bright uniforms—both saluted as they went by this seat. They do not expect any return of the salute—it is a mere formal and graceful acknowledgment that a woman is present. Don't you think it is a pretty custom? I am altogether enchanted with the country, and already I dream of earning a 'chateau' on the Rhine to retire to in my old days! There is a superb one on the Drachenfels belonging to Count Stahn—it is called Drachenburg, a perfect palace! I wish it were mine. . . . There is such a wealth of literature in this country. What is more, the people love literature and think about it. There are lovely drives all about, and then the Rhine itself offers such a number of attractive excursions. In winter they tell us the town is extremely gay. Kermeses, concerts, students' balls, and all sorts of harmless merriment go on. The Rhine trip?—its loveliness baffles description—we have seen all the

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prettiest part of it, and all the romantic robber-castles on the heights, one particularly magnificent ruin called the 'Rheinfels,' standing on a majestic crag, pleased my fancy most. We saw the 'Lorelei' haunt and the rock on which she is still supposed to sit and sing. I was delighted with two quaint small towns, Bacharach and Oberwesel. The last-named place is more like a fancy picture than a reality—you can't imagine the effect of the toppling old houses with carved gables of all shapes, nestling under an enormous rock, crowned by a ruined castle, and the river flowing almost up to the street of the town. I had superb weather for the journey and enjoyed the trip immensely.

"Bonn is as romantic as any place on the Rhine. When fine I have all my meals in the garden. Last night I dined at moonrise, and drank your health and Papa's in Niersteiner, just as the silver queen of night came looking over the highest peak of Drachenfels.

"The charm of the Rhine begins only at Coblenz, and from there to Bingen it is one uninterrupted vista of varied beauty. Beyond Bingen it becomes tame again till it reaches Mayence, thence to Basle again very lovely."

The two officers may not have expected any reply to their salute. It may have been the custom of the German officer to salute every lady he saw, or, like the English nobleman, he may have saluted every beautiful woman as a tribute to beauty. The sentence is, however, typical of Marie who, if she loved pretty clothes and always tried to look her best, had no idea how pretty she herself was in those days.

She visited the house where Beethoven was born, and also the house where he lived as a boy. She climbed the Drachenfels and tells of "the Minstrel of the Drachenfels," an old man who, sit-

ting on a high summit, wearing a slouch hat over long tangled locks of hair, sang love songs to the accompaniment of his guitar.

Charmed by Bonn itself, Marie was tempted to settle there for six months and to learn German, and only the knowledge of her father's need of her prevented it.

On the Grand Terrace of Heidelberg Castle, Marie again writes :

"It is lovely, and I am strolling about the ruins of the Schloss. The view here is superb—one sees all Heidelberg at one's feet—hills all round and trees in magnificent foliage.

"The sun is shining on the ruined Schloss and all its half-spoilt scutcheons and carvings and statues; very beautiful. Ivy clings about it everywhere, trees spring up in the old banqueting halls and dungeons, and splendid masses of Virginia creeper fall out of the broken oriel windows and form into wreaths and long festoons of verdure—it is very beautiful.

"The American tourists here are exceedingly bright and sociable and I begin to say '*Vive l'Amérique*,' they enjoy everything so enthusiastically."

Ardath was finished in 1888, and published in May of the following year, and, to her surprise and delight, soon after its publication, on arriving at a dinner-party, to be followed by a large reception, her host presented her with a lovely bouquet of large white lilies, orchids, and roses, tied with long streamers of white satin ribbon, with the following inscription :

"The nearest approach we can find to the flowers of the 'Field of *Ardath*.' "

During the evening she had admired an engraving of an imaginary German portrait of William Shakespeare. Her amazement was great when, on leaving, she found that her host had unhooked the picture from his wall and placed it in her carriage for her acceptance. It pleased her so much to think of the kindness of the giver and that Shakespeare might, perhaps, have resembled it, that for the remainder of her life the picture stood, as it stands to-day, on an easel in her study.

At that time Marie was a close friend of Mr. and Mrs. Skirrow, and often went to their famous luncheon parties, where one met many of the celebrities of the day. There she was introduced to Robert Browning (whom she describes as "a charming old gentleman, so cheery and kind"), and to Sir Henry Irving, Ellen Terry, Wilson Barrett, Mr. Willard, and to Oscar Wilde and his pretty wife. To Robert Buchanan, too, who possessed that freshness which made listening to him a real pleasure, and whose gifts approached to genius. Of him Marie says in a letter: "Yes, I like him; that he has enemies is as it should be, if we believe, 'Woe unto you when all men speak well of you.'"

His poetry evoked her great admiration. His novel, *The Shadow of the Sword*, Napoleonic in theme and the scenes laid in Brittany, is a really fine story, and one that she warmly recommended me to read.

To Ellen Terry she was particularly attracted and, longing to do homage to her art, sent her, begging their acceptance, some turquoise earrings which were amongst her most cherished possessions.

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They were accepted, and Marie then wrote in reply :

"DEAR MISS TERRY,—I shall be proud and honoured if the turquoises (always emblems of good fortune) have the happy effect of bringing you here, if only for a few brief moments.

"Only favour me by letting me know the day and hour you will come, for *I would not miss you for the world*. Mrs. Siddons gave the earrings you now have to my mother, and I have always guarded them as something specially precious but, when I saw you in 'Viola'—after having been fascinated by your Beatrice—and moved to tears by your Juliet and Ophelia—I knew those trinkets *must* be offered to you—the most gifted and *spirituelle* genius of the modern stage.

"I long for your coming that I may try to tell you what I feel for you, and, awaiting with anxiety one line from you as a preparation, believe me, sincerely your earnest admirer,

"MARIE CORELLI."

The acquaintanceship ripened into a warm friendship which lasted all Marie's life, and after death (then Dame) Ellen Terry called for me to take her to Marie's grave, on which she placed a beautiful wreath of lilies and, falling on her knees, said, "God bless the darling." In Longridge Road they were neighbours.

"I had a splendid view of Irving and Ellen Terry to-day," she wrote me ; "the well-known hansom stopped at 33 Longridge Road, and down came Irving with his tragedy strut ; he then turned and handed the fair Ellen out, as though she were an empress, and she, with her fair hair and delicate smile, looked as though she trod on air. She really is very sweet."

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In spite of the claims of work and the social claims which were growing in number, Marie found, or rather made, time for reading.

"The great literary treasure of the moment," she wrote me, "is Edward Fitzgerald's letters—never was man more modest, more content with little. Feed him with the thoughts of the greatest minds and he has his desire—his translation of Omar Khayyam is superior to the original";

and she enjoyed nothing more than, at social gatherings, to talk of books and to hear the opinions of men in the best position to criticise. I remember once a Professor of Mathematics, who was visiting us, saying, "The more I see and hear Miss Corelli, the more astonished I am at her knowledge. On many occasions I have probed her with questions without showing my purport, and never has she been baffled by them. Her memory and concentration are so remarkable that I sit in wonder at the knowledge in the brain and the depths in the soul within so little a body." Also, such gatherings led to suggestions, the outcome of her work.

"I sat between Mr. T. P. O'Connor and Mr. le Breton, the famous Q.C., both of whom were exceedingly attentive and pleasant. I am to receive a visit from Mrs. Langtry shortly: she has taken a fancy to the plot of *Vendetta*, and wants to create 'the Nina Romani' heroine."

I could rarely be away for a few days on end without receiving welcome letters from Marie, who delighted to keep me as closely informed of her

doings as though we were together and able to discuss them.

"The table last night was exquisite—a large piece of cloth of gold went down the centre, strewn thick with piles of *rose leaves* and edged with roses. The odour was lovely—and the large lamp in the centre had a huge deep shade, made in the fashion of a damask rose hanging *downwards*. Mr. Peter was there with his usual ponderous sentimentality; that man whom Villiers describes in *Ardatb* as 'one who was nothing, does nothing, and is considered therefor the greatest gun of all.'

"Mr. W. H. Mallock wrote to me last night, saying he was coming to see me on Monday, accompanied by Mr. Ernest Beckett, M.P., a young orator on the Conservative side of the House.

"Mr. Mallock, for instance, is one of the leading writers of the time, and he is a very great admirer of mine.

"You must not mind when you see any abuse of me in the papers. I have had the courage to attack truthfully the cliques of criticism and the party spirit pervading all modern art and literature, and, of course, those who are stung retaliate. But it does not in the least matter while all the best literary men are rallying round me, and Bentley is not only satisfied but proud to be my publisher.

"I am not very much afraid now of my financial future, as Mr. Bentley seems to consider that my next books will all increase in royalties, so, if I keep my health and my wits about me, I shall probably be able to do many a pleasant thing for my dear Bertha—and the day may after all come when we may winter in Egypt together and look on the great Sphinx face to face! No one is like you in sincere honesty and love. I know how to value a true friend beyond all the mere fashionable acquaintances.

"I do love peace and rest; I shall never be a follower of Society."

Soon after meeting Wilson Barrett she received a very welcome letter from him :

" There will be a crush to-night, and I feared you might not get as good a box as I wished, if it were left to the last. I have selected your place myself, and enclose the number *marked*, that you may have no inconvenience. Wish me well, and I shall succeed. W. B."

There was real excitement and a house filled with celebrated people on this occasion, when he first played *Hamlet*, and the Prince and Princess of Wales added to the importance of the event by being present unheralded.

" On Bank Holiday I had such a jolly afternoon. I had an open carriage and drove to Hampstead to see friends. I took Madame de Hayden with me. The day was lovely and we drove forth all along the Spaniards Road to see the fine view over the Heath and surrounding country, a view loved by Turner ; its lovely sunsets inspired him.

" We met Mr. Willard, who is very good-looking, Mrs. Willard, Farjeon the novelist, Theodore Watts, Swinburne's friend, and George R. Sims, and many others ; it was altogether a perfect afternoon.

" On Thursday we went to a grand 'crush' in Upper Phillimore Place, where I was introduced to Mr. Rider Haggard. We sat in a cosy corner together. He was very courteous and pleasant. I was made quite a little fuss of, no end of people asking for introductions to me, and there were about two hundred persons present.

" I was introduced to Miss Mary Robinson, the novelist, and Mrs. Alexander (the lady who writes about her heroine's heart being *plus fort* than her body), a good-natured old soul,

who greeted me with a *courtesy* and said, 'I have the honour of meeting a genius!'

"Oscar Wilde was present and kept me no end of time talking on the stairs. Lady Wilde, his mother, was there in a train—dress of silver grey satin, with a hat as large as a small parasol and long streamers of silver grey tulle all floating about her! She did look eccentric.

"Mrs. Oscar Wilde, a very pretty woman, interested me, in a Directoire costume, with tall cavalier hat and plume, and a great crutch stick."¹

"Mr. Farjeon, the novelist, said to me, 'Everybody seems to be going to Switzerland. Good-bye! We shall meet at Thun or Interlaken.'

"He told me that I was the only *new* writer among women who had really made any positive sensation among literary judges; and that every one spoke of me as the new Georges Sand! So let us hope God's blessing will bring prosperity all round."

Like George Sand and other great artists, Marie suffered from and disliked criticisms by anonymous writers. I have often felt and said that of literature every criticism ought to be signed; there should be no hitting in the dark. The temperament of the true artist, whether writer, actor, painter, sculptor, or artiste, is so finely strung that injustices are felt to the quick. It would be all to the good if they never saw unsigned attacks and so ignored them.

Of an interesting luncheon party at Mrs. Bonnor's Marie wrote:

"She has such a magnificent house in Queen's Gate Terrace—all full of wonderful antiques. Her drawing-room chan-

¹ Poor soul, after all the grief she was to suffer, she died of a broken heart in a Brussels hospital.—B. V.

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deliers came from the Doge's Palace, Venice. She is very kind and nice. Mrs. Skirrow was there, and tells me she has written a long letter to Wilson Barrett urging him to produce *Vendetta*. Poor man! he will wish me at Jericho!

"At Mrs. Hogg's dinner I met Rhoda Broughton.

"She tried to be agreeable this time, and of course I responded amiably. She wore a black velvet gown, with a front of white lace, low-necked, short sleeves, etc., pearls round her throat, red roses on her 'boo.'

"I also met Hamilton Aidé, the novelist, who took me in to dinner, a very charming little man indeed."

And at Mrs. Hogg's party she met Ethel and Mabel Webb of Newstead Abbey—which Marie many years later visited for its association with Lord Byron—charming ladies both, who many years later presented her with a sapling of the Byron Oak at Newstead, which now flourishes in her grounds at Stratford-on-Avon. At this same party she was introduced to the Earl of Southesk, a very pleasant old gentleman, very intellectual, but very frail; also to Mr. Frith, the dramatist, son of the great painter.

But when deep in work at a novel, she firmly refused all invitations, even one to Goodwood races, which she received at a luncheon party where she had met a number of Life Guards' officers—a party at which she had, for her, the novel experience of meeting soldiers and diplomats in uniform and Court dress, who had come on from a levée.

On the 3rd August 1890 *Wormwood* was finished, and, as she wrote—

"The last of it goes off to Mr. Bentley to-morrow morning. So my soul is free from my dreadful Parisian

man—he has crawled away out of my horizon and has disappeared.

“Mr. Bentley is charmed, horrified, startled, and excited all together with my book—he says it will make a *furor*, so that is all right!

“Now I expect to get away immediately after Bank Holiday. Yes, I know you will enjoy Switzerland if you have any eyes for what is perfectly grand and lovely in Nature—it is a country that cannot disappoint one who has the spirit of an artist.

“I shall take care that you have a good time, for I shall not do a stroke of work. I shall rest and show my Ber all that is worth seeing.

“I shall do no work at all in Switzerland. I shall only think and dream and inhale the sweet mountain air and listen to the tinkle-tinkle of the Swiss herds.

“The weather keeps fine and warm, so I hope we will have a good August in Switzerland and then return by way of Paris (*D.V.*) to London, and I have made up my mind not to work too hard this Xmas; I will spend it in seeing pantomimes and plays.”

It was after she had finished this novel that she conceived the idea of writing a book round Shakespeare's little son, and in a letter to me says:

“The clouds of my imagination are turning into soft rosy and gold colour, and I see a little figure with wistful eyes and serious baby face advancing towards me, called Hamnet!”

She wrote three chapters, but no more, and it was never taken up again.

CHAPTER VII

ONCE a year, for three or four weeks at a time, I used to leave Marie and her father and take a holiday at Liège, with my mother's sister, Mlle Camille de Gobart, a very religious and bigoted old lady, very tall and elegant and austere, going to at least three early Masses every morning of the week. During my visit she used to wake me before six o'clock with a tap on my forehead, "*Berthe, lève-toi et viens me rejoindre à la messe.*" Berthe often did not obey the command, and purposely dozed off again. *La tante* reminded me of Madame Beck in Charlotte Brontë's novel. On entering a church she would beg me to say five Paters and five Aves, "*pour gagner une indulgence pour le repose de l'âme de ta mère,*" and on some days we visited, before getting back to breakfast, five churches, and in each church we had to win these indulgences. The corner of my aunt's handkerchief was tied up and contained centimes, and all the beggars knew her so well that out went their hands at her approach, and a few centimes would be generously given, followed by bows and "*Merci ! merci !*"

No wonder Marie wrote to me in light vein :

"How fares the Liège Côtier ? Is tante Camille as *triste* as ever ? *Entre nous*, will she carry such a long face to Heaven

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when she dies? She will make the dear little Angels believe themselves to be '*une triste famille*.' Tell her she is not to keep you too long, and that when I pray to Our Lady, she always grants my prayer; but before asking I always thank her heartily for everything I have got.

"Write me as often as you can, and do not ogle that big clumsy 'Herman' too much with those eyes of yours; it is naughty. Mind you tell me all your flirtations.

"I have just got your letter saying you are not coming till October 5th. I confess this is a most bitter disappointment to me, for I have been calculating the month from Thursday to Thursday. Dear Ber, would you feel it very hard if I ask you to come home by Saturday, instead of delaying it so long? If you knew how really suffering and worn-out I am, I am sure you would come. I cannot bear to contemplate actually nearly another fortnight to wait. So, dear Ber, do come home if you can. Surely your aunt will not persuade you to remain when she knows the circumstances. I am so fearfully lonely and Papa becomes so fretful and unmanageable.

"I cannot believe you are having so much enjoyment at Liège—you have been away very long. I do implore you to come home, though I do not wish to appear selfish, but I feel that I shall be really ill if this nervous strain goes on much longer. I write this in great haste. Oh, I do pray you will come home next week; do not let me pass two more Sundays before I see you.—Your sorrowful wee one. Do, do come to oblige me."

"My own little Mamasita! how glad we shall be to see you.

"I make Patch stand up and clap his paws together when I sing:

'Auntie Ber is coming home,
Hurrah! (*clap*) hurrah!'

"I cannot tell you how I long for the day. *Take care of yourself, and mind nothing happens to you on the way.*"

"I shall be so glad to see my old Ber back, for I feel as if I had been very useless for a month, not having done a stroke of original work. Housekeeping wouldn't suit me—I'd rather be a sort of wandering Bohemian, living where the fancy took me, than have a big house and servants to look after; or I should like to be like Marion Crawford: rent a house in Sorrento and write in a sea cave bordering on the Bay of Naples.

"P.S.—Patch sends several licks and sighs. The heat tries the poor little beast very much. I went out this morning with him to get strawberries and other small affairs required; he was very good, but panted all the way with the heat; I felt inclined to loll out my tongue and pant also, like the doggie.

"I have one of my splitting headaches to-day and a very bad cold into the bargain—trotting after the housekeeping, feeling ill and ready to tumble each minute, with a huge batch of proofs at home awaiting 'immediate correction,' is not very inspiring.

"I feel wretchedly done up to-day, but must write to my dear Ber, or she will think me careless.

"Your little wee one embraces you fondly and sends you dozens of tender kisses, and wishes you were here to sing '*Il était un petit navire*!' to soothe her poor head.

"I am very glad you feel that you have left '*home*' behind you, and I hope it will always be home in the truest sense of the word, that is, a place where there is always love and unity."

After such earnest pleading I yielded easily. I was glad to return.

"I did want you so much last Sunday, for I had to entertain everybody, and get them to entertain each other. Mr. Sholtowe and the amusing Mr. Frith¹ carried cups of tea about, and cakes, and seemed to relish everything extremely—while Clifford

¹ Walter Frith, dramatist, and son of the painter.

M A R I E C O R E L L I

Harrison stood by me, taking his tea and talking most charmingly. A friend was perfectly enchanted with Rubini (a favourite canary)—the dear little bird was in the drawing-room yesterday on that very tiny table, and, seeing himself looked at, he raised his head and sang the sweetest little song you ever heard, so soft and mellow, just like a fairy flute. He was greatly admired; the friend knelt down and gave him a bit of cake on his finger, which Rubini accepted condescendingly.

"Don't bother about the other little birds, dear; it will only be a trouble and an expense to you. I can wait for them.

"I do love peace and rest, I shall never be an admirer of society. I like my Ber and all those that immediately surround me, and I love to give them all the pleasure I can. I am happiest with the simple life, surrounded by cheerfulness, and the sun shining.

"You are no doubt wondering why I have not written to you since Saturday, but I have been so busy *sewing* that I have not had a moment. That rose-coloured silk dress was a tiresome thing to manage, it having been so cut about, but it looks fairly decent now. I went in it yesterday afternoon to Mrs. Skirrow's grand 'at home.'

"I have received the Agreement from Bentley, with his cheque for £40; if you want an extra sovereign or two you know where to apply—to the rich novelist! I can't believe I have really got so much money."

Liège was then, as now, a fascinating old town, standing as it does on the banks of the Meuse; in fact, to my mind, one of the prettiest in Belgium.

At the beginning of the Great War I could well realise the terrible situation of the Liègeois, and how bravely they defended the town and gained that fortnight of delay in the onrush of the hordes of

Germans pouring into their small neutral country. That fortnight meant very much to the Allies.

Marie, when living in London, was "at home" to friends on the first and third Sundays in each month during the season. She wrote to me at Liège that she spent a chatty and jolly afternoon, mentioning among the callers Madame Adelina Patti, Sir William and Lady Cusins, the Countess Minerbi and her daughter, Mrs. Wood, the Australian actress, with a charming personality, Major Kavanagh, Mrs. Jackson, Miss Helen Maguire (an Irish beauty), Sir James Macdonald and daughter, and Mr. Sinnett.¹

"Dr. Edward Lane made himself agreeable and fascinating as usual; he inquired after you and sends his kindest *amitids*. He has arranged a trip to Stratford-on-Avon for October, just when the trees are turning to their lovely autumnal colours, so you will be able to go with us to the hallowed ground of Shakespeare's birth, and probably Clifford Harrison will join the party. Mrs. Annie Wolf is a bright American woman, writing for the *Philadelphia Press*. She's a charming little body, very wide awake, with all her wits about her.

"Chevalier Martegg, the husband of Minnie Hawk, invited us all to stay with them at the Château Tribschen, Lucerne. How lovely it will be! Then my dream of really seeing Mount Pilatus and the Rigi will break upon me like a splendid revelation."

Again, she writes :

"Clifford Harrison's reception on Wednesday night was a most brilliant affair; about five hundred people were present; Bond Street was literally blocked with carriages. Archibald

¹ Then a well-known psychiatrist and close ally of Mme Blavatski.

Forbes, the indefatigable and famous war correspondent, was there.

"Write as often as you can, and think much of home, sweet home, where the same restless little writer is wearying up and down her study, with numerous plots of novels working in her head, and only bricks and mortar to inspire her.

"This letter is posted by my 'Ariel,' an electric sprite devoted to my service."

In Marie, the study of the human mind and of personality was instinctive—and her summaries were acute and just.

"Janie has an earnest, philosophical, inquiring, and clear mind, a thinking woman without affectation. There is but one thing in Janie that is needed, to my mind—to have the hovering shadow of scepticism quite removed—and then what a steadfast, sweet, reliable, really womanly woman of the best type we should have! And perhaps, after all, scepticism does not really exist in her; it is the reflection only of the general tendency of thought in this day. She is a very interesting creature to me."

In September 1889 Marie went to Switzerland with Mrs. Dawson and niece, and Eric Mackay, and enjoyed it thoroughly. In one of her letters from Montreux she writes :

"Yesterday, among other interesting things, we saw the house where Byron lived for many months in the little village of 'Les Planches.' We were shown the windows of his rooms—the place is now called the 'Pension Visinand.' It appears that in this same village of Les Planches there are two old women who *remember him*—we are going to try and find them out. They say he was noted for his kindness to little children, and

that he always took two or three little ragged rascals with him to show him the way about the hills. He was looked upon as rather mad, because he liked to lie flat on the top of great heights and look down. He would stay a whole day on the mountains without food, writing. So much we have heard—and, I daresay, with a little trouble, we shall find out some more.

"I am *very well*, very merry, and not at all tired—getting quite brown and rosy. . . . Hair out of curl, and I don't mind; hat blown off, and I don't care—I feel quite a gipsy! I am looking forward with great delight to the excursion from Montreux to Chamonix over the Tête Noire. I think I shall try to see the Mer de Glace, if I don't get too nervous."

Marie wrote me an impression of her visit to Martigny and Chamonix, from Montreux—to her the most wonderful excursion she had ever made, and, in its way, adventurous.

"I now quite understand the fascination people get for climbing and getting up to wonderful points of view; at Chamonix the spell seizes you, the air inspires you, and you feel as if you could go anywhere and dare anything!

"We started on Wednesday in the afternoon for Martigny by train, a party of four, all very jolly; and put up at the Hotel du Mont Blanc. We bargained for a carriage at the Société Générale des Cochers. At last all was settled, and we went to bed in a grand state of excitement and expectation, anyhow so far as I was concerned. On Thursday morning precisely at eight o'clock we started *en route* for Chamonix, in a carriage that looked very battered and dusty, with a driver in a blue blouse, also very dusty, and two horses harnessed in a most peculiar fashion—that is, the one horse was fastened in the usual way between the shafts of the carriage, the other outside

the shafts altogether as if he were alone, just tied to his companion by bits of old rope! They were good, sturdy, strong animals, and knew their work thoroughly, as we afterwards proved. Off we went—as good-natured and merry as possible, in spite of the heat, which was excessive—though the air was so lovely and clear that it would have been wicked to complain! Out of Martigny, we began to wind up steep ascents, higher and ever higher, while the scenery grew grander and grander; snow-peaks peeping up in every direction, while around us the lovely green slopes and rich foliage of the trees refreshed one's eyes from the sun's glare—flowers of all sorts were everywhere—wild pansies, crocuses, gentians, wild strawberries—a perfect wealth of flora.

"Steeper and steeper grew the ascent, and we got on the Col de Forclaz, a huge mountain peak high above the valley where Martigny lies—and at a little inn on top we stopped for the horses to refresh themselves, not to mention ourselves.

"I must not forget to say that of course we frequently got out of the carriage and walked as much as we could in the great heat. From the Col de Forclaz we went on to the Tête Noire, and the magnificence of the landscape increased with every step of the way. When we reached the middle of the Pass we got out for lunch and the horses were unharnessed for food and rest (the poor things were steaming with perspiration).

"Our lunch was bad and badly served, but we didn't mind that. We paid, after lunch, a visit to the 'Gorges Mystérieuses' and the 'Pont Mystérieux.' The pictures in Gustave Doré's 'Inferno' are the only resemblance. The climb up from this splendid Gorge, however, was terrific. After this climb the horses were harnessed again and on we went—impossible to describe the glorious scenery, the numerous wild waterfalls, the rushing torrents tearing along beside us, the superb heights, reaching up to the very heaven as it seemed. One enormous mountain, called 'Bel Oiseau,' was like a round castellated

fortress from the bottom to the top. The afternoon wore on and towards sunset we came in sight of Mont Blanc. A dazzling mass of snow suddenly flashed at us from between two peaks—we all shouted ‘Mont Blanc!’ and then the royal giant vanished again and we descended slowly into what is called ‘the Valley of Desolation.’ It is a wild, bare scene—no trees—precipitous rocks on all sides, great boulders and crags larger than large houses flung down pell-mell on the plain below, and the road is very steep and rough and lonely. Presently, however, we came to the pretty village of Argentières, and there I saw my first glacier! It is a big mass of ice lying for miles down a gorge between the mountains—it is a bluish green in colour and looks like a heap of frozen foam. But it is nothing to what we saw afterwards.

“Mont Blanc now rose up in all his majesty to greet us, his great dazzling peaks sparkling all over with rose-colour in the sinking sun, and in another hour we reached the village of Chamonix and drove up to the Hotel des Alpes, just in time to get an excellent dinner. Such a scene of liveliness and bustle you cannot imagine! Girls in short climbing skirts, with alpenstocks—men looking very picturesque with big hats, loose coats, ice axes, etc., nearly all *English*! It appears that the English have got the reputation at Chamonix for being the best climbers in the world and the women the pluckiest. Telescopes were pointed up at Mont Blanc after dinner, and we were able to see a party of six people, who had left on the *previous day*, all climbing up the steep white ridges like little flies. I gave up all attempts to describe Mont Blanc by starlight; it was too divinely lovely to be described!

“The next day, Friday, we ascended the Montanvert.

“While I was toiling up the Montanvert I met a cow! You know how frightened I am of cows! but this one looked at me very gently and shook her big bell to and fro with a pretty tinkle. On I went and the cow gently stepped aside.

I met an elderly American on a mule. He raised his hat, and said cheerfully, 'Nearly up at the top now! Bravo for the ladies!' Well, at last we reached the top and there before us lay the Mer de Glace. This is the most wonderful sight I have ever seen, but I did not realise how wonderful till I went across it. We got a guide and started. On arriving at the edge of the Mer de Glace we had to draw woollen socks over our boots to prevent slipping, and the guide requested us not to move without his assistance. Now imagine an ocean in storm with high billows and fancy that God said, 'Stop! Be frozen as you are for ever and ever!' You have then some faint idea of the scene. Billows of ice—some a thousand feet thick—the colour is a brilliant sapphire blue, tinged here and there with green; these large ice waves are split in all manner of shapes, making deep crevasses and precipices of ice, so steep that it makes some people dizzy.

"Two *men* tourists had been on it just before we went there. They were stuck and would not move an inch forward or backwards. They'd had *le vertige* and could scarcely manage to walk back to the hotel. Well, 'nervous' little I walked right across the most difficult part, and the guide, judging I had no fear, called me to lean on his arm and look down a crevasse. I did so—oh! it was beautiful—a sheer precipice of dazzling blue ice, and below the rush and roar of an unseen torrent. I enjoyed it more than I can say, and was in a perfect ecstasy of delight, it was such a sublime scene—this grand work of Nature—one felt so close to all the mysteries of creation and so careless as to what might happen to one's self.

"The guides always have great hooks and ropes ready in case any one has vertigo and slips down a crevasse.

"After leaving the Mer de Glace we descended—it was almost worse than the climb. I began to feel as if my knees were broken. The walk was fifteen miles, but I was not overtired.

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"I am not spoilt for home; on the contrary, I shall be delighted to get back and resume work in earnest, for I have only been playing with my pen, and have not been really in harness. But I shall soon make up for lost time; I feel greatly encouraged to find that my reputation as an author is quite as well known on the Continent as in England; and Papa's encouraging letter too, about the novels he has read lately, have made me feel that after all there may be something original in me. Let us hope so, at any rate!"

In the summer of 1889 Mr. Gladstone had called unexpectedly on Marie, at 47 Longridge Road, but did not find her at home. He left his card (which I have kept), with these words written in pencil: "Called to offer his best thanks, leaves town on Wednesday."

On her return home that afternoon her faithful maid "Jane" exclaimed, when she read the card: "Yes, Miss, it was Mr. Gladstone; I knew him by his collar and Mother Gamp umbrella; there was no mistaking him; he seemed very disappointed not to see you."

Happily, an appointment was arranged for the next day, and Mr. Gladstone arrived at about four o'clock in a victoria, accompanied by Mrs. Gladstone, who remained in the carriage. Marie suggested her coming in, but Mr. Gladstone said: "Oh no; she is accustomed to wait for me and enjoys the fresh air," and for over two hours Mr. Gladstone chatted on many subjects—and Mrs. Gladstone took the fresh air!

He told Marie that he had been very curious to

see in person a young woman who could write so courageously and well, saying, "*Ardath* is a magnificent conception, and I recognise in you a great power to move the masses and sway the thoughts of the people: it is a wonderful gift, and mind you use it well; but I don't think for a moment you will abuse it. There is a magnetism in your pen which will influence many." His parting words were: "God bless you, my dear child. Be brave; don't lose heart on the way."

Mr. Gladstone was missing that afternoon in the House of Commons during the discussion on the Deceased Wife's Sister's Marriage Bill.

After his leaving, I anxiously asked her the impression the Grand Old Man had made on her.

"A wonderful conversationalist, so clear and eloquent, and loves Italy and speaks Italian fluently; he seemed to put all his subjects in compressed packets on the table and slid so easily from one to the other; but the strength of his hands struck me most, the hands of a man in the full strength and vigour of youth. His voice was as clear as a bell. He ran downstairs as alert as a ferret, and reached the front door before the maid could answer the drawing-room bell giving her warning of his departure."

Mr. George Bentley, hearing of this interview, wrote:

"It is an event in your life, an event of which you well may be proud, because the interview arises from his interest in the product of your brain and heart. It does him honour that he should thus seek to form the acquaintance of one whom he believes to be possibly moulding public opinion in religious

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matters and the progress of thought. I do most heartily congratulate you, because in the history of your life such an interview henceforth becomes a bit of your career.¹ You write so modestly of the interview, your head all unturned, that I feel that a substratum of good sense underlies the talent God has given you.

"Genius recognised genius. No doubt he was charmed with *you* and *you* with him. I hope you will keep a notebook and note the characteristics of those you meet. Thirty or forty years hence, when you sit in the villa on Lago di Como, you will peruse such reminiscences with mingled pleasure and that inevitable vein of pain which runs through all earthly pleasure."

Marie never did keep a record of the people she met, but one who interested her much and whose talent she admired profoundly—a most endearing personality—was Sarasate, who was among Marie's friends of these days, and she frequently went to his concerts at St. James's Hall, indeed never missing one if she could help it.

He played constantly with the Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted by Sir William Cusins, and it was grand to watch the little Spaniard, all fire and enthusiasm, playing so exquisitely and so delicately that I have seen the very orchestra rise to encore him.

Sarasate was delighted when Marie was present, and I am certain he valued her great gifts of appreciation and enthusiasm. His was a fine, generous soul, and he played, he used to tell her, all the better for her presence. He was like a big child, and would

¹ As Fox's conversations with the poet Rogers forms an interesting episode in Rogers' life.

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ask her sometimes to take care of his watch and chain whilst he was playing, so that it should not get in his way.

When Sir William Cusins died and Sarasate played with Bertha Marks, the pianist, we never enjoyed it quite as much; her playing of the piano was, in my opinion, rather loud and heavy. The last time we saw Sarasate was at Penzance, at the Royal Hotel. One of a party of three, he came in very late to dinner. He had, in fact, lost his way alone on one of the country roads when taking a stroll. He had stopped a man on horseback and exclaimed, "Gentleman, I am lost; can you tell me the way back to Penzance?" His friends were anxiously looking for him in all directions, and were glad indeed when they at last perceived Sarasate excitedly hurrying towards them.

"Chers amis, j'étais perdu en pleine campagne."

After a hurried dinner he indulged in his great hobby—billiards. He spent most of his spare time on the game. At this Marie wondered, and could not understand how the violin could ever be neglected by such a master and shut up so lonely in its case.

He gave her his copy of the *Zigeunerweisen*, with this inscription:

"Au grand Poète Ecrivain, Marie Corelli,
Son grand admirateur et bien reconnaissant
serviteur, PABLO DE SARASATE."

Marie gave a party at Longridge Road in his honour; the Spanish colours were the note to the decorations, and both music and talk were brilliant.

It was typical of Sarasate that one day, when he

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was contemplating calling on Marie in London with Sir William and Lady Cusins, the dear simple son of the South exclaimed, "I cannot; I have not got my visiting trousers on!"

Among other charming letters from the great violinist to Marie, I find the following :

"ADELPHI HOTEL, LIVERPOOL.

"MUY CARA Y ADMIRABLE SENORA,—Je ne vous ai jamais oublié. Votre souvenir à toujours été l'un des plus agréables songes de ma vie, et *Ardath* l'un de mes plus beaux titres de gloire; un artiste n'est jamais un ingrat, et mon cœur aura éternellement pour vous un coin qui vous sera consacré en signe de reconnaissance et admiration.—Il vostro devotissimo,

"PABLO DE SARASATE.

"Je lis de vous en ce moment *Vendetta* traduit en français dans le journal du matin, c'est un chef-d'œuvre."¹

Marie had now written and published her four first novels, *The Romance of Two Worlds*, *Vendetta*, *Thelma*, and *Ardath*, and the year 1889 was drawing to a close. As each of her books was published she presented her father with a copy, which he placed in a special shelf of his bookcase, very touchingly

¹ "MY DEAR AND ADMIRABLE LADY,—I have certainly not forgotten you. Your memory has always been one of the most delightful recollections of my life and *Ardath* one of my finest claims to glory; an artist is never ungrateful, and there will always be in my heart a corner consecrated to you in gratitude and admiration.—Your most devoted

"PABLO DE SARASATE."

"I am at the moment reading a French translation of your *Vendetta* in the morning paper. It is a masterpiece.

"PRINCES HOTEL, LONDON."

pasting into the copy of the first one of her baby scribbles, meaning little in itself, but showing the baby mind working in real earnest when she wrote it. She made it a rule never to show him her work till it was actually printed.

If the year had been one of happiness for Marie and one of steadily increasing appreciation of her work by the public, it was to close on a note of deep sadness for her. On Christmas Eve, at noon, the end came peacefully to Dr. Mackay. We were with him, and saw such a radiant light pass from over his face heavenward that Marie exclaimed, "Darling, you now see all!" On me it has left a lasting impression.

He was buried in Kensal Green on the 2nd January. The funeral was fixed for the 29th December, but was postponed at the last minute by Marie's wish, on account of a dense fog.

The Caledonian pipers paid their last tribute at the cemetery gates. Among many telegrams of condolence—for he was widely, and correctly, termed the British "Béranger," a true poet of the people—came one from Queen Victoria.



CHARLES MACKAY, 1889

(Photo, Elliott & Fry)

CHAPTER VIII

MARIE'S public was increasing with every book she published. *Wormwood* appeared in 1890; but, except in rare instances, the critics wrote unfavourably, and often with bitterness. After the publication of *Barabbas* in 1893, she determined, against the advice of her publishers, to ignore the Press; and from that time no volume of hers was sent out for review. Upon her sales this had no effect, but a writer less capable of detachment, less firm in faith in her own powers to do good by her writings, might well have been discouraged. I find a letter from her friend, Cecil Grenfell.

"69 EATON PLACE, S.W.

"DEAR MISS CORELLI,—I wonder if you are back in London yet. I have just returned from a long holiday in Scotland, where I had very good sport.

"A few days ago I came across the following, written by 'Ninon de L'Enclos.' It made me laugh and think of you: hence this letter.

"'Les enfants, ma chère, me disait-il, savant tout de suite fouetter les chevaux; mais, pour les conduire c'est autre chose. Eh bien, les *critiques* sont comme les enfants; ils fouettent les auteurs, mais ils ne les dirigent pas.'

Yours truly,

"CECIL GRENFELL."

And a high dignitary of the Church also wrote, in 1900, to her: "In these days one has to cultivate a spirit of healthy disdain; such utterances coming from sources so utterly despicable lie many fathoms below my utmost capacity for disdain; they perish of their own worthlessness." And again, in 1907, the then Dean of Gloucester: "I cannot say how I regard you, who have won as no one else has won 'the *clef des cœurs*' of the English people."

When *Barabbas* appeared, she was violently attacked, but a friend, a man of great experience, wrote that he had got her book to see how such a subject could be handled, that nothing short of great talent could do it with propriety. The task was one requiring a truly religious mind unbiassed by conventionality. Between religion and conventionality there is hopeless antagonism, and so the reason for her being "pilloried." He also advised her earnestly to leave the critics alone and disregard them.

She had indomitable courage, not only moral but physical, and she was to suffer physically also; she would never give in or complain of illness to her friends—she believed in always appearing strong and well. It had been instilled into her during her childhood never to complain; if she had toothache or a pain of any kind she must keep the fact to herself. She was told "God is never sick." For many years she suffered from severe headaches, and these interfered both with her work and her social pleasures. Unhappily, she and those about her did not then recognise that eye-strain was largely the cause, and that the use of glasses would save her

much suffering. She had great capacity for enjoyment but little taste for "society," unless associated with art or literature, or in which she met men or women who had made their mark on the world's calendar.

"I was invited to Madame Antoinette Sterling's¹ reception and met many interesting people, especially a nice girl called Constance Cotterill, a young artist.

"Froude's novel is rather solid reading. He has not picked up flowers in *Ardath*.

"I am just getting ready, as Professor Forest is calling to take me to see 'The Briar Rose,' Burne-Jones' famous picture. What a treat for me!

"All this morning I was busy proof-correcting. This afternoon I went to the eccentric Miss B—— and accompanied her to the studio of a German painter, who painted the portrait of Madame Blavatsky. He is an odd little personage—paints extremely well—and has some curious pictures which he painted *while in a trance*. They are all as mad as mad can be (not the pictures, but the artist and his surroundings), and the whole set of them ought to be transported bodily to Colney Hatch—but they are funny specimens of human nature gone astray.

"Major Mills gave us a really magnificent dinner, most luxurious. We were a party of twelve (not thirteen), and after dinner there was a great *conversazione* at the Grosvenor; the decorations of palms and roses were lovely. I think there must have been about eight hundred people present.

"At our dinner there were mostly officers of the Army—the son of the Duke of Cambridge, who is a great friend of

¹ A wonderful contralto ballad singer, still living.

Major Mills, was to have been my partner, but at the last moment he was telegraphed for by Lord Wolseley on business connected with this banishment of the Guards to Bermuda. So I had a retired Indian Colonel instead, who was quite charming, and some attractive ladies.

"I was not a bit tired and am as lively as possible this morning—no headache. In the afternoon I had taken Jane¹ to the French Exhibition. Oh, how she did enjoy it! I gave her an ice at the 'Café des Ambassadeurs,' bought her some nougat, gave her a tumbler with her name on it, and all sorts of things, so I had what one would call a really fatiguing day and yet I am not overdone.

"I am just going to Lady Galton's tea at four-thirty.

"Lady Galton and Sir Douglas are such charming old people of the old English school of courtesy. I met the Contessa Fenzi, who had brought me a personal message from the Queen of Italy, conveying 'her affectionate regards,' and it would be a satisfaction to Her Majesty to possess my portrait, and also to welcome me in Rome, if I could arrange to visit the Eternal City during the coming winter. Contessa Fenzi says she wishes I would go. I should have such a splendid time there and soon know all the best people in the place—*Nous verrons.*"

This message was supplemented by a letter written on behalf of the Queen by one of her maids of honour.

"I met Lord Wentworth, who is actually the grandson of Lord Byron! It sounds so strange to think that he was the son of that 'Ada, sole daughter of my house and heart'! He isn't a bit like his great ancestor.

¹ Her maid.

"I took such a jolly drive with Mrs. Proctor. She drove, and the carriage was a light sort of high phaeton.

"She drove splendidly, and we went like the wind, all up and down the Row and right round the Park. I, who am so terrified of hansoms, was not a bit nervous with her—she understands what she is about, I can assure you. I do so enjoy it.

"I am to see Nettie Carpenter¹ this evening at an 'at home,' a great friend of Sarasate. At a party last night I had a big flirtation with a very handsome young fellow. He is coming here to-morrow; wore my little 'done-up silk with velvet sleeves.'

"Yes, darling, you shall enjoy the lovely Oberland with its blue lakes and snow mountains, and if I am lucky this winter, we will visit both Paris and Rome—Paris certainly—and we will have as much fun as we can."

If fond of pretty frocks, it was but a charming characteristic of our sex, and she believed in dressing well and tastefully, but, though a lover of dainty things, she was not extravagant.

"I wore my new dress, now fitting perfectly, with a charming Paris hat I found at Barker's, a fine black straw lightly trimmed with black velvet, soft white lace and pale roses (I can change the flowers to suit any dress). It is a pretty small shape—it suits me very well, and will be most useful."

She adored flowers and, after a certain dinner-party, the gentlemen were told to gather up the lovely roses, gardenias, geraniums, heliotrope, and lilies that were thrown on a length of soft emerald plush down the centre of the long table.

¹ An accomplished violinist.

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"I had a man on each side of me, and they both gave me a great cluster of flowers, so that I came away with a 'gras bouquet' of the sweetest fragrance."

It was in 1893 that the Empress Frederick expressed a wish to meet the authoress of *Thelma*, as it was the last book the Emperor Frederick read when on his death-bed, and he had admired it. The Empress arranged for a private interview with Marie at Buckingham Palace. It took place and Marie was enchanted with her. They met again on several occasions and the Empress expressed, in 1921, her admiration of Marie's eulogy on her mother, Queen Victoria, "The Passing of the Great Queen."

The strain of creative work, the long anxiety as to her father's health, and the care of a household—for, although I acted as housekeeper, hers was the purse—added to the fact that I had lost my mother soon after Dr. Mackay's death, determined us upon taking a holiday, a period of rest and change of scene. Marie's reading of Shakespeare's works covered the whole ground, and whenever possible, she was among the first to see any Shakespeare play acted by Irving and her friend, Ellen Terry, so the idea occurred to her, perhaps naturally, to visit Stratford-on-Avon. It was in May 1890 that we spent a happy and interesting two weeks in and around the town. On a house, "Ye Hall's Croft," then belonging to Mrs. Croker, there grows a magnificent wistaria, then in full bloom, and I remember well her saying: "If ever I have a house in Stratford

I hope it may be that one." But it was not till ten years later that we were, also in the month of May, to take a lease of four months of "Ye Hall's Croft."

She had too, with her love of children, thought often of Shakespeare's child and, as we have seen, a plan for a book in which he should figure had formed itself in her mind.

At this time, too, Marie was under the spell of Switzerland and, dreading a London winter, decided to spend a winter at Clarens, near Montreux, where Madame Pauli had lived in an old farmhouse and where Byron, so report has it, had slept. She expected crisp, if cold, sunny weather.

"I shall do no work at all in Switzerland. I shall only think and *dream*, and inhale the sweet mountain air, and listen to the tinkle-tinkle of the goat-bells. Oh, how I long to show you that lovely land of the lakes and eternal snow!"

Never were two people so bitterly disappointed! The damp cold chilled us to the bone, the heating was quite inadequate, and the house itself, which we had taken unseen, an impossible home in winter. It was here, I think—and medical opinion supported my view—that Marie developed chills which were the cause of the subsequent ill-health which culminated in her operation at Brighton in 1897.

In 1892 *The Soul of Lilith* appeared, to be quickly followed by *Barabbas*, and in 1895 *The Sorrows of Satan*, whilst the year 1896 saw *The Murder of Delicia*, *The Mighty Atom*, and *Cameos*, a very heavy output for any but a quick writer and methodical, and, in any case, a great strain on the author. In the case

of *Barabbas* she appears to have felt some anxiety as to her free adaptation of a scriptural subject, for I find a letter from Dean Wilberforce.

"MY DEAR FRIEND,—I have finished *Barabbas*. My verdict upon it is that it is a high-minded and very powerful effort to revivify, by the legitimate use of the imagination, a time-honoured history by depolarising it from the conventionality in which it has become crystallised. The romance can by no possibility harm any one, and it may cause many to re-read and consider the inspired record. God bless and teach and use you.—Ever yours,

"BASIL WILBERFORCE."

And yet another book had appeared anonymously. On 22nd April 1893 there was issued the eighth edition of a book entitled *The Silver Domino*, published by Messrs. Lamley. "The literary puzzle of the hour," said *The Literary World*, "'Who wrote *The Silver Domino*?' The question of authorship apart, nothing at once so bitter has appeared since the days of Lord Byron. 'Pungent, mordant satire went out with Grenville Murray, but his mantle has fallen upon the anonymous author of *The Silver Domino*, who has issued some intensely amusing social and literary side-whispers; all that he has to tell us is told with wonderful verve and in a flowing style which has a great charm for all who can appreciate such satire. . . . The book is the most valuable contribution to our satirical literature that has appeared for many, many years.'"

"*The Silver Domino* consists of truly lengthy, candid sallies at the expense of men eminent in

politics, literature, and journalism" So spoke *The Times*.

The *Daily Chronicle* had a column and a half about it, remarking on the unknown author's extraordinary originality. "Friends of both Labouchere and Oscar Wilde have been down to the publisher, Mr. Lamley, to ask who is the author. It is intensely amusing! The publisher was boiling over with excitement."

The Prince of Wales had expressed to Messrs. Lamley a wish to be told the name of the author.

"We understand," said *The World*, "that in St. Andrews opinion is very much divided as to the authorship of the book. One part of the population ascribe the book to Mr. W. E. Henley, others think it was written by the Rev. A. K. H. Boyd."

I may now divulge the well-kept secret: Marie was the author.

Holidays, complete changes of scene, the mingling with new friends and acquaintances, the exchange of views and judgments of men and things, were a necessity; and in her case the need for medical treatment. It was in the summer of 1892 that she agreed, after much persuasion on my part, to go to Homburg, and one evening in August saw her seated in the train on her way *via* the Hook of Holland. She was delighted with Homburg.

"The rooms are very pretty and comfortable. I have a balcony and garden to myself, and I can sit and watch every one go past, which is amusing, and the weather is quite glorious. You must come next time and see this fashionable and social rendezvous. I am sending you to-day a photograph of the

lovely promenade, where your little friend is living *en luxe* like a small princess. My rooms are really charming, so quiet, and with such a splendid view. The long alley going down by the side of the villa leads straight to the park and woods, in which I go every day. You can see it is very pretty and shady."

If she had sought for rest and quiet, she was not to find it at Homburg. Invitations poured in.

"One evening Mr. and Mrs. Gabriel gave a big dinner to me at the Kursaal, and their table was next that of H.R.H.¹ My seat faced him. He leaned back in his chair, smoking a cigarette, stroked his moustache, and fixed his eyes full upon me. He continued to look, much to the satisfaction of my host, who whispered, 'I told you the Prince would not be long before spying you out.'

"Well, H.R.H. then spoke in a low tone to Sir Christopher Sykes and Colonel Clarke, his Equerry-in-Waiting; when the Royal Party rose to go, the Prince passed, so did Sir Christopher, but Colonel Clarke, the Equerry, paused, and deliberately took off his hat to me with a profound bow. It was very curious. I wonder if I shall be in the end introduced to H.R.H.?"

Sir Charles Hall and Colonel Clarke soon called on her with an invitation to dine with His Royal Highness. They were profuse in their courtier compliments, Sir Charles saying that:—

"The Prince was much surprised to hear that the lady he had observed on the Terrace the other evening was the famous novelist.

"Then I was given a few instructions as follows:

"I am to be waiting for the Prince on the Terrace at seven o'clock, and when he arrives Sir Charles Hall will

¹ The Prince of Wales, later King Edward VII.

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present me. His Royal Highness will offer his hand, which I am to take, and while holding it, I am to make the lowest possible curtsy.

"I am not to address him unless he first speaks to me, and in conversation I am to say 'Sir,' and never speak or touch on the subject of religion or politics."

A few years ago, during a visit to Marie at Mason Croft, an old friend, who was in Homburg at the time, said to me that she would never forget the scene of excitement as Marie, on the Prince's arm, entered the Kursaal that evening.

"On the morning of the dinner," Marie wrote, "I must write you just a line. Congratulations have been pouring in upon me, and I have had such a collection of magnificent sprays of flowers to wear to-night. I can't possibly wear them all!

"People are commenting and chattering and staring pretty considerably. It is too funny.

"The Prince was in the tea-garden yesterday afternoon, having his tea at a table not far from me and my friends. He sent his dog, and the creature came to me and rubbed his head all over my knees. He had a gold collar on, engraved thus: 'Dash, belonging to the Prince of Wales.' I gave Dash a bit of sugar, which he ate with much relish, and rushed back again to his master, who received him with many affectionate pats.

"The dinner was delightful. I sat on the Prince's left hand and Lady Sophia Macnamara on his right. He talked to me most of the time and was most attentive. He knew all my books and conversed about the different scenes in them; then he remarked on the smallness of my hand! He took it in his own to look at it, and called the attention of every one to it and said, 'Out of small things what wonders rise!' After dinner we went out into the garden to hear the music. Really, the Prince is charming, extremely courtly manners, a

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winning smile, and a peculiar way of doing things which is very 'taking.'

"At saying 'good-night' I curtsied, but he gave me his hand and said, 'I am very pleased to know you; you must not stand on ceremony with me!' Altogether, the whole thing was a success.

"H.R.H. stopped on the Terrace last night to speak to me. All our party got up. Such a little scene! Finally H.R.H. gave another handshake and said in his cheery way, 'Now, take care not to catch cold, Miss Corelli! We cannot be too careful of *you*!' And with a pleasant smile he marched off.

"Lady Sophia Macnamara called on me yesterday—such a nice, kind woman. She was on her way to dine with the Empress Frederick at the 'Palace,' where it is just possible I may be asked to go.

"Isn't it a curious thing how things turn? You remember my going to dine with Colonel and Mrs. Chaine at Kensington Palace? And how I told you I went into dinner with the Brazilian Minister, and how friendly he was? Well, he went straight off from that dinner to the Prince of Wales and talked about 'the golden-haired Poet'!

"I little thought of all this, when at the Chaines' dinner I laughed so much with the Brazilian Minister for his discourse on 'love.'"

"This afternoon we went out for a long drive with the Laboucheres (not Labby; he only leaves London to-day).

"It was beautiful up in the pine woods. Little Dora Labouchere is such a funny child, rather spoilt but very lovable.

"The Prince sent Mr. and Mrs. Gabriel tickets for a Grand Concert in the Gold Salon.

"I found old Gabriel quite wild with excitement. He made haste to take me into the Concert-room, where I had the Prince's seat. The Empress Frederick and her daughter,

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Princess Christian, and heaps of others were there, and just fancy, one of the songs sung was my song, 'Prince Ivan's Song,' set to music by Frances Allitson—it was a surprise to me.

"*You* will be amused to hear that when I went to that concert I was in my little white cotton wrap with red Empire belt, the one you made.

"H.R.H. looked at your emerald ring the other day and said, 'Who is the happy man?' I laughed and replied, 'Your Royal Highness is looking at borrowed jewels. The ring is not mine, it belongs to a woman—my dearest friend.'

"I can assure you the social life of Homburg is very exciting, and I enjoy it immensely, though money goes fast here, but the change is thorough."

The Prince complimented her, she told me, on being "such an easy and amusing conversationalist."

"Last night I was introduced to H.R.H. the Princess of Schleswig-Holstein, a very agreeable woman, also to the Princess Elizabeth of Bavaria, a charming lady. Both were most complimentary about my books.

"*Addio*, and many, many thanks for your sweetness in making my gown. The white wrap you made is the most successful of my dresses, and the hat with edelweiss! Sir Victor Holton raves about both hat and gown! Oh! oh! oh! Just as I write this line I have got the most magnificent basket of roses from the Princess of Schleswig-Holstein. It occupies the whole of the centre table! I feel disposed to dance!

"Lady Dorothy Nevill and Miss Merisia were astonished and pleased to see me; ditto Captain Arnold. I dine with Mrs. Skirrow and her niece.

"I do wish you could make me another white wrap, short behind without watteau, like the one I have, in soft washing *crêpon*, all white. It looks so pretty with a sash, and having no

lining is so cool. But oh! it is so hot! I have only managed to keep cool by shutting all the windows and keeping all the blinds down till evening.

"I am looking forward anxiously to my sweet Bertha's stitches in the little gown. I am afraid I am quite spoilt by you and everybody. Really, people are so good to me! Clarence Mackay, son of the Bonanza King, sent me the most superb pyramid of roses I have ever seen. I had a headache yesterday, so I have had three large bouquets of roses left to-day, with hopes that I am better.

"I spied Sir Victor Holton, whom we last met at the Foreign Office, a very handsome old gentleman, who was exceedingly gallant. He is a friend of Lady Seymour's.

"I had a jolly little dinner at the Kursaal with Mrs. Graham Green, Mrs. Woods, and others. The heat was intense. The Duke of Cambridge was giving a farewell dinner-party on the terrace. A brilliant scene—band playing.

"Oh! it is so lovely here! And such divine weather! You did well to pack me off, with all my 'dumps and dismals,' as you call them. If I had known how delightful Homburg was I should have been here long ago. Mrs. Skirrow has been here for thirty years.

"I have quite shaken off my old dormouse, stay-at-home sensations, and feel disposed to run all over the world!

"Remember, you have one true little heart that loves you fondly and that would be quite miserable without you, in spite of all her naughty, tiresome little ways. We are far happier in our home than we quite realise—don't you think so?

"I took Czar to the Kursaal yesterday evening, and he excited bursts of admiration from everybody! He is quite a 'lion' here! Poor little dear, he is so full of fun, and quietly enjoyed his walk in the gardens this morning.

"It was amusing to observe his behaviour at the concert. First of all he began a very small howl. I said, 'Naughty!'

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and he was quite silent and listened attentively, with the air of a musical connoisseur, and he only pricked his tiny ears up when the drums or the cymbals were extra loud. He was perfectly delighted with the castanets in *Carmen* the other evening.

"Czar is mentioned in the *New York Herald* as the most beautiful small dog in Homburg! I must say I never could have had a dearer dog after Patch than this little one—he is full of pretty ways and characteristics and grows more loving and devoted to me every day. He is in splendid health."

It is to be wondered whether English literary editors would have equally praised Czar had they known of his delight in tearing to shreds unfavourable—which they mostly were—criticisms sent to Marie through the Press-cutting agencies.

"Just as I am writing this I have had a letter from Colonel Clarke: 'The Prince of Wales asks you to lunch with him on Wednesday, at the Ritter's Park Hotel; we all hope you will be able to come.'

"I accepted, and the Prince introduced me to his son, Prince George. 'Miss Corelli, my son George, who is well acquainted with your books.' I found the young Prince so unaffected and full of fun. I sat next to the Prince of Wales. He was most attentive, kind and delightful as usual.

"The Prince said with reference to our journey home: 'Oh! don't go by Ostend. Why get bored? Ostend to Dover is simple ennui.'

"I am getting more and more patriotic every day and think England better than any place.

"I mean to be quite a luxurious, home-loving bird this winter, basking in warmth and comfort.

"Colonel Clarke asked me last night whether the bad weather would drive me away. 'His Royal Highness hopes

you will be persuaded to stay on till he himself leaves.' I laughed and said, 'Is that a command?' He smiled and answered, 'Why, no! the Prince would not think of suggesting anything that might not please you; it is only a wish.'

"I hope you are sending me the Hindustani translation of *The Romance*.¹

"One day we lunched at the Victoria Hotel with a very clever lawyer, Mr. Cutter, and his wife, and Lord and Lady Esher were also of the party."

Marie describes Lord Esher, Master of the Rolls, as both a very great man and a perfectly charming old gentleman, telling excellent stories.

"H.R.H. went very unwillingly to the races at Baden. They implored him to go, as the 'season' there was so dull, so he went out of pure good-nature. He has been much upset by the news of the disaster to two of his men of the *Britannia*, and wished to cancel all his engagements for yacht racing; but it appears the owner of the *Vigilant* refuses to let him off the race for the May Challenge Cup, or, if he does not race the American yacht, he says he will take the Cup back to America.

"The Prince is very much put out by this message.

"Dr. Harvey, who is here, thinks I do not look strong, and said to me the other day, 'You think too much, do too much, and worry too much. You ought to have a complete rest and let others work for you.' Ah, no such luck for little me!

"This morning, as it was finer, I went out for a walk and met the Prince, who stopped me, shaking hands cordially—he began praising my *Barabbas*. We talked for some time under the trees.

"The Prince is very kind and cordial, and to whomsoever he speaks I always hear of something nice he has said.

¹ *The Romance of Two Worlds*.

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"The Grand Duke Michael is here. I am to be introduced to him. Homburg life is very frivolous and rather fatiguing, especially for me, as I am always in evidence and being pointed out to people; in fact, I know you will say I am my own advertisement; nevertheless, I shall be very glad to be home again in dear old England. . . . We are disappointed: Lord Rosebery has altered his mind and is not coming.

"The old Duke of Cambridge is here and so are Mrs. Stuart Wortley, Miss Fleetwood Wilson, Oscar Wilde, Sir Archibald Alison, and the famous 'Billy Russell' of the *Times*, now Sir William; he has just been to see me and we have had such a delightful talk together sitting on my own balcony at the villa. I am to have a tea-party this afternoon. Amongst the guests will be Sir Gerard FitzGerald, Lady FitzGerald, Canon Wilberforce and his wife, Lady Anna Chandos Pole, Mark Twain (won't it be a treat to talk to him), and dear Toole,¹ who, by the bye, is looking so ill. Colonel Beaumont is here and everybody likes him—also two Russian Princesses."

Here also she met Lady Sofia FitzGeorge, daughter-in-law of the Duke of Cambridge, who was to be a friend and frequent correspondent till her death.

"Mr. and Mrs. Thaddeus are here. 'Poppy' Brinkman, who later married Lord Byron, and is now Lady Houston, is here having baths."

Marie and "Poppy" made a very attractive pair of pretty women—the one fair, the other dark.

On her return to London, refreshed and in good spirits, she again took up her life of work and of pleasure in seeing friends, listening to music, and occasionally going to the play; but the autumn of

¹ J. L. Toole, the actor.

1893 proved a trying one and we were glad to start for the South of France.

The journey from Marseilles to Cannes was one continuous feast of sunshine; and on arrival, as we stood at our open windows, the sun, sinking behind the lovely Esterel mountains, turned the clear blue of the Mediterranean to a sudden blaze of gold and crimson, beautiful and almost startling. The effect lasted but for a moment: the sun sank and darkness came on rapidly.

After dinner an Italian company of musicians and singers entertained the visitors in the big lounge.

It was then that Edmund Yates, the famous "Atlas" of *The World*, was introduced to Marie. At first she was rather nervous, but as he sat down by her side he talked in such a cheery way that after twenty minutes, as Marie said, "I felt as if I had known him all my life." He looked at her inquisitively, interrogatively, rose and knocked the ash off his cigar into a little ash-tray near at hand, came back and sat down again, still looking at her with a half-humorous and kindly smile.

"You are not the least like what I fancied you might be," he observed. "You don't look a bit literary—how is that?" Here his eyes began to twinkle with fun. "You've taken us all in! We expected a massive, strong-minded female, with her hair divided flat on each side, and a cameo in the middle of her forehead!"

This was enough; the ice was broken. He seemed delighted with the picture he had evoked for

himself and repeated, "Yes, a cameo! Well, I am glad you are not that kind of person . . . !"

Then, rising, he shook hands and said good-night, leaving us with a delightful impression of his kindness.

In the course of a very few days a great and affectionate friendship sprang up between the once-dreaded "Atlas" and herself. He delighted in her unliterary appearance and invented many fanciful pet-names for her. They used to stroll up and down the terrace of the Metropole, and he would tell many interesting stories, for instance, of his friendship with Charles Dickens, and he spoke of that great man with the deepest tenderness. He was not at all in tune with the morbid school of thought of the day, and hated, with a wholesome thoroughness, all books that in their teaching seemed to set aside God as an unknown quantity.

"I seldom speak of religion," he said to me one morning, "but I have thought a good deal about it. And what I am now trying to do is to live back to the faith of my childhood!"

The pleasant days at Cannes came too soon to an end, and we all left for San Remo on the 12th March, and thence on to Genoa and Pisa. During the two days we spent at Pisa, "Atlas" was in one of his most genial and lovable moods.

Among his living favourite friends was J. L. Toole. "There's no better fellow anywhere!" he said, with enthusiasm. "He has the biggest heart and broadest mind of any man I know."

Two or three days later we parted—Mr. and Mrs. Yates for Rome, and ourselves for Florence.

MARIE CORELLI

From Rome Marie received the following letter :

“ROME,
22nd March '94.

“MY DEAR LITTLE CHAP,—What a mournful little plaint ! Has it got blue little puds and frost-bitten little toes ! I think possibly by this time warmer weather will have softened your views of Florence and that you will be willing to stay there a bit.

“My Marion does not like Rome and will be glad when our time here is at an end. It seems to suit me, and I enjoy it. I am perhaps a little disappointed in some of the wonders. We have only seen the outside of St. Peter's, but hope to do the interior to-day. Last night we dined with the Baroness B. C. and found her reading *Thelma*. I have lent her *Barabbas* now, and was warm in the praises of our 'little chap.'

“We shall wait here until we have done the honours to our friend, Sir Joseph Monckton, who is to be our guest for a few days on his way home from Egypt, and then for Naples and Sorrento, which latter place will, I think, suit Sir John better than this. Our Son is all right again.

“Let us know your movements and your address, and with love to yourself and Bertha—I am always, affectionately,

“EDMUND YATES.”

We all met in London in May : he was in good spirits and showed the greatest pleasure at seeing us once more. He was on the look-out for a country house, and in affectionate playfulness added, “on condition you come down from Saturday to Monday.”

On the 19th May he called in the afternoon at Longridge Road, looking well and merry, but Marie was away and unfortunately did not see him. That evening, at the revival of *Money* at the Garrick

Theatre, he was struck down, and the next morning he was dead.

Countless friends regretted his loss, but none more truly than his "little chap."

I well remember Edmund Yates taking out of his pocket one of his slashing criticisms of Marie and waving it to her, saying, "Never again, little chappy."

Marie at the time was enjoying a rest and change at Oatlands Park, Weybridge.

"I am sitting in a charming room, with a writing-table at the window, looking out on lovely green meadows and huge trees, and the cuckoo is calling among the woods in the most springlike manner. Fancy, I have not heard a cuckoo for nearly three years! It is a lovely spot here—very quiet, except for the songs of birds—and the air is quite delicious. A big chestnut in full flower is just opposite my room and there is such a jolly blackbird in it whistling away splendidly! The grass is full of buttercups and daisies. . . . I cannot express to you what an intense relief it is to me to be here, and it is so quiet that I am able to write quite comfortably."

In the country she always felt exhilarated and a different creature compared to London, both physically and mentally.

"I read the little book, *Ships that Pass in the Night*, and like it very much, only it is so very sad. But it is clean and original."

Then a few days later she heard of the sudden death of Edmund Yates, and wrote:

"I am perfectly sick with horror and grief at the terrible news. I can think of nothing else. Poor, dear, kind old fellow! What a pity he came back to take any part in the silly distractions of London!

"I have indeed lost a friend for whom I cared very much—it seems so incredible, so cruelly sudden. . . . Go at once and, even to-night, inquire how Mrs. Yates is, and try and see the maid, Jeannot.—Your most sorrowful little MARIE."

And again :

"I do not know when I have felt more utterly grieved. Another great interest is taken out of my life. I had looked forward to Homburg more than usual on account of the Yateses going there—and imagine, they had taken rooms at Weybridge for July before going on to Homburg in August.

"Oddly enough, on Saturday night, the night my poor old friend was actually dying, I slept very badly and was terribly restless. I tried to read, and turning over the *Letters of Dickens*, came upon one to Edmund Yates. I read it and then, as I laid the book down, I fancied I heard somebody call very softly and cautiously (as if it were a visitor afraid to waken me), 'Marie! Marie!' I listened, and it was so very distinct that I actually made up my mind it was some one in the house of the same name as myself being called up for something.

"I feel dreadfully miserable, cold, and stupid and can do nothing at all. The skies are as leaden as they can be, and I keep on picturing Mrs. Yates. The horrible details of the funeral arrangements—oh dear! I know it all, and how one's heart is nearly breaking with all the ghastly formalities and chill. . . . Well, I can only be thankful we all passed the winter together, and I only wish we had gone on to Rome instead of to Florence."

Another friend whom we had met at Cannes was Sir Henry Thompson, the great surgeon, who operated upon Napoleon III. He, too, was a close friend of Yates, and in reply to a letter from Marie wrote :

MARIE CORELLI

“ ARCHDEACONRY, DURHAM,
Sunday, 27th May 1894.

“ MY DEAR MISS CORELLI,—Your very pleasant note reached me in Wimpole Street just before I left for this place, to stay a week or so with my daughter and her husband, the Archdeacon of Durham. Poor Yates’ death was a sad and premature, yet, on the whole, most enviable mode of quitting life. I have seen so much of slow and wearying procedures, often long and painful, by which death terminates existence, that I, for one, should be profoundly grateful to be thus dismissed. I was barely able to appear at the funeral, but the weather was fine and I took no harm. But I could not go to the cremation, which I certainly should have done had I been well. I sent our Hon. Secretary, who came to see me in the late afternoon, and told me that nothing could be more perfect than the result, and Mrs. Yates received the urn holding his ashes, pure and white, before six p.m. Four cremations were done that day at Woking. By this time the *whole of the elements* which made up the personality which we knew as our dear friend Edmund Yates have been re-organised—that is, have been taken up into the living existences of the countless plants, trees, vegetables—growth of all description—surrounding the crematorium, all active, awaiting their turn to furnish sustenance to animal life, and so again and again in everlasting cycle. And this *without any obnoxious stage of decay*, such as that which goes on in stages too horrible to imagine, much less to realise, for years in the grave; but with the same ultimate issue in every case, however remotely reached. After my return to town, where I am always so much occupied, I shall hope ere long to find you at home some afternoon. I have to thank you for your card.

“ My kind regards, dear Miss Corelli.—Yours sincerely,
“ HENRY THOMPSON.”

CHAPTER IX

IN 1895 *The Sorrows of Satan* appeared and was in immediate demand—adding largely to the number of her readers, and Marie, with true dramatic instinct, set herself to work on a stage version. At the house of our old friend, Henry Labouchere, owner of *Truth*, a radical member of Parliament and once in the Diplomatic Service, who had been in Paris during the siege in 1870, she had met Beerbohm Tree, and had talked with him of plays and of an adaptation of her latest book.

“By a happy accident,” he writes on 7th April 1896, “I am one of those benighted creatures who has not yet read the Book—and I shall continue in that ignorance in order to be better able to judge the Play: for when one knows a subject too well one loses the bird’s-eye view.”

In due course the play was adapted by another hand, and staged, but in many ways its production was not such as Marie approved. The play was a failure, but it had given the critics of the day an opening for renewed attacks on her and her works, though a powerful champion came forward in the person of Mr. Clement Scott, whom playgoers and

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readers of those days will remember for his plain outspokenness and independent criticisms.

"Do let us be fair to Marie Corelli," he wrote in the *Whitehall Review*. "She has established her fame as a novelist, and is naturally anxious that the creations of her brain should appeal to the dramatic world. For she is, by instinct, a dramatist. . . . I think I must have printed the first essays and stories she ever wrote, and yet, strange as it may appear, the brilliant authoress and her first editor have never met to this hour. . . . It has been said that the play has been written without the sanction of the authoress. That can scarcely be the case when she has superintended every detail of it. It has been said that Miss Corelli does not recognise Paul Berton's adaptation, and that she is angry about it, as Dickens was when his books were dramatised. It has been insisted that this clever lady, this artist, this lover of the stage, has made a stipulation that all dramatic critics shall be banished from the theatre, and told to buy their own tickets when the new play is produced. Who is it who starts these absurd rumours? . . . The time is not very far distant when all critical articles will be signed."

Later, in 1901, when he had learned to appreciate her dramatic instinct and the value of her criticism—for he frequently talked over with her his forthcoming productions—Beerbohm Tree writes :

"Are you coming to London? Then will you give us the great pleasure of dining with us on Sunday at the Carlton Hotel? Do try to come. Then we will discuss the question of your literary intention.

"Thank you, thank you heartily, for your kind thought of me.

"I admired the courage of your article, which I have read

since I saw you. . . . Do let me know about Stratford and Lady Martin. . . . I imagine the matter will be arranged as you suggest.

"I would like nothing better than a play by you. The thing is—a subject! Have you one? If so, could we discuss it?"¹

"I have been daily rehearsing *Rip Van Winkle*, and unable to concentrate myself on the consideration of my ambitions in the way of a play. I would much prefer to talk this matter over with you. Is there a chance of your coming to London? I should so like to play the character of a man who is everything by turns. Sincerely—a pipe for Fortune's finger to sound what stop she please! Can you conceive such a man? I can. 'Passion's slave,' in fact, though that's not a good title.

"A man swayed by every wind of Fate—responsive to the zephyr as well as the storm—bending to them, but never broken, for he is of steel, not of iron.

"Pray forgive my not writing sooner. How are you? I send you another souvenir of *Midsummer Night's Dream*."

There were to be many such requests from actor-managers that she should write a play for them—or adapt one of her books for the stage—some from young actors and actresses, for whom she would otherwise willingly have sought a way to help forward—but, except that she did write a dramatic version of *Barabbas* for Wilson Barrett, which the censor of plays of that day, no doubt because of its subject, refused to license, she never had a play of her own devising put on the stage. Even she declined to make a film version for Hubert

¹ This was a plot for a play, not founded upon any novel of hers, but a play to suit him, written by herself, which she had roughed out.

Herkomer, the painter who, in earliest days of films, was working at cinema craft in his studio at Bushey.

The writing of *The Sorrows of Satan* had taxed Marie heavily—with imagination so developed as hers, she often felt, and in this instance in particular, that her words had not done justice to her theme, and, when the manuscript had gone to the printer I found her sobbing in her study. “It is going to be a failure,” she said, “I feel it, for it does not come up to what I had felt in writing it.” Perhaps so; but it brought her an avalanche of letters from strangers, the most notable, perhaps, being from Father Ignatius of Llanthony Abbey, near Abergavenny, in Wales, who wrote:

“I have been reading your book, *The Sorrows of Satan*, in my quiet monastic cell, among these solemn, silent hills. I want to thank you for writing it; for your faithful delineation of the fallen English Upper Ten, for the exposure of the trickeries and frauds of the Press to the Literary World of these ‘Last Days.’

“The utter misery of being ‘without Christ’ in life and in death, the daring blasphemies of popular poets and other writers, and the consequences in the lives of their readers, you have indeed thrillingly portrayed.

“As a very humble disciple of our Lord Jesus Christ, I desire to add my grateful quota of thanks to the volumes of gratitude that you must surely receive.

“Praying our Blessed Lord to bless you with health, continued courage, and power to write, indeed a prophet of good things to come in this filthy and materialistic generation.—Believe me, your faithful brother in Jesus Christ,

“IGNATIUS, O.S.B. (Monk).”

A few weeks later, on Sunday, the 19th of April 1896, at the Portman Rooms, Baker Street, London, Father Ignatius was announced to preach on Marie Corelli's book, *The Sorrows of Satan*. Long before the appointed hour crowds blocked the street and crushed in at the doors, despite the efforts of the doorkeepers who were hoarse with calling out, "There is no more room." "Every place is taken." A continuous stream of carriages kept arriving, bringing people who had fortunately provided themselves with half-crown reserved seats. The rooms were densely packed.

The scene was curious and impressive ; numbers of people were content to stand shoulder to shoulder.

The service began in the usual manner, with the evening prayers used in the Church of England ritual and the singing of hymns. Then Father Ignatius read the Lesson, which concluded with the words, "The Lord shall sell Sisera into the hand of a woman."

This was to be his text, and he pronounced it with singular and startling emphasis.

After dwelling on the position in which Israel found itself, when ground down under the heel of the Canaanitish king, whose general was the redoubtable Sisera, the preacher likened the Church of Christ to the land of Israel, and Sisera to the embodiment of modern atheism. Reading from the *Fortnightly Review* a portion of a paper by Dean Fremantle, Father Ignatius boldly declared that the clergy were suffering atheism to increase unchecked—in brief, they utterly declined to interfere with "Sisera."

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"Of late years," said the preacher, "the Divinity of Christ had been constantly called in question, to be arrogantly doubted and rejected, and the servants of the Lord have cried unto Him, and have been unheard. Then, all at once, like a clap of thunder, Marie Corelli's book, *The Sorrows of Satan*, bursts on us. . . . Yes, Marie Corelli is doing more for the faith than Archbishops and Bishops and convocations put together.

"The three demons that infest the Church of England to-day are infidelity, immorality, and worldliness. Whose fault is it that the sacred bond of marriage is disparaged and prostituted? Supposing the clergy of England as one man rose up and struck?

"Colliers strike for wages—won't the clergy strike for honour? . . .

"But Barak refuses to go against Sisera.

"Then a woman, in a celestial eloquence, forces upon the people of England, whether they will or no, the true religion. It is said that our author dislikes the clergy. I am sure she would not dislike an honest clergy; it is the clergy who decline to go against Sisera she would dislike. Who is the one to track Sisera into the light of day and into the light of God's truth? God has delivered him into the hand of a woman! I say there are thousands upon thousands throughout English-speaking Christendom who will bless the pages that Marie Corelli has penned. Is the power of this book merely to be accounted for on some hypothesis?

"Where did the courage come from that made this woman so bold that the Personality of God, the Divinity of Christ, the sanctity of marriage, and the necessity of a religious education should spring from her pen?

"Let all our clergy have a copy of *The Sorrows of Satan* on their library tables.

"Most of you have read this book, and as you read it haven't you been struck by the grandeur of this woman's cult

and the power of this woman's pen? Oh, it is dipped in ambrosial eloquence that makes us stand wondering as we read it! In some parts it takes away our breath.

"Why do the Press, as a rule, stand aloof from our author and do all they can to hinder instead of help? Ah, Sisera sits at the desk of our editors! . . . The current of opinion is rationalistic in religion and revolutionary in sentiment, and so our newspapers are more or less atheistical. . . . But our author stands out quite independent of the Press, quite independent of opinions. She forces the people to read her books; she makes you listen, you cannot help yourself. In this sense she is a queen. Supposing her pen shall stir nobler ambitions in the hearts of the clergy, and our teachers become moral and upright instead of being shams, as to a great extent they are? . . ."

The Reverend Father concluded thus :

"As a Christian, I thank God for the book. *The Sorrows of Satan* is flung down into the midst of English society, as it is constituted at present, as an heroic challenge to that society and to the Church. I verily believe that God has raised our author up, and that she is only at the beginning of a grand career of usefulness. . . . She shall be a prophet in our Israel. May God in His infinite mercy put more power than ever, more courage than ever, into her heart! . . ."

The preacher then knelt, and with a very eloquent extempore prayer for the author of *The Sorrows of Satan*, and a solemn blessing on all present, this strange and impressive service closed.

Though Father Ignatius did not know it, Marie and I were present in the congregation.

On the following Sunday, 26th April 1896, he gave another sermon on a similar theme, again quoting Marie's book to a crowded audience.



"I can well imagine the passionate fire," wrote a clergyman of the Church of England to whom in later years I had lent the book, "with which Father Ignatius delivered some of his sentences. The sermons are the conceptions of a man who was a prophet in his generation."

I have often been asked whether Marie drew her characters from life. The answer is that most of her characters sprang to life as the children of her imagination; but there were exceptions, and "Ruben Dale," in *The Mighty Atom*, was drawn from Mr. Norman, who, at the time of a visit she paid in 1893 to Combe Martin, was sexton of the church. We were a party, and had driven over from Ilfracombe. Marie was very much taken with the man. They corresponded and she sent him a copy of the book.

"I am sure I am highly favoured," he wrote; "I get scores of people daily to see me and the old church through you. . . . I hope if you ever come down to this part you will call upon me. I have sent you me and my little boy's photo which will become young Ruben when I am no more. I am in old clothes, as you see, standing at the porch gates. . . . I conclude with kind love from your old friend,
RUBEN."

But she was not to meet him again, for the old man died late in the year that saw the book published.

Lionel and little Jessamine were purely creatures of her imagination.

"Long before the shadows darkened, the churchyard was deserted and solitary, though in the church itself the organist was practising for the coming Sunday, and the sweet, appealing notes of the beautiful hymn, 'Nearer, my God, to Thee,'

floated out through the ancient doorway, and soared, high up, into the calm air. Lionel's grave was closed in, and a full-flowering stem of the white lilies of St. John lay upon it, like an angel's sceptre. Another similar stem adorned the grave of Jessamine; and between the two little mounds of earth, beneath which two little innocent hearts were at rest for ever, a robin-redbreast sang its plaintive evening carol, while the sun flamed down into the west and the night fell." ¹

John Walden, in *God's Good Man*, was certainly studied from our dear friend, a Yorkshire clergyman, who lived the life of a recluse, in an old-fashioned rectory, with seventy parishioners, about seven miles from Stratford-on-Avon, charmingly situated in the midst of old apple orchards, where the cowslips and sweet violets grew abundantly. We often found peace in this hermitage, as we called it. For more than twenty years he and we were close friends, and Marie's sparkling talk took him out of his loneliness and cheered him. We often took him books and papers for him to read in his solitary home.

This good man was by some considered eccentric, but neither Marie nor myself considered him so. He was a tall, well-built, and sturdy Yorkshireman—a gentleman in every thought and action—and devoted to animals and birds. In his peaceful rectory the robins were so tame that they would take food from his hands and mouth. He would sit for hours in the garden waiting for his little friends, who would perch on his shoes and hop up on to his knees.

His first *Maréchal Niel* roses were always sent to Marie for her birthday.

¹ The last lines of *The Migbry Atom*.

MARIE CORELLI

It is interesting as showing how strongly Marie was opposed to purely secular education, to recall the dedication she wrote for *The Mighty Atom*.

“ To
Those self-styled ‘ Progressivists ’
who, by precept and example,
assist
The infamous Cause
of
Education without Religion,
and who by promoting the idea, borrowed from
French Atheism, of denying to the
children in board-schools
and elsewhere
The Knowledge and Love of God
as the true foundation of noble living,
are guilty
of a crime worse than murder.”

The strain of work continued, with brief holidays. In 1896 there were published *The Murder of Delicia* and *Cameos*, whilst through Arrowsmith she gave the public *Ziska*; but now a halt was forced upon her.

In early 1897 she was very unwell. She longed for Highland air. Hitherto it had always set her up and revived her spirits, so I went north to look for a house, and found one at Killiecrankie, which she took for three months—she wanted, she said, “ quiet—no boating,” but she would “ love to fish and catch her own dinner.” Though the change un-

doubtedly revived her spirits, she returned to London little the better, and there were signs of something very seriously wrong. In the autumn she was very ill. Anxious, if possible, to avoid an operation, she had lived in hope of the trouble being dealt with in any way but that of the knife. The most famous surgeons were consulted and, I remember, when one of them had been definitely called in, Marie questioned him so closely that he could not help exclaiming, "No patient has ever asked me so many questions!" and Marie retorted, "It is my life at stake, and I must know." His manner to her seemed so rough that, though one of his nurses arrived the next day to take charge of the case, Marie would not consent to the operation taking place. A house was taken on the sea-front at Hove. It was her hope that perhaps the sea air and the view out to sea would effect a cure; but it was not to be, and in December she put herself in the hands of Doctor (now Dame) Mary Scharlieb, who decided that an immediate operation was essential. Dr. Mary Scharlieb, assisted by Dr. Frampton, operated with success, but for some weeks it was necessary for both to be in close attendance on the patient. To this care and the air of Brighton she owed complete recovery, for after four months she was well, and returned to London full of high spirits and eager to be again at work.

Among the pleasant experiences during her convalescence at Hove had been a letter from her friend Miss Marsh Swan, saying that the Empress of Austria wished to have a portrait of Marie. "She has read

M A R I E C O R E L L I

all your books," she wrote, "and admires them very much. She is a very clever woman and reads a great deal." Marie sent a photograph, which was acknowledged.

"BAD-KISSINGEN, VILLA MON BIJOU,
April 21st, 1898.

"MISS MARIE CORELLI,
Brighton.

"MADAM,—Her Majesty the Empress of Austria thanks you so much for having been so kind as to comply with her wish in sending her through Miss Swan a portrait of yourself. She is indeed very happy to have it and she will prize it very much. Your books have afforded Her Majesty many hours of happiness and rest. She not only admires your talent and style of writing, but also your poetical imagination with which your works overflow. Her Majesty says that even the Queen of Roumania, who is herself a writer, is one of your fervent admirers.

"Her Majesty sends you her warmest salutations. She has been very sorry to hear that you have been dangerously ill, but she is glad to know that you are now convalescent.

"Reiterating to you, Madam, Her Majesty's best thanks and greetings—I remain, yours very truly,

"FREDERICK J. BARKER."

But another trial was soon to be faced in the sudden illness of Eric Mackay, who, attacked by septic pneumonia, died on the 2nd June 1898, at our house in Longridge Road, barely six months later.

The brave soul was almost prostrated by this new trouble to be faced so soon after her operation. My brother Frank, who was on a visit to us, insisted

upon my taking her away immediately, and he secured a reserved carriage in the night express to Inverness. We were accompanied by a devoted friend, a lady, who was of the greatest help to us both. It was an anxious journey, but it was the wisest thing we could have done. The many days of low spirits had taxed the vitality of us all, but with the keen air of the North an improvement was at last perceptible in Marie.

Eric was the third son, by his first marriage, of Dr. Charles Mackay. As a boy he was educated at Fountainville, Inverness, where he was under Peter Scott, a famous master.

Marie was the angel in his life, and did all in her power to stimulate him to take a place in English literature. He had never succeeded in anything, yet she determined to give him every chance.

When his father was taken so ill at Fern Dell, I felt that we ought to send for him. We discussed the matter and agreed to risk it—not very wisely—for it only added new difficulties and many troubles and responsibilities to our lives. Though I sent him an ample cheque, he arrived in England without any money.

The postmaster of Inverness told us how he remembered Eric Mackay very well as a little boy at school—"a wee laddie awfully fond of reading." He was a man who lacked the power and concentration to succeed in what he undertook. As a young man he had a good voice, and his father was induced by Mr. Mori to send him to Italy to have it cultivated, so that he might take up a musical career.

He was allowed by his father £10 a month for many years, a generous sum in those days. But Eric was no worker, and lacked application. Then he took to journalism, and, being an excellent linguist, he ran a paper, *The Polyglot*, in four languages; then the *Roman Times*—but both were failures. His father helped him out of many difficulties, but there were constant and serious misunderstandings. Whilst in Italy he lived chiefly by giving English lessons and now and then writing Italian items of interest for the London journals.

When Eric arrived in England, a man over forty, Marie and I did our best to help him, but it was a very discouraging task.

Marie discerned in him a taste for writing poetry and a real gift of rhyme, but whilst the English language is adequate to the clear expression of every sentiment and thought, the writer must first know what he means before he can make his readers feel it.

He had a peculiar way of composing his verses. Sometimes the last line of the poem was written first, then in home-made little scribbling-books he would block out the number of verses and write a line here and there. This was very different from Marie's method; she was always clear-sighted and spontaneous in her MSS. But she encouraged and helped Eric Mackay in every way, and paid Messrs. Field & Tuer all the costs of production of a volume of his verse. They had written to her that "no publisher in all London will take a volume of poems on his own risk, and Swinburne pays for every book

he brings out, though he gets back every penny afterwards."

"I shall make tremendous efforts to get Eric's book properly brought out *somehow*, and see that he has his chance," said Marie to me.

It came out anonymously, and many rumours arose as to its authorship. After many ingenious speculations a simple statement appeared one day in the *American Independent*, and divulged the name of the author of the *Love Letters of a Violinist* to be Eric Mackay.

On our return to London it was that Dr. Mary Scharlieb strongly recommended that Marie should live in the country for at least two years, if she was to gain strength and restore her sorely tried nerves.

For some time she refused; she felt that it would interfere with her work and cut her off from her friends and from those theatres and picture exhibitions which were so constant a pleasure. But Dr. Scharlieb was insistent, and at last she took courage, and the memory of that lovely wistaria at Stratford-on-Avon, and all the associations with Shakespeare, whom she worshipped, decided her to write to Mrs. Croker of "Ye Hall's Croft," with the result that she secured the house furnished for four months, from the middle of May 1899. It was a lovely summer and the change soon proved most beneficial.

At Stratford she started afresh her literary work, and in June 1900 she published her first short novel, *Boy*, followed the next month by her long and daring novel, *The Master Christian*. Both were commenced and written at Stratford-on-Avon. Robert Hichens,



YE HALL'S CROFT, STRATFORD-ON-AVON

[Painted by W. W. Chetwode]

who thought highly of the sketch *Boy*, wrote an article from which I may quote :

" Marie Corelli occupies a peculiar position among the notorious ones of the world. For years she has been famous. For years she has made more money than almost any literary woman or man. For years she has been worshipped by—shall I say millions of readers? For years she has been discussed, condemned, praised, pilloried. In the midst of all this hubbub she continues to write as she feels, to express her temperament on paper, to put forth, with an amazing vivacity, her opinions. I like to think of her posed in some calm retreat and 'producing,' while people who have never seen her, who will never see her, are discussing her merits and demerits in various parts of the globe. People say she is small and fair. So she ought to be—a fairy stirring up the world with a wand dipped in ink. Does she wish to be adored or revel in being hated? Who knows? Perhaps she laughs to herself in some shady hermitage, and marvels at the good people who grow dishevelled around her footstool. . . . But she always puts into her work the same peculiar and abnormal vitality—a vitality that never flags or falters, that seems, indeed, to grow, like a fire fanned by the bellows of discussion. *Boy* is what it is named on the title-page—a sketch, a story slight, domestic, unsensational, direct—the study of a boy's growing up in a commonplace, bad environment. The author has set out to be simple—a most difficult matter to succeed in. She has produced a sketch that is wonderfully natural, very true, very touching, and full of charm. . . . The art with which Miss Corelli makes one feel that *Boy* could, nay, must, have been a fine fellow had he been given the chance, is remarkable. . . . Yes, tears will be shed over *Boy*. . . . He wanted to be a real English boy. He wanted to act on the square. . . . But again and again in this story Miss Corelli surprises me by the

effects she attains without any apparent effort, without any attempt at eloquence, elaboration, or rhetorical power. . . .

"In simplicity she has won a new success and found the way to the fountain of tears. Those who finish *Boy* with a lump in their throats will afterwards have a pleasant memory of it."

And in a letter he says :

"I must tell you, gladly, that I am charmed with *Boy*. You have struck a new vein. It is simple, natural, and yet most effective. It is wholesome and yet not 'goody,' and it is truly humorous in the quickest, least strained way. . . . It is the fashion to decry you frantically, and to read you frantically. Yours is a queer position. I wish you would do this : don't subscribe to Romeike, and never read criticisms. . . . I have over and over again longed to say this. I believe the less you read of attacks, the better and better you will write, the mellow and mellow will the fruit of your brain become."

He wrote from Windermere, and asks : "Do you know this place? It is very beautiful." She was to know the Lakes well and to stay at the pilgrim shrine at Brantwood in the years to come.

Again, a year later, he writes :

"You know I do think you often were and often are unfair to us men ; at least, I must say I don't think I could ever be jealous of the success of really good work. . . . I don't care a rap for sex in art."

And again :

"I think I shall have to write an article on you and men ! You are much too hard on us, really. Macaulay, the greatest critic of his day, adored Jane Austen's work and put her next



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to Shakespeare. George Eliot was universally acclaimed by men—Charlotte Brontë is a cult among men . . . Christina Rossetti has been almost worshipped by men (critics), and even given a higher position than her brother. In music, women have not shown themselves greatly creative, and only rarely in painting. I am going to Biskra on Thursday, and then to Algiers."

It was, thanks to this journey, that we have *The Garden of Allah*.

Dean Farrar wrote to her, endorsing her great influence for good in *Boy*, and the story impressed many others, among letters received being one from a complete stranger :

"I prize the book very, very much, and I pray it may awaken in the hearts of many parents a sense of their duty to their children, both by precept and example. . . ."

Although begun at "Ye Hall's Croft," both *Boy* and *The Master Christian* were finished at the Dower House, then called "Avon Croft." Both books were published almost simultaneously in 1900, *Boy* in June and *The Master Christian* in August, the latter proving one of her greatest successes.

Meanwhile Marie was not only reconciled to a life in the country, but had become devoted to Stratford-on-Avon, and no longer wished to return to her house in Kensington and, *à tout prix*, a house had to be found, unfurnished, in Stratford-on-Avon or near by.

We ransacked the neighbourhood, and both big and small houses were visited and considered. "Alveston Leys" was one of the places very much in

the balance. The house was then a very commonplace one, but the grounds were lovely and uncommon. They had originally been beautifully laid out by Mr. Lomax with rare trees and shrubs, but the house and gardens lay low, on the very banks of the river Avon, and it was feared that it would be too damp for us; and although Marie had impulsively gone far in the matter of purchase, the decision not to take it, though at considerable financial sacrifice, had to be made.

Time was growing short, the owners of the Dower House wished to re-enter their home, so there was nothing to be done but to lease "Mason Croft." She decided to take it on a lease of eighteen months, with the option of purchase at a fixed price. It had many drawbacks, but, *faute de mieux*, it was taken. Friends not very encouragingly told her, "You have undertaken the burden of a white elephant."

Her furniture was brought from our London home, and in 1901 we settled into "Mason Croft." It was a dilapidated old place when we went in, but together we set to work, and in good time it was improved out of all recognition; and after a few years, during which shrubs and creepers grew outside and alterations were made within, it became the charming and homely house that it is to-day.

A friend calling on our second day at "Mason Croft" said frankly that she could not see where the fascination was in such a house; but sufficient for us that it was in Stratford-on-Avon. Shakespeare had here in the town first seen the light and had here grown to manhood, and had returned here when he



had made his fortune and earned his fame, though not always appreciated, it would appear, by his fellow-townsmen, or so tradition and records tell us. He loved the town and breathed his last in Stratford-on-Avon.

In the garden of "Mason Croft," where the spirit of bygone centuries still seems to cling, is a vertical double sundial on the top of a stone arch three centuries old. This Elizabethan home was once an old farmhouse, and to this day the estate has to pay the Fee Farm fees, which are of very ancient origin. Centuries ago, when the king possessed the power of granting an estate to any one he thought proper, a Fee Farm rent was reserved, payable for ever out of the same as a first charge thereon; and as some of the rents amount to £300 per annum and are chargeable on estates in almost every county in England and Wales, they formed a large portion of the income of the Crown.

In Charles II.'s reign an Act of Parliament was passed enabling the Crown to sell these rents to private owners.

The Fee Farm rent of "Mason Croft" is a portion of a rent of £15, 13s. 4d., and has been paid in London, at Lincoln's Inn, since the year 1677.

Already she loved the dear old town and all its associations, and this love and reverence grew as the time passed, and she was unhesitatingly frank and fearless in stating her views, and backing them up with all her might, when any scheme was put forward which might lead to the destruction or disfigurement of some one or other of its old-time buildings.

She was much distressed to find that a large debt existed in respect to the parish church, in which Shakespeare, not to speak of other time-honoured citizens, lay; and she determined, if possible, to raise a fund with which to pay this off. She broached the matter, among others, to Ellen Terry.

"I'll do what I can to help, but at the moment I am ill and confined to my bed," wrote Ellen Terry; "but what a disgrace—this debt! I enclose my contribution (£15) and £1 each from Edith Craig and Gordon Craig. I don't quite know how to beg, but I'll try.

"People should rush forward longing to do each a little in such a case.

"Shakespeare!

"Well—well!

"I should have written before, but only yesterday my temperature went down to 101."

And again:

"22 BARKSTON GARDENS,
EARL'S COURT, S.W.

"It makes me mad—cross—that we can't do this little business in hand *with a sweep*! The only reason I still stick on at work is to have the pleasure of *being of use*, but even then, to play the game freely is impossible.

"My dear Marie Corelli, I too have written to Mr. Beit (1), who tells me he has written to you!—I wonder *how much* he has written? He was a nice rich acquaintance—all my *friends* are ghastly poor!—I have gathered scraps together—but only a few pounds, and ill as I am it will be difficult.

"I have, of course, put *Private* on every note I have written, but suppose it creeps into the papers! Then—? Of course, if your name and mine asked *for alms* in a paper for anything, we should get heaps of dirty, useful stuff—



(Painted by W. W. Quatremaine

OLD SUNDIAL AT MASON CROFT

M A R I E C O R E L L I

"A Performance would be good—as you suggest—but how many performances am I not 'down' for between now and April! I've already promised more than can be—probably—performances. I have never played in Stratford!

"Why don't you write me a tiny play 2 *minutes* (fitting the years of me—fifty-three next February—and my nice silvery hair)—gay—and heart good—and I'll play *that* by hook or by crook before April. My son acts beautifully—he could act with me. I fear if you and I write to folk, we'll write all the while to the same folk! To one girl I wrote:

"'You have just received 10s. 6d. from a magazine,—your *first paid* contribution—give it to me for this.' She sent it at once, so delighted—tho' she is frightfully poor (an Earl's daughter at that!).

"Shall you be in London between the 25th January and 2nd of February? Five minutes' advice from you, and direction, would be very valuable to me.

"I am off to *Tenterden* to-day to settle some farm business there—and on Monday to Winchelsea for more business—a line—

"'E. Terry, Smallhythe, Tenterden, Kent,' or

'E. Terry, Winchelsea, Sussex,'

will find me.

"I wish I could come to Stratford, but cannot, as much has to be settled before I go *a-touring* the 2nd February.

"Heavens! the length of this scrawl! Try to 'excuse'—
Yours, E. T."

CHAPTER X

THE greatest asset of the town of Stratford-on-Avon, apart from its beauty and its surroundings, is in the fact of its being the birthplace and home of William Shakespeare, where, for over three hundred years, travellers, now numbered by thousands, have wended their steps to render homage at its shrine. Marie considered it to be the privilege and duty of all loyal inhabitants to help to preserve the character of the town.

It was not long before she found herself obliged to enter the lists herself in defence of these principles. Sir Theodore Martin, a lawyer and man of letters of wide repute, a poet, the biographer of the Prince Consort, author of *Queen Victoria as I Knew Her*, had married in 1851 Helen Faucit, a well-known and talented actress, herself the daughter of an actress. She had acted with Macready in many Shakespeare plays. She died in 1898, and Sir Theodore had given a pulpit, in green marble, to the parish church in her memory. This pulpit, however beautiful in itself, is quite out of keeping with the rest of the exquisite church. He now proposed that there should be a second memorial, in the form of a mural bas-relief in the chancel, opposite to that of Shake-

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spcare, which would necessitate the removal of a memorial tablet to one of the previous vicars, whose widow, aged ninety, was still living, and who had not even been consulted in the matter.

In spite of all efforts, a considerable debt remained on the church, and Marie determined, if only this object could be defeated, to make up the deficiency out of her own pocket.

“AVON CROFT, STRATFORD-ON-AVON,
24th October 1900.

“DEAR MR. ARBUTHNOT,—I am in a position this morning to offer you the instant payment of the £900 needed to close the debt on the church, if you will use your authority to prevent the inclusion of a modern bust into Shakespeare’s Chancel, and relegate it to some other place in the church. You are asked to do this as a matter of *national sentiment* and hallowed history.

“The cheque is at your service on these conditions. All Shakespeare lovers feel very strongly the intended act of vandalism.—Faithfully yours,
MARIE CORELLI.”

But the Bishop of Worcester had, she found, already granted a faculty for the removal of the existing tablet, and Marie had, instead, to bear the expense of legal proceedings. She took legal advice, carried the matter to the Court of Arches, and won the day.

Sir Sidney Lee wrote her that he thought

“No one can be in any doubt that it was your own energetic intervention which caused the satisfactory solution of the difficulty. Your active pursuit of the matter undoubtedly led me to consider it more closely and greatly reinforced my sense of

the incongruity of the situation. Most of the London papers, as far as I have seen them, with perfect rightness, consider that you have saved a national monument from a serious peril. The victory is certainly yours."

Marie, let me say, had no feelings against Sir Theodore, and was full of admiration for Helen Faucit and her acting of Shakespeare's heroines. Eventually the bas-relief found its proper place in the Memorial Museum.

She next heard that the destruction of five cottages in Henley Street, next door to Shakespeare's birthplace, was contemplated. Marie protested both in private and in public. She found that the Shakespeare's Birthplace Trust was incorporated by Act of Parliament in 1891, and was a public trust; and that it stated clearly that the Trustees had no "power or right to sell or destroy any property that had belonged to William Shakespeare or any member of his family." Now, part of the contemplated demolition and sale consisted of the Hornby cottages, which had belonged to Shakespeare's granddaughter and the Hart family, and the deeds were actually at the time housed in the birthplace. The matter went into the Courts: what would have been breach of trust was prevented, and the cottages were saved. I will not tell the whole story over again. Many, and among them Trustees who opposed her at the time, lived to acknowledge that it was she who had been in the right. Marie, almost single-handed, won a victory, with the result that may be seen to-day. Nevertheless, at the time, intense bitterness was aroused. Had the Trus-



[Photo, B. I'yer

MASON CROFT. THE STREET FRONT

tees but referred to documents relating to the Henley Street cottages, documents which were actually in the care of the Librarian to the birthplace, they would have found that the buildings were not, as they claimed, and as was also proved when their construction was exposed to view, merely Early Victorian—and a great deal of expense and much distress of mind would have been avoided.

The cottages were saved and restored, and are now proving most useful as committee rooms and offices for the benefit of the town and of the Birthplace Trust.

Birch's old china shop, where Green, Shakespeare's cousin, had lived, was incorporated in the Library Buildings, and visitors may easily distinguish the old oak beams among the modern which carry the library and reading-room ceilings.

Marie's sole aim and object was to save genuine Shakespearean relics from demolition, and so to preserve them for the town of Stratford-on-Avon, and it was to this end that she endeavoured to inaugurate a guild or society similar to those in certain other centres of historical interest, "to guard Stratford and its surroundings, not only for ourselves but for the generations to come after us," as she described it when, though not till ten years later, the scheme came to fruition.

Her time was indeed fully occupied ; and she was again doing far too much for her strength, and once more suffered from headaches and over-tried nerves. The past months had been strenuous, and many matters still troubled her—the still remaining debt on

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the church among others—and she enlisted the help of her friends who were interested in the town and its associations, wherever she felt she would get support.

When the 1902 Festival took place at the Memorial Theatre Marie was too unwell to attend the performances, but Ellen Terry and she were able to meet again.

“SHAKESPEARE HOTEL,
STRATFORD-ON-AVON,
Saturday Night.

“SWEET M. C.,—Report says you are still ill, and I am *very, very* sorry. If I may come and see you for three minutes, without harm to you, I should like to.

“They must all miss you at the Festival this year—I had looked forward to your shaking hands with my good man. We are here for a week—he is at *Richard III.* this evening, but I am too tired to go, and am resting. We motor to Leamington to-morrow, but shall ask about you at your door some time during the day.

“I’m so sleepy. Good-night—a good wish upon you.—
Yours affectionately, ELLEN CAREW.”

Marie—perhaps largely owing to her musical training, added to a voice of singular clearness—spoke, so to say, in melody; but added to that she spoke from the heart, and above all knew quite clearly what she wished to say. Her friend Mrs. Matthews, telling of her first meeting as a girl with Marie at the house of her uncle, Henry Labouchere, in Palace Yard, Westminster, describes her voice as “silvery clear, soft yet resonant, of purity unequalled, and having in it a thrill of tenderness.” Ellen Terry,

too, after hearing Marie many years later address an audience at the Theatre in Leicester, turned to her and said, "I wonder, my dear, how you ever managed to keep off the boards"; whilst Mr. (later Sir) Sidney Colvin, after hearing her speak to an audience at the time of the Henley Street troubles, wrote congratulating her on "a speech delivered with very remarkable beauty of voice." Early in the year 1901, as a guest of the Whitefriars Club, presided over by Mr. Winston Churchill, on the occasion of their annual "ladies' dinner," the principal toasts had been "Sovereign Woman" and "Mere Man." Marie spoke for fifteen minutes, unprepared, in eloquent defence of our sex. It was her first after-dinner speech, and it was spoken before a very critical audience; and Mr. Winston Churchill, congratulating her afterwards, said that its excellence had "almost disarmed his opposition to Woman's Suffrage." I wonder whether he would claim the same to-day! "She was a lioness in a den of Daniels," said a witty journalist, when praising her powers of public speaking.

But perhaps she had been helped by her pleasure in having around her people of literary and political interests. Her week-end parties were a special interest in her life. She enjoyed nothing better than to listen to good talk and to take part in it, and at these she would gather round her men of eminence in art, literature, and politics, good talkers, active-minded thinkers, experts each in his or her own walk in life. Also she loved to have music in her home, and to get up concerts in the town; but if she

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set herself such a task it had to be carried through by the best artists of the day.

"My heartiest thanks again for all your kindness; it was a real happiness to be with you and to play for your charming audience," writes Johannes Wolf.

"I never will or can forget dear Stratford-on-Avon, and I take it as a great honour that your dear people call me *their* Johannes. But who is the cause of all that kindness? My dear friend, Marie Corelli. I feel happy and at home, *grace à vous*. Please give my love to the dear town. . . .

"I am so pleased the next concert is already getting on so well—it could not be otherwise as you give yourself so much trouble, and if you do anything it is always a great success."

Marie was at this time President of the Stratford-on-Avon Choral Union, and on her first year of office she produced at the Memorial Theatre the first "Grand Vocal and Instrumental Concert." The artistes were Madame Clara Butt and Kennerley Rumford, Mlle Albertini, Monsieur Johannes Wolff, supported by the Choral Union. It was such a success that not even standing-room was available for many who wished to be present.

The following year, 1902, for a similar concert, Marie secured the services of Miss Ada Crossley, Miss Christine Hawkes, Mr. William Green, Monsieur Johannes Wolff, and Chevalier Wilhelm Ganz.

In March 1903 the Choral Union produced Rossini's *Stabat Mater*, and again Marie succeeded in securing leading artistes of the day. Madame Amy Sherwin sang the "Inflamatus," and the duet "Quis est homo," with Miss Hester Otway.



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Mr. Joseph O'Mara sang "Cujus Animam," and Mr. Andrew Black "Pro Peccatis."

Johannes Wolff was a devoted admirer of her work.

"I have just arrived from Austria," he wrote about this time, "and have to play here in Paris before the Queen of Spain. I am rather tired, but am feeling well. I will play to-night my *Souvenir sans Paroles* set to your beautiful poem. The *Poésie* will make the success. . . ."

This is the poem in question :

"SOUVENIR SANS PAROLES"

"Yes, I remember ! . . . but I cannot speak—

Mere words can never voice a thought of Heaven ;
No language lives that is not all too weak

For such wild dreams as to my soul are given ;
Music alone can show once more the light

Of days too fair and half divine to last,
Music alone can touch the far-off height

Where shines the dear remembrance of the past.

Speak for me, golden notes,

That tremble from my bow,

In a melody that floats

Tenderly, to and fro !

God's sweet interpreter of thought thou art,

And thou shalt breathe in sound the memories of my
heart ! "

He always said he owed very much to Marie, and he wrote often to her. She understood well the artistic temperament, its alternations of high

spirits and of deep despondency—and her tact and understanding found response in many tortured hearts. Indeed she and Johannes were close friends, sharing a common enthusiasm for Art in all its forms. He was a large-hearted Dutchman and proud of his country.

"I am most grateful to you," he writes on one occasion. "By your lovely books full of sentiment you have made me another man.

"My sentiments were, alas! spoiled, but now I am different, as I see more and more the uselessness of *mondaine* society as the ruin of much that is good and noble. By your powerful pen you are a blessing to humanity and the world cannot be grateful enough. . . . I am most thankful to Providence to know and have your friendship. . . .

"I am so interested in everything you do, but you never write me about yourself: now I am afraid to tell you my doings. . . . I know you love birds so much, and I am sure they whisper often to you what I think of you. . . . Your charming letter and that lovely little bouquet of violets—how very sweet of you! I have kept them and will always keep them in my violin box. I do wish I had your temperament. You are in so many things a philosopher—what a blessing! Life to me is the most extraordinary problem."

On another occasion Johannes mentions that he had a delightful talk with the Princess Louise "all about my dear friend, Marie Corelli," and had thoroughly enjoyed it.

The following extract from a letter sent on the 10th March 1903 from St. Petersburg, referring to the late Empress, cannot fail to be interesting when

we think of the terrible tragedy that befell the Imperial family :

"MY DEAR FRIEND,—I am very happy to write you from Russia. I am delighted with my visit. I am every day with the Empress ; she is most charming ; really, she is an excellent musician and always accompanies me. I cannot tell you what a beautiful place that Palais d'Hiver is. I never saw anything more grandiose. . . .

"I must see you very soon, as you will give me again comfort with your splendid conversations. Your dear house and garden must be already lovely—here everything is still cold, ice, and snow."

In this same year Marie was approached by a publisher to know if she would write a *Life of Christ*. I quite agreed with the eager publisher at the time that nobody could have done it more reverently. He wrote saying :

"It has suggested itself to me that a life of Christ written by you would be an enormous factor for good—circulating as it would amongst many thousands who would otherwise never read such a work.

"I feel that you could make Him a manly man, and your book would be freer from the cant which usually surrounds the subject and turns so many away from it. I trust you will consider this proposal very seriously and hope that you will view it favourably."

After due consideration she hesitated and then declined ; the task was stupendous, and she feared to undertake so sublime a subject. True, her romance of *Barabbas* had proved her capabilities with a sacred

theme, and her scene of the Resurrection Morn was read from the pulpit by the Dean of Westminster in the Abbey on Easter Sunday, after telling his congregation that he could not find words to give a more beautiful description than that given in Marie Corelli's novel, *Barabbas*—perhaps the greatest honour that could be done to her work.

The idealistic spirituality of the angels at the Tomb is told in a fashion so distinctive of the author, that I quote the scene :

“ A deep silence reigned. All the soldiers of the watch lay stretched on the ground unconscious, as though struck by lightning, the previous mysterious singing of the birds had ceased ; and only the lambent quivering of the wing-like glory, surrounding the two angelic Messengers, seemed to make an expressed though unheard sound, as of music. Then, in the midst of the solemn hush, . . . the great stone that closed the tomb of the Crucified trembled . . . and was suddenly thrust back like a door flung open in haste for the exit of a King, and lo ! . . . a Third great Angel joined the other two ! Sublimely beautiful He stood, the Risen from the Dead ! gazing with loving eyes on all the swooning, sleeping world of men ; the same grand countenance that had made a glory of the Cross of Death, new, with a smile of victory, gave poor humanity the gift of everlasting life ! The grateful skies brightened above Him—earth exhaled its choicest odours through every little pulsing leaf and scented herb and tree ; Nature exulted in the touch of things eternal, and the dim pearly light of the gradually breaking morn fell on all things with a greater purity, a brighter blessedness than ever had invested it before.

“ The Man Crucified and Risen, now manifested in Himself the mystic mingling of God in humanity ; and taught that for

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the powers of the Soul set free from sin there is no limit, no vanquishment, no end! No more eternal partings for those who on earth should learn to love each other—no more the withering hopelessness of despair—the only ‘death’ now possible to redeemed mortality being ‘the bondage of sin’ voluntarily entered into and preferred by the unbelieving. And from this self-wrought, self-chosen doom not even a God can save!”

And this leads me to Marie’s own beliefs, which are, perhaps, impossible to give better than in her own words in a letter written at this time to her friend, that same Mr. Arbuthnot, Vicar of the parish church of Stratford-on-Avon :

“AVON CROFT, STRATFORD-ON-AVON,
28th April 1900.

“DEAR MR. ARBUTHNOT,—It is very sweet and kind of you to write me such a nice letter, and though I do not belong to your form of the Christian Faith, nor to the Roman Catholic form either now, I have the greatest respect and reverence for both. I am one of a very numerous ‘fraternity’ (we are, perhaps, between 50,000 and 100,000 altogether)—who are bound to try our best to follow the teachings of Christ as enunciated by Himself—and we are not, by the rules of our Order, allowed to attend public worship, ‘That we may be seen of men.’ Our rules are somewhat difficult and arbitrary, and render us liable to a good deal of misconception—hence we have chosen as our motto, ‘In the world ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer—I have overcome the world.’ If you would like to form an idea of what we *try* to do, I will copy the ‘Daily Paradise’ from my little private Manual (each member of our Order has one), as I think it will rather interest you. We are all at one in our Faith in the Divinity of Jesus

Christ and His Message, as being the only way to truth and life; of final salvation, so far as this earth and its inhabitants are concerned, and any doubter of this first grand principle would be requested to resign his or her membership. But we do not accept any of the Church forms. We simply, as far as it is humanly possible to do, obey the *words of Christ* as spoken by Himself—even at all risk of inconvenience to ourselves and misjudgment by our friends.

"With regard to the Scriptures, I do not think any *woman* has ever studied them so deeply and devoutly as I have, or, let me say, *more* deeply and devoutly.

"I have had the advantage of the teaching of one of the finest Hebrew scholars in Europe, and he has instructed me as to the actual weight and symbolic meaning of every word and line. My religion is *my very life*—I have no thought without it, or beyond it—and when I say I would give my whole self to death for it, you may judge it is no light matter with me. Please forgive me for taking up your time in this way, but your letter was so kind that I felt impelled to tell you a little of myself, that you might not altogether mistake me, and judge me perhaps wrongly—though even if you do, I must suffer that with other things. But as a believer in Christ I am absolutely resolute.

"Thank you once more.—Sincerely yours,

"MARIE CORELLI."

Early in this same year she had written an article for, I think, the *Pall Mall Gazette* on "*Pagan London*," which, among others, brought her an appreciative letter from Sir Edward Clarke, the famous lawyer.

"It is indeed time that protest was made against the blatant vulgarity of the society and literature of the day," he wrote. "I am glad to hear that after your heavy trials you are beginning to regain strength and spirits."

It was in 1901 that Marie was invited by the Directors of the Philosophical Society of Edinburgh to lecture. To speak to a Society whom such men as Lord Macaulay, Lord Brougham, Thomas Carlyle, W. E. Gladstone, the Earl of Rosebery, W. M. Thackeray, Charles Kingsley, Charles Dickens, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Professor Huxley, and many others had addressed, was a great responsibility, but the invitation was couched in words so graciously flattering that she could not but take courage to comply, and on 19th November 1901 she delivered her first public lecture, choosing as her subject "The Vanishing Gift," explaining her title as referring to "imagination"—that wonderful spiritual faculty which is the source of all great creative work in art and literature. Some call it "inspiration," others "the divine fire."

The chair was occupied by Mr. J. B. Sutherland, who, introducing Miss Corelli, "ventured to think that Mr. Gladstone's prophecy of a great future for her was one of few modern prophecies that had been fulfilled."

Briefly summarised, her lecture dealt with the decay of civilisation and the loss of the imaginative spirit.

"There is something almost humorous," she said, "in all this modern hurry-scurry—something almost grotesque in this desire for swift movement, this wish to save time and to stint work—but there is something infinitely pathetic about it."

It seemed to her as though the present period of the world's civilisation felt itself growing old, as if,

like an individual human unit, it knew itself to be past its prime, and drawing nigh to death—as if, with advancing age, it were seeking to secure as much change and amusement as possible in the little time of existence left to it. Two of the most notable signs of such mental and moral decay are, first, a morbid craving for incessant excitement, and secondly, a disinclination to serious thinking. “But it is very certain that where there is no time to give to thinking there is less time to give to the imagination, and where there is neither thought nor imagination creative work of high and lasting quality is not possible.” She touched upon the great imaginative work of the world in days past, and showed how the thoughts of the old-world period were written in wellnigh indelible language. The colossal sculpture of Egypt, the classic forms of Greece and Rome, were all evidences of high aspirations and endeavour; moreover, they were expressions of a broad reposeful strength and dignified consciousness of power.

“The artists of a former time laboured with sustained and tranquil energy, but we in our day could only produce imitations of their models with a vast amount of spasmodic hurry and clamour.” So, perhaps, we should leave to future generations little but an echo of much ado about nothing. “For truly,” she said, “we live at present under a veritable scourge of mere noise. No king, no statesman, no general, no thinker, no writer, is allowed to follow the course of his duty or work without the noisy comment of all sorts and conditions of men, and in

such circumstances it is well to bear in mind the fine lines of our last great Laureate :

“ ‘ Step by step we gained a freedom, known to Europe, known to all ;

Step by step we rose to greatness—through the tonguesters we may fall ! ’

“ The things that were called imaginary,” she said, “ were often more real than what is called realism.” Shakespeare’s world was so real that there were some who grudged him its reality, and strove to dispossess him of it. Walter Scott’s world was real, so real that a shrine was built to him in Princes Street, crowded with the sculptured figures of men and women, most of whom never existed save in his teeming fancy. What a tribute to the power of imagination ! But some were, perhaps, even now seeking for a *Waverley* cryptogram which should prove that King George IV. wrote the *Waverley* novels, with the assistance of Scott’s gamekeeper, Tom Purdie, and that His Majesty gave Scott his baronetcy on condition that he should never divulge the true authorship ! For if it is asserted that no one man could have written Shakespeare’s plays, then certainly no one man could have written the *Waverley* novels.

She also spoke of the decay of imaginative spirit in Scotland. She touched on the reported repudiation in Scotland of the Scottish accent, the Scottish dialect, and the Scottish songs. She alluded to the songs of Robert Burns, and quoted a famous old Jacobite song, “ The wee, wee German lairdie,” as

an example of Scottish humour, and a verse of "My Nannie O!" as an example of Scottish tenderness. She said it would be a sad day for Scotland when the spirit of tender and poetic imagination left it. "No king, no statesman, can do for a country what its romancists and dreamers can. The sovereignty of the inspired and imaginative soul is supreme, and above all other earthly dominion, even as the fame of Homer is greater than the conquests of Alexander."

She quoted various writers on the quality of imagination. One Persian poet had called it "an immortal sense of memory, always striving to recall the beautiful things the soul has lost." Another example also came from the East: that it was "an instinctive premonition of beautiful things to come." But what she considered the truest was "it is the sun-dial of the soul, on which God flashes the true time of day!" For imagination leads the way to scientific discovery. Shakespeare foresaw the electric telegraph, and had not one of the old writers of the Hebrew Scriptures anticipated the phonograph in speaking of "the image of the voice"? She gave a very interesting extract from a rare book treating of the Egyptian Pyramids, published in 1672, which described the use of wireless telegraphy by one Saurid, a High Priest of Memphis. She concluded her address by saying that if imagination was, indeed, the sun-dial of the soul, "it must not be allowed to get overgrown with the rank moss and weeds of selfishness and prejudice—that it must be kept sound and clean, with its index hand firmly set and none of its numeral figures missing. Then, perchance,

shall God flash the true time of day on it for such as will hold themselves free to mark the hour according to His will. And for those who do hold themselves thus free, and keep the sun-dial clear and clean in their souls, there shall always be light and clear reflections of beauty and peace."

The lecture was a pronounced success, and the secretary wrote that he had received an unusual number of letters in praise of the lecturer's handling of her subject. During the lecture she had touched on the threat by the Corporation of Glasgow, in their need of a water-supply reservoir, of possibly, even probably, destroying for all time the beauties of Loch Katrine. Thanks, she was told, to her appeal, it was hoped to preserve Ellen's Isle, and it was guaranteed that, after a year or so, the "silver strand," through Nature's own agencies, would again appear margining the Loch. To Marie's great surprise and joy, she was some weeks later to receive, presented by the members of the Institute, a massive silver rose bowl of beautiful design, bearing the inscription, "Presented to Miss Marie Corelli by the Edinburgh Philosophical Institution, in grateful recognition of the brilliant address delivered by her on the 19th November 1901."

Following upon this lecture came a letter from her friend, W. H. Wilkins. They had long been friends, and those who remember him will recall his brilliant talk. He is best known to the general public by his book, *The Life of an Uncrowned Queen*. It is the story of Sophia Dorothea, consort of King George I., a tragic and passionate figure. Wilkins

was a confirmed invalid, and the cause was rheumatic fever, brought on by sleeping, when on a visit away from home, in a damp bed. It left him with spinal trouble, against which he fought with courage and cheerfulness. He was a very gifted man, but death took him when in what should have been the prime of life. "I am writing," he said, "on behalf of the Royal Society of Literature, to ask if you would honour them by reading a paper, or lecture, before the Society . . . my letter is only to sound you on the subject . . . if you accept, you are the first lady who has ever lectured to them."

Among frequent week-end visitors were Mr. and Mrs. Henry Labouchere. They had, after her illness and operation at Brighton, placed "Pope's Villa" on the banks of the Thames at her disposal—indeed, there was little they would not have done for her, for Henry Labouchere admired pluck above all things, and her courage in support of her convictions would, in any case, have won his respect.

Marie and "Labby" discussed and corresponded regarding many questions social, racial, literary, or political. He was opposed to the Boer war, and when opposed to anything he was violently opposed. They did not always agree, and when that was the case, she had no hesitation in saying so. In 1900 he writes to her :

"No, I was not hurt. As you say, the country has gone mad—to argue is like arguing with a crowd of drunkards. But this won't last; they will soon be in the condition of the man after a booze and with a splitting headache. This is

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what happened in the Crimean War. It is always the same story—Bright was burnt in effigy, and after the war all admitted that he had been right. We are now fighting to enable a gang of financial competitors to 'put out' some more rotten Co.'s.—
Yours truly, HENRY LABOUCHERE.

"P.S.—I wonder that no one has written a novel bringing in Shakespeare and Anne Hathaway and with local colouring—you should."

But, war declared upon us, Marie was heart and soul with the army in South Africa, though bitterly opposed to the "Mafeking" that followed, as well as to the callousness of many people at home, who, able-bodied and free, were not enlisting as they should. She had friends at the Front, and her thoughts were constantly with them. On the relief of Ladysmith by Dundonald's Mounted Brigade, she cabled to her old friend, its commanding officer.

"We were in time," he wrote her in reply, "but only just. It was painful to see the wan faces of the sick who rushed from their tents to cheer us when we galloped right through the Neutral Camp on the afternoon of 28th February. Poor fellows! they were dying off at a fearful rate. . . . You can have little idea of the difficulty of attacking the Boers in this country."

Of the last moment's relief of the beleaguered town Marie had—as on some other occasions, a presentiment of what would happen, and she had written of this, and Lord Dundonald, answering from Natal, wrote :

". . . It is curious what you say about your presentiment the night of the relief of Ladysmith. I can't say that I have

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had exactly the same sort, but I have foretold, so far as my own immediate horizon is concerned, what the Boers would do and what they would not. When others thought the Boers would attack, and slept in their boots, I knew they would not and did not trouble about them. This has many times occurred and saved me a lot of worry—but I daresay I founded my presentiments on probability, though sometimes I have been miles away from the army, with only some five hundred rifles, and thousands of Boers close by.

"No, I am not ambitious. I don't think I should fight for anything unless it were for an idea. I felt the country wanted all the men who could fight, and once in an affair I will see it through; and not caring much for my life, it all comes so easy to me, but that is not ambition. My thoughts are now in some beautiful spot in England, where I could be quiet and emerge from solitude only to help my native land to prepare for the future. I have seen the ruined homes of Natal. House after house destroyed by men-devils—peaceful homes torn to pieces. This is war, and our country must look to her armour. The foreigner will not spare us. Great Britain must arm, and perfect her manhood in war, and by one way or another stop the immigration of wretched outcasts into the country, who are turning the heart of the Empire into a foreign city with all the abuses of one. My brigade is made up of irregulars—such good men to fight. . . . The black races of South Africa are looking on at this struggle, praying for England's success. There is grand material amongst these men. I like them.—
Yours sincerely, DUNDONALD"

— letter which Marie vividly recalled when war threatened in 1911, and in the black days following the declaration of war in 1914.

In 1904 Mr. Labouchere is writing to her a letter, being his explanation, from his reading of science,



of the attraction of the sexes for one another. One must pardon the crudity of some of his scientific theories adapted, and no doubt with a characteristic delight in mischief, to the subject in question.

" VILLA CHRISTIANA,
via SANTA MARTA, FLORENCE,
3rd December 1904.

" DEAREST,—No woman can understand the exact grounds of the attraction of women to men. It begins on the difference of sex. The entire universe is, according to modern science, made up of ions. These ions are something electrical, or are electricity. All that we know is that they have a positive and a negative pole, and that they are in perpetual motion owing to the attraction of one pole and repulsion of the other. . . .

" Now man is a positive pole and woman a negative pole—or both, it may be said, are two electric batteries. These batteries have a tendency to equalise the sum of their joint electricity. This tendency impressed on their respective atoms is the basis of love and that sort of thing, and constitutes the difference of the attraction of persons of different sexes to each other, which does not exist between those of the same sex. The difference of the amount of the electricity in any two persons of a different sex itself differs. The greater the difference, the greater the attraction, and this no more depends upon any independent action of the two than the attraction of gravity depends upon the things attracted together by it."

Then he writes to her of beauty :

" Beauty is very much a question of convention and of association. What one nature finds beautiful in a human being another does not. With partially educated persons, there is little sense of beauty. A British working man—so far as I have ever discerned—divides women into fat and thin.

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Some admire the thin, others the fat. What is termed a very beautiful woman, *i.e.* one who fulfils all the conventional conditions of beauty, may attract as a picture, but what may be called the electric attraction does not necessarily follow. The man fancies something in her—her nose or her eyes or her arms or anything else. But in reality he does so because of the law of electric attraction and of electricity seeking to equalise itself. So much for love and beauty.

“Men are far more vain than women. A woman likes admiration. If she is clever and not physically a monster, she gets it by playing on the vanity of men. If I were a fairly good-looking woman I would make any man fancy that I saw something in him that specially attracted me, by pretending to this, making him talk of himself, regard me as his admiring confidant and so on, and I would back myself against Venus if she sought to cut me out by her charms alone. A man and a woman may be excellent friends—they may not be in the least in love with each other; but there always will be a difference between their friendship and that of two persons of the same sex, because the man is a man and the woman is a woman.

“Mrs. Craigie produces an agreeable, genial impression. A woman may notice her hard mouth—a man generalises. And this is why I say that being a pretty woman is an advantage to her with the critics with whom she comes in contact, particularly if she understands how to create a favourable impression irrespective of her looks. Critics usually are exceptionally vain, and she would fail were she not to lay herself out to please them.”

It was during one of the first visits of Mr. and Mrs. Labouchere, when we were still at “Hall’s Croft,” that Marie conceived the idea of giving a Christmas tree as a treat to a thousand children of the Stratford-on-Avon National Schools, in the Memorial Theatre. Most of them had never been in the theatre in their lives.

Mrs. Labouchere had had great experience in London with her annual well-organised dolls' shows at the Albert Hall, and she entered into the scheme with enthusiasm, and told where Marie could best buy the presents for these thousand children.

The great difficulty was to secure the theatre. At first permission was refused. There were many reasons given against it, such as that the children would damage the stalls, they would have to be removed, and no child must sit in the dress circle. After much correspondence, however, the theatre was at last secured—but the only contribution came in the form of the big Christmas tree kindly given by Mr. Domerick Gregg of Temple Grafton. In due course the stalls were removed and replaced by forms, and only the gallery and the floor of the theatre were used by the children, who—dear, happy, bright boys and girls—thoroughly enjoyed the entertainment. That we obtained permission to use the theatre was a great triumph, and I must say it turned out a great success. The organisation was left entirely in our hands, and I was asked by one in authority, "What shall we do with so many children?" "Leave it to me," Marie broke in. We divided the school into fourteen standards, each under the care of its own instructors, dressed in their Sunday clothes. Carrying flags, cheerful and happy, the children entered the building without the least confusion. The gallery was filled with the boys and the floor of the theatre with the girls. The dress circle was occupied by guests whom Marie had invited. I shall never forget the expressions of

surprise, the wonderful sigh of pleasure, that the juvenile audience gave when the curtain went up, whilst the bell-ringers rang the Christmas chimes. The tree was lit up with electricity by a Birmingham firm, for there was no electric power in the town at that time, and looked charming. Fourteen long tables covered with presents on each side of the tree made their distribution easy, a table for each standard, and the prizes were distributed accordingly. It went so well that there was no confusion of any sort, for we took each standard class in turn. The members of each standard had drawn their tickets before reaching the stage. The only hitch was the help a tiny boy required to carry the Christmas turkey off the stage, and another the cake.

Many actors and others sent telegrams, which were read out, expressing good wishes for Shakespeare's town's children.

As the children were allowed no refreshment in the theatre, they each received, on leaving, a huge cracker containing cakes, sweets, oranges, and the like, handed to them on the doorstep of the Memorial building. Before leaving the theatre the Rev. George Arbuthnot, the Vicar, moved an impromptu vote of thanks to Miss Corelli, recommending her strongly not to expect any gratitude; he had worked for thirty years in the town, he said, and had never seen the slightest sign of it! At first we did not appreciate the satire, but they say that in this dear old town it takes twenty years at least before a newcomer is recognised by his, or her, fellow-townsmen.

CHAPTER XI

MARIE, had she not had superabundant energy and great nervous, if not equally great physical vitality, could hardly have sustained the weight of work that was her portion in the period with which I am now dealing. Whenever any subject-matter of topical interest which affected the status of woman, the conditions of the poor, maternity homes, the safeguarding and care of children—anything, indeed, towards the national advantage—made claim upon her, it had her support, either by the weight of her pen, or, and most frequently, and whenever the light of unsought publicity was not turned upon her, through the help of her purse; for she was making at this time, for a writer of novels only, a large income. Yet she wrote, now as always, what it pleased her to write, and, if she knew her own value in the matter of royalties and fees for articles contributed to reviews and magazines, she knew nothing of, and cared less for, the science of investment, and the conversion, with care for the future, of income into capital. Editors sought her opinions, reviews and magazines sought contributions from her pen. One well-known editor of a leading London newspaper was inspired to ask the

author of *The Master Christian* to review Hall Caine's *The Eternal City*, which had just appeared. She replied by return of post on 6th September 1901.

"DEAR SIR,—I cannot but admire the astute and business-like character of your request!—but I do not write 'reviews.' Nothing would ever persuade me to criticise the work of my contemporaries. Moreover, my book, *The Master Christian*, is not at all on the same theme as *The Eternal City*. Mr. Hall Caine treats of Rome, I of the Christ. The two are direct opposites.

"*The Eternal City* is recognised by, inspired by, and founded on Zola's *Rome*, in which great work the religious message of Mr. Caine's work is fully set forth. The idea of a democratic Rome under a democratic Pope is Zola's own and belongs to Zola alone. Therefore, let me request that you should ask M. Zola to review the work of his English confrère.—Faithfully yours,

MARIE CORELLI.

"6th September 1901."

In the spring of 1901 she was asked by a firm of publishers to write for them a Life of Queen Alexandra, but she felt she could not, without sacrifice of much time, undertake a "Life" which should be worthy of its subject; and she doubted, perhaps, whether she could even then produce a work without more time given to research and documentation than she could afford which would satisfy herself. Later, she was to be asked by telegram to write a "Eulogistic" fifty-thousand-word serial for a London daily paper. She, of course, declined, and in any case would never have written to such instructions. But there were invitations to speak which she was glad to accept, and one came from the Scottish Society

of Literature and Art in Glasgow. As her subject she chose "The Sign of the Times." Again, as in Edinburgh, Marie declined any fee, but she could not but appreciate to the full a souvenir presented to her by Dr. William Jacks with other officers, on behalf of the Society, of a pair of antique silver candelabra, in return for her lecture to so "enthusiastic and representative a gathering" in St. Andrew's Hall, on 20th February 1902.

In January of 1903 she lectured in Manchester, the subject being "A Little Talk on Literature." She had a great reception, and Judge Parry congratulated her at the conclusion of her lecture on behalf of her audience.

"It might be worth while to consider," she said, "whether in these modern days people in general really understood the value of literature or the vital influence it has upon the growth, progress, and history of nations. Poetry was the parent stem from which all literature had sprung into growth and flower. Literature was the expression of human thought in written language and, viewed in the highest sense, literature was the idealisation of human thought into ideal language." She placed the Bible at the head and front of literature. After the Bible came Shakespeare, Milton, Shelley, Byron, Keats, and Tennyson, the highest of our exponents of poetry and sublime expression of thought.

For pure classic English style she gave the palm to Addison, Steele, Macaulay, and Ruskin; and for the best fiction they must go to Sir Walter Scott, Charles Dickens, George Eliot, Thackeray, and

Charlotte Brontë, writers who had the courage to portray good as good, and evil as evil, without mixing up the two in such a way as to injure the moral perception of the reader.

She ended her address by saying :

“ We should take our books as we take our friends, prepared not to find fault, but to enjoy their company. We should not skip the pages of a book or dismiss them with brief contempt because the opinions expressed do not always coincide with our own, nor when some very dreadful or thrilling scene is described assume that the author must have ‘ experienced ’ the same.

“ By this argument Shakespeare must have experienced the sensations of a murderer in order to write *Macbeth*, Sir Walter Scott required a personal acquaintance with Richard Cœur de Lion before producing his magnificent novel, *The Talisman*, and Dickens needed to have lived during the French Revolution for any experience of *The Tale of Two Cities*. Strange as it may seem, the grandest poems, the finest fiction, are produced by authors who have never had, or never could have, the experience they deal with except in Imagination.

“ Most of the great imaginative works of the world are beyond experience. To the poet and romancist ‘ Imagination ’ is Experience. It is the Eye of the Soul, which sees all Earth and all Heaven.”

She concluded by saying that all authors worthy the name had unspeakable joy in their work, and performed that work in the hope to cheer, refine, or elevate at least one soul in a million.

We spent several days in Manchester. The Lord Mayor and Lady Mayoress entertained her at a civic



[Photo, B. Feyer

THE CONDOLA ON THE AVON

luncheon, and some three thousand people assembled to meet her at the Lord Mayor's *Conversazione* at the Town Hall.

Another appeal came later, from the committee of the Leeds branch of the Royal National Lifeboat Institution, most earnestly begging her to give an address in their large city hall to over four thousand people in aid of this most deserving fund, which she did, and the place was so packed that the committee requested her to address an overflow meeting as they could not shut the doors.

She delivered a most stirring address, to which the financial reply was very satisfactory; moreover, the whole went to help the cause, for here again she refused either hotel or travelling expenses.

The Vice-Chancellor of Leeds University, Dr. (now Sir Michael) Sadler in thanking her, remarked that "her hearers were charmed by her eloquence and by the extraordinary beauty of her enunciation. Every sentence in the lecture gave its value in light or shade to the composition as a whole."

It was now that she discovered a new relaxation. Driving about the country in her carriage or behind her ponies meant, in summer, dust and often noise, though to drive to some high ground and view the open country, or, with her little dog, to get out and wander in the woods, was always a delight to her, and she had not as yet confidence in the new luxury of motoring; but the river at Stratford-on-Avon was as yet unspoiled, and a gondola, with its shelter from the sun, offered the best means of floating on its stream and resting in comfort. She obtained one

from Venice, and at first, for the art of propelling a gondola was not known here, engaged an Italian gondolier, who was after a time, however, replaced by one of her English servants. Here on the river she could rest or think; here, too, she could take her many visitors who came from busy lives on the stage or in law courts, from Grub Street or Mayfair.

The charm of the river had always appealed to her, and she enjoyed watching and taking friends to see the races for the King's Trophy Cup, presented by her in 1901 to commemorate the accession to the throne of King Edward VII.

As I have said before, Marie's deepest delight was in seeing Shakespeare played, and it was 1903 that saw a curious happening. Beerbohm Tree had invited her and me to the first night of his *Antony and Cleopatra*—his own rendering of Antony disappointing her, as she frankly told him. But Constance Collier, who played Cleopatra, had been promised by Marie the loan, for the performance, of a very beautiful Egyptian necklace—left in Marie's will to the nation and now in the South Kensington Museum—a very fine example of a date approximately 4000 B.C., which was found during the construction of the great Nile barrage, and had been given her by Sir John Aird. It happened that during the night before the production of the tragedy, the spirit of the Egyptian rightful owner of the necklace four thousand years before appeared to Marie in a dream, entreating her not to lend the necklace, for, should she do so, ill luck would follow. The dream seemed so real that Marie made excuse and did not lend it.

MARIE CORELLI

It was well she did not, for Cleopatra, in a passionate scene with Antony, tore the necklace she then wore from her throat and it fell in fragments on to the stage. Marie turned to me in the box, "How lucky it was not my necklace!" We both were thankful, and so later, when she heard our story, was Miss Collier.

Meanwhile Stratford-on-Avon and its interest were rarely out of her mind, and it was on this visit to London that, after a talk with her banker, she wrote with joy in her heart to her friend the Vicar, announcing the fulfilment of what had long been her great wish.

"GRAND HOTEL, LONDON,
30th April 1903.

"DEAR MR. ARBUTHNOT,—Herewith I enclose my cheque, in full payment of the remaining debt on the church.

"It is the close of the Shakespeare fortnight, when you will receive this. The entire clearing of the long-standing debt is therefore to be taken as my grateful offering to the memory of that great literary Master, whose ashes the beautiful Holy Trinity Church enshrines, and to whose genius I owe so much of the happiness, instruction, and consolation of my life. I have only now to ask you not to speak of this to any one till Sunday, when you will please make the announcement to your congregation at the eleven o'clock service, from the pulpit in the usual way, and say as simply as, of course, you will do, that the entire remaining debt on the church has been cleared by one of your parishioners, Miss Marie Corelli, as a tribute to the close of the Shakespeare Festival of 1903.

"Let me, before concluding, thank you for the courtesy you have invariably displayed towards me. To the many friends just now gathering around me, and proffering their

sympathy for the nameless and needless insult inflicted on me in the dear old town I love so well, I have said, as I feel, that my notable 'fighting Vicar' has never fought with me, but has always inspired me with respect and friendship. There is no more to say, but to send my kind greetings to Mrs. Arbuthnot, and to assure you that I am always, yours sincerely in all things,

MARIE CORELLI."

The insult in question was a statement printed in the local paper by Mr. Boyden, the editor, and originating with Mr. Winter, a local draper, to the effect that Marie's whole aim in the matter of the saving of the Henley Street houses had been that she might herself present a "Corelli" library to the town, for her own self-glorification. Nothing could have been further from her thoughts. After the Henley Street affair had been satisfactorily disposed of, she had offered £1000 out of her own pocket to buy the neighbouring (known as Birch's) china shop, in order to preserve it from demolition. This offer had been refused—and even here her action was, locally, characterised as a bribe; a bribe to achieve what aim in this instance has never been stated. Action for libel was brought in December, in the King's Bench Division of the High Court, at the Birmingham Assizes. Mr. Marshall Hall, K.C., M.P., appeared as leader for Marie. The case against Mr. Winter occupied two days, and the verdict of the jury was for one farthing damages. The trial and the verdict were widely commented on, and Marie received from England, America, and elsewhere very many letters of congratulation for her public-spirited services to the town and to the

memory of Shakespeare—many of which first became public knowledge in the course of the trial—together with criticism of the verdict and, in particular, that it did not declare for damages, and especially for costs, in her favour.

It is strange that the town could not then willingly and generously accept a benefactor at her true worth; she had but one aim and rarely—unless actually driven to it—took notice of what she looked upon as the result of boorish, ill-bred vanity. What had she to gain personally by what she did for Stratford? A gift of money, a purchase of old houses to ensure their safety, the restoration of a piece of property whose owner could not afford to do it, effects its purpose and benefits the town—but the name of the one who pays is soon forgotten. Here, to-day, are many instances of her loving care; but how many visitors ask or are told that it was she who made restoration possible. Nor would she have expected it.

Let me cite one instance of the time of which I write, namely, the Tudor House, Mr. Stanley's shop. The exterior of this fine half-timbered house was restored outside from the roof to the top of the shop windows by Marie Corelli's generosity, at a cost of £200, and a very fine fifteenth-century house has been preserved and adds immensely to the beauty and attractiveness of this ancient town.

Happily, this led to similar work being undertaken elsewhere in the town, and she took every opportunity to help, both by influence and with money, to restore old houses; for she was most earnest in her wish to instil in the minds of the

townspeople whom, with the exception of declared enemies, she looked upon as her friends and partners, the necessity of preserving their old buildings and restoring the beauties of the unique borough of Stratford-on-Avon; and to get them to take a pride in what it could show of its past history, in all its permanence and beauty, to the pilgrims who flock every year—many from lands where such beauties are not to be seen—to visit Shakespeare's birthplace and town. Among other restorations were, in due course, Harvard House, the International Stores, and Winter's shop, the owner of the latter accepting a contribution of £60 towards the restoration of his shop-front. The manager of the International Stores took personal pride in, at his own instance, uncovering the old oak on the front of his building, as a testimony, he said, to the great pleasure and admiration he had derived from reading Marie's books. Mr. Boyden, who had previously lived fifteen years in the house, declared that he had never seen old oak on the premises. Nevertheless, it was there, and a unique square pattern of black and white timber-work was uncovered and exposed to view as its original builders had intended it to remain.

It was in 1907 that she was "featured," as we should now say, in *Punch*:

CURTAILED DOGGEREL *À LA MODE*

There was a fair Siren of Strat.,
 Who narrated the Sorrows of Sat.,
 She'd a gond. on the Av.,
 She was every one's fav.,
 Though she used Shake's Trustees as a mat."



FROM A CARICATURE BY DUDLEY HARDY

Perhaps, every year, Marie's interests centred above all local matters on the Birthday Celebration Festivals at the Memorial Theatre. With her knowledge of stage-craft, her long study of Shakespeare's plays and those of his contemporaries, her acquaintance with the leading actors of her day, she might well have been called to membership of the Stratford Memorial Theatre Committee and the "Shakespeare Club." To be overlooked, intentionally or the reverse, was immaterial to her; and if she saw what she judged to be the result of mishandling, she was the freer to criticise. Her earnest desire was to see full justice done to Shakespeare's memory. Here, in the Memorial Theatre, Sarah Bernhardt had given a matinee performance of *Hamlet*, as a personal tribute. She had been Marie's guest. Madam Réjane had offered her services in the same cause, but there had been no cordial offer of welcome.

Here Ellen Terry had won the affection of the townspeople in 1902. She had claimed no fee, but had been granted the title of "Governor" of the Memorial Theatre—a dignity accessible to the common public by a monetary payment of £100.

In 1903 Henry Irving had entered into an engagement to play, with his own company, in the Memorial Theatre on the poet's birthday. Suddenly this engagement was cancelled on the ground of ill-health, although only five days later he was to open his season in London. In several previous years, it appeared, the same promise by the greatest Shakespearean actor to play at Stratford had been made and cancelled. Mr. Benson, with his company, had

devotedly served the cause, but in 1903 Beerbohm Tree was invited to bring his company for the week in 1904. The plays to be given were *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, *Twelfth Night*, *Julius Cæsar*, *King John*, and Stephen Phillips' *Herod*. Both Tree and Marie were invited to a public luncheon on Shakespeare's birthday, 23rd April 1903. Terms had been agreed, as Tree thought, and as, indeed, exchange of letters went to suggest, and he, being called upon to speak, assumed the fact in his speech. The committee took exception to his action, though there were dissentients among the members, no doubt, but as a result Tree declined to have anything more to do with them.

Rumour had it that Irving had been objected to by members of the committee on the ground of lack of moral character! Probably this is an exaggeration, but it is a fact that here, in Stratford-on-Avon, only a "bowdlerised" edition of Shakespeare's works was obtainable at the "Memorial" Theatre.

Marie, such were the local comments, had to deny that it was she who had induced Mr. Tree prematurely to say in public that he was engaged to play at Stratford in 1904.

Marie felt strongly and declared openly that there could be no worthy Memorial Theatre until it were divorced from purely local management, and put into the hands of a competent national committee—a committee who would run it on the lines of the Wagner Opera House at Bayreuth, and so make the Festival national instead of purely parochial.

The present theatre, opened in 1879, but later

destroyed by fire, had been built by subscription, the Stratford townspeople alone finding over £3000, though by far the larger part of this had been met by the late Charles Edward Flower, a leading brewer of the town, to whom all honour. But that was no reason why a Memorial Theatre should not—built as it was to the memory of, and in order to produce the plays of, a national hero—be conducted by a committee, part representative of local capital, if you will, and for the rest consisting of the best brains and experience available, and divorced completely from that demoralising lady, Mrs. Grundy.

For some time past, what with new books and reprints in cheaper form of already published books, and constant requests from publishers and magazine editors for contributions, Marie had found it impossible to keep active control of all her literary interests, and in 1904 she placed her literary affairs in the hands of Mr. A. P. Watt, an act which she never regretted, leading, as it did, to the personal friendship of that able and warm-hearted gentleman and his sons, a friendship and business association which lasted till her death and has remained unclouded to the present day.

For Christmas 1904 there was published, as a supplement to *The Strand Magazine*, a Christmas story by her, entitled "The Strange Visitation of Josiah McNason." It brought a letter from her friend, Charles Edward Jerminham, a journalist and essentially a man of the world, known best for his work on *Truth*. "It is a delightful story," he writes, "of

the old kind, and carried me back to the past century, when I was young and my imagination over-crowded the stage with unseen creatures ; when the unreal I believed to be real and the real unreal. At many old country houses I have often sat up through the night to make acquaintance with the local ghost, but apparently I am not in spirit 'society.' Oh, what a story you could give us of Spirit Society !—the real West-End of to-day in spirit form, with spirit understanding of the vanity of frivolity—the honours that are toys, the gold that is valueless, the respect that is artificial."

It happened that just then a weekly paper, with a circulation of some seventy thousand copies, was causing anxiety to its proprietor. Offers to purchase from two wealthy newspaper owners were each refused. But he must, in some way, increase its circulation ; he did not wish to sell, but he could not face continued losses. "Give Miss Marie Corelli," said Jerningham to him, "a thousand fully paid shares, with no liability, and try and induce her to take an interest in the paper. An occasional letter from her would increase your circulation in three months to nearly double—Miss Corelli is the Life-Boat of Journalism." The advice led to nothing, nor, do I think, Marie would have agreed. She valued her complete freedom above monetary reward, and she disliked always the idea of being bound and tied down.

Some months later he was again writing to her : "You are quite right ; all our sympathies should be with the Russian people at the moment, and mine

are certainly, as yours are. I do wish you would write one of your rousing letters and awake the sympathy of the English, if the latter are not too fast asleep to take an intelligent interest in anything! Thirty years ago the English were enthusiastically encouraging progress in every direction: the removal of ignorance, prejudice, superstition, and abuses of all kinds: they were deeply interested in moral questions, in history and literature and science—now they only care for football and the rise and fall of shares, tempered by ‘Trunk Mysteries’ and ‘Fashionable News.’”

Well, Marie did what she could in her own way, and many were the thoughtful people who wrote, pointing to the good influence of her books.

The Treasure of Heaven occupied her working hours during 1905, and on its publication in 1906 brought her many letters; but perhaps nothing pleased her more than the knowledge conveyed to her that her old neighbour, George Meredith, had read it and closed the book with tears in his eyes.

“I write this,” writes Charles Jerningham to her of the book, “whilst still under the spell of it. Cynics are mostly made, not born, and one of them has been crying—myself! Men of the world have generally very soft hearts that have been hardened by the artificial system which they are set in, and which clamps them in every direction, but they feel the more for this. Besides, their experience is wide, and they have seen suffering and have suffered where more commonplace people have done neither. . . . You have such fine courage, and go straight to

the things others dread to approach, and that to good purpose. . . . The critics are not the appointed mouthpieces of the community."

It also brought her again a letter of appreciation from Father Ignatius :

"I have just read your last book, *The Treasure of Heaven*, and it is a delicious story ; some parts and thoughts are a real mental enjoyment. I feel sure that it will do very much good. It will make those who possess Heaven's Treasure value it more than ever, and make many ashamed of themselves for not prizing with a larger appreciation the best Gift our Lord is able to bestow upon our short pilgrimage through the toils of time.

"Your story is such an immensely original one, and has such a strange sweetness and restfulness about it, and it touches so many chords in the silent chamber of the soul. I enjoyed it very much and thank you very truly for it.

"If you find time to send me a line, will you tell me if there is such a place as Weircombe ? I should think *you* must have plenty of love, after all the good you have done. Our Lord bless you and keep you.—Your affectionate old friend,

"IGNATIUS, O.S.B. (Monk).

"I *am* so glad you allowed your portrait to be the frontispiece."

Father Ignatius' secretary also wrote from Combe-martin that he had been seeking to identify the places associated with her characters. "All the morning," he said, "I have been hunting for the grave of one 'Simon Yeddie Ye Tanner.'" Nor could he find to his satisfaction Clarinda Payne's cottage, or that of Ruben Dale !

Her work was now attracting notice on the



MARIE CORELLI, 1906

[Photo, Gabel]

Continent, and early in 1906 she received a letter from M. Maurice Rostand, dated from his father's (Edmond Rostand) house in the Basses-Pyrénées, asking her permission to translate into French, in collaboration with his father's secretary, for publication, *The Sorrows of Satan*, *Barabbas*, and *The Mighty Atom*, feeling that these would appeal to the French public. He felt, he said, that his father's name was a sufficient introduction, seeing that she had quoted some verses from *Princesse Lointaine* in *The Sorrows of Satan*.

Later, he wrote again that they had completed, in first draft, the translation of *Ziska* and *The Mighty Atom*, and asking whether he might, instead of *Le Puissant Atome*, which would be its literal translation, give as its title, *La Ceinture Bleue*. He also conveyed an invitation from his father and mother to Marie, that she should pay them a visit.

There, however, the matter ended; but in due time all her novels appeared in Dutch and Swedish editions, and very many in French and German—*Barabbas* even being translated into Hindustani and Gujarati. Till *The Treasure of Heaven* appeared, Marie had never permitted the publication of any portrait of herself; sketches and snapshots had, of course, been printed, but none with her sanction. It so chanced that early in the year we were in London and, glancing over an illustrated daily paper, she saw what can only be described as a libellous portrait of her. She was much distressed by it, as well she might be. "Look here, dear," I said, "the time has come when you must have a genuine portrait

taken, and let the public see what you are really like." It needed much persuasion, but I suddenly thought of a little subterfuge. Knowing of a good photographer, I said, "Go to Mr. Gabbell's and be photographed; give the name of 'Miss Vyver,' as they don't know either you or me." That appealed to her, and, acting on my suggestion, she went straight off to the studio with her faithful maid.

It had been a happy thought, and the incognito rather amused her. The photograph was satisfactory and showed her unaffected and natural in pose. It appeared as a frontispiece to *The Treasure of Heaven*. One has only to note the little hands and arms, in the portrait as a child with the large hat and bows, reproduced earlier in this volume, to see how natural to her the attitude was, and how excellently it represents her.

It was now that rumour again had it that Marie was not the author of her books, but though, at the death of her brother Eric, it had been hinted that there would be no more, no hint was now vouchsafed as to who was her Bacon. Editor friends, however, soon scotched the report; yet this was another of the pin-pricks which annoyed, though it did not disturb her. And there were many pleasant experiences to outweigh annoyances. In 1905 we were invited to, and accepted, a cruise with Sir Thomas Lipton on his yacht *Erin*, then at Cowes. On board we met as fellow-guests our old friend Lady Byron, and Mr. Robert P. Houston, M.P., whom she later married; Mr. Wilson Marshall, an American, the owner of the yacht *Atlantic*, which

won the Kaiser's Challenge Cup, and Mr. and Mrs. Edward Morris of Chicago. The latter were soon to become prominently associated with Stratford-on-Avon.

After our return from our visit to Sir Thomas, we left for the cure at Marienbad. The crossing was one of the worst possible and the subsequent night-train journey hardly reposeful. Marie was far from well, and the journey to Bohemia a long one ; but once arrived, the weather was glorious, and Marie soon felt the benefit of the cure and enjoyed herself. King Edward, we found, was taking the waters, and each morning at seven-thirty walked up and down the Spa, sipping at his glass. We met many friends, and among them a lady we had met at Cowes, who said in the course of conversation to Marie, whose reaction can be better imagined than described : " And do you really believe in a God ? Really ! How nice ! You must tell me all about it. I shall be so delighted to have a long, long talk with you."

On our return we found a very beautiful lamp, sent to Marie by Mr. Marshall and Mr. and Mrs. Morris—a replica of one I had admired on the yacht—with a card bearing the following words :

"When next you burn the midnight oil,
To charm us with your tales romantic,
This lamp, we hope, will lighten toil
With memories of the *Atlantic* !"

But that was not all.

Within a stone's-throw of "Mason Croft" stood

a decayed-looking building, but a very typical and perfect specimen of a sixteenth-century house, named Harvard House.

"Over and over again as I passed it," she has written, "its quaint windows seemed to blink like poor tired eyes, asking, 'What is to become of me when I get older and still more shaky than I am?'"

Acting on impulse, she bought the house as it stood.

The visit to the *Erin* was to be her opportunity and its salvation. She had talked of it on board, and told how it had belonged to John Harvard's mother, how its appeal was not only to Harvard University in particular, but to Americans in general. "You may call it a romantic notion perhaps," she had said, "but I should like to think that the house of John Harvard's mother was a link with John Harvard's University, and a sign of friendship between the two nations."

Mr. Morris was greatly taken with the idea, and both he and his charming wife entered into her scheme with spirit and generosity, and commissioned her to purchase the house. This was easy, for she had already bought it. Now hers was the task of repairing and restoring it, and a very congenial one, which she lost no time in setting about. Resolved that the work should be undertaken by Stratford-on-Avon men, she secured the services of Messrs. Price & Sons, builders and decorators, long established in the town, who, under her supervision, did the difficult and delicate work with a result which more than surpassed our most sanguine expectations.



Now Robert Harvard, father of John Harvard, belonged to the parish of St. Saviour's, Southwark, where Shakespeare had his Globe Theatre. Katharine Rogers was married in Stratford-on-Avon to Robert Harvard, on the 8th of April 1605, and it is by no means unlikely that the great dramatist may have been present at her wedding, for either in the March, April, or July of that year (1605) he completed the purchase of the tithes of Stratford, old Stratford, Bishopton, and Welcombe, paying £440, this purchase entitling Shakespeare and his family to be buried in the chancel of the parish church. Shakespeare may well have kept up an acquaintance with Mrs. Harvard, a townswoman of his own, in London. John Harvard was baptized in St. Saviour's on the 29th of November 1607, and a month later, namely, on the 31st of December of the same year, Shakespeare's brother Edmund was buried in the same church, "with a forenoon knell of the great bell." Mr. Halliwell Phillipps speaks of it as a mark of respect, and considers that it resulted "from the poet's own affectionate directions, while the selection of the *morning* for the ceremony, then unusual at St. Saviour's, may have arisen from a wish to give some of the members of the Globe company the opportunity of attendance."

There must assuredly be a strong probability of an existing acquaintance between the Harvard family and Shakespeare during their common residence in Southwark and Stratford-on-Avon.

On 6th October 1909 Harvard House, restored and furnished, was opened to the public by the

American Ambassador, Mr. Whitelaw Reid. A special train conveyed the Ambassador and some three hundred guests from London.

Amongst them were the Bishop of Worcester, Canon R. Rhodes Bristow (representing the Bishop of Southwark), Captain Sydney A. Cloman (U.S.A. Military Attaché), Commander Edward Simpson (U.S.A. Attaché), Lord Fairfax, Sir Thomas Dewar, Sir Thomas Lipton, Sir Gerard Muntz, Sir Joseph Lawrence, Mr. R. C. Lehmann, M.P., Mr. Philip S. Foster, M.P., the Hon. J. L. Griffiths (Consul General, U.S.A.), Professor William Chawner (Emmanuel College, Cambridge), Madame de Navarro, Madame Ada Crossley, Mr. Max Pemberton, and many others distinguished in the arts and in literature.

The American Ambassador, in declaring the Harvard House open, said :

“The action they were dignifying and honouring by their presence was, in a sense, international. The oldest University in America entered that day upon a new era. Thanks to the generosity of Mr. Edward Morris and to the assiduous and gracious intervention of one of Stratford’s best-known residents, Miss Corelli, it was enabled to enter also into possession of the home of its Founder’s mother. Harvard University in that way formed not merely a single new tie with England, but really two new ties. The first was that fine old Elizabethan survival, wonderfully preserved, most reverently restored, and admirably furnished. It carried with it double historic associations ; on the one hand, with the beginning of liberal education in America, and on the other, with Shakespeare’s town, the

chief shrine of the common literature of the English-speaking race. The other new tie which Harvard was joining to England was also notable and more recent: it was the gaining as president Dr. Lowell, who had done to England a service somewhat similar to that which her own distinguished Ambassador¹ at Washington had rendered to America. He had understood it and had helped to make his countrymen understand it—that the two countries were both conspicuously and distinctly free countries; that human rights were not really invented in 1776; that, in fact, that old, unhappy contention arose out of the strenuous demand of the colonists for just those English rights that the two peoples now had.

“Under different forms, it was true, substantially the same rights were enjoyed—the same protection for life, liberty, property, and the pursuit of happiness. Long might the two peoples continue to give to the world the oldest, the longest, the largest, and the most perfect example of ordered liberty that history recorded!”

He then declared the house open, “free to all visiting sons of Harvard, and as a general rendezvous for all visiting Americans. May it serve that double purpose as long as our race prizes letters and honours Shakespeare!”

Miss Corelli then presented Mr. Whitelaw Reid with a key of the house, enclosed in an engraved crystal casket, as a symbol of the bond existing between Harvard University and Harvard House. She was heartily congratulated on the taste and skill which she had displayed in its restoration and furnishing. Luncheon for three hundred guests was served in the music-room at “Mason Croft.”

¹ The Rt. Hon. James Bryce.

Before luncheon Miss Ada Crossley sang delightfully "The Star-spangled Banner," and after lunch our own National Anthem. Grace was spoken by the Bishop of Worcester, who pronounced the blessing in an ancient Latin form, which he declared would have been one used in the days of John Harvard himself. Speeches were made by the Ambassador, the Bishop of Worcester, and others. Marie received and read out a telegram which had just reached her from America: "Come to America and Uncle Sam will love you." To which Marie added, "I do hope so." Before the guests left each lady received a bouquet of roses and lilies-of-the-valley tied with streamers of *red*, the Harvard colour.

How truly she hoped that she had tied a love-knot, not between individuals, but between nations!

After Mr. Morris's death his widow, who married again and is now Mrs. Neilson, carried out Mr. Morris's expressed wish by endowing the House with the sum of £2500 for its upkeep—and thus it is financially secured for all time. Marie was elected Chairman, and since her death the Trustees have nominated me in her place—a post I am very proud to fill.

Of the many expressions of appreciation of her action in bringing about so interesting a rendezvous for Americans in England, none perhaps gave her greater satisfaction than one from Lord Curzon, for he was not only a broad-minded statesman, but he had married two American wives, and may therefore be credited with an intimate sense of international sympathy. Moreover, he was an antiquary, and

delighted always in the restoration of national monuments. "I have read in the papers," he writes, "the account of the proceedings at the opening of the Harvard House, which, through your happy instrumentality, has been added to the treasures of Stratford-on-Avon. . . . It is only right that so beautiful a building should be preserved, and that it should provide a local meeting-place for the many Americans who honour Shakespeare almost more than we do ourselves."

Her friend, Frank D. Millet, the artist, an American by birth and upbringing, who lived at Broadway, some fifteen miles distant, sent her for the occasion a small flag, and later wrote that the little flag was not a trophy of victory, nor yet a souvenir of anything more than various athletic events in which he had joined the mad crowd of "rioters" for Harvard. The architect of the stadium had given it to him on the day that great structure was opened by a football match between Harvard and Yale.

Later he wrote to her :

"Did you ever let your house and try to finish a picture and get ready to go abroad all at once? That's what occupies me now, and I am leaving here Monday and sailing on Wednesday for New York."

Alas! he did sail for America, and on the ill-fated *Titanic*, and perished with many heroic passengers on that monster steamer, so much advertised as unsinkable. He was a serious loss to good fellowship—a more charming and amusing man never lived. Mr. W. T. Stead was another of the victims.

He had called on Marie before leaving, saying that he wished to express to her his personal regret and apology for one or two criticisms he had written on one of her novels. His was a strange character; nevertheless he was earnest in his wish, on bended knee, to be forgiven. It was a quaint little incident.

Only a few days later Mark Twain visited us. He was already in failing health, but was being fêted in Oxford, and Marie, to save him fatigue—more particularly as he had to attend a dinner in London the same evening—engaged a special train to bring him from Oxford to Stratford-on-Avon. He lunched at "Mason Croft" and said a few words to the boys of Trinity College, next door to us. Marie asked him to write his name in her Visitors' Book, and offered him for the purpose a gold pen, with a "D" studded in small diamonds, which had belonged to Charles Dickens. It had been given her by a friend of her own old friend, Clifford Harrison. Mark Twain did not appreciate the honour she intended, and, taking his own from his pocket, said: "I guess my own is good enough for me"!

It was in June 1907 that Mark Twain paid his last visit to England. Marie wrote to him in the hope that he would again visit us, but he replied:

"YOU VERY DEAR MARIE CORELLI,—It is lovely of you to feel and say those affectionate things, and they have made a choking in my throat which is more eloquent response than any that can be built out of words. If I were not so hard-driven, daily and nightly and hourly, by this dear, hospitable, and heart-bewitching England, I would go and hunt you up and revive the Homburg days. As it is, I suppose I shall



MARIE CORELLI FROM A DRAWING BY AMÉDÉE FORESTIER

MARIE CORELLI

never see you again, and that is a sorrowful thought for me. But I send you my loving good-bye, and may you be happy always ! S. L. CLEMENS."

But Marie was not always successful in accomplishing what she wished. She had long admired the work of her fellow-writer, Ouida—perhaps in particular *Wanda*, *A Dog of Flanders*, and *Two Little Wooden Shoes*. Rumour said that Ouida had lost a great deal of money through horse-racing, gambling, extravagances (such as lining her carriages with white satin brocades), bad speculations, and anticipating her literary earnings. When not in Italy, she lived extravagantly in London, and now was not able to even meet a sum of £300. Moreover, it appeared that there was a bill of sale on her furniture in the "Villa Mario" in Italy. Marie was gravely distressed on her account, and cast about for some way in which best to help her, and she wrote a powerful article about Ouida in the *Belgravia Magazine* for April 1890.

This article evoked a most appreciative letter from Mrs. Henrietta E. V. Stannard, the author of *Bootle's Baby* :

"DEAR MISS CORELLI,—I must send you a line to offer you my very best congratulations on the exceptionally brilliant article on Ouida. . . .

"This article is so just, so brilliant, and so terribly severe that it compels me to pay its author real homage.

"Everything that you say about Ouida is so perfectly just—and, do you know, you are the first person I have ever heard speak of that exquisite story *Umilta*, to my mind quite the most

really beautiful child of the pen, which ought to be the greatest in the world.

"I am afraid you may suffer hereafter somewhat for having so fearlessly the courage of your opinions. I hope not—such courage deserves the admiration of our whole fraternity."

Marie, moreover, went and saw Ouida's publisher, Mr. Chatto.

In June 1894 Ouida had written to Marie, saying :

"... I write now to ask you if your present publisher would like to become mine. If he offers good terms, I can give him at once a book—when he says what his own views are.

"I am infinitely touched by your deep and enthusiastic feeling for myself, and thank you from my heart."

Marie then gave her an introduction to her own publishers. But one may judge that Ouida was difficult to satisfy.

"They give nothing at all, but, as I had troubled you about it, I let them have the book. I am very anxious to have it handsomely bound, with bevelled back. Perhaps if you write to Mr. — you could say something to impress this on him?

"I wonder you like the royalty system. It is not just for the author. The writer has only one-sixth of the receipts and the publisher five-sixths,"

showing, if anything were needed, how utterly incapable Ouida was of understanding practical affairs.

When in Florence both novelists had met. Ouida wrote in one of her letters :

"I thank you much for your pretty thought of flowers. You already give me one very rare flower—*sympathy*.—Ever yours,
OUIDA."

In another :

" I am greatly touched by your letter. I have received none such since the death of my mother.

" I am for the summer in this beautiful Lucca country, a paradise of nightingales. I shall hope to see you ere long, either in Italy or England.

" Did you read Oscar Wilde's Prose Poems in the *Fortnightly*? They are really ludicrously bad. Have you ever noticed what very silly things people of talent do perpetrate? Genius avoids bathos.

" Have you read *The Silver Domino*? That vol. delighted me so much.

" I cannot help saying that the personalities that are permitted in the English Press are disgraceful.

" The trade of books in Great Britain is ruined by the amount of trash which is published. The Libraries do the mischief ; they care nothing for quality, only want a number of new vols.—' box stuffers,' as I have heard them called."

Ouida was passionately fond of her dogs, and, indeed, devoted to all animals, and in one of her letters addressed to Marie at Killiecrankie Cottage she was indignant at having read about one of Marie's lady guests shooting a roe deer, and says :

" Did Miss X. V. shoot everywhere? She is very ' Modern,' but I cannot imagine her killing creatures.—O."

I remember well this incident of the killing of the roe deer, and how Marie would not look at it as it lay by the front door of Killiecrankie Cottage, with its pathetic, beautiful eyes open.

At one time Ouida kept forty horses and thirty dogs ; at the end only three dogs, and she went

without food herself so that her dogs should not starve.

On 12th July 1907 the *Daily Mail* printed an appeal on Ouida's behalf, and Marie wrote a letter to the Editor :

"Every one who has read the fine novels *In Maremma* and *Wanda*, two of the most beautiful word pictures ever given to English literature, must be profoundly touched and deeply grieved by the sad account in the *Daily Mail* of the privations and sufferings of the gifted authoress 'Ouida,' who, whatever faults certain critics may have been pleased to find with her in her prosperous days, is second to none of our modern romancists for poetic diction, versatile imagination, and incisive wit ; the latter quality being most brilliantly distinctive in such works as *Princess Napraxine*, *Othmar*, *Friendship*, and *Guilderoy*.

"It should also be remembered that no living writer has ever more eloquently pleaded the cause of the poor Italian peasantry than 'Ouida' in her *Village Commune* ; while, if the art of simple grace and perfect pathos be demanded, no one can read without tears her gem-like little stories of *The Dog of Flanders* and *Umlta*. That a writer who has given so much intellectual pleasure to thousands should have suffered in the manner so graphically described in your columns is surely one of the most piteous episodes in literary history. The small Government pension just granted to her may help to keep the wolf from the door, but it is surely not sufficient to testify to 'Ouida' herself that public admiration for her undoubted genius which must be felt by all independent readers of fiction who have the strength of mind to dissociate themselves from the misleading criticism which has, with considerable malignity, been frequently and unjustly passed upon a woman novelist far more brilliantly endowed than most of her contemporaries.

M A R I E C O R E L L I

"I venture to suggest that a 'Fund,' started by the *Daily Mail* for the purpose of placing 'Ouida' above all anxiety for the rest of her days, would meet with a quick and generous response, and in full anticipation that such a Fund will be started, I enclose my cheque for £25 as a first contribution."

But when Ouida heard of it she sent one short telegram to the editor :

"MASSAROSA, VIAREGGIO, *Friday, 12th July.*

"Absolutely forbid any mention of me.—DE LA RAMÉE."

And soon afterwards she died in deep poverty.

To one of Scots blood, the air of the Highlands seems to be almost a necessary tonic, every few years at least. Marie was no exception to this rule, and never was she so set up by any holiday as by one spent in the North. In the autumn of this year (1907) we went to Perth—paid a visit to Killiecrankie of both sad and happy memory—and drove to Aviemore, then on to Grantown-on-Spey. We stayed at Braemar, visited Balmoral, and, as a fitting climax, Marie accepted an invitation to the Highland games at Inverness. Here, in glorious weather, she regained health, strength, and youth—dancing reels till four o'clock in the morning with, to her delight, "kilted and tartaned chieftains."

The holiday in 1906 had been spent at Whitby, whence we drove to Richmond, in Yorkshire, a beautiful old city; then on to Windermere and to Coniston, to stay with Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Severn, at Ruskin's home.

CHAPTER XII

WITH all her other interests in Stratford and London, she nevertheless worked steadily, and in 1908 she published *Holy Orders*, in 1911 *The Life Everlasting*, and in 1914 *Innocent*. She was also contributing articles to the daily and weekly Press.

Mr. Comyns Carr's adaptation of *Edwin Drood*—with his own ending to the unfinished novel—had been put on by Beerbohm Tree at His Majesty's Theatre, and Marie had written an appreciation :

"MY DEAR FRIEND," wrote Tree from the theatre, on 9th January 1908,—“I am writing to tell you how happy and grateful I felt on reading your notice of *Edwin Drood*, and am very proud of your references to my own share in the performance. I understand that the article was due to your own kind thought, and I appreciate it more for that reason, and the newspapers generally seem somewhat opposed to Comyns Carr's theory of the mystery, but the play goes splendidly—I find it a great strain upon me—but the fight is worth fighting. I am now sitting down to acknowledge personally my many debts of gratitude, and it is to you that I am addressing my first letter. I wonder whether you will be coming to London? Do let me know beforehand.

“Every blessing do I wish you during this year, and many, many more.—Ever yours,

“HERBERT BEERBOHM TREE.”



AS "LA PRINCESS LOINTAINE"

Photo, Gabell

In the winter of that year we had what then appeared to us a very unpleasant experience.

One dark and stormy night in December, at about eleven-thirty o'clock, all were at rest in "Mason Croft," when suddenly the household was startled by the noise of five revolver shots fired towards the back of the house from the garden.

Happily, Marie had been in bed with a slight attack of bronchitis for three days, or we might have been sitting in the drawing-room by the fire, and unaware of his presence, when the man fired at us.

For years I could not get over the eerie feeling of lunatic eyes peering through the glass of the Winter Garden. The young man was caught by the butler and a policeman, who had heard the shots, on the steps of the Elizabethan summer-house, with still one shot in his revolver. Marie thought little of it—all she said was, "Poor fellow!" He was proved to be irresponsible and given by the magistrate at Warwick into the care of his mother. When asked what his idea was in buying a ten-shilling revolver and firing towards the house, his reply was: "Only to see Miss Corelli and bring her out to speak to me." He had prowled from six-thirty to eleven o'clock on the premises, climbing over a brick wall to get into the garden. A gentleman had given him a "lift" half-way from Birmingham to Stratford, besides giving him tea at the Shakespeare Hotel. His was not a very grateful way of repaying a stranger for such kindness.

Lord Dundonald saw a report of the incident in the Press, and wrote :

"I am so very sorry to see you have had trouble and annoyance. Let it pass 'like water off a duck's back.' . . . It will be thus to the end, so take a good walk in the sun and sweep your mind of it. I remember my grandfather, who had much political persecution, said that 'when he went to bed he took a broom and swept his head out.'

"Never be worried by the paltry effort of any human being.

"If you are still bothered, go to the great source of our living, as near as you can, 'The Sun.' "

It was in the summer following that Ella Wheeler Wilcox, with her husband, and Mr. and Mrs. Humphreys, came to "Mason Croft" to meet Marie. They were a charming "*partie carrée*." The American poetess knelt at Marie's feet, in a way that only Americans and the Latin races can with dignity in homage. Then came another friendship, founded on both sides upon literary work and tastes.

Lady Northwich and Lady Churchill have told me they had planned for some time to ask Mrs. Florence Barclay to meet Marie at lunch at Northwich Park, but it could not be arranged, and it was left to Mrs. Barclay to write to Marie and for Marie to welcome her. I think the real reason was that our dear friend, Lady Northwich, feared that the two might, perhaps, not get on together. If so, she was greatly mistaken, for they had much in common and became fast friends.

Mrs. Barclay was very fond of telling how she was teased at Northwich Park, because they could

never understand how she could have, on her way through Woodstock, passed the gates of Blenheim on the left without seeing them. As a matter of fact, she did pass the great gates of Blenheim on the left without seeing them, because there happened to be a most fascinating little public-house on the right, and she was making a collection of all the quaint public-house signs. It was only when the matter of the great gates of Blenheim came up three times at the luncheon table that Mrs. Barclay, thus pilloried for lack of observation of places of interest, defended herself, and mentioned the counter attraction and her interest and delight in collecting signs and memorising them as she went along. For a study of such signs is of interest beyond mere curiosity. Much of a country's history is written in its public-house signs, though often needing scholarly interpretation.

Mrs. Barclay had, by chance, an interesting list of fifty with her, and by a few quaint samples secured her acquittal.

It was Lady Edwards' enthusiasm about Marie Corelli that fired Mrs. Barclay with a desire to meet her.

Mrs. Barclay mentioned in one of her letters that "the only book I have brought away with me is *The Life Everlasting*. The theory of Eternal Youth is a wonderful idea and a great gift to this worn-out generation, if only people can be made to grasp it. It would be a secret of power to so many if a vital force within could keep their spirit, soul, and body young and vigorous.

"The sheer beauty of it all, of course, carries its own appeal,

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which none can miss. 'The sinking moon—*like a white face in sorrow.*' Perfect! it puts all the emotions of moonlight into six words."

It meant much to Mrs. Barclay that the *Rosary* gave pleasure to Marie, and she was grateful for criticism of *Shenstone*, and said, "You worded the comment so perfectly, it was wrapped up in a kindness which gave an added pleasure."

It was in 1909 that we again went to the Arthur Severns at Coniston. Marie had hoped to see there her friend, Arthur C. Benson, who was to have been at Ambleside, but she was to be disappointed. Writing from The Feathers Hotel, Ludlow, an old exquisitely timbered and panelled hostelry which would have delighted her, he tells how he had to be in Cambridge, and would not be at Ambleside till too late.

"I have come off to this beautiful part of England for a few days, partly to see it, but partly also to avoid the May Week festivities at Cambridge, which are a little too multitudinous for my taste—though I ought to be learning, I suppose, by this time, a sort of Pickwickian attitude towards youthful merriment. Did you ever make out how *old* Mr. Pickwick was meant to be? About forty, I think, not more!

"I wish very much I could have met you at Brantwood. It is a very sacred and heart-stirring place. One understands there what St. Peter meant by the making of the three tabernacles at the Transfiguration! I think it is almost the greatest of the English shrines—do you remember the words in *Præterita* about the morning coming in over Coniston?—not because Ruskin was so noble a being only, but because he

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missed the serenity of Genius, and because the capacity for self-tormenting, which is the shadow of that exquisite fineness of perception, was so highly developed in him."

Another letter of his of earlier days I quote, because, though I do not know the actual questions which brought his reply, the subject-matter was one of great interest to her, who above all valued and appreciated initiative and independence of thought, and because, in his position of experience and responsibility, no better testimony could be found to her own convictions.

"MAGDALENE COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE,
27th November 1909.

"... the public schools, as far as education goes, are terribly hide-bound. What they need is a simpler and more modern curriculum, with some room for a boy to have a special subject as well. Of course, the practical difficulties are considerable. It is very difficult to get all-round teachers, and for the sake of economy and efficiency one must have a *system*—one can't, I mean, educate each boy on individual lines—that could only be done at home. But what happens now is that an education suitable for a few is enforced on the many—and the many are sacrificed to the few—and sacrificed, too, I fear, to an old-fashioned tradition among the masters. It is in a sad muddle and the tangle will take time to unwind—but it *will* be unwound, I think, in the next few years—I hope without the necessity of a painful awakening."

Her interest in education was to be further satisfied when, in 1913, her father's and her friend of early years, Dr. Donaldson, now Rector of St.

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Andrews University, who had always been devoted to her, wrote a warm invitation :

"MY SWEETEST LASSIE,—I am now settled down in St. Andrews until the end of the winter session 1914. I can therefore receive you at any time after this day, and will gladly receive you whenever you choose. But I should like much that you should see something of our University life. The session begins on 13th October. Next day (14th October) the ceremony of opening our Engineering Laboratory takes place in Dundee and you might enjoy going there with us. My nephew, Sir Alexander Kennedy, is to perform the ceremony. He is to come to St. Andrews on Saturday, 11th October, to stay with me here. It would be very pleasant if you could come on the same day and stay with me till Monday, 27th October. The students have to elect a Lord Rector in room of Lord Rosebery on Saturday, the 25th. You would be able to see a good deal of Professional and Student life within the time mentioned. Of course, I should wish you to stay longer. But you can fix your own time, and you are heartily welcome to my house, so long as you care to stay.

"I will tell you about my Skibo visit when you come. We had a talk about you. You had a warm friend in Mr. Page, the American Ambassador, who was staying in Skibo along with his wife and daughter.—Ever yours very affectionately,
J. DONALDSON."

From St. Andrews she wrote enthusiastic letters to me. She had motored over to see our once summer cottage at Killiecrankie: "The autumn tints are simply indescribable—magnificent—and such weather!" She had the true Scots blood—the North always refreshed her; and when it was not Scotland, it had to be mountain country, with

heather and bracken and fir trees, or else the sea lapping at a rock-bound coast. On 1st January of the following year Dr. Donaldson again writes :

"SWEETEST WEE LASSIE,—I think of you always. All my associations with you are remembrances of warm love and stimulus to endeavour and to serenity and beauty of life. . . .

"People here are continually saying that they would like to know you. The wife of the Lord Provost of Dundee told me the other evening that she would like to tell you personally how indebted she feels to you for all you have done for her. A beautiful elderly lady said that there was no one that she could like to know so much as you. She is mother-in-law of Sir George Baxter, one of the most prominent men in Dundee. And so matters go on, and I hope you will see that any visit that you can pay here will be a joy to a great number of people as well as an intense pleasure to me."

A great pleasure to her always was to meet and talk to, and often to discuss the great writers with, the boys of the school next door to us, which was under the care of Mr. Tregarthen; and brightness and intelligence in young people she delighted to encourage. In an address to the boys of the Harrow County School in 1915 she had said, as reported in the Press :

"We appear to have no great poet fitted to immortalise the magnificent courage that day by day adds lustre to our lengthening roll of honour. Feeble rhymes now and then appear in the Press, but a living poem is not forthcoming. If Byron were alive, what a difference it would make ! Had he been living now he would have given us England's Iliad

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as only Homer or Shakespeare could. . . . Compared to Byron, Tennyson was but a weak singer, Browning a clanking mill-wheel, while Swinburne lost himself in redundancy of rhyme and metaphor."

This was seized upon by *Punch* :

"Though myriads of minstrels environ
Our soldiers with lyric and lay,
The War hasn't thrown up a BYRON
To answer the need of 'The Day,'
As matchless as MACHIAVELLI,
With passion and pathos in tons—
But no matter; we've M—— C——
To frighten the Huns.

If Byron had only been living—
Though a hundred-and-thirty or so—
What beans he would daily be giving
To Britain's contemptible foe!
And yet, though no rending *réveille*
The patriot's tympanum stuns,
No matter; we've M—— C——
To scatter the Huns.

We've plenty of BRIDGES and BINYONS,
And bards of inferior sort,
Who, trusting to rickety pinions,
The fate of young Icarus court;
But their voices are lost in the *mêlée*,
They stir not the souls of our sons;
No matter; we've M—— C——
To flatten the Huns.

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POOR SWINBURNE was ruined by drowning
His thought in a deluge of rhyme,
While the muse of the late ROBERT BROWNING
Was void of all musical chime ;
And TENNYSON'S verse was like jelly,
A diet for prudes or for nuns ;
But no matter ; we've M—— C——
To shatter the Huns.

We haven't a modern TYRTÆUS
Our shirkers and laggards to shame ;
We haven't a MILTON to free us
From fetters that hamper our aim ;
We haven't a latter-day SHELLEY
To sing of munitions and guns ;
But no matter ; we've M—— C——
To hammer the Huns,"

—verses which appealed immensely to her sense of fun, for she could enjoy good chaff at her expense when it bore no malice.

There were at times amusing incidents, too, near home.

A north countryman on a visit to Stratford-on-Avon, sauntering in Church Street, was attracted by the beautiful flowers on the front of "Mason Croft"—hyacinths, tulips, pansies, and the golden gilly-flowers in window boxes. He inquired who was the owner. When told that it was Marie Corelli the writer, "Ah yes," he replied ; "I know, just so—the daughter of William Shakespeare"! This was overheard by a friend of mine.

There was also the American tourist who some

years ago, driving through the town, was shown Marie Corelli's house. He asked the carriage-driver concerning her :

"Is she pretty?"

"Yes."

"What kind of a lady?"

"A most bright and lovable soul."

"Is she married?"

"Oh no, sir."

"Why not?"

"Ah, sir, you see William Shakespeare is dead!"

With the Great War Marie sought to help her country by every means in her power—she had had clear premonition of the coming conflict. In 1913 she had contributed to *Nash's Magazine* an article entitled "Savage Glory: an Appeal against War." In this article she had clearly envisaged a League of Nations. "The continued existence of war is, in the face of all faith and feeling, a shame to the world. . . . If war is still to confirm us and other nations as savages, we must behave accordingly . . . but when we can get rid of our savagery we shall lay down our arms. We shall realise that civilisation means unity; unity in all high purpose and progress towards the betterment of mankind." Marie loathed the idea of war, but once Belgium's soil was violated, once there was a threat to France and to her own loved country, she fought hard with her only weapon—the pen. At the invitation of Mr. Hall Caine, its editor, she contributed to *King Albert's Book*. Lord Northcliffe was among the first to appreciate the strength of her weapon. When the war itself

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was over, she still feared for the future of civilisation, and published *Secret Power*, which I myself rank as one of her best books. Lord Haldane wrote to her :

"Let me say at once that the reading has given me great pleasure; the style is brilliant, and the range of imagination is very great. The conception, too, is a novel one. As you say, the story is a parable.

"Still, you are warning the public against what war may some day come to mean,"

and Lord Oxford (then Mr. H. H. Asquith) wrote asking her to give him an autographed copy of the book, and continued that it had been a great pleasure to read her words of appreciation of his paper on Kitchener; that Kitchener had been vilely traduced, and that he had thought it opportune, and even necessary, to expose malignant fables, adding, "When you return to Stratford I hope we may meet again. Meanwhile, my kindest greetings both to yourself and Miss Vyver."

She offered, too, her Stratford home as a hospital, but it was not very suitable for that purpose, and there were others more adaptable in the neighbourhood; but in 1917 she placed a house of hers, free of all rent and other charges, at the disposal of the American Y.M.C.A., to be the first of their proposed Country Clubs—at the Mecca of Americans, for, as she said, she felt the greatest possible pride and pleasure in the fact that a house of hers was at their service and, as Shakespeare has it, she gave them "a hundred thousand welcomes."

One cause of grave anxiety to Marie was the

presence in this country of people, Germans by birth, or pro-German in sympathy. Perhaps her impulsiveness carried her too far in her fearless criticisms in this respect of men in office, Ministers who were served by a better Intelligence Department than any, probably, of our people were then aware. She wrote two poems, which appeared respectively in *Chart and Compass* and *The Daily Mail*—"Sea Power" and "A British Naval Song"—the latter bringing her a letter, with some snapshots of the action in the Bight of Heligoland, from an able seaman on H.M.S. *Southampton*.

We were fortunate in living beyond the range of raiding Zeppelins, but, on a visit to Mr. Seymour Lucas, the artist, and his wife, we might well for a time have done so. We had been asked to stay a week at their country home, The Priory, and Blythburgh was on the highway for German aircraft; but Marie had met with an accident in stepping into her car, and so hurt her knee that we had to telegraph a postponement.

"The Zeppelin came down very near here," wrote our host. "We missed seeing it by about twelve hours, for it sailed over my garden when in flames, several pieces falling in the village and some in the garden.

"To-morrow I hope to go and see the remains of the monster. Just imagine, it is 650 feet long and carried two guns on a platform, with a crew of twenty-two men. One of them, I hear, left the Zepp. in a parachute and was captured comparatively unhurt. The rest, of course, perished.

"Is there a remote chance of your paying us a visit with your friend this year? . . . You need not feel unsafer here

than in town, for I feel sure the enemy does not want to waste bombs on a few fishermen's cottages, and the air here would do you good, I feel sure."

Among the many hospitals appealing for help was Queen Mary's, away in the poor quarters of the East End of London. An entertainment was got up at the Alhambra, in Leicester Square, of which George Robey was the leading spirit. It took place on 9th December 1917. Marie was asked to make an appeal in a message to the audience, and beyond, and she willingly agreed.

"DEAR AND GOOD PEOPLE ALL," it ran, "Your friend and mine, big-hearted, generous George Robey, asks me to give you a 'Message' to-night. I wish it could be a 'message' such as the angels sang long ago in Bethlehem—'peace on earth': provided it were Peace with Honour! But even then I should be giving you only half the Angelic Song—the other half is 'Goodwill towards men.' This is a heavenly music which we may gladly hear—in which we may all unite. Goodwill to men!—goodwill and sympathy for all our human brothers and sisters in pain, sickness, and sorrow—this must and should be our best and nearest approach to that Infinite Mercy to which we all appeal and on which we all rely. Goodwill! It means kindness, ready help in need, solace in affliction, boundless generosity, and love to all! I feel that you who are assembled here to-night—you who represent a part of the splendid British people, whose pluck, patience, and endurance in this terrible war are magnificently beyond all praise—you have, you *must* have, pre-eminently this spirit of 'goodwill.' Yes! in spite of your many trials, your labours, your bitter bereavements, hushed into the silence of inward prayer, you

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are full of 'goodwill'—and if, at this moment, you saw a wounded soldier brought in here direct from the Front you would all instinctively rise in an affectionate respect too profound for words or tears! And if you saw a little dead child killed by the bombs of the murderous foe in the arms of its distracted mother, you would be so moved by that 'pity which makes the whole world kin,' that you would think the distraught woman was your very sister, and her slain child one of your own family. And so, to-night, with all my brilliant, hard-working friends on this great stage—friends who exert themselves in every way to entertain and amuse you, no matter how sad and weary they may sometimes be themselves—I plead for your 'goodwill' on behalf of those who, unlike you, have neither the health nor the strength to be amused or entertained—wounded men, crippled, disfigured, blind, and battered in brain and heart by the storm and stress of war—men who have sacrificed their homes and all that makes life worth living on the chance of—what? Death for England. And if not death, a life disabled, which is worse than death. In the great hospital for which our Appeal is made, one thousand five hundred such men have been cared for and treated, and altogether three thousand wounded have passed through its remedial wards. It is indeed a veritable harbour of refuge, and it has a double value in its situation, for it is placed in one of the poorest neighbourhoods of London, close to the Docks, and gives help, solace, and shelter to 'thousands of struggling creatures of whom London, in general, knows nothing.'

"Oh, those thousands of struggling creatures!—we may not ignore them!—not if we have 'goodwill'! Men and women here to-night who are strong and healthy must try to realise what it is to be in constant pain—they who would utter a little yell of distress if a pin pricked them—let them think what it means to be afflicted by some cruel disease, and at the

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same time to be so stricken with poverty as to be unable to afford the remedies needful or the care and nursing so urgently demanded. And, thinking of this, let them remember with gratitude and loving appreciation 'Queen Mary's Hospital,' that noble House of Rescue, set in the midst of a great crush of industries and a toiling population of the poorest of the poor. They will then turn the eyes and the heart of their 'goodwill' upon it, giving all they can, even to the extent of personal sacrifice. I know how much is demanded on all sides—I know how much is being given—but I also know that the generosity of the British heart is as deep and boundless as the sea which encircles the British Isles. It has been proved over and over again that whenever a good cause has to be served, or a great deed to be done, Great Britain does it. And so Great Britain will always do it—even to the end of a thousand wars! To British hearts, therefore, I send my 'Message'—and I say, Men and women of goodwill, come to the rescue! Raise the fallen, cheer the sad, heal the wounded, soothe the pain and sickness, comfort the dying! It is your great privilege to-night to do all this by the help you will give in response to the appeal made to your best feelings by one of your best friends, George Robey, who would sacrifice a good deal of his own private pleasure to make you happier for one evening! But no happiness you could ever win can surpass that of knowing that your abundant generosity towards this great work and the sympathy you show for your less fortunate fellow-creatures, expresses the 'goodwill to men' of which the angels sang."

Mrs. Patrick Campbell read the message most beautifully, and it produced a great effect. The manuscript itself was exquisitely bound, by Robert Rivière & Son, in dark blue calf with gold lettering. George Robey auctioned it after the address from

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the stage; it was bought by Mr. Hylton Philipson for a hundred guineas.

On his visit to England, she had met and had long talks with the then Australian Premier. His difficulties and his enthusiasm for the allied cause were well known to her; and he, on his part, appreciated to the full not only her own qualities, but her power to help. In 1916 he writes to her:

“COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA,
PRIME MINISTER,
27th August 1916.

“MY DEAR MISS CORELLI,—From across the leagues of ocean I send you greetings and good wishes: apologies, too—altho’ my offence is almost too rank, yet I do not despair of forgiveness, since my excuse, after all, is in essence that put forward by the illustrious Sir Boyle Roche, that no man can be in two places—or do two things—at once unless he is a bird: which I am not.

“Since I last saw you I have been chained like a galley slave to the oar—to the task set before me. Save for an all-too-brief rest on board the *Euripides*, I’ve been going full steam ahead since I left Stratford-on-Haven—I know you spell it Avon, but a Haven of Rest, a place where the tired body and spirit might find sweet solace.

“As I write I am plunged in the very vortex of fierce conflict, and the issue of conscription—invoked from the deeps through the failure of voluntary recruiting to supply the troops necessary to keep our Army at the front at full strength—threatens to disrupt our party. Before this reaches you my political epitaph may have been written. Yet, subject to that and death, that great destiny that awaits us all, I shall lead the vanguard.

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"I hope all goes well with you and Miss Bertha. As for us—Mrs. Hughes and the baby are in great form, and I—still live.

"With kindest regards from us all.—I am, yours truly,
"W. M. HUGHES."

And again, when victory appeared assured, a letter showing a statesman's mind, looking forward, though with well-founded misgiving, to the years that should follow. How well founded were his fears we of to-day may judge for ourselves.

"CARFAX, 29 ELSWORTHY ROAD,
N.W.3,
10th October 1918.

"MY DEAR MISS MARIE CORELLI,—I am probably the worst correspondent in the world, as I am most certainly the most wretched of sinners—for have I not left undone those things which ought to have been done (as for my sins of Commission I dare not even mention them in general terms)? I have left unanswered your most kind letters so long that shame is ashamed to mantle upon my brow.

"Can you, will you, accept my most sincere apologies? I hope and believe you will. I read all your press articles and regret much that the storms of circumstances have blown me back from that quiet haven at Stratford-on-Avon in which you live and work so indefatigably.

"The war has taken a most glorious turn: the *Day* is truly at hand at last: *our* sun rises swiftly in the Heavens warming us with its splendid glory.

"We shall (*D.V.*) yet live to throw up our hats and shout glad Hosannah to the Lord of Hosts for thus He has led us safely through the Valley of the Shadow of Death to the Promised Land.

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"As to what kind of land we are going to make of it: well, I don't know—I much fear that Peace will find us even worse prepared than War.

"But we must not croak—or go about saying 'I told you so,' but just do the best we can. All the same, it's very disheartening.

"With kindest regards from Mrs. Hughes and Kim.—Yours truly,
"W. M. HUGHES."

Meanwhile Marie was wielding the pen to good effect, and her efforts were appreciated where their need was best recognised. "I was delighted with your splendid views expressed in the *Pall Mall* of Friday," wrote Lord Charles Beresford; "how I wish that I could write the same incisive English that you do!"

Lord Charles used to tell amusing stories, and we used to meet him often in earlier days at Mr. Labouchere's house in Old Palace Yard. There was one at the expense of Mr. Lucy, "Toby M.P." of *Punch*. Toby M.P. was a very small man indeed, with a very big heart, and with, I should say, in spite of his sense of humour, to which he could give free vent in the columns of a newspaper, not an enemy in the world.

On one occasion, when dining with Lord Charles Beresford on H.M.S. *Magnificent*, he was kept later than was anticipated. To allay anxiety, the Admiral semaphored to Mrs. Lucy, telling her she might expect her husband to lunch next day. The message began: "From Lord Charles Beresford, *Magnificent*, Mr. Lucy will be home . . ." but the stops got misplaced, and the message delivered ran: "Magnifi-

cent Mr. Lucy will be home . . ." Ever since then Lord Charles had addressed him as "Magnificent Mr. Lucy."

He used also to tell another story about his friend. Mr. Lucy complained to Edmund Yates, proprietor of the *World*, that his successor on that paper was "masquerading in my clothes." "My dear Lucy," replied Yates, "there is no one on my staff who could possibly get into your clothes."

What appears tragedy at the time often, when looked back upon, is but comedy. So it happened with us.

Marie was suddenly accused of "hoarding." To any one who knew her, or to any one who was not interested in encouraging the "scare caption," such an idea was absurd. If anybody was to be blamed, it was not Marie, who did not interest herself in domestic matters, but myself.

D.O.R.A. opened the doors of all English houses to the prying small folk of our country towns, and, rightly, neither rich nor poor were exempt. What had happened was that correspondence with the Food Controller had elicited the fact that the householder growing his own fruit should make as much into jam as possible. With us, at any rate, 1917 was, a wonderful fruit year. In our own garden we gathered nearly a thousand pounds weight of fruit. The "Hoarding Act" clearly stated that the order did not apply to sugar obtained for the preservation of home-grown fruits. Our local grocer could not supply his customers with enough sugar, and so

Marie applied to Sir Thomas Lipton for help. She had earlier pleaded with a previous Food Controller, Sir Arthur Yapp, that poor working women should not be compelled to stand in the cold in queues waiting for food for themselves and their children; her active help and sympathy was well known to the authorities. She telephoned to Sir Thomas and received the reply, "Ye'll never want for sugar so long as Tom Lipton's on the 'phone." We received sufficient, and we set happily to work, and had almost preserved all our fruit when one day a policeman arrived, and explained that he was instructed to search the house for "hoards." He brought no authority, but said that if permission were refused he would obtain a warrant. I felt there was no need for that, so having rummaged drawers and cupboards, cellars and larder without success, he turned his attention to an outhouse, and there at last he found piles of cases. "Tate's Sugar," "Maypole Tea," "Nestlé's Milk." Here he had evidence indeed! He set to work immediately to force the as yet unopened crates. Alas for visions in his honest brain of official praise and recognition—even perhaps of promotion! He found them full of electric-light fittings, wires, glass globes, and the like, untouched since despatch from the contractors, and waiting the time when our installation of electric light could be completed. It seemed to us that the constable in question, who was well acquainted with our kitchen, might have easily convinced himself as to our "hoarding" proclivities and so informed his superior officers, but one need not blame him. To be blamed

are those who knew that sugar was being delivered by Sir Thomas's firm openly, the cases labelled quite clearly "sugar" to "Mason Croft," and who could easily have ascertained that the sugar was all being used to make jam for the public good, jam of which Marie would probably have given away the greater amount, or would have sold as and where the authorities instructed. We could never have eaten all we had made! The local authorities, however, preferred to take the matter before the "Bench" at Stratford-on-Avon. The Bench, though there were dissentients, refused—by, I understand, a majority of one—to believe that we had not used any of the sugar in our tea. Though our servants were present to answer questions on oath, they were not called, and my own replies to questions in the witness box were not believed. Marie was convicted. Next day the press blazoned abroad throughout the country the statement that Marie Corelli was a hoarder of food.

The whole story, and why Marie could not appeal to Quarter-Sessions, is given by her in her record of these years, *My Little Bit*, published in 1919. As I said, to-day the whole thing is comedy, but at the time Marie's treatment by citizens of a town on which she had spent thousands of pounds on its restoration alone, thus largely increasing its beauty and historic interest, and therefore, its trade, hurt her at the time deeply; but the many letters she received from Englishmen, Americans, and Canadian soldiers in France, showed her that the public judgment was not that of the small majority of those on the Stratford-on-Avon Bench. Sir James Crichton Browne wrote

that her vindication was triumphant and "should make your calumniators ashamed of themselves. Hoarding indeed!" and then referred to all she had done not only towards helping to win the war, but for the town of Stratford-on-Avon. Her article has gone unchallenged and, as an eminent lawyer writing to her said, unless the people mentioned cleared themselves, judgment would go against them by default.

Meanwhile Marie was contributing both in money and service to our own Y.M.C.A., and was beginning to think for the after-care of the poor fellows permanently maimed by war. In 1901 Lord Wolseley, as Lord Haig after the Great War, was writing to her on the same subject. He had known Marie from childhood, for he was an intimate friend of her father.

"I naturally take the deepest interest in the old soldiers you refer to," he wrote in 1901. "They have been abominably neglected by the State. Had they been 'fiddlers' or 'tenors' they would have been looked after by what is called 'Society,' but being merely gallant soldiers who fought manfully for wages that a scavenger would spurn, they are allowed to die in the workhouse."

And in another, referring to his Egyptian campaign, he tells her :

"I hope you will forgive a very busy man an act of carelessness of which he feels ashamed. Your letter was twofold, first about myself, and for the extremely kind things you say of me and of my services I thank you most sincerely. They seem so real and they are expressed in sentences pleasant to

the ears of all who believe in our language, so pure and so full of verve and meaning."

The year 1916 was an anxious one for England, and for Stratford-on-Avon in particular, relying as it does to so great a degree upon visitors, and particularly American visitors, and on the success of its Festival, and Marie, hoping to attract English visitors, issued a pamphlet with the alluring title of *With Shakespeare in his Garden*. I venture to quote from it :

" . . . Who would not take something of a holiday, if he knew of any ideal spot, where peace and beauty conjoined could give the weary heart and brain a spell of sorely needed rest ! An oasis in the desert of battle, where lovely scenes enchant the eye and the spirit of romance and poesy captivates the imagination and gently persuade us to put aside all sad thoughts and heart-breaking memories, and give ourselves up to the allurements of a Nature-Paradise, made sacred for all time by the name and fame of the greatest Poet in the world ! But—*is* there such a paradise ? Truly there is !—a paradise within reach of all ; no farther than the heart of leafy Warwickshire, the most beautiful county in England. There, among delicious woods and flower-filled fields, with an exquisite river winding its silvery way between mossy banks fringed with feathery reeds and peeping blue eyes of forget-me-nots—there, like a precious jewel in a perfectly wrought setting, is the quaint old town of Stratford-on-Avon, a far more charming and delightful spot than many of the foreign resorts on which, before the war, we were foolishly prone to waste our money and our time—a picturesque place . . . made sacred to all lovers of art and literature by the simple yet sufficing fact that the ONE MAN of England, William Shakespeare, was born

there and died there, thus completing, in the short round of his fifty-two years on earth, a perfect cycle of English poetry and drama.

" . . . Surely we should make our own shrine of Stratford-upon-Avon a 'fashion,' for intelligent men and women, who are glad to walk with Shakespeare in his Garden—the Garden of all England—and, hand-in-hand with him, as it were, listen to his sweet and noble discourse on all things human and divine—from the rise of kings to their downfall—from the loves of men to their betrayals—from the tenderness of *Romeo and Juliet* to the clash of arms at Agincourt; while through all his gracious talk with us we shall gather the fruit of such high and pure philosophy as shall help us to be tolerant of human error. . . . Shakespeare offers no poor or inhospitable entertainment in his beautiful Garden-Town of Stratford-upon-Avon, with its ancient gabled houses, of all which are being gradually relieved of the disguising stucco in which they were dressed to suit the stiff taste of Queen Anne's reign, and now are being shown in all their old-world charm of Elizabethan architecture; there is every creature comfort to be had, and many of the minor personages in the Immortal plays can be seen around if we only keep our eyes open.

"We shall easily discover 'Master Slender' leaning against an old oak door and considering whether he shall go in to dinner or not—'Dogberry and Verges' are ordinary fellow-mortals in the town, so are 'Launce' and 'Speed,' 'Justice Shallow' and 'Bottom the Weaver'—so that when we go to the Theatre, set in the midst of lawns and bordered by the shining river, we become so imbued with the living spirit of the place that the enactment of the Play seems as real as what we are accustomed to call Reality.

"So come, all who can, all who will!—come, and spend many happy days with Shakespeare in his Garden!

"A welcome awaits all who attend the Festival—a



THE SHAKESPEARE MEMORIAL, FIRST WON BY T. SPENCER

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cheery ' old English ' welcome, free from conventionalism and artificiality.

" Certainly no place in all Great Britain can for beauty, peacefulness, and romantic association excel ' Shakespeare's Town,' where his fine spirit is the gracious host, and his friendly voice says—' Come ! ' "

In this appeal there was to her no imagined presence of the Poet. To her Shakespeare lived, and she saw his characters always about her; at every turn of the street she saw figures of the past stepping from their timbered houses. It was to her no effort of reconstruction. To encourage a love for the town and for its associations, she commissioned Mr. Alfred Drury, R.A., to design a very handsome medal—the obverse a fine head of Shakespeare, the reverse the Grammar School Arms, one in gold, one in silver—for the best two essays on Shakespeare, to be competed for annually by the boys of the Grammar School where Shakespeare had learned and played with boys of his own day. These first and second prizes were awarded for three years, and Sir Sidney Lee judged the essays. On the fourth year, however, to Marie's intense regret, he had to tell her that only three boys had competed, and she found that there was no longer any enthusiasm among the boys. One must judge from this how little the headmaster appreciated the earnest desire so often expressed by Mr. H. A. L. Fisher, when Minister of Education, that in all schools boys and girls should be taught the history of their own towns and neighbourhoods—thus learning to appreciate and value their inheritance,

and be led on to a better understanding of the meaning of national and world history—and how little the masters cared for the great literary traditions of their town in particular.

As I have shown, Marie was highly critical of Shakespearean actors; indeed, far back in 1900, in a critical notice by her in the *Daily Express*, for which paper she wrote from time to time at the request of Sir (then Mr.) Arthur Pearson, she had spoken her opinions very candidly, and an action for libel—happily settled out of court—was the result; but where praise was, in her view, deserved, she never stinted it. The work of Miss Lilian Baylis at the Old Vic had her enthusiastic support, and her belief in the capacity of "the People" to feel the appeal of the great playwrights was fully justified.

In 1923 Miss Baylis wrote:

"It is a delight to know how many are triumphing with us in our celebration of the First Folio Tercentenary, and of our production, during the last nine years, of all the plays it contains, and of Pericles.

"I believe that if Shakespeare came back to England he would still be happier among those of the Bank Side than anywhere else, and I am very thankful that we have been allowed to make his plays realities to South Londoners again, as well as to the people at large."

I remember well, too, her enthusiasm for the performance of Louis Bouwmeester, the Dutch actor, as Shylock, which we both thought to be a consummate piece of acting.

Mountains and the sea were again what Marie needed as change from anxieties and annoyances,

and as relaxation from her work—largely self-imposed, for her country—so it came about that, earnestly solicited to do so, we went in 1917 to a house which we took for two months at Criccieth. There, at hand, we had Mrs. and Miss Megan Lloyd George, already friends, and the Prime Minister, when his duties permitted of rest and change; also, near by, his brother, Mr. William George. From there we took drives through the romantic Snowdon country—by Harlech, and a hundred places of beauty and historic interest. The visit led up to a lasting friendship with the George families, very precious to both Marie and myself. Our visit was repeated in the year following.

Here Marie saw for the first time the Welsh women in their native costumes and high hats, and here she found the sister spirit in song and legend of her own Scotland. Also she experienced the sister rains of Wales. Writing to her friend, Violet Matthews, she says:

"We are quiet, *intensely* quiet! Yesterday was a true Welsh Sunday, pouring steadily with rain—and pious old persons going to the 'chapel' under huge umbrellas. I wondered whether any good God *could* be pleased with them for looking so plain, but the weather was so truly awful that I forgave everybody all their sins, and thought it wouldn't matter what any poor human wretch did under such circumstances! To-day makes amends—the sea sighs like a naughty child that is sorry for its naughtiness, and a pale gold sun glints like an early daffodil through the clearing mist. I've been reading the life of Madame Edmond Adam;¹ what an active

¹ A famous French editress and woman of letters.

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mind! I am sorry I missed Marshall Hall—but it is a usual occurrence! What victories the Americans are winning! I'm glad, for my heart has always had a strong feeling for 'Dixie' and the Stars and Stripes."

The next memorable holiday for us both, although we had several long motor tours—one, among others, taking us to Wells and Glastonbury, on the Isle of Avalon—the land of Tennyson's King Arthur—was spent in Tennyson's country, round and about Hindhead. Here again we found the high hills, bracken- and heather-clad, with their fir woods and distant views that were always an inspiration to her. The air, if not that of Scotland, was a complete change from that of Stratford, and change of air and scene was what she needed. Here, too, she could walk in the woods and gather heather, with her little dog Pippin as companion, or drive to one or other of the beautiful villages in the neighbourhood; but Aldworth, on Blackdown, Tennyson's Surrey home, was her loadstone. "I stood," she notes in a short diary of our holiday, "in the room where the great and good man passed to the 'island valley of Avalon, where never wind blows loudly.'"

But the house was empty and stripped of all its former contents. Again, and yet again, we returned to Aldworth.

She had been at Tennyson's funeral in Westminster Abbey, a tribute gladly paid to the last of the poets whom she valued most.

A time had now come, however—and I had watched its coming with growing anxiety, when she

Spent time by the sea - It
seems so happy. In the
Prime Minister coming to recruit
(~~was~~ I don't know collecting men
for the army!) there, after his
last time in Manchester?

Please find my kindest remembrances
from Sybil - (please forward to
me I still look back upon with
amazed gratitude) & I am, as
before, your friend,

Philip Burne-Jones.



must nurse her strength; and though she worked still and received many friends, the doctors had for some time past warned her that her heart was not in good condition, and that an active life of mental and physical strain must be avoided. In January 1924 she had an alarming attack—she took to her room, and was never to leave it again alive. She could not rest on a bed or couch, but spent almost all her time, day and night, half upright in a chair, though she would walk about the room and look from her window to the garden when a lengthening day and warmer sun began to swell the early buds. She refused to have a trained nurse. There was still hope that she might get well enough to resume a reasonably normal life; but one day at her window she heard a choir in a house near by practising Tennyson's "May Queen," and she opened her window the better to enjoy the voices. Next day congestion of the lungs developed. Still she refused skilled nursing, preferring to be tended only by her devoted maid and myself; but we were not skilled enough in grave emergency, and on Sunday, 20th April, a hospital nurse took my place. Marie would not be consoled. Sitting upright in her chair all night, she implored, with tears in her eyes, that I might be sent for; but the nurse, not realising how close was our sympathy, would not humour her. Next morning she passed away without again seeing me or feeling the touch of my hand.

The house remains as she left it. Her own bedroom and study are kept daily aired and decked with

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flowers as when she lived. On a chair in the Winter Garden is her garden hat, to which her dove flies when its cage is opened, and perches as it did before it lost her.

In her will she leaves "Mason Croft" in the hands of Trustees, with instructions that after my death the house and ground shall be at the service of any person or persons distinguished in the arts and sciences who would otherwise seek lodging at an hotel in Stratford-on-Avon, who may apply to the Trustees and find welcome.



CHAPTER XIII

TO sum up Marie's character would be no difficult task to one who knew her so intimately as I, who had lived with her for so many years; but I hope that in this Memoir I have been able to show her development and her personality as she grew from ambitious childhood to womanhood and to accomplishment; and so to convey to the reader, largely through letters written to her, a true picture of my friend. With the heart of a child, she also possessed unconquerable spirit and determination. She was generous, often beyond judgment. If she valued her own work at a high price, she was always ready to pay a high price for services rendered to her—be the worker musician, artist, craftsman, or servitor. The number of years in her service testifies to the love of her felt by those who made up her domestic staff. To her they were as brothers and sisters in her thoughtfulness for them. Throughout her life she was fortunate in having friends who valued her friendship, and if friends were not near, she had always the birds and flowers, and the fairies—the same fairies of her childhood, who never were far from her. Of her acts of kindness many can give testimony, and not the least of her kind acts were in

helping people to help themselves. One instance among many may suffice. Her friend, Clifford Harrison, reciter by profession, but also a writer of poetry and an artist, and in his day earning enough but not more than would support a healthy man, was consumptive, and as the years passed was less and less able to earn enough by recitation alone, so he worked by day at pen-drawing. In this he excelled. Ruskin said of his pen-drawing that Clifford Harrison had begun where he, Ruskin, had left off. Marie encouraged him to give an exhibition of his work. She never had bought a picture from him, but she went early to the exhibition and, unknown to him, had affixed, to her debit, the welcome red wafer upon some half a dozen of his pictures—*pour encourager les autres*.

Love of animals was characteristic of her, and she was adored by children, to whom she was "Fairy Queen" or "Fairy Princess." In the cause of children her pen and purse were always available. "A child's attitude towards Life," she has written, "is one of complete reliance on unknown but trusted destiny, and, in very early years, if that reliance should be broken, the little spirit, startled by some cruel blow, is seldom or never the same again." Letters received from her children friends, now at school, or in service, or entering the professions, or in married life, were among her greatest joys. But among men and women she made enemies, often when she least expected. Sir Sidney Lee, who knew her well in later years, and for whom she came to have both liking and high regard, has written: "Her outspoken



Painted by W. H. Quattr
THE MUSIC ROOM, MASON CROFT

censures of local activities" (in Stratford-on-Avon) "involved her in repeated controversies and in some inevitable unpopularity. Though she welcomed support in her polemics, her courage was always equal, at need, to fighting her battles single-handed."

She was impulsive and, I may say it, sometimes lacking in tact. Once her opinion formed and her mind made up, seeing clearly what she wanted, she took her line of action, and was apt to be impatient of the point of view which was quite genuinely held by her opponents, and many were antagonised when they might have been won over, for her personal charm was great, had she but deigned to make use of it to achieve her aims. That same clearness of sight and aim was characteristic of her writing. She knew what she wanted to say—and she wrote it without hesitation or emendation. I have all her manuscripts, and there are hardly any corrections to be found in them. Her proofs were always returned practically untouched to the printer.

Also it may be that, though a sense of fun she had in plenty, she was somewhat deficient in sense of humour, that rare and subtle sense that can, in a flash, see the humour in a situation (even though it be at one's own expense) and, seeing the humour, soften the opposition and so, turning from frown to smile, win a bloodless victory.

To account for the way in which her books were received by the critics and by many of the public is more difficult, unless an accepted form of narrative told in an accepted way was their measure for criticism. Whatever faults there may be, her success

came mainly from the fact that she wrote from the heart and aimed at the hearts of her readers. She wanted to do good, and this even in the early days of struggle, when she wrote for her living and for the love of others, and the high moral aim of her work can no more be disputed than the good results testified to in hundreds of letters and by thousands of voices. Her imagination flew ahead of scientific accomplishment, as with many writers, and she had no scientific training or experience but—except as to detail, and as to foundation upon strictly scientific, proven facts—how many of her visions have not come true! So, too, her imagination painted true pictures. Consider the Norwegian “Altenfjord,” with the evening and dawn effects produced by the Midnight Sun; turn to the scenes in *Ziska*—how true to recent discovery was her description of the interior of an unrisfled tomb; and the scenes in *Barabbas*. Yet she had never seen Norway and the Midnight Sun, nor did she know the East, nor Rome, the past of which she reconstructs so vividly, and with so true a background. Perhaps a correspondent, an undergraduate of Oxford, quite unknown to her, judged correctly when he wrote to her:

“Your immense popularity is the result, as it seems to me, of your originality and sincerity, your passionate appeals to the people’s feelings (which, often unlike their opinions, have always truth in them), combined with dramatic power, are directed on the points which at present most nearly touch the heart, as, for instance, the vague impression that science is overthrowing religion and the best hopes of man. But the reason why the ‘learned’ criticise you is that you often include

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inaccurate science and technically inadequate philosophy. This ought to be overlooked in a novelist, who cannot be expected to have time to master the enormous detail of modern science and philosophy. . . . This does not affect the value of work as a novel, and especially a novel of good influence, but it does tend to obscure your merits in their eyes."

The bigger men—a philosopher and a man of pure science, for instance—could, whilst pointing out to her her faults in regard to the technicalities of scientific detail, requiring knowledge of a subject which is now advancing day to day, as only a little time back it advanced century by century, can appreciate the imaginative writer's qualities, aims, and achievements.

"28 QUEEN ANNE'S GATE,
WESTMINSTER,
6th November 1921.

"DEAR MISS CORELLI,—I have just completed my reading through of *The Secret Power*.

"Let me say at once that the reading has given me great pleasure. The style is brilliant, and the range of imagination is very great. The conception, too, is a novel one. As you say, the story is a parable.

"I turn to my criticism, which does not really touch the appeal the book makes. It is that it is not so that science makes its tremendous advances. Such a development as you represent is convincing only if it is shown to be what it always must be, the outcome of long and sustained concentration. Even with the greatest genius, and with the energy of youth, this must be so. No woman living the life of the heroine

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could possibly design such an airship as is portrayed, nor could any man have worked out such an invention for destruction as is suggested without his preliminary work being known. Science knows as yet of no such results as practicable, even for those who have completely mastered all that current knowledge can give, and that is already a good deal. The work would require long time spent over experiment in laboratories and in operating with mathematics of a very high order. The want of this deprives the narrative of the quality of 'inevitableness.' I quote from Matthew Arnold's Preface to his volume of Wordsworth's poetry, when he speaks of this quality.

"But the criticism does not take anything from the attractiveness of the book. I only mean to say that the story would have appealed yet more had the hero been a Leonardo da Vinci or a Pasteur or an Einstein. Even so, the question of the limits of the possible would have obtruded itself.

"Still, you are warning the public against what war may some day come to mean,—Yours sincerely,

"HALDANE."

"17 GROSVENOR ROAD,
WESTMINSTER, S.W.,

28th May 1918.

"DEAR MISS CORELLI,—Several weeks ago I finished reading *The Life Everlasting*, and I have mused over the ideas it contains many times since then, but I have never had the time until now to express to you my enjoyment of much that the book contains. You would not expect me to subscribe literally to all the views embodied in your romance, but I can with a whole heart say that I appreciate the uplifting character and intention of the book. It is good to be carried even in

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imagination into realms above earth-level; and your book suggests to people that they may reach out and touch the stars if they wish. . . .

"You are completely justified in assuming the existence of such tremendous forces as those of which Santoris gained control. There is sufficient energy locked up in a cubic inch of the ether around us to supply a city with all its horse-power for a year; and radium may represent a means of making it available. When this energy is placed at man's disposal by the investigation of science, will man be worthy of the discovery, or will he use it for purposes of destruction? This is a moral and ethical question rather than a scientific one. I notice in your pamphlet on *The World's Greatest Need*, that you make the man of science responsible for the invention of instruments of destruction and death; but he is not really the one who does this.

"Science discovers; and men use its results for good or evil. . . . The search for truth, and the discovery of new substances and forces in Nature must not be impeded because mankind does not put them to worthy uses. What has to be done is to advance moral and ethical ideas to higher planes, so that new knowledge shall benefit the human race instead of being used to destroy it. Unless this is done, there will be an end of civilisation, for it is possible to conceive of a time when the forces at man's disposal will be so strong that a hostile army or an enemy city may be destroyed almost at the touch of a button. . . .

"You have shown such sympathy with scientific aims that I am sure you would never willingly misrepresent the spirit or work of the scientific investigator. Whatever he may be, he is better than the soulless money-grubber whom the world delights to honour.—Sincerely yours,

"R. A. GREGORY."

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And again in 1923 :

" 17 GROSVENOR ROAD,
WESTMINSTER, S.W.1,
12th January 1923.

" DEAR MISS CORELLI,—It would take many pages to answer in detail the various points raised in your letter of 10th January, and you would be weary long before my explanation were complete. If what I say, therefore, seems pontifical and unqualified, you must forgive me, and yet believe that I give you faithful testimony.

" All sound-waves require material substance for their transmission. Air and any other gases transmit such waves ; so do fluids such as water, or solids like iron and wood. In a vacuum there can be absolutely no sound, so that when an electric or other bell is hung up in a globe from which all air has been exhausted, not a sound is heard, though the hammer is seen to be continually striking the gong. Light, on the other hand, is a wave motion in something termed the ether which we cannot weigh or isolate or detect in any way tangibly. We know that light comes to us from the Sun and Stars through empty space, and we know it is a wave motion, and the imponderable medium in which this motion occurs in the ether. The waves used for wireless communication and for broadcasting are also waves in the ether but much longer than those which affect our sensation of sight. X-rays, on the other hand, are much shorter. Imagine a keyboard with forty octaves upon it. The range of human vision is limited to a single one of these octaves—from deepest red to darkest violet—and all the other thirty-nine octaves of ether waves can only be detected by scientific means.

" The air around us is always charged with electricity, and the Sun itself is continually disturbed by great electric storms which affect the earth. The amount of electricity used in

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broadcasting is nothing in comparison with what normally exists in the atmosphere. It is very improbable, therefore, that the electric waves used in wireless communication can have any effect upon climate. Nothing is impossible, but on *a priori* grounds, and in the absence of positive knowledge, we can say that any relation between wireless and weather has yet to be proven. Francis Thompson's words,

‘Thou canst not stir a flower
Without troubling of a star,’

beautifully express an ultimate truth; and you may say similarly that a candle cannot be lighted without raising the temperature of the whole atmosphere, but the amount of the increase is nevertheless negligible at a few inches distance.

“As to light producing sound, this is only done electrically. Light-waves can never be transformed into sound-waves any more than spirit can become matter. They can stimulate electric action and this action can then be converted into sound, but that is quite a different thing from light becoming sound. I know the instruments by which light can be made to produce sound, but it would take a long letter to explain their action, and already you will be tired of what I have written.

“The present type of broadcasting programmes is common, because the people who arrange the programmes are common, but I hope it will improve in time. It only represents what music-hall and the popular press think that people like. You must not, however, blame science for this. We have made a great gift to the world and if the world debases it, that is not our fault. Poison gas was used for bleaching nearly a century before it was introduced into warfare, and saltpetre is a valuable plant fertiliser as well as a constituent of gunpowder.

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"I shall be delighted to have a copy of *Secret Power* and to read it, even though I may not agree with your Sound Ray.
—Very sincerely yours, R. A. GREGORY."

"17 GROSVENOR ROAD,
WESTMINSTER, S.W.1,
16th February 1923.

"DEAR MISS CORELLI,—For several days I have been hoping to write to you my thanks for the copy of *The Secret Power*, which I have read with intense interest. I understand now why you asked me about the conversion of light-waves into sound, and though the physics of this transformation is not as you have imagined it, yet I should be the last to suggest that your use of the idea was not legitimate in a romance. I would prefer, however, that thought itself should be considered as causing the promotion of a kind of ethereal wave, like the ethereal waves used in wireless communication, and that these waves may influence the minds attuned to them. Morgana could thus receive communications from the Brazen City without there actually being any sound requiring material substance for its transmission. After all, if I speak to a friend, I make sounds which his brain interprets, and I may speak with my eyes as well as with my mouth. In the latter case ethereal waves transmit my thoughts and the idea is easily extended as a means of conveying thought by telepathic means. That is how I prefer to think of your sound ray.

"Putting aside your departure from the canons of conventional physics, which for your purpose do not much matter, I find in your book the deepest sympathy with the scientific spirit and much intimate knowledge of new scientific ideas. You evidently follow with interest some of the great developments of our times, and you express them in words which

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carry conviction. There is a possibility that tremendous forces may be released when more is known about the whirling particles which make up the atom, and these may be used for good purposes, as Morgana used them, or for destruction, as with Roger Seaton. It is, perhaps, just as well for the human race that these forces are not yet available; for I am not at one with you in the opinion that man is not yet ready to be entrusted with this knowledge. Science is a thousand years in advance of the primitive capacities of mankind in general, and the world is unworthy of the rich argosies it is continually discharging upon the quays of our modern cities. . . .

"There are dozens of points in your book upon which I am inclined to offer comments, but to do so would weary you. Any one can, of course, see the inside of a sun ray, with its octave of colours, who cares to put a prism in the path of a beam of light. This octave, however, as I have already mentioned in an earlier letter, is only one of about forty known octaves of ethereal vibrations. Morgana's attitude towards love and marriage is consistent with the character you have drawn of her, yet it belongs to a different world from that in which we live. It is the desire of man or woman for a mate which keeps the human race in existence; and if there were no such desire in our being then obviously one generation would not succeed another. To refined minds the intimate relations which result in childbirth may seem gross, but they are as much a part of our nature as creative thought or spiritual aspirations, and their realisation may be the most supreme moment of life. This is sex if you like, but it cannot be avoided on this side of Jordan, except by losing oneself in the Golden City, as Morgana did.

"You are tired of my screed, so I will say no more except to thank you most heartily for the pleasure which your book has given me.—Very sincerely yours,

"R. A. GREGORY."

There was, indeed, something intuitive in Marie—perhaps intuition is the sublimity of imagination—certainly she often had presentiments of happenings; often she seems to have been under the influence of those fairies, her childhood's companions. Her friend, Violet Matthews, recalls an instance:

"I remember one summer, Don Randi, an Italian priest, who for many years was continually in and out of the villa,¹ came over to stay with me in England for a few weeks.

"I took him to tea with Marie at 'Mason Croft.' We laughed and talked gaily in Italian. Don Randi was always full of amusing stories and much fascinated by Marie. During tea I asked her if afterwards she would play the piano; she continued talking and shook her head, but later on she walked across the lovely music room, which she had furnished as a vast sitting-room, and sat down at the piano. I saw her pause for a moment, then her tiny white hands began to move rapidly over the notes. I soon began to see an expression of amazement passing over the face of the priest, and it was not surprising for, when at last no more sound came, and instead of coming to where we were sitting, Marie walked out of the window into the garden, he (trembling with emotion) told me that Marie had played three of the native songs from a little remote village in the Carrara Mountains which had been his home till he was seventeen, and to which he had never returned. She had played them softly and gently, with intense feeling, one after the other; instinctively I knew it was useless to ask her to explain, for Marie had never heard of Don Randi before that afternoon and knew nothing whatever about his origin. Neither did I. Marie was quite unconscious of what had happened, conscious only that she had played just anything that came into her head. Naturally, Don Randi marvelled and was intensely touched."

¹ Mr. Henry Labouchere's villa in Florence.



Page 13, B. H. Thompson

THE MOUNT RAINIER ALUMNI CROBT

To have at "Mason Croft" clever people—musicians or good talkers—was Marie's great enjoyment, and those who had listened to her and Sir Philip Burne-Jones in brilliant dispute will never forget it. Many were the artists and actors as well as writers who came here. Marie talked well—enjoyed talking—but was always ready to suffer eclipse when giants contended; but when we were alone and her spirit needed rest, she turned to books. When her headaches came, she would turn to Dickens or Sir Walter Scott—but poetry was her chief delight.

In praise of books she wrote in 1915 :

" My gratitude to all the Authors, ancient and modern, with whom I have every day been on terms of confidence, affection, and sympathy, can never be written or spoken. In this time of war, books are more than ever a necessity. . . . A volume of Emerson's *Essays* is a friend for a lifetime; an exquisite little book entitled *Silences of the Moon*, by Henry Law Webb, is another delightful companion. Any of the beautiful stories of George Eliot, Charlotte Brontë, or Charles Dickens is a better gift than a jewel. . . . Let us give books, then, books for our cheer and hope and uplifting."

It was in this spirit that, far behind her great writers, as she felt herself to be, she wrote her own books, and with all but the few earliest, as it went to the printer, she offered a prayer—a prayer that it might carry her message to the world and bring comfort to her fellow men and women—and she pasted it, though hidden to the printer by a piece of paper pasted over it, into each manuscript.

MARIE CORELLI

TEMPORAL POWER

"Divine and beloved Master Christ, to whom I most humbly and devotedly offer myself and all such work as I can do, bless these poor pages, and grant that they may convey Thy message surely to those whom Thou desirest shall receive it."

THE TREASURE OF HEAVEN

"I have loved it very much, and I pray it may carry its intended message to the world, and show that love is the best of all Things."

A PERSONAL TRIBUTE

BY WAY OF

EPILOGUE

By J. CUMING WALTERS

IT was my privilege to make the acquaintance of Marie Corelli in the summer of 1901. She had just been engaged in a controversy on a Shakespearean subject, and in that controversy I had taken part. I received an invitation to call upon her, and with some reluctance, and even a little prejudice, went to Stratford, where she had not long before taken up her residence. There we resumed our discussion, and there we made friends. In the course of the years that passed I saw her frequently, received many letters, and was honoured with some of her confidences.

The story of her life is told in the pages of this volume, and it is no part of my task to repeat it; suffice it to say here that the more I knew Miss Corelli the more did I feel that she conformed to Ruskin's standard of the "gentle nature," "sensitive in flesh and spirit, fine of structure in mind and body, kind and merciful, heroically strong and delicate, incapable of pride and falsehood." These are, I am aware, terms which describe an ideal of womanhood, and it would be foolish to declare that they were exactly

and completely fulfilled in any human being. But Miss Corelli was herself an idealist ; in her books the ideal was plainly and beautifully set forth, and in her own life she endeavoured to reach that ideal, as all who really knew her were aware. The poet, the artist, the dreamer were continually manifest in her act and thought, and her nature was imbued with deep religious feeling. " Well, you are a dreamer," he said ; " you do not live here in this world with us—you think you do—and yet in your own mind you know you do not. You dream—and your life is that of vision simply. I'm not sure that I should like to see you wake. For as long as you can dream you will believe in the fairy tale " (*The Life Everlasting*). These qualities made her an aspirant towards pure and perfect life, perchance unrealisable in the earth-state and only " the vision splendid," but they gave her the conception of what life ought to be and what hereafter it would become, and impelled her to that cry from the heart :

" Come to me, then, thou angel-love of mine !
 Mate with that half of me which is divine,
 Mix with my soul and its immortal breath,
 And rise with me triumphant over Death ! "

It is, then, Marie Corelli, the idealist, the visionary, the writer with a purpose, the woman who tried to realise her dreams, I wish to make understood, as I was led myself to understand her both by personal acquaintance and through her books.

Her personality is impressed in her writings. Although she always disclaimed being autobio-

graphical, and was probably unconscious that she was so, the *ego* was too dominant for others to overlook it. And, indeed, there is no such thing as impersonality in great and sincere literature, nor is it any reproach to an author that he looks into his own heart and writes. There would have been no Renaissance without personality; there would have been no Dante, Petrarch, Shakespeare, Montaigne, or Milton, had they not given us themselves in spirit and in truth. As Walter Bagehot said, "People do not keep a tame steam-engine to write their books; they must be produced by a first-rate imagination working on a first-rate experience." This is exactly Miss Corelli's case; the imagination and the experience were hers, and they produced that remarkable series of human dramas and radiant romances of which even Mr. Stead said—speaking of one he disliked most—"the conception is magnificent." That there is exuberance, that there is passion, that there are faults of style, that there are angry outbursts which should have been restrained, the best friends of Miss Corelli admit—and admit the more freely because they *are* her best friends and most jealous of her literary repute; but even then, what gold remains! I am among those who regret the extremes in *The Sorrows of Satan*, but I almost forget them amid the overwhelming mass of compensations. Moreover, the extremist views there expressed are, as will be found in every instance, directed against indisputable wrongs and vices—unchastity, sordidness, slander, corruption—and much could therefore be urged in excuse for the lash and sting of a Juvenal.

The censor was speaking from intensity and conviction; it was Marie Corelli, crusader, waging war against the paganism of the age. The method may have been too violent, but what are we to say of the motive? I remember saying to her at the time a vehement protest was made: "Are you not afraid of being condemned for this?" and her answer: "I trust to time—and God." The words might have been spoken by Mavis Clare. But, "I am not the heroine of the tale," she both said and wrote; what will not be questioned is that more than one heroine expressed Marie Corelli's own thoughts, and justly so, for she was truthful and earnest, had a message to deliver, and utilised both her themes and her characters as the media. In this sense, at least, I hold the works to be autobiographical, and this adds to their value. "Thought," as she said, "is the voice of the soul."

Miss Corelli's best piece of autobiography will be found in her Prologue to *The Life Everlasting*. Here she reveals and expounds herself. She relates what she alone knew—others could only have dimly guessed it—of her designs, of the motives by which she was animated, and of the principles she wished to enunciate. It is not only her completest self-revelation, but her self-vindication, made in no apologetic spirit, but with the artless candour of one who wishes to speak the truth and to let that truth suffice for all purposes of explanation, or, if necessary, defence. The Prologue is also one of her choicest pieces of writing. It seems to come with torrent-force, yet it goes deep; it is no outburst of emotion,

but a profoundly considered thesis. In the course of the elucidation of her literary purposes Miss Corelli distinguishes between her main task, consisting of the speculative and psychological works, and those which she frankly terms melodramatic, "to please the public," and, not least, her publisher. But when secure in her domain, or when emancipated from the influence of a good friend who none the less allowed the business side to dominate, she gladly recognised that "no one could henceforth hinder or oppose me but myself, and that I had the making, under God, of my own destiny." And the result was the sequence of the seven works which are "linked together by the one theory" (psychological) and were the deliberately conceived plan and aim from the outset, *A Romance of Two Worlds*, *Ardath*, *The Soul of Lilith*, *Barabbas*, *The Sorrows of Satan*, *The Master Christian*, and *The Life Everlasting*. Her creed, her message, her experience, her hope, all that was dear to her and rich within her, are in these works—they are the real Corelli, the woman with a mission.

Frankly confessing that she is "a Voice in the Wilderness," and that she speaks "simply out of love and pity for suffering humankind," she goes on to say that she is not hurt by attack nor elated by praise: "I have not a moment to waste among the mere shadows of life which are not Life itself—I follow the glory, not the gloom." She discusses the lapse from Christian faith and deplors it; she appeals for sincerity and its fruits; she sets forth her own simple creed, the creed drawn from Nature; and she presents the esoteric idea of a world intended

for training and development in order that the spirit may reach out to its heaven.

"I began to write," she says, "when I was too young to know anything of the world's worldly ways, and when I was too enthusiastic and too much carried away by the splendour and beauty of the spiritual ideal to realise the inevitable derision and scorn which are bound to fall upon untried explorers into the mysteries of the unseen ; yet it was solely on account of a strange psychic experience which chanced to myself when I stood upon the threshold of what is called ' life,' that I found myself producing my first book, *A Romance of Two Worlds*. It was a rash experiment, but it was the direct result of an initiation into some few of the truths behind the veil of the Seeming Real. . . . A wonderful vista of perpetual revealment was opened to me. I saw how humanity, moved by gross egotism, has in every age of the world ordained laws and morals for itself which are the very reverse of Nature's teaching—I saw how, instead of helping the wheels of progress and wisdom onward, man reverses it by his obstinacy and turns it backward even on the very point of great attainment—and I was able to perceive how the sorrows and despairs of the world are caused by this one simple fact, Man working *versus* Nature, while Nature, ever divine and invincible, pursues her God-appointed course, sweeping her puny opponents aside and inflexibly carrying out her will to the end. And I learnt how true it is that if Man were *with* her instead of *against* her, there would be no more misunderstanding of the laws of the Universe, and that where there is now nothing but discord, all would be divinest harmony."

These avowals are important. The critic is disarmed by Miss Corelli's own confession as to the crudity of some of her early work. And then we are brought to her real purpose, to her propaganda, and

we perceive the emergence of the woman with great ideas and a bold mission. In her "Electric Theory of the Universe," however crude her scientific knowledge, she tells us of what she anticipates, and then proceeds to the study of psychic forces, and to her greatest theme, the Hereafter and the Spirit Realm. "Life and love are of little worth if they must end in dark nothingness" was her conclusion, and she was not brought to it by spirit-communication (which she deemed "out of natural law"), but by logical reasoning: "By Divine Law and system we learn that the so-called 'dead' are not dead—they have merely been removed to fresh life and new spheres of action." The remarkable Preface, psychological and introspective and all-revealing, comes to an impressive finale with the words, "The Fountain of Youth and the Elixir of Life were dreams of the ancient mystics and scientists, but they are not dreams to-day. To the Soul that has found them they are Divine Realities."

I specially mention this volume because I believe that in its purpose and its execution it should rank highest among Miss Corelli's works; but I have also the personal reason that the leading ideals expressed in it were often discussed by us at "Mason Croft," and the last letter I received from her contained these words: "If you will read the Prologue to *The Life Everlasting*, you will grasp my faith. The story is devised to try and teach the force of influences, and how it needs all our will and strength to fight against them and overcome them."

So forcible is the ethical motive in most of the

volumes that they might serve, and doubtless were intended to serve, as propaganda. These are a series of dramas with messages of power and a regenerating influence. The volumes fall into two distinct classes, of which those conveying the moral purpose form one. The second, more daring and more important, consists of those works in which the writer becomes speculative in science and philosophy. Miss Corelli not only had the fancy of the poet, but the vision of the prophet. She was a seer of wonders of the future. It became a settled part of her design, beginning with *The Romance of Two Worlds*, to fix attention upon great likelihoods and developments, upon the seeming impossible, upon "miracles," not by the violation of Nature's laws, but by the deeper understanding and the greater mastery of them. And the marvel of it all was that she lived long enough to see some "impossibles" realised, to witness the fulfilment of her foretellings. Aerial flight, wireless messages, electrical rays, and psychic healing were among the mysteries she treated with a confidence which suggested foreknowledge; and while many of her critics dismissed her ideas as pure fantasy and the extravagance of the imagination, she herself held to them as potential truths to be demonstrated in good time.

All this was designed. She offers a most illuminating explanation of her scheme, begun in youth and continued to the last, by which she proposed to awaken the world to scientific victory and the long results of Time. And still more, she advanced to the psychic realm, and though disclaiming to be

"either a Spiritualist or Theosophist," presented the main beliefs of both with the insight of the hierophant. In *Ziska* she deals definitely with the law of Karma, and, giving as her two chief characters a reincarnated man and woman, works out the hypothesis to its logical conclusion that, "as we sow, so do we reap." In *Ardath* we have past life recalled and destiny revealed, and in *The Life Everlasting* the idea of reincarnation is used to fullest purpose and with the utmost skill. "It is the assertion of an Eternal Law," she wrote. "Soul rushes to soul, heart leaps to heart . . . the immortal soul-spark strikes its kindred fire across a waste of worlds until they (the two predestined people) meet in the compelling flash of that God's Message called Love." Her psychic and occult views are a separate study, and they can only be hinted at in the course of a general review. Suffice it that for herself she fixed her hopes on immortality, believed unreservedly in the continuity of life and permanence of memory, and looked forward to joining the choir invisible and beginning a new life of service and advance.

In her writings—traceable alike in a short story or a sustained novel—Miss Corelli always had a distinct theme and a special appeal. She did not fear to have "a purpose" ascribed to her—that deadly taunt of modern criticism which would include Dickens, George Eliot, and Charles Kingsley in the ban. But the simple fact was that Miss Corelli, far from being abashed, gloried in her purpose, proclaimed it clearly, and emphasised it at every opportunity. She was passionately in earnest

and her work throbbed from the heart. Hence she wrote with fervour, even with fury; she became declamatory even to vehemence; she had the zeal of a missionary, the enthusiasm of the crusader. She was desperately eager that her message should be understood, that it should reach as large a multitude as possible, and that it should exercise an influence upon the age. This was particularly the case in her moral campaigns—her protests against the sins of "Society," against luxury, selfishness, degeneracy, indolence, corruption, debasing customs, insidious vice. Drink, sensuality, unchastity, in thought as well as in deed, sordid aims, avarice, the worship of gold, hypocrisy in religion, false doctrines, and perverted ideals—these were among the problems she set herself resolutely to grapple with and, if possible, to solve: she put forth intensive fighting power in the process; she was not sparing in attack or faltering in blow; she strove to the end, as Knights Templar strove under sword and cross in a Holy War. In these campaigns Miss Corelli was both warrior and devotee. And if she needed excuse for her urging force, for her clamorous tone, for her excess of wrath, it could surely be found in the fact that, while girding at evil, she championed purity and went to the rescue and succour of the weak. Nowhere is this more manifest than in the pages of *God's Good Man*; while, for the vindication of oppressed womanhood, for the articulation of the victim's case against physical and spiritual enslavement, nothing more eloquent and at the same time more rending can be found than *The Murder of Delicia* and *Temporal Power*.

In the realm of speculative science Miss Corelli followed Lytton and preceded Wells. Fantastical as some of her ideas and forecasts appeared to be at the time, they proved to be not impossible, and some of them became practicable in her own lifetime. These realisations of what had been deemed chimerical afforded her boundless satisfaction. Airships, wireless, thought-transference, were among her prognostications. She was a bold, but not a reckless or unreasoning foreteller of wonders to be, and her faculty in this respect might be termed true seer-ship or divination. Writing to me only a few weeks before she passed on, she mentioned, with proud satisfaction, that what she had foretold in *The Secret Power*, and had been regarded as wild fantasy, was now a proved reality. "I have been justified," she said.

Miss Corelli's romances, then, were not only vivid stories; they were her means of imparting knowledge and doctrine. Not one of them but has "purpose," and it is of no slight interest to notice the animating cause in each work. We discover by this means the subjects nearest to her heart, and the problems that she was eager to solve. It was doubtless because she had a lesson to enforce, a truth to expound, or some fine daring speculation to enunciate, that she threw herself with such ardour into her work. Rising early, her powers fresh, her brain teeming with ideas, she would write for several hours, putting, as it were, the new-born strength of the day into the effort to achieve, and concentrating her earnestness and enthusiasm upon the single purpose in view. It was her morning task, begun

with a few whispered words of prayer, pursued with unflagging zeal; and the knowledge of something done made the rest of the day easy, or, at all events, free from exacting duties and open to those social pleasures in which she delighted.

Yet to a visitor it must often have seemed strange, almost inexplicable, that the bright, smiling, girlish woman, with the mass of shining golden hair, talking gaily as she moved about her flower-decked rooms, was she who for a few hours previously had been writing burning words on Society's sordid slave-markets, or the horrors of the drink traffic, or perverted education, or misapplied wealth and its corruption, or the satanic influence of riches on womankind, or the barter of souls in the false name of Love and the hypocrisy of marriage, or the hollowness of religious professions unaccompanied by faith and deeds, or the tyranny of convention and the injustice of caste; and if these had not been her text, that this same woman had been engaged in some bold forecasting in the region of science, or some probing into Nature's deep and well-hid secrets, or some keen visioning of wonders yet to be. It was remarkable, and at times almost fantastic, that Marie Corelli in her garden at "Mason Croft" should be also the Marie Corelli of *The Secret Power*, *Ardati*, and *The Life Everlasting*, pronouncing on ideal life and love and the life beyond.

Although, with her strong views on certain of the clergy and ministry, on the state of the Church, on the differences so often manifest between Christian precept and Christian practice, Miss Corelli would

by no means have passed, or desired to pass, as orthodox; yet in religion she held deep and fervent views, had firm convictions, and an unshakeable faith. The fundamental truths were so clear to her, and so precious also, that she had little patience for those who perverted or obscured them; and the only instance of a lack of tolerance known to me was her attitude towards those (I will not further define them) whom she termed "idolaters."

In her books she set forth her conception of the part that women should play in the world's drama; in her life she endeavoured to exemplify the gospel she preached. Her heroines were at times dismissed as etherealizations, but Miss Corelli meant them to typify a possibility worth attaining; and if Mavis Clare and Thelma were creatures of fantasy, they are none the less an inspiration.

In her home she was truly homely, revelling in the very sentiment of Home, and taking a human delight in its comfort and charm.

In one of her miscellaneous articles I find her expressing her sentiments on Home in these vivid terms:

"A happy home is the best and surest safeguard against all evil; and where home is not happy, there the devil may freely enter and find his hands full. With women, and women only, this happiness in the home must find its foundation. They only are responsible. If I were asked my opinion as to the chief talent or gift for making a home happy, I should, without a moment's hesitation, reply, 'Cheerfulness.' A cheerful spirit, always looking on the bright side, and determined to make the best of everything, is the choicest blessing and the greatest charm of home."

If there were difficulties in connecting her outward life with her romantic work, it was even more difficult for some of those who were nearest to Marie Corelli, who watched her happy life day by day, who heard her carols, and knew of the "sunshine-place" in which she was securely poised—it was difficult for them to believe that she was also the writer of those poignant *Open Confessions* which could only come from a deeply wounded and suffering heart. If these *Confessions* were not the outcome of experience, it is not easy to account for the imagination which could give them such painful realism. They are cries of agony, of bitterness, of scorn. Can these things be dissembled? Can we be deceived by painted shadows? Are we mocked? It scarcely seems possible. The bleeding heart is bared; the sob of anguish is real. Yet, if this surmise be correct, it adds but another mystery—and the one furthest from solution—in Marie Corelli's life.

The keynotes to Miss Corelli's works may therefore be given as sincerity and enthusiasm. Her sincerity was so deep, and her enthusiasm so unconstrained, that the critics were misled into a belief that she was extravagant; they could not account for what Emerson has so appropriately termed "the Oversoul." Perchance, too, the spectacle of a woman in deadly earnest, and a novelist to boot, was so unfamiliar in times of "rages of a season" and sensational "best sellers" as to be unaccountable. Yet on every ground the feud between Miss Corelli and the critics, especially those critics of the cheap school, who dismissed her lightly with a few words

of ridicule, and did not even trouble to read her works or grasp her message—this long-sustained feud was, I think, to be regretted on both sides. It meant attack and reprisal, and it had no definite results. Miss Corelli maintained her public, and it increased to a wonderful multitude. At her zenith she was easily the most read novelist of the day, nor is the public interest by any means exhausted.

Despite the critics' attacks and the fierce rejoinders they called forth, I honestly believe, from my observations of Miss Corelli and from conversation with her, that there was no ill-feeling in her heart, still less was there rancour: she gave the retort which she deemed necessary, but harboured no personal bitterness or hostility. This I wish to place on record not only as personal testimony but as a further aid to the true understanding of her nature.

The reviewers who considered their duty done when they had detected a split infinitive (George Eliot was guilty of that same abomination, yet escaped condemnation), or when they had traced a misquotation, or when they had decided that an idea was "extravagant" and therefore worthless, undoubtedly failed in the second part of their task, which was to discover virtue as well as blemish. But it is doubtful if many of them took the trouble to comprehend the motive or the character of her writing, and the words which Charlotte Brontë applied to the critics of *Wuthering Heights* might well be adapted to the critics who scorned *The Romance of Two Worlds*: "Too often do reviewers remind us of the mob of Astrologers, Chaldeans, and Sooth-

sayers gathered before the Writing on the Wall, and unable to read the characters or make known the interpretation." I venture the opinion that, though the popular verdict, the verdict of the millions, on Miss Corelli may not be endorsed to the full, posterity will not fail to place her aright and admit her literary force in the age to which she belonged.

It would be wrong to suggest a literary relationship between Marie Corelli and George Eliot; their styles were distinct, and their theses, for the most part, had little in common. But on certain questions they were brought into sympathetic contact, chief among these being concerned with the status of woman. Let it be understood at the outset that neither of them belonged to "the shrieking sisterhood"; indeed, each was willing to forgo certain claims, and each deprecated extremes. But they knew what was due to their sex, and they resented that irrational and illogical "superiority" assumed by a section of mankind, which permitted the view to be taken that woman was by nature an inferior, that she was unfitted for certain duties, that she was not expected to make progress, and that she must take a subsidiary part in the scheme of life. All this must be highly obnoxious to women of intellect, and we find Marie Corelli and George Eliot at one in their protest, and in representing types of women who are the equal of the best types of men. It is here that comparisons may justly begin. George Eliot depicts Dorothea Brooke, Esther Lyon, Dinah Morris, Maggie Tulliver (all of them, by the way,

with characteristics of her own), and Marie Corelli gives us parallels in Mavis Clare, in *Innocent*, and, above all, in the heroine of *The Life Everlasting*; but it might almost as truly be said that all her leading women convey the same impression, illustrate the same truth, and fulfil the same mission. Independence from men she did not ask; on the contrary, she believed that this would constitute "the suicide of their nobler selves."

But Marie Corelli's heroines, like George Eliot's, were women with aspirations, with knowledge, with fine instincts; they had desire for scope and liberty beyond the cramping laws of the world and the conventions of society; they rebelled against dull and empty existence, the doom of so many who are deemed subordinate to their lords and masters. George Eliot (as we learn from her own *Journal*) frequently complained of the repression to which her sex was subjected. Marie Corelli, more vigorous in style, at times denounced with fiery and consuming passion the wrongs of women at the hands of the tyrant subjugator; or, with infinite pathos, she revealed the tragedy of a wife who, under that sacred name, became a martyr. Her volumes were veritable crusades on behalf of subdued, suffering, and outraged womanhood. The sex has had no braver champion and no more fervent advocate.

And just as George Eliot thought that there should be Saint Therasas living an epic life of "spiritual grandeur and far resonant action," so Marie Corelli in less rhetorical phraseology upheld a similar ideal. It is wonderfully—I think I might

venture to add, with a touch of poetical sublimity—illustrated in the case of the woman in *The Life Everlasting*, who fits herself for a supreme position by purity and good deeds, by learning and experience, by the ordeal of suffering as well as by the pursuit of perfection; and who therefore realises her transcendent dreams and attains to happiness, beauty, and exaltation.

Because she made high claims for the recognition of woman, she was severe upon those of her own sex who revealed their little worth and marred the argument in their favour. How difficult to advocate the woman's cause when there were so many society "butterflies" wasting their lives, "gnats and gad-flies" working evil! But she defended womankind in general from cheap derision and cold contempt, believing that, though "some are cruel, some frivolous, some faithless, they are nearly all alike in their boundless capacity for loving"; and, when dowered with that capacity, a woman will assuredly "try to do a good and noble thing, not that she may vex or humiliate a man by superiority, but that she may be more worthy to be his mate and helper in the world." The case could not be more finely expressed.

It is in such phrases (and her works so abound with them that full quotation cannot be attempted) that we find the clue to Marie Corelli's doctrines. It was not the clever woman she admired most, though she held that women ought to be clever and to display the fact; nor was it women of dazzling brilliance that she put forward as the most attractive, though, again, she liked them to possess brilliance.

But her ideal was world-service, human advance, spiritual uplift; cleverness and brilliance were valuable adjuncts, but she wanted her women, in order to succeed in their aim, to have grace, beauty, adornment, combined with warmth of heart and courage of spirit. In *Wormwood* she uttered the timely warning: "The woman of genius, with that strange, subtle attraction about her which is yet not actual beauty—she is a person to be avoided if you would have peace." Nothing presumptuous here. Marie Corelli continually pointed to what at first seemed the lowlier plane, though it might prove to be the higher in accomplishment—it was to be the coadjutor of man as his friend, inspirer, and guide, a loyal companionship mutually helpful, "yoked in all exercise of noble end." She believed also that the only love-passion that could endure was when material and spiritual conjoined, the spiritual predominating.

In mock seriousness, pursuing her campaign, Marie Corelli would often repeat the parrot-cries of the time: "No woman is ever supposed to know anything for a fact, she is too stupid"; "I am only a woman, and women know nothing"; and scores of similar outworn fallacies; and though they call for neither comment nor argument, we may take it that Miss Corelli was speaking from experience when she said: "The world is a cruel world, and always doubts great ability in a woman."

It was from devotion to her sex, and in the hope of arousing men to a truer and deeper understanding of its rights, realities, and potentialities, that Marie

Corelli wrote so poignantly an appealing work such as *The Murder of Delicia*. But her vindication of woman is a main thread in all her romances, except, of course, where the leading woman is to be held up to reprobation (as in *Vendetta*) for her lapse, falsity, and defect. No one could be harder upon her sisters than she—not upon the sisters who erred through weakness and temptation, but those who wantonly degraded themselves, sold their honour and their heritage, preferring darkness to light. These were her despair.

At times we note the faltering in her faith as she describes modern society, deploras sordid marriage and open slavery in the name of wifehood, and regrets that "sweet girls are becoming scarce," and the designing, mercenary, man-hunting, wealth-wanting women only too plentiful. This was the secret of her diatribes (for they cannot be described by a milder term) against society dames, time-wasters, the too-worldly, and the small of soul. She hated scandal, and rebuked the modern Eves who "tore each other's clothes and reputations," filled up their days with spiteful gossip, indulged in petty jealousy and uncharitable speech. So in *Ziska* we alight upon the remark that "wherever a woman is exceptionally beautiful she generally gets reputed as improper by her own sex"; and in another volume Miss Corelli pointed out how delightful it would be were women to praise each other. "The beauty of women," we read in *Wormwood*, "is one of the gifts of God to gladden our eyes; it is not to be rejected or deemed unsacred. I should love to

preach of beautiful women. They are the reflexes of beautiful souls."

As for the "bonds" of marriage, the yokes of the law, the chains which keep enslaved to each other those who are unequal, disillusioned, unfit, and at war in spirit, she regarded them as iniquitous and opposed to the divine will; she traced back to them social evils and moral wreckage; she saw that hope and remedy could only come with a revision of the views which had perverted a blessed and sacred institution into pain and debasement. "Holy matrimony," as it exists in so many cases, was to her a term of loathing and scorn, not because of what it was meant to be, but because of what it had become. When have Modern Babylon and the Marriage Mart been more scathingly condemned? When have bartering men and shameless women, traffickers in bodies and despoilers of soul, felt so ruthless a scourging? It was only an advocate of purity and of the higher life, a believer in the divinity of the overruling purpose and in the uplift of the race, who could have set herself the mission of preaching against desecration and debasement. Above all, it must be remembered that Miss Corelli's aim was humanitarian. Her heart was full of pity for the sisters sold to the bidders in the market, deprived of love, and wasting their lives in regret and despair. Although she did not join the Suffrage movement, she was the ardent champion of womankind's freedom and advance; what concerned her was the best means to happiness and progress. She believed it was in love purified, in home, in unselfish labour, in

exalted aim. These ideals had been cast down ; her fervent desire was to upraise them. Was she mistaken ? At least we can say that her impulse was noble.

Realising, as Marie Corelli proclaimed she did, that "a woman's genius, if great and true, equals and often surpasses that of the most gifted man," it was, none the less, not upon intellectual predominance she laid stress, nor from which she expected most satisfaction or happiness to be derived. There are feminine attributes far more valuable in her scheme, and shining more entrancingly in her vision of the ideal womanhood yet to be evolved. Heart and soul are to do more than brain. The devotion of the wife, the tenderness of the mother, will elevate woman to the status of Miss Corelli's desire, and the decisive word on the subject is probably to be found in the ringing sentence from *Barabbas* : "By woman's tenderness and patience the cords of everlasting love are tied between this earth and the highest heaven."

Readers of Marie Corelli's novels will have been struck by the frequency with which she speaks, sometimes with even a sort of terror, of the mere love of physical beauty, and of unions which are other than spiritual. No doubt we get here an index to her character. Her marriages were ideal, but in a workaday world would be difficult, if not for the majority impossible. But Miss Corelli's repugnance was not confined to what she termed animalism ; she had a dread of shattering disillusion, when man and woman awoke from their enchantment and found the angel-aspect turned to clay.

There is a shock on both sides ; there is suffering both for the man and woman when the glorious vision fades into the light of common day. And Marie Corelli faithfully presented both sides of the case : " As for women," says the disillusioned man, " we begin our lives by believing them to be angels, but we soon find out what painted, bedizened, falsely-smiling courtesans they are all at heart " (an extreme avowal, and putting the case at its worst) ; and " Man's idea of love," says the woman, " is to take all he can get, and give nothing in return but misery, and sometimes death." " A woman must never look sad, or lose her beauty ; she must always smile and please," says the exacting husband ; and Marie Corelli in more than one story provided a terrible indictment of the monster-masters who had wrought women's ruin in the name of affection, doomed them to life torment under promise of a life devotion. Turn to the searching truths in *Temporal Power*, *Innocent*, *The Sorrows of Satan*, *The Soul of Lilith*, *Holy Orders*, and therein shall you find the inner meaning of that most awesome of Marie Corelli's utterances : " Love first and death afterwards are a woman's best friends." It is to *The Life Everlasting*, however, that I turn again for the best and the most impressive enunciation, convinced as I am that it is this volume which is most self-revealing and most truly interpretative of the writer's convictions. Here the woman who had thought never to wed, the woman who refused to be " dragged down from the divine in love," the woman who seems etherealised throughout, and yet is warm, radiant, and human—it is

she who, finding her co-mate in body and soul, tells us :

"To me, and to my Beloved, the world is a garden of paradise, rich with beauty and delight. We live in it as a part of its loveliness ; we draw into our own organisation the warmth of the sunlight, the glory of colour, the songs of sweet birds, the fragrance of flowers, and the exquisite vibrations of the light and air. Like two notes of a perfect chord we mould our lives on the keyboard of the Infinite, and we know that the music will become fuller and sweeter as the eternal seasons roll on."

This is as pure and noble an idyll of marriage as we could wish. It is Marie Corelli's tribute both to man and woman in their majesty ; and it is her exemplification of perfect union.¹

What woman has been under crude and primitive conditions, what she too often is in the modern state of society, and what, unhappily, she allows or deliberately makes herself to be in an age of hard competition and moral laxity, caused Miss Corelli to utter her saddest admonitions and her most solemn warnings. She revolted against many of "Society's" ordinances. The ease with which women abandoned convention, addicted themselves to the fripperies as well as the vices of fastness and

¹ From the same volume, in the discussion on "real love," "supreme self-surrender," "inevitable union": "Why, everything is possible then! Beauty, perfection, wisdom, progress, creativeness, and a world—even worlds—of splendid thought and splendid ideals, bound to lead to still more splendid realisation . . . two immortal souls full of a love as deathless as themselves, conjoined in highest effort and superb attainment!—the love of angel for angel, of god for god."

fashion, defied as antique and unnecessary the rules which regulate a well-ordered community, appalled her the more because she ranked the capacity of the true woman so highly and believed in her potential sovereignty. The bartering of daughters in the drawing-rooms of Mayfair, no whit differing in principle from the bartering of Circassian slaves in the marriage-markets of the Orient, stirred her to pity, indignation, righteous wrath, not only on account of the shame of the bargain in flesh and blood, in the desecration of love, and in the shattering of hope, but because the whole demeaning transaction meant that woman forfeited her rights, risked her progress, subordinated her power, and placed herself on a lower human level than that which was designed. Over and over again the missionary's theme became "the Fall of Woman," not by actual sin but by submission to unjust law. "Not failure, but low aim, is crime," she would have agreed. She wanted woman to aspire and attain; how could she do so when surrendering her virtue, sacrificing her ideals, and submitting to legalised helotry? The attitude of Miss Corelli is explained by the views she took of the state of womanhood in Society of to-day, as represented by the Sibyl Eltons, masquerading beauties without souls, worshipping gold and devildom. "If," said Lucio Rimanez, Prince of Darkness, "women were pure and true, then the lost happiness of the world might return to it, but the majority of them are like you—liars!—ever pretending to be what they are not." No doubt these were Miss Corelli's personal sentiments, but was she not ex-

pressing for all high-minded women the sentiments they possessed, and for others who had not fully estimated their place and opportunity conveyed to them a new breath of inspiration? The self-realisation of her sex was one of her foremost ideas. She gave pictures of degradation, of defilement, of sensuousness, but she preached uplifting. And if her gallery contains sombre portraits of the miserable, it contains also some of the brightest portraits of the happy. The "sunshine" woman, the woman of cheerful heart and smiling lips, who glories in her health and sees the charm and beauty of Nature—that was the picture to be gazed on, the type of perfection to be pursued. It is set forth in brilliant colouring, in all winsome delightfulness, and in all grandeur, in such words as we find in *Ardath*:

"Good, God-fearing women, women who pray, women who hope, women who inspire men to do the best that is in them—these are the safety and glory of nations. When women forget to kneel, when women cease to teach their children the 'Our Father,' by whose grandly simple plea Humanity claims Divinity as its origin—then shall we learn what is meant by 'men's hearts failing them for fear and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth.'"

Compare her picture of the divine institution of marriage with the fearful and repugnant illustration of unhallowed and loveless marriage between mercenary Sybil Elton and the self-absorbed millionaire in *The Sorrows of Satan*. The spectacle is made so appalling by Miss Corelli's Hogarth-like realism that we scarcely dare to allow the eyes to linger on "the

uncurtained, bare prose of life"; but we have to recall it as part of her plan to reveal what comes of a perversion of the sacred law. Woman's mission, we are told, is to be a good angel; but, unfortunately, the follies, vices, and extravagances of social life have so degrading a tendency that, in Miss Corelli's words, "we sit down by choice in the mud, when men would have placed us on thrones." In *God's Good Man* she told the story, with touching and beautiful pathos, of a woman who, from looking downward, was led to look upward—one who learnt that there was something sublimer for a woman to do than to allow herself to be "trained and dressed" for the marriage business, and so to have her best impulses checked, to grow cold and cynical, and to lose faith in all that is good. The book would be notable if it were only for this one character of Maryllia, though in truth she only personifies the doctrine Miss Corelli has oftenest preached.

In *Ardath* she gave her "dream of heaven made human," in which the "purely womanly" woman is depicted as an angel. In other words, her ideal is the woman in whom remains the perceptible trace of divinity.

Her passionate love of the beautiful made her a descriptive artist of rapturous power. How easy it is to recall a hundred passages in which the vivid scene is conjured up in a magic of words, a riot of changeful colour, a dazzle of light! It may be the brilliant panorama of foreign lands which is made to flash upon the vision, or the serene charm of blue starlit skies; it may be the delirious kaleidoscope

of the carnival, or the quiet pleasaunce of an English woodland; whatever the scene to be painted, the artist-brush was ready in the skilled hand. What pictures she has given of the sea in storm and in calm, of the widespread fields in their luxury of green and gold, of the mountain heights and of the shadowy vales! So numerous are these pictures with their lavish colours that we should be perplexed for choice; yet the rural scenes and antique dwellings described in *Innocent* have an especial appeal for me, while for sheer fascination I let my eyes dwell upon the display of wonders and the mirage-like visions in *Ardath*. There are interiors, too—gloomy, solemn, portentous; there are silent monasteries and darkling castles, there are mysterious abodes of priests and hermits, there are vaults and halls and corridors which have no parallel outside the story of Vathek and Eblis; but the author of *The Soul of Lilith*, *Ardath*, *Temporal Power*, *Vendetta*, could well match herself, again and again, with William Beckford.

So much may be granted her as word-artist that we are reminded she was, after all, essentially a poet. She wrote far more verse than is generally known. The intercalary songs in her novels were nearly all her own, and many of them are of true lyrical beauty. A volume has been made of her verses, and it could be considerably enlarged. In 1901 she sent me her privately published volume, *Christmas Greetings*, containing not only a number of seasonable sketches and allegories, but a number of poems and her own musical setting to King Henry's "Ah, my sweet sweetening." Her love of music is attested in her

writings; it plays a deep, emotional part in her dramas; it is suggestive and symbolical, precluding gladness or tragedy; it had its thrills and its mysteries for her, and whispered to her secrets that were beyond words. All this we can discover if we only read the love story of Rafel Santoris and the occult experiences of Aselzion.

Her philosophy was gracious, uplifting, altruistic. She seemed to draw much from the ancient founts of wisdom, but chiefly she relied upon primitive Christianity and its fundamental truths. Her pages are thickly sown with aphorisms, and if it be objected that she was trite, it can be added that she was but preaching that elementary gospel which modern glosses have failed to improve.

We are often led to ask whether her romances are wild, fantastic exaggerations, or whether they are the ornate wrappings of a central truth; whether her mind lost itself in wondrous imaginings, or whether in splendid and dazzling imagery she was enshrining a deep wisdom. How far she set forth her statements as fancy and how far as fact; how far as speculation and how far as verities, she alone could say—and at times she did say, as her letters show. But, whatever our opinions, we may regard her as a woman of magnificent inspiration—mystic, subtle, powerful—uplifting her to another plane.

In the ancient golden times of chivalry, Marie Corelli would, I think, have been one of those high-souled women who girded on the armour of the knights and sent them forth upon bold emprise and spiritual quests. That was her nature, her tempera-

MARIE CORELLI

ment ; and such was her impulse to inspire worthy deeds and achieve noble ends. And I venture to add that men would have gone forth for her sake, as did Lancelot and Percivale and Pelleas of yore, to do her service and to win her praise. As it was, she fought her battles alone — battles for humanity, battles for truth, battles for the higher life and for sacred causes.



BERTHA VYVER

[Photo, Isidell]

MARIE CORELLI'S WORKS

WITH THE DATES OF THE FIRST EDITIONS AND THE
NAMES OF THEIR PUBLISHERS

<i>Published by</i>		<i>Year</i>
Bentley ¹	<i>Romance of Two Worlds</i>	1886
	<i>Vendetta</i>	1886
	<i>Telma</i>	1887
	<i>Ardatb</i>	1889
	<i>Wormwood</i>	1890
	<i>Soul of Lilith</i>	1892
Lamleys ¹	<i>The Silver Domino</i>	1892
	(Published anonymously)	
Methuen	<i>Barabbas</i>	1893
"	<i>Sorrows of Satan</i>	1895
Skeffington.	<i>Murder of Delicia</i>	1896
Hutchinson	<i>Mighty Atom</i>	1896
"	<i>Cameos</i>	1896
Arrowsmith	<i>Ziska</i>	1897
Hutchinson	<i>Jane</i>	1900
"	<i>Boy</i>	1900
Methuen	<i>Master Christian</i>	1900
"	<i>Temporal Power</i>	1902
"	<i>God's Good Man</i>	1904
Constable	<i>Free Opinions</i>	1905
"	<i>Treasure of Heaven</i>	1906
Methuen	<i>Holy Orders</i>	1908
	<i>The Life Everlasting</i>	1911

¹ Now published by Methuen.

MARIE CORELLI'S WORKS

<i>Published by</i>		<i>Year</i>
Hodder & Stoughton	<i>Innocent</i>	1914
Hutchinson . . .	<i>The Young Diana</i>	1918
Collins.	<i>My Little Bit</i>	1919
Methuen	<i>The Love of Long Ago</i>	1920
	<i>The Secret Power</i>	1921
	<i>Love and the Philosopher</i>	1923
Hutchinson	<i>Open Confession : To a Man from a Woman</i>	1925
	<i>Poems</i>	1925

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