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# A LADY

OF THE

# LAST CENTUR

## (MRS. ELIZABETH MONTAGU):

*ILLUSTRATED IN HER UNPUBLISHED LETTERS;*

COLLECTED AND ARRANGED,

WITH A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH, AND A CHAPTER

## ON BLUE STOCKINGS.

BY

DR. DORAN, F.S.A.,

*Author of "Table Traits, and Something on Them;" "Lives of the Queens of England of the House of Hanover," &c.*




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TO

ANDREAS J. G. HOLTZ, ESQ.

(TWYFORD ABBEY),

THIS "BIT OF MOSAIC" IS DEDICATED, WITH SENTIMENTS

OF THE MOST SINCERE ESTEEM AND

CORDIAL REGARD.

# PREFACE.

In the year 1809, Mr. Matthew Montagu published the first two of four volumes of letters of his aunt, Elizabeth Montagu. He was not only her nephew, he was also her adopted son and her executor. On the 5th of December in that year, the celebrated statesman William Windham was reading those volumes, "in the evening, up-stairs;" and he subsequently recorded the following judgment of them in his Diary:—"I think very highly of them. One of their chief merits is *series junctuaque.* Nothing can be more easy and natural than the manner in which the thoughts rise one out of the other, even where the thoughts may appear rather forced, nor is the expression ever hard or laboured. I see but little to object to in

the thoughts themselves, but nothing can be more natural or graceful than the manner in which they are put together. The flow of her style is not less natural, because it is fully charged with shining particles, and sparkles as it flows."

In 1813, Mr. Matthew Montagu published two more volumes of his aunt's correspondence. The press generally received them with pleasant testimony of approval. It not only endorsed the judgment of the eminent statesman quoted above, but it especially pointed out that the letters were genuine and authentic, which could not be said of a similar collection of letters then challenging the censure of the town. Mrs. Montagu's letters were read with great avidity, and readers, for the most part, came to the same conclusion as the statesman and the critics.

The last letter in the series is addressed to Mrs. Elizabeth Carter. The date is September, 1761. The writer lived nearly forty years after that date. During that time, she maintained a lively correspondence; her letters were copied and

circulated. After her death, a few, with fragments of others, found their way into various periodicals. The correspondence which Mrs. Elizabeth Montagu kept up with her sister-in-law, Mrs Robinson, wife of the Rev. William Robinson, and a few other friends, between 1761 and the close of the last century, was long in the possession of the late Mr. Richard Bentley, who purchased them at a sale of autographs. These form the chief portion of the present volume.

In a note to the letters published by Mr. Montagu, the editor states that they are "intended to convey in them the biography of the writer, which the editor thinks he could not so well exemplify by any remarks of his own as by the letters themselves." Mr. Montagu gave to his aunt's readers every word of every epistle, from the salutation to the signature.

From the letters now printed for the first time there have only been omitted vain repetitions, formal compliments, and the nothings that may have once been somethings, but which are now

mere dust and ashes, from which little of value is to be sifted. There have been retained all that could further "convey the biography of the writer," with addition of such anecdotal illustration from the printed letters and from contemporary records, as might serve to show more completely the character and surroundings of a Lady of the Last Century.

LONDON. *Nov.* 1872.

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# A LADY OF THE LAST CENTURY.

## CHAPTER I.

Elizabeth Robinson, who became so well-known, subsequently, as Mrs. Montagu, belongs altogether to the eighteenth century. She was born at York, in October, 1720. She died in the last year of that century, 1800. Miss Robinson was of a family, the founder of which, William Robinson, a London merchant, but a descendant of a line of Scottish Barons, bought, in 1610, the estate of Rokeby, in Yorkshire, from Sir Thomas Rokeby, whose ancestors had held it from the time of the Conquest. Her father, Matthew Robinson, was an only son of a cadet branch of the Robinsons. He was a member of the University of Cambridge, where he wooed the Muses less ardently than he did Miss Elizabeth Drake, a beautiful heiress, whom he married when

he was only eighteen years of age. The very young couple settled at Edgeley, in Yorkshire; but the husband (owner, through his wife, of more than one estate in the country) preferred the shady side of Pall Mall to fields of waving corn or groves vocal with nightingales.

Of the twelve children of this marriage, seven sons and two daughters survived their youth. The daughters, Elizabeth and Sarah, were endowed with the same literary tastes. Sarah wrote the more books, but Elizabeth is the better remembered. The church, the law, politics, and commerce attracted one or other of the sons.

In 1730, the head of the elder branch of the Robinsons, Thomas, was created a baronet. He was that famous Long Tom Robinson of whom so many well-known stories are told. Chesterfield slightly touched him in an epigram, and Walpole seldom referred to him without a sarcasm. At the coronation of George the Third, Sir Thomas was the mock Duke of Normandy, who, with an equally English and mock Duke of Aquitaine, was supposed to indicate that the King of England was as much King of France, by the grace of God, as he

pretended to be. Long Sir Thomas was so truly an Englishman that he went to France, and into French society, in his hunting suit. A satirical French abbé, hearing his name and looking at his marvellous attire, gravely asked him if he were Robinson Crusoe.

Long Sir Thomas Robinson sold Rokeby to the Morritts in 1769. When he died, in 1777, his title went to his next surviving brother, Richard. This Richard was an English clergyman, who, in 1731, had commenced a successful career in Ireland, as chaplain to two viceroys, and he was successively Bishop of Killala, of Leighlin and Ferns, and of Kildare. Finally, he was raised to the dignity of Archbishop of Armagh, Primate of Ireland. In the year that Sir Thomas died, Richard was created an Irish peer, Baron Rokeby of Armagh, with remainder to Mrs. Montagu's father, Matthew Robinson. The father did not live to succeed to the title, but his son Matthew *did*. The present Lord Rokeby is Mrs. Montagu's great grand-nephew, and was born when she was yet living, A.D. 1798. The first lord figures largely in this lady's letters. His good works made him

popular in Ireland, which his grace found to be a fine country to live out of, as much as was, more or less, consistent with duty. He was one of the best-known characters at Bath during successive seasons; he also suffered much from the gout; but he endured with alacrity all the port and claret that were necessary to keep it out of his archiepiscopal stomach.

Thus much for Mrs. Montagu's family. She derived from it a certain distinction; but she enjoyed greater advantage, for a time at least, from the marriage of her maternal grandmother, who took for her second husband the learned and celebrated Dr. Conyers Middleton. Dr. Middleton's home was at Cambridge, where a few of Miss Robinson's youthful years were profitably and curiously spent.

Curiously—from the method which the biographer of Cicero took with the bright and intelligent girl. Among the divines, scholars, philosophers, travellers, men of the world who were, together or in turn, to be met with at Dr. Middleton's house, the figure of the silent, listening, and observant little maid was always to be seen. Her presence there was a part of her education. Dr. Middleton trained her to give

perfect attention to the conversation, and to repeat to him all that she could retain of it, after the company had dispersed. When she had to speak of what she did not well understand, Dr. Middleton enlightened his little pupil. This process not only filled her young mind with knowledge, but made her eager in the pursuit of more.

How readily she received impressions at an early age, and how indelibly they were stamped on her memory, she has herself recorded. "One of the strongest pictures in my mind," she wrote to Lord Lyttelton, in 1759, "is the funeral of a Dean of York, which I saw performed with great solemnity in the Cathedral, when I was about four years old. Whether the memory of it, added to the present objects, may not have made the place appear the more awful to me, I do not know; but I was never so affected by any edifice." She loved York, and in her early Yorkshire home, the plan of education went far in advance of the views, and perhaps of the powers, of family governesses. Masters, as well as mistresses, were there for the instruction of both sons and daughters; but Elizabeth's father sharpened and stimulated her intellect by en-

couraging her to make smart repartees to his own witty or severe judgments. In this cudgelling of brains, Matthew had great delight till he found that his daughter was too much for him at his most favourite weapons. Matthew then bit his lips, and ceased to offer challenge or give provocation.

Matthew Robinson's wife seems to have been educated, according to the traditions of a school founded in 1673, for the purpose of raising women to the dignity and usefulness which distinguished their ancestresses. The lady, Mrs. Makin, who originated this school for English maidens, stated her object in an Essay, of which a few words may be said, as illustrative of a system of female education in England, which, founded nearly half a century before Elizabeth Robinson was born, had not lost all its influence till after she herself was to be reckoned among learned young ladies. The work in question was called "An Essay to revive the Ancient Education of Gentlewomen in Religion, Manners, Arts, and Tongues: With an Answer to the Objections against this way of Education." In the Dedication to the Lady Mary, daughter of James Duke of York, the author says: "The

barbarous custom to breed women low is grown general amongst us, and hath prevailed so far, that it is verily believed that women are not endowed with such reason as man." Of old, Mrs. Makin says, women were highly educated; but *now*, "not only learning, but virtue itself, is scorned and neglected as pedantic things, fit only for the vulgar." The remedy enjoined for this matter is thus stated: "Were a competent number of schools erected to educate Ladies ingeniously, methinks I see how ashamed men would be of their ignorance, and how industrious the next generation would be to wipe off the reproach!" The author adds: "Let not your Ladyship be offended that I do not, as some have wittily done, plead for female pre-eminence. To ask too much, is the way to be denied all."

To prove that women were formerly educated in Arts and Tongues, the author names a score and more of Greek, Roman, and other ladies celebrated for their proficiency in those respects.

"How," asks the author, "could the Sibyls have invented heroic, or Sappho 'sapphick,' or Corinna have thrice beaten Pindar at lyric verses, if they had

not been highly educated?" And to prove that the young ladies of both Greece and Rome were instructed in all kinds of good literature, the writer refers to a learned duel between twenty ladies a side, from each nation, in which the Grecian women came off the better in philosophy, and the Roman superior in oratory.

As instances of admirably-educated Englishwomen, the following persons are named, with much eulogistic comment:—

The Lady Jane Gray. The "present Duchess of Newcastle, who, by her own genius, rather than any timely instruction, overtops many grave Gownmen." The Countess Dowager of Huntingdon, a pupil of Mrs. Makin's; "well she understands *Latin*, *Greek*, *Hebrew*, *French*, and *Spanish*," and "what a proficient she is in arts subservient to Divinity, in which (if I durst, I would tell you) she excels." The Princess Elizabeth, daughter to King Charles the First, to whom Mrs. Makin was tutoress, "at nine years old, could write, read, and in some measure understand *Latin*, *Greek*, *Hebrew*, *French*, and *Italian*: had she lived, what a miracle she would have been of her sex. Mrs.

Thorold, daughter of the Lady Car, in Lincolnshire, was excellent in philosophy, and all sorts of learning. I cannot, without injury, forget the Lady Mildmay and Dr. Love's daughters: their worth and excellency in learning is yet fresh in the memory of many men." Finally, as the greatest sample of all, the author describes Queen Elizabeth at some length, who, "according to Ascham, read more *Greek* in a day than many of the Doctors of her time did *Latin* in a week."

In the Postscript to the above essay, the following passages occur:—

"If any enquire where this education may be performed, such may be informed that a school is lately erected for Gentlewomen, at Tottenham High Cross, within four miles of London, on the road to Ware, where Mrs. Makin is governess, who was formerly tutoress to the Princess Elizabeth, daughter to King Charles the First. Where, by the blessing of God, Gentlewomen may be instructed in the Principles of *religion*, and in all manner of sober and virtuous Education: more particularly in all things ordinarily taught in other schools.

| | |
|---|---|
| "As Works of all sorts . . | Half the time to be spent in these things. |
| Dancing. . . . . | |
| Musick . . . . . | |
| Singing . . . . . | |
| Writing . . . . . | |
| Keeping accompts . . | |

"The other half to be employed in gaining the *Latin* and *French* tongues; and those that please may learn *Greek* and *Hebrew*, the *Italian* and *Spanish:* in all which this Gentlewoman hath a competent knowledge.

"Gentlewomen of eight or nine years old, that can read well, may be instructed in a year or two (according to their parts) in the *Latin* and *French* tongues; by such plain and simple Rules, accommodated to the *Grammar* of the *English* tongue, that they may easily keep what they have learned, and recover what they shall lose; as those that learn Musick by Notes.

"Those that will bestow longer time may learn the other languages afore-mentioned, as they please.

"*Repositories* also for Visibles shall be prepared; by which, from beholding the things, Gentlewomen may learn the Names, Natures, Values, and Use of

*Herbs*, *Shrubs*, *Trees*, *Mineral-pieces*, *Metals*, and *Stones*.

"Those that please may learn *Limning*, *Preserving*, *Pastry*, and *Cookery*.

"Those that will allow longer time may attain some general knowledge in *Astronomy*, *Geography*, but especially in *Arithmetick* and *History*.

"Those that think one language enough for a Woman, may forbear the Languages, and learn only *Experimental Philosophy*, and more or fewer of the other things aforementioned, as they incline.

"The Rate certain shall be 20*l*. *per annum*: But if a competent improvement be made in the Tongues, and the other things aforementioned, as shall be agreed upon, then something more will be expected. But the parents shall judge what shall be deserved by the Undertaker.

"Those that think these Things Improbable, or Impracticable, may have further account every *Tuesday*, at Mr. Mason's Coffee-house, in Cornhill, near the Royal Exchange; and *Thursdays*, at the "Bolt and Tun," in *Fleet Street*, between the hours of three and six in the afternoon, by some person whom Mrs. Makin shall appoint."

| | |
|---|---|
| "As Works of all sorts . . | Half the time to be spent in these things. |
| Dancing. . . . . | |
| Musick . . . . . | |
| Singing . . . . . | |
| Writing . . . . . | |
| Keeping accompts . . | |

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Mrs. Makin's school, under herself and her successors, and her system, adopted by imitators, had good influences in their "little day." Those influences continued beyond that period in families like that of Mrs. Robinson, where every variety of knowledge was accounted valuable. It was a period when grace of carriage was held by others to be as necessary as a well-stored mind; and very popular in some English households was a little volume from the French, called "The Art of being Easy at all Times and in all Places, written chiefly for the use of a Lady of Quality."

In the Robinson family, personal grace came naturally; but the mind was cultivated. Indeed in that household, the wits were not allowed to rust. It was the delight of those bright girls and boys to maintain or to denounce, for the sport's sake, some particular argument set up for the purpose. Occasionally the pleasant skirmish would develope into something like serious battle. The triumphant laugh of the victor would now and then bring tears to the eyes of the vanquished. At such times there was a moderator of the excited little assembly. The mother of the young disputants sat at a table

close at hand. She read or worked; sometimes she listened smilingly; sometimes was not without apprehension. But she was equal to the emergency. Her children recognized her on such occasions as "Mrs. Speaker;" and that much-loved dignitary always adjourned the house when victory was too hotly contested, or when triumph seemed likely to be abused.

It is hard to believe that Elizabeth Robinson, who was the liveliest of these disputants, assumed or submitted to the drudgery of copying the whole of the "Spectator," when she was only eight years of age. Her courage and perseverance, however, were equal to such a task; but her energies were often turned in another direction. She was as unreservedly given to dancing, she tells us, as if she had been bitten by a tarantula. She as ardently loved fun —"within the limits of becoming mirth"—as she devotedly pursued learning.

"My mind used to sleep," she writes to Lord Lyttelton, "eight or ten hours without even the visitation of a dream, and rose in the morning, like Aurora, throwing freshness and joy on every object, tricked itself out in sunbeams, and set in gay and

glowing colours." With a head furnished with knowledge beyond that possessed by most girls of her age; with feet restless and impatient to join any dance anywhere; she had a heart most sisterly and tenderly attuned to love for, and sympathy with, her brothers. "I have seven of them," she wrote while she was yet in her teens, "and would not part with one for a kingdom. If I had but one, I should be distracted about him. Surely, no one has so many or so good brothers." This is only one out of a score of such testimonies of sisterly affection.

There are some significant traces of the effects of this lady's early training in the letters which she wrote from the time she was twelve years of age till she had reached her twenty-second year, when she married. These letters were addressed to a friend older than herself, Lady Margaret Cavendish Harley, who in 1734, became Duchess of Portland. They are sprightly and forcible, but they are not "girlish." In one of the earliest, written at Horton, near Hythe, Kent (one of the estates which Matthew gained by his marriage), she says:—"My papa is a little vapoured, and last night, after two hours' silence, he broke out into a great exclamation against the

country, and concluded by saying, that living in the country was sleeping with one's eyes open. He has ordered me to put a double quantity of saffron in his tea." For what purpose this remedy was ordered, may be guessed from a passage in a comedy of Charles the Second's time, by Howard. "Saffron-posset-drink is very good against the heaviness of the spirits," says Mrs. Arbella, in "The Committee."

Young Miss Robinson was fond of illustrating her early letters by images taken from life, and set up after the fashion of popular novelists. One of these figures occurs in a letter addressed to the Duchess of Portland, in May 1734, when the lively writer had not yet completed her fourteenth year:—"I am surprised that my answer to your grace's letter has never reached your hands. I sent it immediately to Canterbury, by the servant of a gentleman who dined here; and I suppose he forgot to put it in the post. . . . If my letter were sensible, what would be its mortification, that, instead of having the honour to kiss your grace's hands, it must live confined in the footman's pocket, with greasy gloves, rotten apples, mouldy nuts, a pack of dirty cards, and the only companion of its sort—a

tender epistle from his sweetheart, 'tru till Deth;' perhaps, by its situation, subject to be kicked by his master every morning, till at last, by ill-usage and rude company, worn too thin for any other use, it may make its exit by lighting a tobacco-pipe."

The young writer of the above was not only remarkably observant of all that passed around her, but generally showed her reading, by a quotation that should give force to the description of what she observed. Thus, in writing to her dear duchess, who had been suffering from fever (A.D. 1734) Miss Robinson remarks:—"I shall put on as musty a face at your grace's fever as Miss W —— could make at the face of Dr. Sandys, to describe the horror of which would require at least as tragic a bard as Lee; for then she would look, good gods! how she would look!" This may smack of priggishness; but there was nothing of that, nor of false prudery, in Elizabeth Robinson's character. Before she was fifteen, she had some experiences not likely to fall to the lot of young ladies of the present day. "I have in winter," she writes to Mrs. Anstey, "gone eight miles to dance to the music of a blind fiddler, and returned at two o'clock in the morning,

mightily pleased that I had been so well entertained." Indeed, young ladies seem to have been thoroughly emancipated, and to have been abroad in the "wee sma' hours 'ayont the twal" enjoying all the perils consequent on such rather wild doings. In 1738, when our young lady was not quite eighteen, she went, with two of her brothers and her sister, eight miles to the play, from her Kentish home; and she tells the Duchess of Portland, "After the play, the gentlemen invited all the women to a supper at the inn, where we stayed till two o'clock in the morning, and then all set out for our respective homes." The frolicksome damsel adds, "Before I had gone two miles, I had the pleasure of being overturned, at which I squalled for joy." It was, perhaps, this indulgence in fun and late hours, joined to much solid reading, that made this youthful reveller and student hate early morning hours as she hated cards. But her "quality" was favourably shown in her ready observance of the law and custom of the house in which she happened to be a sojourner. There is no better proof than this of what is understood by "good breeding." She would rather have gone

down to breakfast at noon than at nine; but if the breakfast-hour of her entertainers was at eight, there was the young guest at table, fresh as the rose and brighter than the dawn. She amusingly illustrated this matter once, by writing from a house where she was tarrying, "Six o'clock in the morning; New Style!"

In fact, few things came amiss to her. No doubt she preferred Mary-le-bone Gardens to those at Edgeley or at Horton. She was happy in both, but happier in the fashionable gardens nearer London; for Mary-le-bone was still out of town. Elizabeth Robinson's day is described, on one of these occasions, as breakfasting in Mary-le-bone Gardens at ten; giving a sitting to Zincke after mid-day, for her well-known miniature portrait as Anne Boleyn; and spending the evening at Vauxhall. At the nobility's private balls given in the first-named suburban paradise, Elizabeth Robinson was amongst the gayest and fairest of the revellers. Before the dances began in those days, the ladies' fans were thrown upon a table, and the men then drew them for partners, each taking for his own the lady to whom the fan which he had drawn, and which he

presented to her, belonged. It was not all breakfasting and dancing in those gardens. There was a large plunging-bath there, much used by fashionable Naiads, who rose from silken couches, donned a bathing dress, took headers into the waters, gambolled n and under them till they were breathless, and then went home to dress for other enjoyments. When the Duchess of Portland heard of her young friend's plunging delights, she expressed herself "frightened out of her wits." But, on the other hand, Lord Dupplin wrote a couple of verses on this particular Naiad, and in honour of the poet, the laughing nymph again and again took headers into the glad waters of Mary-le-bone.

The home scenes of her life in the country come out strong in contrast with those of her life in London. In a lively sketch of one of these scenes, drawn for the duchess's amusement, the youthful artist thus joyously describes herself and her doings:

"One common objection to the country is, one sees no faces but those of one's own family; but my papa thinks he has found a remedy for that, by teaching me to draw; but then he husbands these faces in so cruel a manner, that he brings me some-

times a nose, sometimes an eye, at a time; but on the king's birthday, as it was a festival, he brought me out a whole face, with its mouth wide open." In another letter, she says: "I would advise you not to draw old men's heads. It was the rueful countenance of Socrates or Seneca that first put me out of conceit with it. Had my papa given me the blooming faces of Adonis and Narcissus, I might have been a very apt scholar; and when I told him I found their great beards difficult to draw, he gave me St. John's head in a charger. So, to avoid the speculation of dismal faces, which, by my art, I dismalized ten times more than they were before, I threw away my pencil. If I drew a group of little figures, I made their countenances so sad and their limbs so distorted, that from a set of laughing Cupids, they looked like the tormented infants in Herod's cruelty, and smiling, became like Rachel weeping for her children." After more in this strain, she calls herself the best hospital painter; "for I never drew a figure that was not lame or blind, and they had all something of the horrible in their countenances . . . you would have thought they had seen their own faces in the glass."

Her failure in the above respect at home found ample compensation in successes at Tunbridge Wells, at Bath, and at county races, at all of which Elizabeth Robinson's beauty attracted all eyes; her vivacious wit charmed or stung all ears. At these places, she studied life quite as much as she enjoyed its pleasures; and she could not go down a dance at the Wells or at "The Bath," without making little mental epigrams on the looks of newly-married people, the manners of lovers, and the doings of eccentric folk. These found their way, in writing, to her ducal friend, who had already bestowed on the restless maiden the nick-name of "La Petite Fidget."

At Bath, she was as restless, as observant, and as epigrammatic as at Tunbridge Wells. She describes Bath life, in 1740, as consisting all the morning of "How d'ye does?" and all night of "What's Trumps?" The women, in the "Ladies' Coffee House," talk only of diseases. The men, "except Lord Noel Somerset, are altogether abominable. There is not one good; no, not one." Among the lady eccentrics, was a certain dowager duchess, who, said Miss Robinson, "bathes, and,

being very tall, had nearly drowned a few women in the Cross Bath; for she had ordered it to be filled till it reached her chin; and so all those who were below her stature, as well as her rank, were obliged to come out or drown."

The glance thus obtained into the Bath itself only gives, as it were, a momentary view of the fashionable people in those fashionable waters. They who compare old accounts with what is now to be seen, will agree that he who looks, at the present day, into the dull, dark, and simmering waters, can have no conception of the jollity, frolic, riot, dissipation, and indecorum which once reigned there. There was a regular promenade in the waters, and the promenaders were of both sexes. They were in bathing costumes, and walked with the water nearly up to their necks. The heads of the shorter people appeared to be floating. At the same time, they were frolicking, or flirting, or otherwise amusing themselves. Those who came for sanitary purposes were hanging on by the rings in the wall, and were sedulously parboiling themselves. The Cross Bath was the famous *quality* bath. Handsome japanned bowls floated before the ladies, laden with

confectionary, or with oils, essences, and perfumery for their use. Now and then one of these bowls would float away from its owner, and her swain would float after it, bring it again before her, and, if he were in the humour, would turn on his back and affect to sink to the bottom, out of mere rapture at the opportunity of serving her. The spectators in the gallery looked on, laughed, or applauded till the hour for closing came. Therewith came half-tub chairs, lined with blankets, whose owners plied for fares, and carried home the steaming freight at a sharp trot and a shilling for the job.

Elizabeth Robinson's friendship with Lord Lyttelton is well known. At a court assembly, at St. James's, in 1740, the gentleman in question was present. He was then plain Mr. Lyttelton, son and heir of Sir Thomas, and about a year over thirty. The young lady observed him in the brilliant scene more closely and more approvingly than she did others. "The men were not fine," she writes to her grace; but she makes exception. "Mr. Lyttelton was, according to Polonius' instruction, rich, not gaudy; costly, but not exprest in fancy." In her eyes and to her mind, he was a perfect gentleman

and scholar. "Mr. Lyttelton has something of an elegance in all his compositions, let the subject be ever so trifling. . . . Happy is the genius that can drink inspiration at every stream and gather similies with every nosegay." Alas! the elegance of the last century embraced much that was otherwise. The present Lord Lyttelton would not dare to read aloud to a company of ladies and gentlemen the once popular and elegant poem which his ancestor addressed to Belinda!

In the days here referred to, there were two circumstances to which all maidens looked forward as their probable, but not equally desirable lot, namely, marriage and the small-pox. The latter fell on Elizabeth Robinson's sister Sarah, when the family were resident at Horton, near Hythe. The elder sister was sent to a neighbouring *gentleman*-farmer's, so called solely because he tilled a few acres of his own. Here, the Iphigenia aroused unwonted sympathies in the breast of the Squire Cymons. She would have nothing to do with furthering the humanizing process of those dull and thirsty clods. Their scarlet waistcoats did not impress her like Mr. Lyttelton's birthday suit at court. One

heaving swain, she thought, would make an admirable Polyphemus! He stared at her just as the calves did; but the calves had instinct enough not to say anything to her. They were preferable to the squire, to whom the young girl, with her bright intellect, could not be persuaded "to lend out her liking on land security." There is a world of meaning in what she wrote on that occasion to her correspondent: "I liked neither him nor myself any better for all the fine things he said." She was a creature not to be wooed or won by a tippling, fox-hunting clown, rich in the possession of dirt. She had finely-strung sensibilities, which would not attune themselves to "the loud laugh which speaks the vacant mind." Mrs. Pendarves, who saw much of her in the town and country mansions of the Duchess of Portland, recognized the above fact. "Fidget," she wrote, in the year last named, "is a most interesting creature; but I shall not attempt to draw a likeness. . . . There are some delicate touches that would foil the skill of a much abler artist than I pretend to be."

Just then her fears for her sister were even stronger than her antipathies for her Kentish lovers.

In order to satisfy her eagerness to be assured that the sister she loved was out of danger, the latter was allowed to walk veiled into the fields, within speaking distance of the other. *Veiled*, because she had cruelly suffered, and it was thought better not to shock the elder sister by a sight of the devastation which the foul disease had worked temporarily on the beauty of the younger. Thus, the sisters stood, for a brief time, speaking all that love and hope suggested, and the sound of the convalescent sister's voice fell like delicious music on the heart of the listener.

With renewed health came uninterrupted happiness, and gay mingling in gay society, and audacity of expression when describing it. Elizabeth Robinson had felt almost as much contempt for the fops among the soldiers of her day, as disgust for the country Polyphemuses who made her wrathful with their wooing. Very severe was she on "the scarlet beaux," who were ordered to Flanders. "I think," she says, "they will die of a panic and save their enemies' powder. Well! they are proper gentlemen. Heaven defend the nunneries! I will venture a wager Flanders increases

in the christenings more than in the burials of the week."

In describing changes in fashion, she makes singular application of her historical knowledge. In 1741, she wrote to her sister, from town: "I do not know what will become of your fine shape, for there is a fashionable make which is very strange. I believe they look in London as they did in Rome after the Rape of the Sabines!"

As this fair young Elizabeth remembered her history on one occasion, so did she show on another that she had not forgotten her church catechism. "As for modern marriages," wrote the lady, just then going out of her teens, "they are great infringers of the baptismal vow; for it is commonly the pomps and vanities of this wicked world on one side, and the sinful lusts of the flesh on the other."

There are traces throughout Miss Robinson's early letters of how it went with her own heart and its sympathies. In her eighteenth year, she wrote to the Duchess of Portland: "I never saw one man that I loved." She added to this assertion such an endless list of virtues, merits, qualities, &c., which she expected to find in that happy individual,

as to lead to the conclusion that a monster so faultless would never be created. She even half acknowledged as much; for she wrote, "I am like Pygmalion, in love with a picture of my own drawing; but I never saw an original like it in my life. I hope when I do, I shall, as some poet says, find the "statue warm." In her nineteenth year, she gave utterance to a pretty petulance in these words: "I wish some of our neighbours had married two and twenty years ago; we should have had a gallant young neighbourhood; but they have lost time, and we have lost lovers by that delay." To a remark of her sister's, that, if she were not heedful, some handsome fool would win her in spite of herself, she replied, that, to win her heart, "it must be rather fair-spoken than fair-faced." She was not much moved when rivals in beauty passed into the married state before her. In 1741, there are the following autobiographical details in letters to the wife of the Rev. Mr. Freind, of Canterbury:—"I saw some fine jewels that are to adorn my fair enemy, Mrs. S——. I beheld them without envy, and was proud to think that a woman who is thought worthy to wear jewels to

adorn her person, should do me the honour to envy and hate me. . . . Surely of all vanities, that of jewels is the most ridiculous; they do not even tend to the order of dress, beauty, and cleanliness; for a woman is not a jot the handsomer or cleaner for them." And again: "I am confined again by a little feverishness. I thought, as it was a London fever, it might be polite, so I carried it to the Ridotto, court, and opera, but it grew perverse and stubborn, so I put it into a white hood and double handkerchief, and kept it by the fireside these three days, and it is better; indeed, I hope it is worn out. On Saturday, I intend to go to Goodman's Fields, to see Garrick act Richard the Third, that I may get one cold from a regard to sense. I have sacrificed enough to folly, in catching colds at the great puppet-shows in town."

Subsequently, she would have her friend's husband believe that she was another fair vestal of the west, who meant to pass through the world in maiden meditation, fancy free. She writes to the Rev. Dean of Canterbury: "I have lately studied my own foibles, and have found that I should make a very silly wife and an extremely foolish mother,

and so have as far resolved as is consistent with deference to reason and advice, never to trouble any man or to spoil any children." This was but banter. Only the year before, her sister having made a jest of her love for heroes of antiquity, Elizabeth Robinson, oracularly answered, "I believe I shall do my errand before many people think; but prudence shall be my guide. A living man," exclaims the wise virgin, "is better than a dead hero!"

In 1741, this decided young lady was wooed by a fashionable lover, and also by a noble lover who was her senior by a good many years. The former was dismissed, and the young lady wrote to her sister in the above year: "Poor M. B. takes his misfortune so to heart, that I really pity him; but I have no balsam of heart's-ease for him. If he should die, I will have him buried in Westminster Abbey, next to the woman who died with the prick of a finger, for it is quite as extraordinary; and he shall have his figure languishing in wax, with 'Miss Robinson fecit,' written over his head. I really compassionate his sufferings and pity him; but though I am as compassionate, I am as cold as

charity. He pours out his soul in lamentations to his friends, and all

> 'But the nymph that should redress his wrong,
> Attend his passion, and approve his song!'

. . . I am glad he has such a stock of flesh to waste upon . . . *I* am really quite fat; and if there were not some hope that I might get lean again, by raking in town, I should be uneasy at it. I am now the figure of Laugh-and-be-fat, and begin to think myself a comely personage. Adieu! *Supper is on table.*"

And the saucy Nymph "really did her errand" before many thought. She declined the offer of the man of fashion, and said "*Yes*" to the suit of the older scholar and gentleman.

The practical conclusion came in due time. In the "Gentleman's Magazine" for August, A.D. 1742, there is the record of eleven marriages. Four of them saucily chronicle the fortunes of the brides. Among the other seven, may be read this brief announcement:—"August 5. Edward Montagu, Esq., member for Huntingdon, to the eldest daughter of Matthew Robinson, of Horton, in Kent, Esq."

## CHAPTER II.

EDWARD MONTAGU was the son of Charles, who was the fifth son of the first Earl of Sandwich. He was a well-endowed gentleman, both intellectually and materially, and he adopted the Socratic maxim, that a wise man keeps out of public business. He is described as being "of a different turn from his wife, fond of the severer studies, particularly mathematics." Under his influences, the bounding Iambe from Horton gradually grew into the "Minerva," as she was called by friends as well as epigrammatists. Mr. Montagu was a mathematician of great eminence; and a coal-owner of great wealth. He was a man of very retired habits and great amiability. He loved to puzzle fellow mathematicians with problems, and he did not dislike coals to be high in price; but he urged other owners to incur the odium of "making the advance."

Mr. and Mrs. Montagu were married in London, and did not immediately leave it. Mr. Freind officiated at the marriage ceremony. The bride, in a note to Mrs. Freind, expressed her infinite obligation to him, "for not letting the knot be tied by the hands of an ordinary bungler." On Friday, August 6, the day after her marriage, the bride wrote to the Duchess of Portland: "If you will be at home to-morrow, at two o'clock, I will pass an hour with you; but pray send me word to Jermyn Street at eleven, whether I can come to you without meeting any person at Whitehall but the Duke; to every one else pray deny your dressing-room. Mr. Freind will tell your grace I really behaved magnanimously; not one cowardly tear, I assure you, did I shed at the solemn altar; my mind was in no mirthful mood indeed. I have a great hope of happiness. The world, as you say, speaks well of Mr. Montagu, and I have many obligations to him which must gain my particular esteem; but such a change of life must furnish one with a thousand anxious thoughts."

Shortly after, the newly-wedded pair travelled to one of Mr. Montagu's estates in the north; but not

alone. They were accompanied by the bride's sister. The custom of sending a *chaperon* with a young married couple prevailed. Indeed, down to a comparatively recent period, some husbands and wives, who were married in Yorkshire, may remember that to have started on their wedding trip or their journey home, without a third person, would have been considered lamentable indecorum.

The bride thus speaks of the journey and the new home. To Mrs. Freind, she writes :—

"We arrived at this place (Allerthorpe, Yorkshire), after a journey of six days through fine countries. Mr. Montagu has the pleasure of calling many hundred pounds a year about his house his own, without any person's property interfering with it. I think it is the prettiest estate and in the best order I ever saw : large and beautiful meadows for riding or walking in, and all as neat as a garden, with a pretty river (the Swale) winding about them, on which we shall sometimes go in boats. I propose to visit the almshouse very soon. I saw the old women, with the bucks upon their sleeves at church, and the sight gave me pleasure. Heraldry does not always descend with such honour as when charity leads her

by the hand." A little later, Mrs. Montagu writes thus to the duchess:—

"The sun gilds every object, but I assure you, it is the only fine thing we have had; for the house is old and not handsome: it is very convenient, and the situation extremely pleasant. We found the finest peaches, nectarines, and apricots that I have ever eat." Then comes a dash of the old sauciness. She rejoices at the news the duchess had communicated to her, that Lord Dupplin, who once wrote verses on her taking a header into the Mary-le-bone plunging baths, was the father of an heir to his title and estate. "I think no man better deserves a child. The end justifies the means; else, what should one say for his extreme, surprising, amazing fondness for the lady? . . . I am glad Lord Dupp enjoys his liberty and leisure. The repose a gentleman takes after the honour of sending a son into the world, may be called ease with dignity."

Further evidences of the course of her married life are thus afforded by herself. On the 24th of August, Mrs. Montagu tells the duchess:—

"It must be irksome to submit to a fool. The service of a man of sense is perfect freedom.

however, not unnatural, in the days when mothers read Aphra Behn aloud, and sons and daughters listened to that arch-hussey's highly-flavoured comedies. Mrs. Montagu alludes to similar reading when drawing an "interior" for the duchess's good pleasure, while Mr. Montagu was away. "I cannot boast of the numbers that adorn our fireside. My sister and I are the principal figures; besides, there is a round table, a square skreen, some books, and a work-basket, with a smelling bottle, when morality grows musty, or a maxim smells too strong, as sometimes they will in ancient books." She loved such books, nevertheless, much better than she did the neighbours that would be friendly.

"I do hourly thank my stars," she says, "that I am not married to a country squire or a beau; for in the country, all my pleasure is in my own fireside, and that only when it is not littered with queer creatures. One must receive visits and return them . . . and if you are not more happy in it in Nottinghamshire than I am in Yorkshire, I pity you most feelingly. . . . Could you but see all the good folks that visit my poor tabernacle, oh, your grace would pity and admire!"

There was neither "squire" nor "beau" in the quiet, refined gentleman she had married. The wife might well be sorry for the absence of such a companion. He had left her, as she expressed it, to her mortification, but with her approbation. She desired him to go, yet half-wished him to stay; but at last "got out honour's boots, and helped him to draw them on." "Since I married," she writes to Mrs. Freind, "I have never heard him say an ill word to any one; nor have I received one matrimonial frown." For a matrimonial life, begun in August, clouds and showers in October, would have been an early prodigy indeed. To the duchess, who asked more as to her characteristic doings than her feelings, Mrs. Montagu replied:—

*Dec.* 1742—"Your grace asks me if I have left off footing and tumbling downstairs. As to the first, my fidgetations are much spoiled; sometimes I have cut a thoughtless caper, which has gone to the heart of an old steward of Mr. Montagu's, who is as honest as Trusty in the play of 'Grief à la mode.' I am told that he has never heard a hop that he has not echoed with a groan."

At another of Mr. Montagu's houses, Sandleford,

near Newbury, Berks, his wife found more genial neighbours than in the north. She especially disliked the rough Yorkshire folk, and she did not conceal the little sympathy she had with "agreeable company." She felt it a misfortune that she found in few people the qualities that pleased her. Like him who thanked God that he had not a heart that had room for many, she was thankful that she could love only the chosen few; but she could bear with twenty disagreeable people at once, while a tête-à-tête with a single one she disliked, made her sick. At Sandleford, she played the farmer's wife's part without laying aside that of the lady, or, indeed, of the student. She could rattle off the gayest description of a country-fair, losing no one of its characteristic features, and next write a long and thoughtful dissertation over Gastrell, Bishop of Chester's "Moral Proof of the Certainty of a Future State." The spirit of this dissertation, contained in a long letter to her friend the duchess, is that of what would now be called a Free Inquirer. She will not bow her intellect to any authority of mortal man. She has hope, but lacks knowledge —except that God is the loving Father of all—and

beyond that she evidently thinks the bishop knows no more than she does.

The ladies around her, at Sandleford, were neither so well endowed intellectually as herself, nor seemingly cared to be. Grottos and shell-work showed the bias of their tastes. Mrs. Montagu speaks of visiting one in Berkshire, which was the work of nine sisters (Leah), who in disposition, as well as number, bore "some resemblance to the Muses." Lord Fane's grotto at Basildon was one of the mild wonders of the county. When she goes thence to London, depreciation of the latter shows a growing love for rural life. She describes life in London as being—all the morning at the senate, all the night at play. Party politics were her aversion. They were "pursued for the benefit of individuals, not for the good of the country." The factious heads in London she described as being very full of powder and very empty of thought. Happy in her own home, she could mingle jesting with sympathy when referring to sorrows which other people had to bear. "I pity Miss Anstey," she wrote, "for the loss of her agreeable cousin and incomparable lover. For my part, I would rather have a merry sinner for a

lover than so serious a saint!" Her own husband, however, was not mirthful. He stuck to his mathematics, understood his business as a coal-owner, loved his wife, and found life a pleasant thing, particularly where *his* lines had fallen.

With the birth of a boy came new occupations, fresh delights, and hitherto unknown anxieties. The nursing mother, remembering her old gay time, declared that "for amusement there is no puppet-show like the pleasant humour of my own *Punch* at Sandleford." She fancied a bright futurity for the boy; but her passing ecstacy was damped by the thought of the perils and temptations by which life is beset. "Pity," she wrote, "that a man thinks it no more necessary to be as innocent as woman than to be as fair."

In March, 1744, when Mrs. Montagu and her sister thought it a remarkable feat to travel from Sandleford, near Newbury, to Dover Street, London, in one day, with only two breaks down, Mrs. Montagu left her boy in the Berkshire house. "It was no such easy matter," she said, "to part with little Punch, with whom we played and pleased ourselves as long as we could afford time." On her return

to Sandleford, in July, the natural beauty of the place seemed centred in little Punch's person. "He is now an admirable tumbler. I lay him down on a blanket on the ground every morning, before he is dressed, and at night when he is stripped, and there he rolls and tumbles about to his great delight. If my god-daughter," adds the Last Century Lady to Doctor Freind, referring to *his* daughter, "be not a prude, I should recommend the same practice to her."

The mother's dreams and duties were soon brought to a melancholy close. In September, 1744, the little heir had his first severe experience of life, and, perhaps happily, it was too much for him. He died of convulsions while cutting his teeth. A few joyous tumbles on the blanket, a few kisses, a few honied words, and much pain at last, made up all that he knew of life. Mrs. Montagu tempered her heavy grief with much active occupation and study. She meekly attributed the loss of her son to God's visitation on her confidence in her own care and watchfulness. She may be said to have lost with him her hopes, her joys, and her health for a considerable period. In September, 1744, she wrote to the duchess:—

"Poor Mr. Montagu shows me an example of patience and fortitude, and endeavours to comfort me, though undoubtedly he feels as much sorrow as I can do; for he loved his child as much as ever parent could do." She discovered all the virtues in Mr. Montagu that adversity needs, and adversity only can show. "I never saw such resignation and fortitude in any one; and in the midst of affliction there is comfort in having such a friend and assistant. It was once my greatest happiness to see him in possession of the dearest of blessings. It is now my greatest comfort to see he knows how to resign it, and yet preserve the virtue and dignity of his temper." They never had another child; and, if they were not altogether as happy as before, they were, at least, as cheerfully resigned as heirless rich people could persuade themselves to be. Occasionally, however, she envied happier mothers. Referring to one of these, nearly twenty years later, who was then stricken by a profounder grief, Mrs. Montagu wrote to Lord Lyttelton: "Poor Mrs. Stone, between illness and affliction, is a melancholy object. I remember that after my son was dead, I used to envy her her fine boy; but not being

of a wicked disposition, did earnestly wish she might not lose him. Poor woman! her felicity lasted longer than mine, and so her grief must be greater; but time is a sure comforter."

Mrs. Montagu found relief for her sorrows, as well as for indisposition, from which she suffered greatly at intervals, at Tunbridge Wells and in small country gaieties. Thus, in 1745, at a country fair (ladies went to such sports in those days), Mrs. Montagu was not more surprised to see a gingerbread Admiral Vernon lying undisturbed on a basket of *Spanish* nuts, than she was at Tunbridge Wells to behold grave Doctor Young and old Colley Cibber on the most intimate terms. Mrs. Montagu, on the Pantiles, asked the doctor how long he intended to stay, and his answer was, "As long as your rival stays." When this riddle was explained, the "rival" proved to be the sun. People from all ends of the world then congregated at the Wells, and Mrs. Montagu sketched them smartly, and grouped them cleverly, in pen and ink. One of the best of these outline sketches is that of a country parson, the vicar of Tunbridge, to whom she paid a visit in company with

Dr. Young and Mrs. Rolt. "The good parson offered to show us the inside of his church, but made some apology for his undress, which was a true canonical dishabille. He had on a grey striped calamanco night-gown; a wig that once was white, but, by the influence of an uncertain climate, turned to a pale orange; a brown hat encompassed by a black hat-band; a band somewhat dirty, that decently retired under the shadow of his chin; a pair of grey stockings, well mended with blue worsted, strong symptoms of the conjugal care and affection of his wife, who had mended his hose with the very worsted she had bought for her own." The lively lady and her companions declined to take refreshment at the parsonage, where, she made no doubt, they would have been "welcomed by madam, in her muslin pinners and sarsnet hood; who would have given us some mead and a piece of cake that she had made in the Whitsun holidays, to treat her cousins." After dinner at the inn, the vicar joined them, "in hopes of smoking a pipe, but our doctor hinted to him, that it would not be proper to offer any incense but sweet praise to such goddesses as Mrs. Rolt and your humble servant. I saw a

large horn tobacco-box, with Queen Anne's head upon it, peeping out of his pocket." Wherever Mrs. Montagu wended during this autumn of 1745, she filled her letters with these pen-and-ink sketches of what she saw. But that eventful year brought more serious duties. In 1745, when the Jacobites were about to invade England, Mr. Montagu went from London to York, to aid in raising and arming the people. The Yorkshire gentlemen acted with great spirit, and stood by their homesteads instead of flying to London. "Though it gives me uneasiness and anxiety," wrote the young wife, "I cannot wish those I love to act otherwise than consistently with those principles of honour that have always directed their actions." The rebellion spoiled the London gaieties. Drums and routs had no longer a fashionable meaning. "I have not heard of any assemblies since I came to town; and, indeed, I think people frighten each other so much when they meet, that there is little pleasure arising from society. . . . There is not a woman in England, except Lady Brown, that has a song or tune in her head, but, indeed, her ladyship is very unhappy at the suspension of operas."

The death of Mrs. Montagu's mother in the following year, drew from her a tender and well-deserved tribute of affection in a touching and simple letter to Mrs. Freind. In 1747, her friend, Mr. Lyttelton, lost his first wife, and wrote a monody on her, for the public ear. The monody walks on very high stilts, and occasionally falls and struggles on the ground. Mrs. Montagu thought it had great merit, and that her friend would be inconsolable; but Lyttelton brought out, the same year, his "Observations on the Conversion and Apostleship of St. Paul," of which Mrs. Montagu was a diligent reader and a constant eulogist. In less than two years, the widower left unfinished a prettily-begun epitaph to his Lucy, with whom he had enjoyed six years of conjugal felicity, and married a daughter of Sir Robert Rich. With her, came a life of warfare, followed by a treaty by which each party agreed to live at peace with, and wide apart from, the other.

Meanwhile, Mrs. Montagu made friendly progresses to princely mansions in various parts of the country. She had hearty welcome at all, from lay and ecclesiastical nobles alike. This did not in-

fluence her critical eye. At Wilton, then and now one of the best examples of an English nobleman's residence, she writes: "As to the statues and bustos, they certainly are very fine, but I think too many. Heroes should not have so many competitors, nor philosophers so much company; a respectable society may be increased into a mob. I should, if they were mine, sell half of their figures to purchase their works, which are, indeed, the images of wise men."

A cloud now came, and long rested, between her and the sun of her happiness. The death, in 1748, of her brother "Tom," a man of wit, taste, and judgment, after her own heart; "the man in England for a point of law," as Chief Justice Lee remarked; a man who had accomplished much, and who might have reasonably looked to the highest position which could be attained in his branch of the profession, as his own,—the death of such a man, good, bright, aspiring, and qualified for success, was a loss to his brilliant sister for which she never found compensation. "As for this good young man," she wrote: "I hoped it would rather have been his business to have grieved for

me. Mr. Montagu is most careful of us, and I cannot, amidst my sorrow, help thanking heaven for such a friend." A letter from her husband in London confirms this statement: "I long to leave this place, and to be with you now, rather than at a time when you have less occasion for a friend. Be sure that you are constantly in my thoughts, and that no accidents of sickness or any other matter can work any change in me, or make me be with less affection than I have been, my dearest life, your most obliged and affectionate E. M."

Compelled, subsequently, to repair to Bath for her health, she despised no innocent amusement. "I want mechanic helps," she said, "for my real happiness, God knows, is lessened; and, though I have many relations left, I reflect that even this circumstance makes me more liable to have the same affliction repeated." Then, after a week or two of omnivorous reading and friendly intercourse, she writes to the duchess:—"Mrs. Trevanion, Lord Berkley of Stratton's sister, goes away from us to-morrow, which I am sorry for; she seems very agreeable and well-bred, and has a thousand other good qualities that do not abound at our morning

coffee-house, where I meet her. Whist and the noble game of E. O. employ the evening; three glasses of water, a toasted roll, a Bath cake, and a cold walk, the mornings. . . . My physician says three months will be necessary for me to drink the waters. . . . I am forced to dine by myself, not yet being able to bear the smell of what common mortals call a dinner. As yet I live with the fairies. . . . But here is another Mrs. Montagu, who is like me, hath a long nose, pale face, thin cheeks, and also, I believe, diets with fairies, and she is much better than when she came, and many people give me the honour of her recovery."

After returning to Sandleford, she began again to need, or to fancy she needed, the restoring waters of Tunbridge. To Mrs. Anstey she wrote:—

"I may, perhaps, trouble you to seek me some house about Mount Elphinstone; for, to tell you the truth, I get as far from the busy haunts of the place as I can; for it agrees neither with my inclination nor health to be in the midst of what are called the diversions of the place. An evening assembly in July is rather too warm; and, tell it not in the regions of politeness, I had rather see a

few glow-worms on a green in a warm summer's evening than belles adorned with brilliants or beaux bright with clinquant. I cannot be at Tunbridge before the beginning of July. I am engaged to the nightingale and cuckoo for this month."

Although continued ill-health kept Mrs. Montagu much in retirement after she first went to Tunbridge, the Wells had their usual effect. She was the centre of a circle of admiring friends; and when established for months together at Tunbridge Wells, her coterie was a thing apart from those of the Jews, Christians, and Heathens of all classes who crowded the Pantiles or the assembly-rooms. Her letters sparkle with the figures that flit through them. Some contemporary ladies of the last century are thus sharply crayoned: "I think the Miss Allens sensible, and I believe them good; but I do not think the graces assisted Lucina at their birth. . . . Lady Parker and her two daughters make a very remarkable figure, and will ruin the poor mad woman of Tunbridge by out-doing her in dress. Such hats, capuchins, and short sacks as were never seen! One of the ladies looks like a state-bed

running upon castors. She has robbed the valance and tester of a bed for a trimming. They have each of them a lover. Indeed, as to the dowager, she seems to have no greater joys than E. O. and a toad-eater can give her." That word "toad-eater" was still in its novelty as a slang term. In 1742, Walpole calls Harry Vane, afterwards Earl of Darlington, "Pulteney's toad-eater." In 1744, Sarah Fielding, in "David Simple," speaks of it as "a new word." To Mr. Montagu, his wife thus wrote:—

"My dearest,

"I had, this morning, the pleasure of your letter, which was in every respect agreeable, and in none more so than your having fixed your time for going to Sandleford, as I shall the sooner hope to see my best and dearest friend here. . . . I shall wish I could procure wings to bring me to you on the terrace at Sandleford, where I have passed so many happy hours in the conversation of the best of companions and kindest of friends; and I hope you will there recollect one who followed your steps as constantly as your shadow. I am still following them, for there are few moments in which my

thoughts are not employed in you, and ever in the best and tenderest manner. . . . The charms of Sandleford are strongly in my remembrance, but still I would have you find that they want your little friend."

From the gaieties of Tunbridge Mrs. Montagu went to the residence of a sage, Mr. Gilbert West. She found less pleasure among the sculpture and paintings of Wilton than under Gilbert West's modest roof at Wickham, in whose master she saw "that miracle of the moral world, a Christian poet;" and in Mrs. West, something more than a tenth Muse or a fourth Grace. To conversations with West are attributed the deeper convictions of the truth of revealed religion which Mrs. Montagu entertained henceforward. She did not cease to be cheerful because on one point she was more serious. In a cottage which she hired near West's house, she playfully offered to her lady visitors wholesome brown bread, sincerity, and red cow's milk. With tastes that could find gratification wherever she might be, Mrs. Montagu was one of the happiest of women. Most happy, not when she was queen, or one of the queens, of society, but when she was

among her books. She was an indefatigable reader. She reflected as deeply as she read carefully. The literature of the world was known to her, in the original text, or in translations, of which she would read three or four of the same work; and, if she had a preference, she would give an excellent reason for it. Her criticisms on the works she read are always admirable, whether she treats of a Thucydides in a French dress, of Cowley's imperfections as an amatory poet, of Melmoth's "Pliny's Letters," or of writers like Richardson, whose "Clarissa Harlowe" is analysed in one of the printed letters with a skill and insight that might be envied by the best writers of the times that have succeeded to her own. Fictitious and real personages, she dissects both, with the hand of an operator who loves the work in which he excels. She is equally great when treating of the heroes of antiquity, or of the notorious Mrs. Pilkington, whose fie! fie! ways seem to warrant her slapping her with her fan; but whose talent, pleasant audacity, and suffering, soften Mrs. Montagu's heart and lead her to gently kiss both cheeks of the erring Lætitia.

At the close of 1750, her brother Robert went in

search of fortune to China, where, however, he found a grave. In the following year, she writes to her husband, who was on private business in the north: "I have sat so constantly in Lady Sandwich's chimney-corner, I can give you little account of the world." She playfully says to her absent lord: "I am glad you are so far tired of your monastic life as to think of returning to the secular state of a husband and member of parliament." She adds: "You have too many virtues for the contracted life of a monk, and, I thank my stars, are bound in another vow, one more fit for you, as it is social, and not selfish." From Lady Sandwich's chimney-corner, and from much study, mixed with every-day duties, it is pleasant to see her surrounded by the Ladies Stanhope and Mrs. Trevor, who were adjusting her dress when she went as the "Queen-Mother" to the subscription masquerade. The dress was "white satin, with fine new point for tuckers, kerchief and ruffles; pearl necklace and earrings, and pearls and diamonds on the head, and my hair curled after the Vandyke picture." Mr Montagu was so pleased with her appearance that, said the lady, "he has made me lay by my dress, to be painted in when

I see Mr. Hoare again." Better than her own presentment is her picture of the too famous Miss Chudleigh at this masquerade: "Miss Chudleigh's dress, or rather undress, was remarkable. She was Iphigenia for the sacrifice; but so naked, the high priest might easily inspect the entrails of the victim. The maids of honour (not of maids the strictest), were so offended, they would not speak to her."

It was with happy facility Mrs. Montagu turned from the studies she loved and the duties which she came to consider as her privilege, to the gayest scenes of life. "Though" says she, "the education of women is always too frivolous, I am glad mine had such a qualification of the serious as to fit me for the relish of the *belles bagatelles*." No one better understood the uses of money. When her husband was in the north furthering his coal interests, she wrote to him: "Though the coldness of our climate may set coals in a favourable light, I shall be glad to see as many of them turned to the precious metal as possible. . . . I have a very good opinion of Mr. Montagu and his wife. I like the prospect of these golden showers, and so I congratulate you upon them; but, most of all, I congratulate you upon the

disposition of mind which made you put the account of them in a postscript." The last words of her own letters to her husband were invariably affectionate, with a sentiment of submission that has a very old-fashioned air about it. For example :—

"Every tender wish and grateful thought wait on you, and may you ever as kindly accept the only gift in my power, the faithful love and sincere affection of your most grateful and obedient wife, E. M." Again, in September, 1751, from Tunbridge Wells :—"To your prayer that we may never be so long separated, I can, with much zealous fervour, say Amen!"

## CHAPTER III.

In October, Mrs. Montagu was in her town-house, in Hill Street, receiving company. Guests of the present day will read, perhaps with a smile of wonder, the following illustration of the times:—"The Duke and Duchess of Portland and Lord Titchfield dined with me to-day, and stayed till eight o'clock."

In the year 1752, there was a subpreceptor to the Prince of Wales, named George Lewis Scott. His baptismal names were those of the King George I., at whose court in Hanover, Scott's father had held some respectable office. The son was recommended for the preceptorship by Bolingbroke to Bathurst, who spoke in the candidate's favour to the prince's mother, and the king's sanction followed. Walpole describes Scott as well-meaning, but inefficient, through undue interference, and as a man of no "orthodox odour," as might be expected of a

protégé of Bolingbroke." Mr. Scott had literary tastes, and occasionally exercised them with credit. Such a man seemed a fitting wooer for Sarah Robinson, Mrs. Montagu's clever sister. The wooing sped, marriage followed, and separation, from incompatability of temper, came swiftly on the heels of it. The correspondence throws no light on a dark episode; but, in April, 1752, Mrs. Delany wrote to Mrs. Dewes, in reference to Mrs. Scott's marriage and the separation of herself and husband, the following words:—"What a foolish match Mrs. Scott has made for herself. Mrs. Montagu wrote Mrs. Donellan word that she and the rest of her friends had rescued her out of the hands of a very bad man; but, for reasons of interest, they should conceal his misbehaviour as much as possible, but entreated Mrs. Donellan would vindicate her sister's character whenever she heard it attacked, for she was very innocent." Perhaps it was the misery that came of this marriage that made Mrs. Montagu conclude a letter from Heys to her husband, during this year, with these words:—"Adieu, my dearest, may you find amusement everywhere, but the most perfect happiness with her who is by every grateful and

tender sentiment your most affectionate and faithful wife, E. M." The writer herself could find amusement everywhere. A country-house, well-furnished with books, made Sandleford more agreeable to her than the glories within and the dust without her house in Hill Street. She speaks deliciously of having her writing-table beneath the shade of the Sandleford elms, and she thus pleasantly contrasts country-house employments with the pleasures of reading ancient history, which lightened the burthen of those employments: "To go from the toilette to the senate-house; from the head of a table to the head of an army; or, after making tea for a country justice, to attend the exploits, counsels, and harangues of a Roman consul, gives all the variety the busy find in the bustle of the world, and variety and change (except in a garden) make the happiness of our lives." She read Hooke's "Roman History" as an agreeable variety. Her mind was stronger than her body. She was now only thirty-two years of age; and she writes to Gilbert West, that ex-lieutenant of horse, and honest inquirer into theological questions: "You will imagine I am in extraordinary health, when I talk of walking two miles in a morn-

ing." If she could not walk far, she could read and *stand* anything. In December, she was again at home in Hill Street. On Christmas Eve, 1752, she writes:— "I proposed answering my dear Mrs. Boscawen's letter yesterday, but the Chinese-room was filled by a succession of people from eleven in the morning till eleven at night."

Early in January, 1753, close upon the anniversary of the death of the brother whom she dearly loved—her brother "Tom,"—who died a bachelor, in 1748, an event occurred, the bearing of which is only partially told in a letter from Mrs. Montagu to Gilbert West: "My mind was so shocked at my arrival here, that for some days I was insupportably low. I am now better able to attend to the voice of reason and duty. A friendship, begun in infancy, and re-united by our common loss and misfortune, had many tender ties. By tender care I had raised her from despair almost to tranquillity. I had hourly the greatest of pleasures, that of obliging a most grateful person. She made every employment undertaken for me, and every expression of my satisfaction in her execution of those employments, a pleasure. I received from her

kind offices which, however considerable, fell short of the zeal that prompted them. Of this, I do not know that there is a pattern left in the world. She was much endeared, and her loss embittered to me by another consideration, which you may reasonably blame, as it shows too fond an attachment to those things which we ought to resign to the Great Giver; but while she was under my care, I thought a kind of intercourse subsisted between me and a most dear and valuable friend whom I lost this time five years. Whatever I did for her I thought done for that friend on whom my affections, hopes, and pride were placed."

This little romance having come to a sad conclusion, Mrs. Montagu was soon afterwards in town, running, as she said, "from house to house, getting the cold scraps of visiting conversation, served up with the indelicacy and indifference of an ordinary, at which no power of the mind does the honours; the particular taste of each guest is not consulted, the solid part of the entertainment is too gross for a delicate taste, and the lighter fare insipid. Indeed, I do not love fine ladies, but I am to dine with . . . . to-morrow, notwithstanding." Again, in November,

1754, she writes from Hill Street the day after her arrival: "In my town character, I made fifteen visits last night. I should not so suddenly have assumed my great hoop, if I had not desired to pay the earliest respects to Lady Hester Pitt, who is something far beyond a merely fine lady."

Mrs. Montagu did not seek for friends exclusively among the great. With her and with Lyttelton, intellect was the chief attraction. They both received into their friendship the refugee Bower, who made so much noise in his day. Mrs. Montagu and Lyttelton refused to abandon him when he was assailed by his enemies. When she was told, in a letter from a Roman Catholic, that Bower, the ex-Jesuit, whom she had received in her house, was a knave, that his wife was a hussey, and that Mrs. Montagu herself was an obstinate idolizer and a perverse baby for believing in them, she continued her trust, despised report, and asked for facts.

In 1755, Mrs. Montagu affected to detect the first sign of her superannuation in her sudden resolution not to go to Lady Townshend's ball, though a new pink silver *negligée* lay ready for the donning. *Once*, she said, her dear friend, Vanity,

could lure her over the Alps or the ocean to a ball like Lady Townshend's. The day was past since she would have gone eight miles, in winter, to dance to a fiddle, and would have squalled with joy at being upset on her way home. She and Vanity, she thought, had now parted. "I really believe she has left me as lovers do their mistresses, because I was too fond, denied her nothing, and was too compliant to give a piquancy to our commerce." She was as "sharp" in judging others as herself. Of Lady Essex (the daughter of Sir Charles Hanbury Williams, who married the Earl of Essex in 1754, and died in 1759), Mrs. Montagu, in the intervening year, 1756, says: "Lady Essex coquettes extremely with her own husband, which is very lawful. . . . She wants to have the *bon ton*, and we know the *bon ton* of 1756, is *un peu equivoque*."

And now, in the year 1757, the celebrated word "blue-stockings" first occurs in Mrs. Montagu's correspondence. Boswell, under the date 1781, tells us in his "Life of Johnson," that "about this time, it was much the fashion for several ladies to have evening assemblies, where the fair sex might participate in conversation with literary and inge-

nious men, animated by a desire to please. These societies were denominated *Blue Stocking Clubs.* One of the most eminent members of these societies, when they first commenced, was Mr. Benjamin Stillingfleet, whose dress was remarkably grave, and, in particular, it was observed that he wore *blue stockings.* Such was the excellence of his conversation, that his absence was felt as so great a loss, that it used to be said, 'we can do nothing without the *blue stockings,*' and thus by degrees, the title was established." Boswell was greatly mistaken, for, in 1781, Benjamin Stillingfleet, the highly accomplished gentleman, philosopher, and barrack-master of Kensington, had been dead ten years, and he had left off wearing blue stockings at least fourteen years before he died. This subject will be referred to in a subsequent page. Meanwhile, in March, 1757, when rumours of war were afloat, Mrs. Montagu gaily wrote to her husband; "If we were in as great danger of being conquered by the Spaniards as by the French, I should not be very anxious about my continuance in the world; but the French are polite to the ladies, and they admire ladies a little in years, so that I expect to be treated with great politeness, and as

all laws are suspended during violence, I suppose that you and the rest of the married men will not take anything amiss that happens on the occasion: nor, indeed, should it be a much greater fault than keeping a monkey if one should live with a French marquis for a quarter of a year!" A little later, Walpole told George Montagu a story which illustrates the scandal-power of the period. "I was diverted," he wrote, "with the story of a lady of your name and a lord, whose initial is no further from hers than he himself is supposed to be. Her postilion, a lad of fifteen, said, 'I'm not such a child but I can guess something! Whenever my Lord Lyttelton comes to my lady, she orders the porter to let in nobody else, and then they call for pen and ink, and say they are going to write history!' I am persuaded, now that he is parted, that he will forget he is married, and propose himself in form to some woman or other!"

Such scandal as this could not affect either of the parties against whom it was pointed. In the next following years of the reign of George the Second, Mrs. Montagu led her usual life. In London, gay; in the country, busy and thoughtful.

"In London," she asks, "who can think? Perhaps, indeed, they may who are lulled by soft zephyrs through the broken pane, but it cannot happen to ladies in Chinese-rooms!" In those rooms she received all, native and foreign, whose brains or other desirable possessions entitled them to a welcome. At Sandleford, she was sometimes reading a translation of Sophocles, dear to her almost as Shakespeare himself, but as often she was amid accounts relative to firkins of butter, tubs of soap, and chaldrons of coal. When she left the country, it was in the odour of civility; for Mr. and Mrs. Montagu invited a cargo of good folks to dinner, and, like Sir Peter Teazle, left their characters among them to be discussed till the next season. In 1758, Mrs. Montagu became acquainted with Mrs. Elizabeth Carter, the translator of Epictetus; and Mr. Montagu, by the death of a relative, succeeded to the inheritance of rich possessions in the north. Mrs. Montagu thought she had got the richer estate, in the learned lady who had become her friend. Nevertheless, she bore the accession of fortune with hilarious philosophy. "As the gentleman from whom Mr. Montagu

inherits had been mad above forty years, and almost bed-ridden for the last ten, I had always designed to be rather pleased and happy when he resigned his unhappy being and his good estate." She only fancied there was neither pleasure nor happiness in it, because the "business" appertaining to succession was wearisome.

When she found herself among the great coal-owners, she was neither happy nor pleased. They could only talk of coal, and of those who had been made or ruined by it. "As my mind is not naturally set to this tune," she wrote to Mr. Benjamin Stillingfleet, "I should often be glad to change it for a song from one of your Welsh bards." She, however, intended to turn the occasion to intellectual profit by exploring the country, and studying its beauties and natural productions, but a little fainting fit put an end to this design. An over-zealous maid went to her aid, when fainting, with a bottle of eau-de-luce, but as she emptied the contents into Mrs. Montagu's throat, instead of applying it outwardly for refreshment, the lady was nigh upon being then and there deprived of upwards of forty years of life. She happily recovered, and by-and-

by, she speaks of herself, in London, as "going wherever two or three fools were gathered together, to assemblies, visiting days, &c. Twenty-four idle hours, without a leisure one among them!" So she said; but an order to Mrs. Denoyer, at the Golden Bible, Lisle Street, for a hundred of the best pens and half a ream of the finest and thinnest quarto paper, indicates how many hours of the twenty-four were employed. She thought, or she affected to think, that she grew idler as she grew older. In one of her letters to old Doctor Monsey, — a grotesque savage and scholar, who, in lugubrious jokery, wrote love letters (which she pretended to take seriously) at fourscore,—she said, in September, 1757, just before her thirty-seventh birthday: "I shall write to you again when I am thirty-seven; but I am now engaged in a sort of death-bed repentance for the idleness of the thirty-sixth year of my age!" She certainly took a wrong view of her case when she further said:—"Having spent the first part of my life in female vanities, the rest in domestic employments, I seem as if I had been measuring ribbons in a milliner's, or counting pennyworths of figs and weighing sugar-candy in

a grocer's shop all my life." This was no affectation. "If you envy me," she added, "or know anyone who does, pray tell them this sad truth. Nothing can be more sad. Nothing can be more true."

It would have been sad, if it had been true; but she was severe in her own censure. If she cheerfully plunged into the vortex of fashionable duties, she persistently proclaimed her higher enjoyment of home privileges. She sneered at her own presence wherever two or three fools were gathered together, but her honest ambition was to establish friendships with the wise and the virtuous. Johnson assured her of her "goodness so conspicuous," and was proud of being asked to use his influence to obtain her support of poor Mrs. Ogle's benefit concert, as it gratified his vanity, that he should be "supposed to be of any importance to Mrs. Montagu." With respect, at this time, for Johnson, she had a deeper feeling of regard for Burke. "Mr. Burke, a friend of mine." There is reasonable pride in the assertion, and how tenderly and cleverly she paints her "friend!"—"He is, in conversation and writing, an ingenious and ingenuous man, modest and

delicate, and on great and serious subjects full of that respect and veneration which a good mind and a great one, is sure to feel; he is as good and worthy as he is ingenious." Her love of books was like her love of friends. Dressed for a ball, she sat down, read through the "Ajax" and the "Philoctetes" of Sophocles, wrote a long critical letter on the two dramas, and, losing her ball, earned her bed and the deep sleep she enjoyed in it. At Tunbridge, she describes the occupation of a single morning as consisting of going to chapel, then to a philosophical lecture, next to hear a gentleman play the viol d'amore, and finally to hold controversy with a Jew and a Quaker. In 1760, she was equally vivacious, in "sad Newcastle." In September of that year, she writes to Lord Lyttelton, that she was taking up her freedom, by entering into all the diversions of the place. "I was at a musical entertainment yesterday morning, at a concert last night, at a musical entertainment this morning; I have bespoken a play for to-morrow night, and shall go to a ball, on choosing a mayor, on Monday night." But in the hours of leisure, between these dissipations, she fulfilled all her

duties as a woman of business in connection with her steward's accounts and the coal interests, and devoted the remainder to the study of works in the loftiest walks of literature. "More leisure and fewer hours," she says, "had possibly made me happier, but my business is to make the best of things as they are." She ever made the best of two old and wise men who professed in mirth, to make love to her in all seriousness. The two wise men look, in their correspondence, like two fools. Lord Bath, the wiser of the two, looks more of a fool than Dr. Monsey, and there is something nauseous in the affected playfulness of the aged lovers, and also in the equally affected virginal coyness with which Mrs. Montagu received, encouraged, or put aside their rather audacious gallantry. Her part in these pseudo love passages was born of her charity. It gave the two old friends pleasure (Lord Lyttelton himself styled her Ma Donna), and it did no harm to the good-natured lady. Lord Bath, however, is not to be compared with such a buffoon as Monsey. His honest opinion of Mrs. Montagu was: that there never was and never would be a more perfect being created than

that lady. And Burke said that the praise was not too highly piled.

It was at this period that Mrs. Montagu first appeared as an authoress, but anonymously. Of the "Dialogues of the Dead," published under Lord Lyttelton's name, she supplied three. They are creditable to her, and are not inferior to those by my lord, which have been sharply criticised, under the name of "Dead Dialogues," by Walpole. In "Cadmus and Mercury," the lady shows that strength of mind, properly applied, is better than strength of body. There is great display of learning; Hercules, however, talks like gentle Gilbert West; and Cadmus, when he says, that "actions should be valued by their utility rather than their *éclat*," shows a knowledge of French which was hardly to be expected in him.

If we are surprised at the cleverness of Cadmus, in speaking French, we cannot but wonder at the ignorance of Mercury, in the next dialogue, with a Modern Fine Lady, in not knowing the meaning of *bon ton*. But the lady's description of it is as good as anything in the comedy of the day. As for the manners of the period, as far as they regard

husbands, wives, and children, their shortcomings are described with a hand that is highly effective, if not quite masterly.

Mrs. Montagu seems to think that *Ici on parle Français* might be posted upon the banks of the Styx; for, in the dialogue between Plutarch, Charon, and a Modern Bookseller, the first alludes to *finesse* and the second refers to the *friseur* of Tisiphone. But Plutarch had met M. Scuderi in the Shades! On the other hand, he had never heard of Richardson or Fielding! Nevertheless, the criticisms on modern fiction and modern vices, are, if not ringing with wit, full of good sense and fine satire. They could only have come from one who had not merely read much, but who had thought more: one who had not only studied the life and society of which she was a part, but who could put a finger on the disease and also point out the remedy.

The first and last dialogues are enriched by remarks which are the result of very extensive reading. That between Mercury and the Modern Fine Lady abounds in proofs of the writer's observation, and consequently of illustrations of contemporary social life. The lady pleads her many

engagements, in bar to the summons of Mercury to cross the Styx. These are not engagements to husband and children, but to the play on Mondays, balls on Tuesdays, the opera on Saturdays, and to card assemblies the rest of the week, for two months to come. She had indeed found pleasure weary her when the novelty had worn off; but "my friends," she says, "always told me diversions were necessary, and my doctor assured me dissipation was good for my spirits. My husband insisted that it was not; and you know that one loves to oblige one's friends, comply with one's doctor, and contradict one's husband." She will, however, willingly accompany Mercury, if he will only wait for her till the end of the season. "Perhaps the elysian fields may be less detestable than the country in our world. Pray have you a fine Vauxhall and Ranelagh? I think I should not dislike drinking the Lethe waters when you have a full season." This fine lady has not been destitute of good works. "As to the education of my daughters, I spared no expense. They had a dancing-master, a music-master, and a drawing-master, and a French governess to teach them behaviour and the French language." No

wonder that Mercury sneered at the fact that the religion, sentiment, and manners of those young ladies were to be learnt "from a dancing-master, music-master, and a chamber-maid." As to the last, there soon came in less likely teachers of French to young ladies than French chamber-maids. General Burgoyne makes his *Miss Allscrip* (in "The Heiress," a comedy first played in 1786) remark: "We have young ladies, you know, Blandish, boarded and educated, upon blue boards in gold letters, in every village; with a strolling-player for a dancing-master, and a deserter from Dunkirk to teach the French grammar."

The dialogues had a great success. The three avowedly "by another hand" interested the public, as the circumstance gave them a riddle to be solved in their leisure hours. They were attributed to men of such fine intellect that Mrs. Montagu had every reason to be delighted at such an indirect compliment.

If her own account is to be taken literally, she had now, at forty, assumed gravity as a grace and an adornment. In 1761, she wrote to Mrs. Elizabeth Carter that, whether in London or in the country,

"I am become one of the most reasonable, quiet, good kind of country gentlewoman that ever was." And she closes another letter to the same lady, in September of the same year, with the observation,—made when she was only forty-one, and had but just accomplished half of a career of which she was already tired,—"I will own I often feel myself so weary of my journey through this world, as to wish for more rest, a quiet Sabbath after my working days; but when such time shall come, perhaps some painful infirmity may find my virtue employment; but all this I leave to Him who knows what is best."

While the writer was recording this wish and making this reflection, all England was in a frenzy of exultation at the accession of the young king, George III., and all London in feverish excitement at the coming of a young queen. When, so to speak, the uproar of festival and congratulation culminated at the coronation of the young royal couple, the lady who was weary of life and sighed for a Sabbath of rest, got into a coach at Fulham at half-past four on an October morning, and was driven to Lambeth. With her gay company she was rowed across the river from Lambeth to the

cofferer's office, whence she saw the procession go and return, between Westminster Hall and the Abbey, and owned that it exceeded her expectations. The return to the Hall was made, however, in the dark; and, under shadow of night, the Montagu party were rowed to York Buildings, where a carriage waited to take them to Fulham. The lady, stirred by a new sensation, which was followed by neither fatigue nor indisposition, seemed to have resumed the spirit of the nymph who used to take headers into the Mary-le-bone Gardens plunging-bath, and to be complimented, on her daring, in ballads, by Lord Dupplin!

When the fashionable world flocked to Mrs. Montagu's house in Hill Street, in the middle of last century, the street was not paved, and the road was very much at the mercy of the weather. To get to the house was not always an easy matter. When entered, the visitor found it furnished in a style of which much was said, and at which the hostess herself laughed. "Sick of Grecian elegance and symmetry, or Gothick grandeur and magnificence, we must all seek the barbarious gaudy *goût*

of the Chinese; and fat-headed pagods and shaking mandarins bear the prize from the finest works of antiquity; and Apollo and Venus must give way to a fat idol with a sconce on his head. You will wonder I should condemn the taste I have complied with, but in trifles I shall always conform to the fashion."

There were duties connected with her position which Mrs. Montagu as scrupulously fulfilled. Receiving and returning visits was "a great devoir." Resort to assemblies was a "necessary thing;" the duty of seeing and being seen was an indispensable duty; but she had mental resources which enabled her to pity the "polite world," which had no way of driving away *ennui* but by pleasure. If in Hill Street she was of "the quality," as Chesterfield called them, in the country she was not only what she loved to call herself, a farmer's wife, but a political economist. At Sandleford we see a poor wretch standing at the door of the mansion. She is hideous from dirt, poverty, and contagious disease born of both. The lady-farmer was not only charitable but something besides. "I was very angry with her," she says, "that she has lately

introduced another heir to wretchedness and want. She has not half Hamlet's delicacies on the question. To be or not to be! The law's delays are very puny evils to those her offspring must endure. The world affords no law to make her rich, and yet she will increase and multiply over the face of the earth."

Throughout the printed letters, continual examples occur of Mrs. Montagu's acute observation of character, and of her happy expression when she described it. She not only watched closely, but spoke boldly of the ladies around her, and of their more or less pretty ways. Thus, Mrs. Montagu saw that all the ladies courted Dr. Young, the poet, but she was sure it was only because they had heard he was a genius, and not that they knew he was one. When some Misses expressed their delight at a particular ball, she remarked that their delight was probably increased by the absence of Miss Bladen, who became Lord Essex's second countess, and who was not there to outshine them! "So strong in women," she said, "was the desire of pleasing, each would have that happy power confined to her own person." It did not escape her

eye that Lady Abercorn and Lady Townshend, "each determining to have the most wit of any person in the company, always chose different parties and different ends of the room." How gracefully serene is the portrait of the Duchess of Somerset, who did what was civil without intending to be gracious, and who so surprised Mrs. Montagu, in 1749, because the princely state and pride the duchess had so long been used to, had "left her such an easiness of manners." One of her exceptional touches was when she described the pious Countess of Huntingdon as a "well-meaning fanatic." That must have been after Gilbert West and Lord Lyttelton had brought her out of the field of Free Inquirers, and the Primate of Ireland had made her of the religion of the Established Church. At that period she would have placed the church above the law, resembling the old Scottish woman of the kirk, who, on pronouncing that to take a walk on the Sabbath was a deadly sin, was reminded that Jesus himself had walked in the cornfields on the Sabbath-day, to which she replied, "Ah weel, it is as ye say; but I think none the better o' him for it!"

Adverting to a wicked saying, that few women

have the virtues of an honest man, Mrs. Montagu maintained that a little of the blame thereof falls on the men, "who are more easily deluded than persuaded into compliance. This makes the women have recourse to artifice to gain power, which, as they have gained by the weakness or caprice of those they govern, they are afraid to lose by the same kind of arts addressed to the same kind of qualities; and the flattery bestowed by the men on all the fair from fifteen, makes them so greedy of praise, that they most excessively hate, detest, and revile every quality in another woman which they think can obtain it." This is the censure, or judgment, be it remembered, on Last Century Ladies!

When Mrs. Fielding, to benefit those ladies, wrote a novel called "The Penitents," supposed to be the history of the unhappy fair ones in the Magdalen House, Mrs. Montagu remarked, hesitatingly, "As all the girls in England are reading novels, it *may be* useful to put them on their guard:" but she adds decisively, "If I had a daughter, I should rather trust her to ignorance and innocence than to the effect of these cautions!"

Of course, Mrs. Montagu studied the gentlemen

as profoundly as the ladies. As one result, she gently laughed at Dr. Young's philosophy, which brought him to believe that one vice corrects another, till an animal made up of ten thousand bad qualities grows to be a social creature tolerable to live with. Sir William Brown could hardly claim this toleration, for he had not discovered (said Mrs. Montagu) that the wisest man in the company is not always the most welcome, and that people are not at all times disposed to be informed. Fancy may easily bring before the reader the sort of conversation which Mrs. Montagu was able to hold with Mr. Plunket. She says of it: "Some people reduce their wit to an impalpable powder, and mix it up in a rebus; others wrap up theirs in a riddle: but mine and Mr. Plunket's certainly went off by insensible perspiration in small talk." She was so satisfied that there was a right place for a wise man to play the fool in, that she expressed a hope to Gilbert West (who was turning much of her thought from this world to the next) and to his wife, that "you will, both of you, leave so much of your wisdom at Wickham as would be inconvenient in town." West feared that, at Sandleford, she sent

invitations to beaux and belles to fill the vacant apartments of her mind. She merrily answered, that there was empty space enough there for French hoops and echoes of French sentiments; but she also seriously replied, "There are few of the fine world whom I should invite into my mind, and fewer still who are familiar enough there to come unasked."

Mrs. Montagu hated no man, but she thoroughly despised Warburton. The way he mauled Shakespeare by explaining him, excited her scornful laughter; the way in which he marred Christianity by defending it, excited much more than angry contempt. "The levity shocks me, the indecency displeases me, the *grossièreté* disgusts me. I love to see the doctrine of Christianity defended by the spirit of Christianity." Bishop Warburton and some country parsons were equally silly in her mind. Of a poor riddle, she says, "A country parson could not puzzle his parish with it, even if he should endeavour to explain it in his next Sunday's sermon. Though I have known some of them explain a thing till all men doubted it."

From the rule by which she measured all men, she did not except any one of her brothers: and never

did sister love her brothers more tenderly and reasonably. Her brother William, the clergyman, was restless in temper from excess of love of ease. "My brother Robinson," she wrote to her sister, Mrs. Scott, in 1755, "is emulating the great Diogenes . . . he flies the delights of London, and leads a life of such privacy and seriousness, as looks to the beholders like wisdom, but, for my part, no life of inaction, deserves that name." Other characters she strikes off in a single sentence. That, referring to Sir Charles Williams is a very good sample from an overflowing measure. "Sir Charles," she said, "is still so flighty, that had he not always been a wit, he would still pass for a madman!" When she refers to Lord Hyde's printed, but never acted comedy, "The Mistakes, or the Happy Resentment," and says, "I suppose you will read the play, as it is by so great a man," she was probably thinking of Miss Tibbs, who, "it is well-known, always showed her good breeding by devoting all her attention to the people of highest rank in the company."

Mrs. Montagu was as clever at generalities as when sketching individuals and special peculiarities. The numerous Jews at Tunbridge Wells, in 1745,

she describes as having "worse countenances than their friend Pontius Pilate in a bad tapestry-hanging." Good farmer's wife, as she said of herself, and also very fond of refined luxury, she laughed in her letters at those persons who built palaces in gardens of beauty, and left, as she said, nothing rude and waste but their minds; nothing harsh and unpolished but their tempers. To her, no knowledge came amiss. Amid all the gaieties of the life at Bath, she took interest in the chemistry of every-day life. During one of her visits, she was initiated into the mysteries of making malt!

Her very affectations, as they were called, sprung from her endowments. Her learning and reading, and intercourse with scholars and thinkers, furnished her with extraordinary figures and illustrations that were applied to very ordinary uses.

Neither Elizabeth Robinson nor Mrs. Montagu would be so common-place as to say, the moon shone, but "the silver Cynthia held up her lamp in the heavens." She could readily detect and denounce this learned affectation, this sacrifice of the natural to the classical in others; and she said with truth of Hammond's "Elegies," "They please me much,

but, between you and me, they seem to me to have something of a foreign air. Had the poet read Scotch ballads oftener, and Ovid and Tibullus less, he had appeared a more natural writer and a more tender lover." These terse sayings are well worth collecting. Here is one from a heap that will furnish a thousand: "I own the conversation of a simpleton is a grievance, but there the disparity of a wise man and a fool often ends."

Here may be closed the illustrations of Mrs. Montagu's life, drawn chiefly from her published letters. The following sketches of her own life, and of that by which she was surrounded, are taken from letters, with one or two exceptions, now for the first time printed.

## CHAPTER IV.

THE unpublished letters take up the glorious theme previous to the last incident named in the published correspondence. The earliest is from Mrs. Montagu's sister, Mrs. Scott, to the wife of their brother, the Rev. W. Robinson, at Naples. The two sisters, Elizabeth and Sarah, loved each other with intense affection. The younger went long by the nick-name of *Pea*, from her extraordinary likeness to her elder sister, who used, before Sarah's unhappy marriage, to rally her on the obesity of her lovers and her cruelty in reducing them to consumptiveness and asses' milk.

March 28th, 1761. Mrs. Scott to Mrs. Robinson, Naples.—"The Tories are in high spirits. The king has declared that as they are possessed of the greatest part of the property of the king-

dom, they ought to have a great share in the government, and accordingly many are taken into place. The king was asked what orders he would have given to the dockmen against the approaching election. His majesty answered, 'No orders at all.' He would have them left to themselves. Lord Granville said, 'That was leaving them to be directed by the First Lord of the Admiralty' (Lord Anson). The king replied, 'That was true; he had not considered that; they must, therefore, be told to vote for the Tories, to be sure.' The late Speaker and the parliament took a most tender farewell of each other. They thanked and he thanked, and then they re-thanked, and in short, never were people so thankful on both sides; and then they recommended him to the king, to do more than thank him; but he refused any reward. Only, his son, it is said, will have a pension of 2000*l.* per annum—a good, agreeable compliment, and yet what no one will disapprove."

Walpole describes Onslow's retirement, after holding the office of Speaker during thirty years, in five successive parliaments, in these words: "The Speaker has taken leave and received the highest

compliments, and substantial ones, too. He did not over-act, and it was really a handsome scene. Onslow accepted a pension of 3000*l.* a year for his own life and that of his son—afterwards Lord Onslow."

After noticing the changes in the ministry, and conferring of honours on, and the granting of pensions to persons of no great public importance, Mrs. Scott turns to the death of the great master of the ceremonies at Bath, Beau Nash, and to the conduct of the great statesman, Mr. Pitt. "Mr. Nash, I believe, died since I wrote to you, and all his effects are to be sold for the benefit of his creditors, but will not prove sufficient to pay his debts. Collett now officiates as his successor, though others are talked of for that noble post; but as neither the corporation nor the keeper of the rooms seem disposed to annex any salary to it, I imagine Collett will continue in possession; for I think no one else will do it without other reward than the honour and profit arising therefrom."

Collett, after brief possession of the post so long held by Nash, was succeeded by Derrick, an ad-

venturer in whom Bath was as much interested as England was in Pitt, of whom, Mrs. Scott thus writes:—"Mr. Pitt still continues in his post. Without connections of any sort, without the power of conferring honours or places, he commands imperiously, and forces obedience from mere superiority of parts and integrity. As a statesman he is self-existent, and depends on none, nor has any dependent on him. He does not see his oldest friends but when they have business to impart, obliges none by private benefits, nor engages any by social intercourse. His mind seems too great for any object less than a whole nation. There is something very new and extremely surprising in his conduct. He is an Almanzor in politicks. He is himself alone. How long he can stand thus, only time can show. As there was scarcely ever an instance of the like, we have no precedents by which to form conjectures. National prejudices about Scotchmen are lulled asleep. Lord Bute is high in favour; the city is pleased with him; the Tories much attached to him. The king is still generally applauded. Our sex went in such numbers to the House of Lords

at the closing of the session, to see his majesty on the throne, that good part of the company fainted away, and not above three lords had room to sit down. . . .

"My brother Matt is at present prosecuting the minister of Lyminge for non-residence, in revenge for some offence he has given him about the tithes; and my father bids fair for being engaged in prosecuting a clergyman at Canterbury, for saying he was in the Rebellion in the year '16. . . . Report says that the Duchess of Richmond and some other ladies, whose husbands are going or gone to Germany, are going there likewise, and are to be at Brunswick. I much question whether their husbands will rejoice in their company, but certainly Prince Ferdinand will not be fond of such auxiliaries. It is the oddest party of pleasure I ever heard of. Thomas Diaforus, who invites his mistress to the lively amusement of making one at a dissection, would be an agreeable lover to these ladies. . . . Perhaps they think Germany may afford them more of their husbands' company than they can obtain in England; for some among them would think that a valuable acquisition, and pos-

sibly they may not be mistaken, for a drum that leads to battle may not be so powerful a rival to a wife as one that leads its followers only to coquetry."

Mrs. Scott's reference to Pitt, Secretary of State and soul of the ministry of which the old imbecile Duke of Newcastle was the nominal head, seems to have been made with Almanzor's lines in her memory.

> "Know, that I alone am king of me!
> I am as free as Nature first made man,
> Ere the base laws of servitude began,
> When wild in woods the noble savage ran.
> I saw th' oppress'd, and thought it did belong
> To a king's office to redress the wrong," &c.

The public mind, however, was not so much occupied with men of mark as with a ceremony which had not been witnessed in England for very many years. In a letter from Batheaston, September 14, 1761, written by Mrs. Scott to her sister-in-law, at Naples, she describes the time as one of general madness, and continues as follows:—

"One would imagine that no king had ever married or any state ever had a queen before. The nation has for some time been and will still

longer be absolutely frantic. The expected princess was to be all perfection, both in person and mind, and I believe few ever took so much pleasure in the possession of their own wives as they have in his majesty's having obtained so rare a blessing. I don't think so great a compliment has been paid to matrimony for many years past. Miss Arnold, who is gone up to my brother Morris, in order to be ready for the coronation, has had a sight of her majesty; and from her, as well as others, I understand she is very far from handsome. Her mouth fills a great part of her face. When Miss Arnold saw her, which was only in passing, she was talking and laughing, which would shew it in its full dimensions, and she says she could see no other feature; but we are assured she is extremely good-natured, very lively, and has an extraordinary understanding. The first part, her youth renders probable; for the last article, we may rather suppose it affords a reasonable ground for expectation than that it has come to any perfection. She has been learning French since she knew she was to leave Mecklenburgh; and I suppose must have endeavoured to obtain some English, as the more

necessary thing. It is said that Lord Hardwicke wrote over an account to his wife of her personal defects, which her ladyship read in a large company. This was repeated to his majesty, who is greatly offended. Certainly, it was highly imprudent in the one, and not less foolish in the other; and I wonder his lordship, after having been married near thirty years, should not know his wife better than to put it in her power to commit such a folly, as he might have known how likely she was to use it to his disadvantage. I suppose the poor man went over in full expectation of seeing a Venus, and was so amazed that he could not contain his disappointment.

"As many persons as Greenwich would hold waited there for many days, to see her majesty arrive, and at last, after having been exposed to those storms, she landed in Suffolk, and, consequently, did not make her appearance on the Thames. The rooms at Greenwich let for half a guinea a day, and the poorest little casement brought in the owner a daily crown. I hope it has enriched many poor people. Of all the taxes ever levied in this kingdom, that which will be raised this year on folly, will be by far

the highest. I hear there is scaffolding enough erected against the coronation to hold two millions of people. Almost all the kingdom will be in London; and many, I suppose, will be reduced to scanty meals for a whole year to come, by the expenses on this occasion; and if the day should prove rainy, which the season of the year renders very probable, those who are not in Westminster Hall or the Abbey will see nothing; for there is an awning prepared, to be carried over the heads of those who walk in the procession, in case of rain. The finery of every one who intends to appear at court is beyond imagination. This kingdom, or perhaps any other, scarcely ever saw the like.

"The queen's clothes are so heavy that, by all accounts, if she be not very robust, she will not be able to move under the burden; but I hope her constitution is not very delicate, for she did not arrive in London till three o'clock; and, besides the fatigue of her journey, with the consequences of the flutter she could not avoid being in, she was to dress for her wedding, be married, have a Drawing-room, and undergo the ceremony of receiving company, after she and the king were in bed, and *all* the night

after her journey and so long a voyage. Nothing but a German constitution could have undergone it." . . .

Poor Queen Charlotte's plainness was—as Northcote subsequently described it, in speaking of her portrait by Reynolds, namely—an elegant, and not a vulgar plainness. She had a beautifully-shaped arm, and was fond of exhibiting it. "She had a fan in her hand," said Northcote; "Lord! how she held that fan!" Of literary news this letter contains the following item:—

. . . "Dr. Young has written a poem on 'Resignation,' and dedicated it to Mrs. Boscawen. I have not seen it, but have heard it much praised, and am told he wrote it at the desire of my sister Montagu and Miss Carter, who requested it in a visit they made him on their road to Tunbridge, where my sister spent the summer."

Municipal authorities, more gallant than Mrs. Scott and the female critics, spoke of the queen, in their addresses, as "amiably eminent for the beauties of her mind and person." Many parties who drove into town to witness the coronation, were made to "stand and deliver" their valuables by

highwaymen, who infested all the roads leading into London. Those who escaped and got as far as Charing Cross, could go no further, unless the gentlemen fought way for their ladies and themselves, which some bold spirits ventured to do. While the great show was in progress, press-gangs picked up youths likely, however unwilling, to serve the king; and the city at night was in the hands of a mob, which did with London, Londoners, and their possessions very much as they pleased. Many lives were sacrificed, and very little was thought of them.

The night after the wedding, there was a ball at court, so grand that nothing like it, so it was said, had ever been seen in England. The king and queen retired at the early hour of eleven. One great feature of the night was that the Duke of Ancaster, whose wife was mistress of the robes to the queen, appeared in the dress which the king had worn the whole day before at the coronation, and which his majesty had condescendingly given to his grace! A pleasanter feature was to be seen in the group of bridesmaids, who "danced in the white-boddiced coats they had worn at the wedding." Liquor and illuminations prevailed outside. "Ah!"

said an observant Smithfield dealer; "what with plays, fairs, pillories, and executions, London has more holidays than there are red days in the almanack!" In truth, London was drunk and rampant. It could be both at small outlay; for mutton was selling at one shilling a stone (in the carcase), and Cognac could be had for nine shillings a gallon!

Lord Hardwicke, named in the above letter, was the son of an attorney, and rose to the dignity of Lord Chancellor by his merits. When he was plain Philip Yorke, he made an offer of marriage to an heiress, a young widow, with a jointure, whose father asked him for his rent-roll! The handsome barrister replied that he had "a perch of ground in Westminster Hall." The young fellow's suit prevailed; and the happy couple began life in a small house near Lincoln's Inn, the ground floor of which served for the husband's offices. The lady was connected with the family of Gibbon the historian; and she was a wife so good, prudent, and so wise, that Mrs. Scott's sneer at her seems quite gratuitous. The poor lady died three days before the coronation; and her husband in 1764.

Dr. Young's "Resignation" was the dying song of a man above fourscore. Its object was to console Mrs. Boscawen for the loss of her heroic husband, the admiral. In the last century, English heroes were singularly respected. The Suffolk ladies, of whatever rank, voluntarily yielded precedence to Mrs. Vernon, "great Admiral Vernon's" wife.

Mr. Pitt resigned the foreign secretaryship on October 5th, 1761. He and his friends were for declaring war against Spain. Lord Bute and a majority opposed it, the king agreeing with them. Pitt's fall was made tolerable by the pension of 3000*l.* a year for the lives of himself, son, and wife. The latter was created Baroness of Chatham; and in three months war *was* declared with Spain!

Mrs. Scott to her brother at Naples. Nov. 28, 1761.—. . . "Lord Bath and Lord Lyttelton were both at Tunbridge, and Miss Carter was with my sister; so, you may imagine, the place was agreeable, and wit flowed more copiously than the spring. The room she has so long been fitting-up is not yet finished, but the design of it is so much improved that I really believe it will be the most beautiful thing

ever seen, and proportionably expensive. Taste, you know, is not the cheapest thing to purchase. Use and convenience may be provided for at a moderate charge, but great geniuses are above being contented with such matters.

"I suppose you have heard much of the general lamentations for Mr. Pitt's resignation. It is by many thought that his resuming his post is unavoidable, and, indeed, I suppose it must be so, if affairs take the turn which appearances give reason to expect. He is more popular than ever in the city. The procession of the royal family on the Lord Mayor's day was broke in a manner that puzzled people much, as they could not account for it; but it has since been said it was occasioned by a multitude of sailors, who forced their way through the crowd in search of Mr. Pitt's chariot, from which they intended to have taken the horses, and to have drawn it themselves to the Mansion House. The post of honour is not often a place of safety, but I think it was seldom more dangerous than it would have proved in this case, had they effected their design; but they could not find him, so he got there with whole bones, and was received with

greater acclamations than were bestowed on *any* other person. He endeavoured to get away privately, but the mob were so very kind that they very near overturned Lord Temple's chariot, in which he was, by crowding about it, and hanging on the doors; and a very long time he was in getting home. I will not say it was tedious, for the sweetest music is deserved praise. He did not attend the House of Commons till some days after its first meeting; but when he did, spoke, by all accounts, beyond what he or any other man ever did, with perfect calmness and modesty, and, with few words, silenced every one who endeavoured to oppose him. G. Grenville attempted to answer him, but a general buz obliged him to sit down. However, the press is loaded with his abuse. These events are happy for hireling scribblers. They get a dinner, and can do him no essential harm. So it's very well. It would be cruel to grudge them their morsel. I hope it will fatten many a starving author.

"But to mention those who do not write for bread, and those who contrive to get both bread and fame together, Lord Lyttelton's second volume quarto

of Henry the Second is in the press. . . . Mallett has published a poem called 'Truth in Rhyme,' dedicated to Lord Bute. . . . I am glad he can tell truth in either rhyme or prose. . . . I have heard a *bon mot* of Lady Townshend's, of which no one will deny the truth. Somebody expressed their surprise that Lady Northumberland should be made lady of the bed-chamber. 'Surely,' said she, 'nothing could be more proper. The queen does not understand English, and can anything be more necessary than that she should learn the vulgar tongue?'"

It was at this period that Mrs. Scott became an authoress, in whole or in part, of a successful, but now utterly forgotten, novel, called "Millennium Hall." This book, a single volume, went through four editions. In the first edition, 1762, the first word of the title is spelt throughout with one *n*, and in all the editions it is said to be by a gentleman on his travels. Common report assigned the authorship to Mrs. Scott, shared, as far as some small help went, by her friend and companion for years, Lady Barbara Montagu. A copy of the second edition (1764), which once belonged to Horace Walpole, is now in the British Museum.

On the back of the title-page, Walpole corrects the above sharing of literary labour in the following words, written in his well-known hand:—"This book was written by Lady Bab Montagu (the sister of George Montagu Dunk, Earl of Hallifax) and Mrs. Scott, daughter of Matthew Robinson, Esq., and wife of George Scott, Esq." It was continued to be published as the work of a gentleman, in the two succeeding editions; but Mrs. Scott is still accredited with the greatest share in the labour. "Millennium Hall" is generally described as a novel. It is a series of stories of the romantic lives of four or five ladies who, having been bitterly disappointed in love, and handsomely solaced by riches, retire from the world and establish themselves in the hall which gives its name to the novel. It is a name which would lead one to suppose that there is a sort of millennium peace and happiness achieved there, such as will be found on earth generally only in the millennium period. The wealthy and love-lorn ladies of the hall, however, have only founded a female school and society in advance of contemporary ideas, but having nothing wonderful, though now and then some-

thing eccentric, if weighed by our present standards. The real interest of the volume lies in the romantic biographies, and these are narrated with lady-like grace, elegance, tenderness, and, occasionally, tedious prolixity.

The story represented, with some exaggeration, the lives led by Lady Bab and Mrs. Scott in their "conventual house" at Batheaston. Both boys and girls were well trained by those ladies at that place. Mrs. Montagu, in reference to Mrs. Scott's good works, so loved her sister as to render her uncharitable to other people. "Methodist ladies," she said, "did out of enthusiasm what Mrs. Scott did out of a calm sense of duty, and gratitude that the employment was a solace to one who had been cruelly tried by affliction." No credit was given to poor Lady Bab, but her happy temperament could well afford to do without it. Strange as the stories were which illustrate "Millennium Hall," they were not nearly so strange as one which, in March, 1762, Mrs. Scott related to her brother at Rome, in a letter from Bath: "Those who deal in the small wares of scandal will not want subjects. Miss Hunter, daughter to Orby Hunter, has lately

furnished a copious topic. . . . She and Lord Pembroke, in spite of winds, waves, and war, left this kingdom for one where they imagined they may love with less molestation,—where they cannot see a wife weep nor hear a father rage. They set off in a storm better suited to travelling witches than flying lovers, but were so impeded by the weather, that a captain sent out a boat and took the lady prisoner; but after he had set her on shore, he found that, as she was of age, it was difficult to assume any lawful authority over her; and, after having spent a night in tears and lamentation, she was restored to Lord Pembroke. . . . His lordship resigned his commission and his place of lord of the bedchamber, and wrote a letter to Lady Pembroke, acknowledging her charms and virtues and his own baseness (an unnecessary thing, since the latter she must long have known, and was probably not absolutely ignorant of the former), but assuring her Miss Hunter was irresistible; that he never intended to return into England, and had taken care that 5000*l.* should be paid her yearly. As Lady Pembroke is so handsome and amiable, perhaps his conduct will be seen by the world in a true light,

without any fashionable palliations. A report was spread, that they were taken by a privateer, but I can hear of none but of a very different capture—the clay cold corpses of Lord and Lady Kingstone, which were on their way to England for interment."

The elopement of Miss Hunter (a maid of honour, too!) from Bath with the Earl of Pembroke, formed one of the most delicious bits of scandal ever discussed in the Rooms, on the Parade, or in the Meadows. The excitement attendant thereon was shared by the whole country; for Kitty Hunter was a well-known, and not at all suspected, beauty of the day. Her father, Orby Hunter, was, at the time of the elopement, one of the lords of the admiralty. The vessel that brought back the fugitives was a privateer, commanded by a friend of Mr. Hunter's. Kitty's father declined to receive her, and she accompanied Lord Pembroke abroad. The earl was a married man. His wife was Elizabeth, daughter of the Duke of Marlborough. Her exemplary husband wrote to her from Italy a letter, in which he politely informed her, that though he had lived with her so many years, he regretted to say he had never been able to love her so well

as she deserved, so thought it best to leave her. Subsequently, he had the assurance to invite Lady Pembroke to accompany them on the continent. "And she," says Walpole, "who is all gentleness and tenderness, was with difficulty withheld from acting as mad a part from goodness as he had acted from guilt and folly." He had tried to make his wife hate him, but in vain. It is one of the illustrations of social feeling in the last century, that neither the rascal earl nor the light-o'love maid of honour was thought much the worse of for their shameless conduct. A "Peerage," of ten years subsequent to the elopement, edited by a clergyman, too! the Rev. Frederick Barlow, vicar of Burton, thus speaks of my lord, who was then living:—"His lordship distinguished himself in the annals of gallantry with Miss H—— about ten years ago, and since that time," it goes on to speak plainly of the earl's gallantry, "with several ladies of less note:" adding, "his lordship is universally esteemed as an accomplished nobleman and a brave officer." Mrs. Scott happily goes on to treat of a plainer but much honester woman than Kitty Hunter:—"The queen gives daily less satisfaction, and the

people who at first found her out to be pleasing, seem now to be insensible to the discovery they then made. Her husband, however, seems fond of her. . . . Report says the Prince of Mecklenburg, a very pretty sort of man, with an agreeable person, is fallen desperately in love with Miss Bowes—a prudent passion; and the girl has no ambition if she does not choose to be a princess. I fancy, should she become such, he would be richer than the duke, his elder brother. . . . Lady Raymond is going to be married to Lord Robert Bertie,—an union wherein no acid will enter; for they are both famed for good temper. Mr. Whitehead's play has been acted and published, and a poor performance it is. The dialogue flat and ungenteel, and the plot poor enough."

Whitehead's play was a comedy, "The School for Lovers," in which Garrick played Sir John Dorilant. The main attraction was the ever youthful Mrs. Cibber, who, at nearly fifty years old, acted Cælia, a girl of seventeen; yet Victor says: "She was admitted by the nicest observers to become the character. This was entirely owing to that uncommon symmetry and exact proportion

in her form, that happily remained with her to her death." But there were more extraordinary comedies being enacted in real life than on the stage.

In a letter from Mrs. Scott to her brother, at Naples, dated April 10, 1762, there are profuse congratulations on the birth of his son, and a wonderful amount of speculation on mothers, nurses, and on babies generally, possible and impossible, expected and not expected, over tardy or too hasty, and all in as plain language as the subject could admit. The writer then refers to the report of the queen affording promise of an heir; "but as she is no great favourite with the nation, it does not seem to afford any great joy." This leads to a subject that made a stir among last century ladies who were privileged to go to court. "A court dress (*sic*) is going to take place at St. James's, the same as in France, which greatly distresses the old ladies, who are quite clamourous on the occasion, and at a loss how to cover so much neck as the stiffened-bodied gowns are made to show, and which they are sensible is not very appétissante after a certain age; as likewise how to supply the deficiency which churlish time has made in their once flowing tresses. Some

younger ladies, to whom nature has been rather a stepdame than a kind mother, join in their lamentations, and London is in an uproar. The exultation of those who, conscious of their charms, rejoice in laying aside as much covering as possible, being as little silent at the distress of the others. *They* look on this allowed display as a sort of jail delivery to their long-imprisoned attractions; and as beauty is nature's boast, insist that it should be showed at courts, and feasts and high solemnities, where most may wonder at the workmanship; and that fashion has been hitherto unjust in concealing part of the superiority nature has bestowed upon them. The consumption of pearl-powder will certainly be much increased; for where there is such a resource, even fourscore will exhibit a snowy breast, and the corpulent dowagers will unite the lilies of the spring with all the copious abundance of a later season.

. . . "Lord Pembroke, after he got to Holland, wrote to his lady, to desire her to come to them, assuring her Miss Hunter would be assiduous in her endeavours to oblige her, and that they should form a very happy society, if she would bring over

her guitar, two servants who play on the French horn, and his dog Rover! This polite invitation she, Emma like, was exceeding ready to comply with, but the Duke of Marlborough had rather too much sense to permit it. His lordship has since written her word, he shall never be happy till he lives with her again. Absurd as all this is, it is certainly fact, and some add, that he has advised Miss Hunter to turn nun! To be sure he best knows how fit she is to take a vow of chastity! That he may by this time wish she would take any vow that might separate her from him, is, I think, very probable."

The general scramble for honours which usually marks a new reign had not yet ceased. Mrs. Scott thus refers to the part which some of her own family took in it.

Mrs. Scott to the Rev. W. Robinson. May 26, 1762.—"I cannot forbear wishing you could have an Irish bishopric, but your profession are too watchful to suffer such things to be vacant. I hear our cousin Robinson does not much like his promotion to Kildare. I suppose he does not entirely relish rising step by step. All travelling

is expensive, and I believe none more so than the passing through the various stages of bishoprics; but I think he may be contented to rise *à petits pas*. His rising at all seems to proceed only from a want of anything to stop him, according to the philosophical axiom, that put a thing in motion and it will move for ever, if it meets with nothing to obstruct its course. Nature went but a slow pace when she made him, and did not jump into one perfection. Sir Septimus is tolerably contented with his fate in a world so regardless of real merit, and therefore little likely to reward his superlative merits. I hear that a week before he had this black rod given him (a proper reward for a preceptor), he declared that whoever would eat goose at court must swallow the feathers; but now they have been so well stroked down, he finds them go down easily enough."

In a subsequent letter to her sister-in-law at Naples, Mrs. Scott lightly sketches a celebrated character at Bath.

"This place is by no means full, but it contains much wealth. Colonel Clive, the Nabob maker (is not that almost as great a title as the famous

Earl of Warwick's?), lives at Westgate House, with all the Clives about him. He has sold his possessions in India to the East India Company for 30,000*l.* per annum, a trifling sum, which he dedicates to the buying of land. In a time when property is so fluctuating, I think he may see himself possessor of the whole kingdom, should his distempers allow him a long life; but his health is bad, and he purposes, when peace is made, at latest, to show at Rome the richest man in Europe. He lives in little pomp; moderate in his table, and still more so in equipage and retinue."

Mrs. Scott now disappears for awhile, to make way for her more celebrated sister.

## CHAPTER V.

THE first letter of Mrs. Montagu's in the hitherto unpublished series is addressed "To Mr. Robinson." the writer's brother. It is dated from "London, 28th of May, 1762." Mr. Robinson was then residing at Naples, where his wife had recently given birth to a son. After the usual congratulations, Mrs. Montagu says: "I would have answered your letter the day after I received it, but was obliged to wait for the letter of recommendation to Mr. Pitt. Neither Lord Lyttelton or the Bishop of Carlisle are related to or acquainted with Mr. Pitt. Their sister married a distant cousin of Mr. George Pitt's, and was parted from him, I believe, long before Mr. George Pitt was a man, and they have not ever had the least commerce with him." After this explanation, the writer refers to the news of the day, and to one of the leading men

of the time: "The Duke of Newcastle is about to resign his office and retire to the joys of private life. I am afraid he will find that the mind used to business does not find quiet in idleness. There is hardly a greater misfortune than to have the mind much accustomed to the tracasseries of the world. A country gentleman can amuse himself by angling in a trout stream, or venturing his neck in a fox chase; a studious man can enjoy his books in solitude, and, with tranquill pleasure, 'woo lone quiet in her silent walk;' but chiefs out of war and statesmen out of place, like all animals taken out of their proper climate, make a miserable affair of rural life. I dare say his Grace of Newcastle will fall to serpentizing rivers, and then wish himself again a fisher of men. Aurora may put on her finest robe to unbar the gates of Morn; he will still sigh that his folding doors are not to open to a crowded levée. The notes of Philomel are not sweet to ears used to flattery; and what is the harvest home to a man used to collect the treasure of England?"

"The king has purchased Buckingham House, and is going to fit it up elegantly for his retired

hours. Her majesty promises to give us an heir very soon. Princess Amelia has purchased Gunnersbury House. The Duke of Portland dyed about ten days ago, and the Duke of Manchester last week.

"There has been a cold and fever in town, as universal as a plague, but, thank God! less fatal. Mr. Montagu had it violently, and we had ten servants sick at the same time. This distemper is not yet over. It grows more fatal, but I hope we shall have some rain, which will probably put a stop to it. . . . My poor friend Mrs. Donellan dyed of it the day before yesterday. She had been ill all the winter, and was unable to struggle with a new distemper. . . . We propose to go to Sandleford very soon, and I hope to have my sister Scott's company there, which will make me very happy. Lady Bab Montagu has lost her sister, Lady Charlotte Johnson, who dyed in childbed.

"Lord Hallifax is returned with great glory from his Lord Lieutenancy in Ireland. He pleased all people; he united all parties; he contented those he was sent by and those he was sent to; and has shown it is possible to please the government and

to be popular there. . . . I suppose you have heard of the death of Sir Edward Dering, which was sudden. He has entailed everything on his grandson, and left but very small fortune to his younger children. People seem to think that by making one person in their family rich, they can make one very happy; but, alas! human happiness cannot be carried beyond a certain pitch. Competency will make every one easy: great wealth cannot make any one happy. It is strange, parents should seem to feel only for one child, or, indeed, that the heir should be dearer than the child; for it is as heir they show their regards to one of the family. No personal merit, no tender attachment, no sympathy of disposition can overrule that circumstance. Sir Edward Dering dyed very rich. . . .

"Mr. Harrison's watch" (the fourth and most perfect time-keeper, for ascertaining the longitude at sea, invented by the Yorkshire carpenter's son, by which he ultimately received 24,000*l.*) "has succeeded beyond expectation; navigation will be improved by it, which all who have the spirit of travelling shall rejoice at. The wives of some of our general officers are gone to Lisbon with their

husbands, which I tell you for the honour of the fair sex. Lord Anson is in a very bad state of health. I am told Rome is the best place to get books at; I should be glad to have Muratori 'Sopra le cose delli secoli passi.' I have his 'Annals of Italy.' . . . My love to my sister and dear little godson. . . . Pray remember, you owe me a god-daughter still."

Mrs. Scott's letter, in June, to Mr. W. Robinson, has two passages in it which are like notes to her sister's epistle.

"You will find few commoners in England. We make nobility as fast as people make kings and queens on Twelfth Night, and almost as many. . . . Lady Townshend says, she dare not spit out of her window for fear of spitting on a lord."

. . . "The Duke of Newcastle, after his resignation, had a very numerous levée, but somebody observed to him, there were but two bishops present. He is said to have replied, that bishops, like other men, were too apt to forget their maker. I think this has been said for him, or the resignation of power has much brightened his understanding; for of whatever he may be accused, the crime of wit was never laid to his charge."

Walpole states, with regard to the prelates at the old duke's *levée:* "As I suppose all bishops are prophets, they foresee that he will never come into place again; for there was but one that had the decency to take leave of him, after crowding his rooms for forty years together: it was Cornwallis." The duke went out on finding he had no chance of carrying a pecuniary aid to Prussia. If he was almost a fool, as some kind friends said, he had the wisdom to keep in place longer than any of his contemporaries. He was succeeded as Prime Minister by Lord Bute. Cornwallis, Bishop of Lichfield and Coventry, reaped the reward of his fidelity. He was promoted to the Archbishopric of Canterbury in 1768. It should be added, to the honour of the duke, who, however mentally ill-endowed and eccentric, was a gentleman in practice, that he declined a pension on his retirement. He might be incapable of serving his country, he said, but England should certainly not find him a burthen. Chesterfield cites, as an example of his timidity, the duke's childish fear at Lord Chesterfield's bill for correcting the calendar, and, as a proof of his integrity, the fact that "he retired from

business above four hundred thousand pounds poorer than when he engaged in it."

The duke left "business" in a considerable amount of confusion. In a letter dated July 27, 1762, Mrs. Scott writes to Mr. Robinson at Rome, after much small talk on babies and jokes on prophesied lyings-in, in these words:—

"Political disputes never ran so high in print as at present. The periodical papers are numerous and abusive to the greatest degree. By what I hear, the lawyers find it some substitution for the decay of business in the courts; for the minority papers regularly undergo the inspection of council learned in the law before they are published, that the authors who stand on the very verge of treason may not, by some inadvertency, make a *faux pas* that will throw them down the precipice; and some persons of consequence are under engagements to the printer to indemnify him should the heavy hand of authority oppress him. . .

. . . "The king has given Johnson a pension of 300*l.* per annum—a necessary step for one who wishes to be thought the patron of literature, and what every one must approve."

"The North Briton" was not of Mrs. Scott's opinion with regard to Johnson's merits. "I hope," says Wilkes (No. 11, Aug. 14), "Johnson is a writer of reputation, because, as a writer, he has just got a pension of 300*l.* per annum. I hope, too, that he has become a friend to this constitution and the family on the throne, now he is thus nobly provided for; but I know he has much to *unwrite*, more to *unsay*, before he will be forgiven by the true friends of the present illustrious family for what he has been writing and saying for many years."

In the last-named month, occurred that great event, the birth of "the first gentleman in Europe." Mrs. Scott thus speaks of mother and child:—

Aug. 13, 1762. Mrs. Scott to Mrs. Robinson, Rome.—"On Thursday, the queen was brought to bed of a son, and both, we are told, are well. Many rejoiced, but none more than those who have been detained during all this hot weather in town to be present at the ceremony. Among them, no one was more impatient than the Chancellor, who, not considering any part of the affair as a point of law, thought his presence very unnecessary. His lordship and the Archbishop must have had a fatiguing

office; for, as she was brought to bed at 7 in the morning, they must have attended her labour all night, for fear they should be absent at the critical moment of delivery. I wish they were not too much out of humour before the prince was born, to be able to welcome it properly. . . . The lady's person is not the only thing that displeases. There is a coarseness and vulgarity of manners that disgust much more. She does not seem to choose to fashion herself at all. . . . Ned Scott's wife is to suckle the Prince of Wales—an employment which in all probability will prove as good nourishment to her own family as to the royal babe; for her numerous offspring can scarcely fail of being provided for after she has served in such an office.

. . . "Peace is being much talked of, tho' the terms are unknown. The Duke of Bedford is spoken of as the person who is to go to Paris to transact it. I hope much will not depend on secret articles; for I think he gave a proof, when old Bussy was here, that his old nurse could not be a greater blab!"

The Chancellor, who was present on the above occasion, was "cursing Lord Northington,"—a coarse

witty man, married to a fool, who became the mother of the witty Lady Bridget Fox Lane. Northington, like Newcastle, had his fling at the bishops. In serious illness, he was counselled to send for a certain prelate. "He will never do," said the patient. "I should have to confess that I committed my heaviest sin when I made him a bishop!" The primate who attended at the birth of the Prince of Wales was Secker; and as he was originally a dissenter, and was never baptized in the Church of England, there were anxious church-women who thought that his christening George Prince of Wales would never make a Christian of him. And it can't be said that it did! Meanwhile, how things were otherwise going in England, Mrs. Scott relates to her brother, in Rome, in a letter dated September, 1762.

"The lowest artificer thinks now of nothing but the constitution of the government. . . . The English always seemed born politicians, but were never so universally mad on the subject as at present. If you order a mason to build an oven, he immediately inquires about the progress of the peace, and descants on the preliminaries. A carpen-

ter, instead of putting up a shelf to a cupboard, talks of the Princess Dowager, of Lord Treasarre, and of secretaries of state. Neglected lie the trowel and the chisel; the mortar dries and the glue hardens while the persons who should use them are busied with dissertations on the government.

. . . "The Duke of Marlborough and Lady Caroline Russell were married eight and forty hours after his grace declared himself a lover. The Duke of Bedford was always known to be a man of business, but he never despatched a matter quicker than this. He gave to Lady Caroline 50,000*l.* down, and is to give as much more at his death."

The next letter, written at Sandleford, October the 8th, 1762, is addressed to the writer's sister-in-law, "Mrs. Robinson, Recommendé à Monsieur Jenkins, Gentilhome Anglois au Caffé Anglois, sur la Place di Espana, Rome." It commences with "My dear Madam," and after a very prolix argument on the lack of interest in home news sent to travellers abroad, Mrs. Montagu refers with pride to the English triumphs at the Havanna and Martinico, and thus continues. . . . "But we are not much the nearer to a peace; for, as ambition subsides or

crouches in the House of Bourbon, it rises in the Court of Aldermen, in London. When we shut the Temple of Janus, we shut up the trade of Change Alley, and the city finds its account in a war, and they clamour against any peace that will not give us the commerce of the whole world! . . .

"We have lately had a very fine public ceremony, the instalment of the new Knights of the Garter at Windsor. The king, assuming the throne of sovereign of the order, gave great lustre to the spectacle. I should have liked to have seen so august a ceremony; and my Lord Bath was so good as to ask me to go to Windsor with him, from his house at Maidenhead Bridge; but Mr. Montagu, not being fond of public shows, and apprehending his lordship offered to go out of complaisance, I declined it, and my lord spent three days here; so it was plain, his politeness to us was his only inducement to go to the instalment. I must own I should have taken some pleasure in being led back into former ages and the days of our great Plantagenets. I have a reverence, too, for the institutions of Chivalry. The qualities of a Knight were valour, liberality, and courtesy, and to

be *sans peur et sans reproche.* And though the change of government and manners make this knightly character now appear a little extravagant, the Redresser of wrongs was a respectable title before a regular police and a good system of laws secured the rights and properties of the weak. I hear the late instalment was extremely brilliant. The helmets of the knights were adorned with gems; military honours, indeed, did not sit proudly on their crests; but if they have the virtues suited to the times we live in, we will be contented. The knights of Edward ye Third were, indeed, very great men. The assembly of British Worthies might have disputed personal merit with, perhaps, the greatest Heroes of antiquity, considering them singly and independently; but to enjoy an extensive or a lasting fame, men's actions must be tyed to great events; then they swim down Fate's innavigable tyde, otherwise, they soon sink into oblivion." . . .

In the February of this year, 1762, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu had returned to England, after many years of absence. In October, in the same year, she died. Of her appearance on her return, Mrs. Montagu wrote as follows to her sister-in-law at Naples :—

Feb. 16th, 1762.—"You have lately returned to us from Italy a very extraordinary personage, Lady Mary Wortley. When Nature is at the trouble of making a very singular person, Time does right in respecting it. Medals are preserved, when common coin is worn out; and as great geniuses are rather matters of curiosity than of art, this lady seems reserved to be a wonder for more than our generation. She does not look older than when she went abroad, has more than the vivacity of fifteen, and a memory which, perhaps, is unique. Several people visited her out of curiosity, which she did not like. I visit her because her cousin and mine were cousin-germans. Though she has not any foolish partiality for her husband or his relations, I was very graciously received, and you may imagine entertained, by one who neither thinks, speaks, acts, or dresses like anybody else. Her *domestick* is made up of all nations, and when you get into her drawing-room, you imagine you are in the first story of the Tower of Babel. An Hungarian servant takes your name at the door: he gives it to an Italian, who delivers it to a Frenchman; the Frenchman to a Swiss, and the Swiss to a Polander; so that, by the

time you get to her ladyship's presence, you have changed your name five times, without the expense of an act of parliament."

In October, the same writer thus wrote of Lady Mary's death, and of the son who survived his mother:—

"Lady Mary Wortley Montagu returned to England, as it were, to finish where she began. I wish she had given us an account of the events that filled in the space between. She had a terrible distemper; the most virulent cancer I ever heard of, which carried her off very soon. I met her at Lady Bute's, in June, and she then looked well. In three weeks, at my return to London, I heard she was given over. The hemlock kept her drowsy and free from pain; and the physicians thought if it had been given early, might possibly have saved her. She left her son one guinea. He is too much of a sage to be concerned about money, I presume. When I first knew him, a rake and a beau, I did not imagine he would addict himself at one time to Rabbinical learning, and then travel all over the East, the great Itinerant Savant of the World. One has read that the believers in the transmigration of

souls suppose a man, who has been rapacious and cunning, does penance in the shape of a fox. Another, cruel and bloody, enters the body of a wolf; but I believe my poor cousin, in his pre-existent state, having broken all moral laws, has been sentenced to suffer in all the various characters of human life. He has run through them all unsuccessfully enough. His dispute with Mr. Needham has been communicated to me by a gentleman of the Museum, and I think he will gain no laurels there; but he speaks as decisively as if he had been bred in Pharaoh's court, in all the learning of the Egyptians. He has certainly very uncommon parts, but too much of the rapidity of his mother's genius.

. . . "I am sure my brother will be glad to hear that Mrs. Scott, of Scottshall is wet-nurse to our Prince of Wales, and is much liked by our king and royal family; so that I hope she will be able to make interest to establish all her children. A little of the royal favour and protection will bring them forward in professions, and the girls may have little places in the household; and I hope the scheme which I forwarded to the utmost of my

power, will save an ancient, honourable family from ruin. She is vastly pleased and happy in her situation, and her royal nursling is as fine and healthy a child as can be.

. . . "I have rambled a good deal this summer, much to my amusement and the amendment of Mr. Montagu's health, who was greatly out of order in the spring. We went to Lord Lyttelton's, in Worcestershire, with a large party consisting of my Lord Bath, Mr. and Mrs. Vesey, and Doctor Monsey. Lord Lyttelton had his daughter, his sister, Mrs. Hood, and the Bishop of Carlisle (his brother) with him, so we made a pretty round family. The weather was fine, and the place is delightful beyond all description. I should do it wrong, if I were to attempt to describe it. Its beauties are summed up in the lines of my favourite Italian poet—

> 'Culte pianure e delicati colli,
> Chiare acque, ombrose ripe, e prati molli.'

These lines seem to have been written for Hagley; but, besides these soft beauties, it has magnificent prospects of distant mountains, and hills shaded with wood. The house is magnificent and elegant;

we had several agreeable entertainments of musick in different parts of the Park, and adapted to the scenes. In some places, the French horns reverberated from hill to hill. In the shady parts near the cascades, the soft musick was concealed and seemed to come from the unseen genius of the wood. We were all in great spirits, and enjoyed the amusements prepared for us. Mr. Montagu grew better every day, by the air and exercise, and returned to London quite well, though he had been much pulled down by the fashionable cold called l'influenza.

. . . "He carried me to see Oxford, which, indeed, I had been at before; but when there are so many cities built for trade and commerce, it is always so pleasant to me to see there are places dedicated to the improvement of the human mind and the nobler commerce with the Muses; and tho' it is easy to find fault in everything, yet I think these places of education and study must have been of great service in advancing the noblest interests of mankind, the improvement of knowledge, and harmonizing the mind.

"We went to Blenheim, which I saw with great

pleasure, as the monument of England's foreign glory and national gratitude. In our return to town, we saw Warwick Castle, the seat of the great Neville, surnamed 'the Make-King.' We visited his tomb and the monuments of Beauchamps, Nevilles, and Brookes. I walked an hour under some trees, on a beautiful terrass where Lord Brooke and Sir Philip Sydney used to take their morning's walk, blending, I dare say, as in his 'Arcadia,' Wisedom of state and schemes of great enterprize with rural talk.

"In our next stage, we saw Kenilworth Castle, once the strong place of Simon de Montfort, since the seat of the Earl of Leicester. He entertained Queen Elizabeth there in all the pageantry of the old times of chivalry. From the lake a lady came, who told the queen, in rude rhime, that she had been confined there ever since the days of Merlin, but her majesty's power had set her free. The lake is now dry'd up. The place no longer belongs to ambition or luxury. Laughing Ceres re-assumed the land, and what the proud rebel and the assuming favorite left is enjoy'd by a farmer. There are great remains of the

stately castle, made more venerable by the finest ivy I ever saw. I could wish this object placed rather at the edge of a bleak mountain, and that it frowned on a desert, but it unhappily overlooks a sweet pastoral scene; however, the memory of the illustrious persons it has belonged to gives the mind that serious solemn, disposition its situation wants.

"But you who walk on classic ground will despise my Gothick antiquities. I will own my Nevilles and Montforts dare not stand equal with your Gracchi, nor my Earl of Leicester with any of the favorites of Augustus; but, perhaps, to the rough virtues and untamed valour of these potent rebels, we owe part of our present liberty and happiness, and even our taste for the venerable remains of ancient Rome. . . . I desire my most affectionate love to my brother; and to my nephew and godson, my best wishes; and I desire he will be a Roman, not an Italian. I beg him to go back as far as before the ruin of Carthage for his morals." . . .

In a fragment of a letter written in 1763, Mrs. Montagu says:—

"Miss Hunter has come back in the character of

the Fair Penitent. Her lover was soon tired of an engagement which had not the sanctions of virtue and honour. Shame and a fatherless babe she has brought back. I hope her miserable fate will deter adventurous damsels from such experiments." Kitty Hunter's fate was far from being miserable. She married Captain Clarke, who became Field Marshal Sir Alured Clarke; and the once audacious maid of honour died in the odour of fashion, A.D. 1810.

In 1764, Mrs. Montagu was an invalid—one who *would* fulfil the duties of her position, but who was glad to withdraw from them to the repose of Sandleford. Supremely admired as she was in society for the brilliancy of her talents, Mrs. Montagu was seen to the greatest advantage when at home with one or a very few choice friends. After Mrs. Elizabeth Carter had spent some time with her at pleasant Sandleford, she wrote to Mrs. Vesey. . . . "For most part of the time we were entirely alone. . . . Our friend, you know, has talents which must distinguish her in the largest circles; but there it is impossible for one fully to discover either the beauties of her character or the extent

and variety of her understanding, which always improves on a more accurate examination and on a nearer view. . . . The charm is inexpressibly heightened when it is complicated with the affections of the heart." Mr. Pennington, Mrs. Carter's nephew and editor of her correspondence, states that those who did not know Mrs. Montagu in her exclusive home character were ignorant of the real charms of her understanding, the strength of her mind, and the goodness of her heart.

One of her great trials visited her this year—the death of her constant and venerated friend, the Earl of Bath. There is no letter in the unpublished collection which bears any reference to Lord Bath's death—Walpole's great enemy, and Mrs. Montagu's most devoted and admiring friend. It would be difficult to say whether this accomplished nobleman, or the good Lord Lyttelton, or the profound Lord Kames, or discerning Burke had the greatest veneration for the mental endowments of Mrs. Montagu. It may be here added, as a sample of one or two other ladies of the last century, that after Lord Bath was a widower, and had been made childless by the loss of his gallant son, un-

attached ladies made offers of marriage to him, he being one of the wealthiest men of the day. They propósed seriously, like Mrs. Anne Pitt, or by strong inuendo, like Lady Bell Finch. The latter, on Lord Bath returning to her half a crown which he had borrowed, wished he could give her a *crown.* Lady Bell replied, that though he could not give her a crown, he could give her a coronet, and that she was ready to accept it! Lyttelton celebrated the friendship which existed between Mrs. Montagu, Lord Bath, and himself in 1762, in a little poem called "The Vision." The noble poet told how a bard appeared to him, and how the minstrel sang of the superiority of the myrtle to the oak, then—

> —— "closed the bard his mystic song,—his shade
> Shrunk from my grasp and into air decay'd,
> But left imprinted on my ravish'd view,
> The forms of Pult'ney and of Montagu."

After the earl's death, his will was as much the subject of conversation as his decease. Chesterfield calculated, that in money and land he left to the value of 2,400,000*l.*, and made his sole legatee the brother, General Pulteney, whom he never

loved. "The legacies he has left are trifling; for, in truth, he cared for nobody. The words *give* and *bequeath* were too shocking for him to repeat, and so he left all in one word, to his brother." In 1767 General Pulteney died.

The next letter is dated from Mrs. Montagu's Northumberland residence, Denton Castle (or Hall), December 7th, 1766. It is addressed to Mrs. Robinson, and contains long and premature congratulations on the expected birth of her sister-in-law's next baby, and then continues:—"I am still in the northern regions, but I hope in a fortnight to return to London. We have had a mild season, and this house is remarkably warm, so that I have not suffered from cold. Business has taken up much of my time, and as we had farms to let against next May-day, and I was willing to see the new colliery begin to trade to London before I left the country, I had the prudence to get the better of my taste for society. I had this day the pleasure of a letter from Billingsgate (a polite part of the world for a lady to correspond with) that the first ships which were then arrived were much approved. At Lynne they have also succeeded, and these are the

two great coal-markets. So now, as soon as I can get all the ends and bottoms of our business wound up, I shall set out for Hill Street.

"I spent a month in Scotland this summer, and made a further progress than Mr. Gray did. An old friend of Mr. Montagu's and mine came to us here, and brought his daughter the end of July, and summoned me to keep a promise I had made him, of letting him be my knight-errant and escort me round Scotland.

"The 1st of August we set forward. I called on the Duke and Duchess of Northumberland at Alnwick Castle, in my way. It is the most noble Gothick building imaginable. Its antique form is preserved on the outside. Within the apartments are also Gothick in their structure and ornaments, but convenient and noble; so that modern elegance arranges and conducts antique strength and grandeur, leaves its sublimity of character, but softens what was rude and unpolished.

"My next day's journey carried me to Edinburgh, where I staid about ten days. I passed my time there very agreeably, receiving every polite attention from all the people of distinction in the town. I

never saw anything equal to the hospitality of the Scotch. Every one seemed to make it their business to attend me to all the fine places in the neighbourhood, to invite me to dinner, to supper, &c. As I had declined an invitation to go to Glasgow, the Lord Provost of Glasgow insisted on my coming to his villa near the town, instead of going to a noisy inn. I staid three days there to see the seats in the environs, and the great cathedral, and the college and academy for painting, and then I set out for Inverary. I should first tell you, Glasgow is the most beautiful town in Great Brittain. The houses, according to the Scotch fashion, are large and high, and built of freestone; the streets very broad, and built at right angles. All dirty kinds of business are carried on in separate districts, so that nothing appears but a noble and elegant simplicity.

"My road from Glasgow to Inverary lay by the side of the famous lake called Loughlomon. Never did I see the sublime and beautiful so united. The lake is in some places eight miles broad, in others less; adorned with many islands, of which some rise in a conical figure, and are covered with

fir-trees up to the summit. Other islands are flatter. Deer are feeding in their green meadows. In the lontananza rise the mountains, on whose barren breast

'The labouring clouds do seem to rest.'

The lake is bright as crystal, and the shore consists of alabaster pebbles. Thus I travelled near twenty miles, till I came to the village of Leess, where I lay at an inn, there being no gentleman's house near it. The next morning I began to ascend the Highland mountains. I got out of the chaise to climb to the top of one, to take my leave of the beautiful lake. The sun had not been long up; its beams danced on the lake, and we saw this lovely water meandering for twenty-five miles. Immediately after I returned to my chaise, I began to be inclosed in a deep valley between vast mountains, down whose furrowed cheeks torrents rushed impetuously, and united in a river in a vale below. Winter's rains had so washed away the soil from some of the steep mountains, there appeared little but the rock which, like the skeleton of a giant, appeared more terrible than the perfect form. Other mountains were covered with a dark brown

moss. The shaggy goats were browsing on their sides. Here and there appeared a storm-struck tree or blasted shrub, from whence no lark ever saluted the morn with joyous hymn, or Philomel sooth'd the dull ear of night; but from thence the eagle gave the first lessons of flight to her young, and taught them to make war on the kids.

"In the Vale of Glencoe, we stopp'd to dine amidst the rude magnificence of nature rather than in the meanest of the works of art, so did not enter the cottage which called itself an inn. From thence, my servant brought me fresh herrings and bread; and my Lord Provost's wife had fill'd my maid's chaise with good things; so very luxuriously we feasted. I wish'd Ossian would have come to us, and told a tale of other times. However, imagination and memory assisted, and we recollected many passages in the very places that inspired them. I staid three hours listening to the roaring stream, and hoped some ghost would come on the blast of the mountain and show us the three grey stones erected to his memory. After dinner, we went on about fourteen miles, still in the valley; mountain rising above mountain till we ascended to

Inverary. There we at once entered the vale where lies the vast lake called Lough Fine, of whose dignity I cannot give you a better notion than by telling you the great leviathan had taken his pastime therein the night before I was there. Tho' it is forty miles from the sea, whales come up there often in the herring season. . . .

"At Inverary, I was lodged at a gentleman's house, invited to another's in the neighbourhood, and attended round the Duke of Argylle's policy (such is called the grounds dedicated to beauty and ornament). I went also to see the castle built by the late duke. It appears small by the vast objects near it. This great lake before—a vast mountain covered with firr and beech behind—it, so that, relatively, the castle is little. I was obliged to return back to Glasgow the same way, not having time to make the tour of the Highlands. Lord Provost had an excellent dinner and good company ready for us. The next day I went to Lord Kames', near Sterling, where I had promised to stay a day. I pass'd a day very agreeably there, but could not comply with their obliging entreaties to stay a longer time, but was obliged to return to Edin-

burgh. Lord Kames attended me to Stirling Castle, which is on the road, and from thence to the iron works at Carron. Then again I was on classical ground. We dined at Mr. Dundass's. At night, I got back to Edinburgh, where I rested myself three days, and then, on my road, lay at Dr. Gilbert Elliot's, and spent a day with him and Lady Elliot. They facilitated my journey by lending me relays, which the route did not always furnish; so I sent my own horses a stage forward. I crossed the Tweed again; dined and lay at the Bishop of Carlisle's, at Rose Castle, and then came home much pleased with the expedition, and grateful for the infinite civilities I had received.

"My evenings at Edinburgh passed very agreeably with Dr. Robertson, Dr. Blair, Lord Kames, and divers ingenious and agreeable persons. My friend, Dr. Gregory, who was my fellow-traveller, tho' he is a mathematician, has a fine imagination, an elegant taste, and every quality to make an agreeable companion. . . . He came back to Denton with me, but soon left us. I detain'd his two daughters, who are still with us; they are most amiable children. . . .

"I was told Mr. Gray was rather reserved when he

was in Scotland, tho' they were disposed to pay him great respect. I agree perfectly with him, that to endeavour to shine in conversation and to lay out for admiration is very paltry. The wit of the company, next to the butt of the company, is the meanest person in it. But at the same time, when a man of celebrated talents disdains to mix in common conversation, or refuses to talk on ordinary subjects, it betrays a latent pride. There is a much brighter character than that of a wit or a poet, or a savant, which is that of a rational and sociable being, willing to carry on the commerce of life with all the sweetness and condescension, decency and virtue will permit. The great duty of conversation is to follow suit, as you do at whist. If the eldest hand plays the deuce of diamonds, let not his next neighbour dash down the king of hearts, because his hand is full of honours. I do not love to see a man of wit win all the tricks in conversation, nor yet to see him sullenly pass. I speak not this of Mr. Gray in particular; but it is the common failing of men of genius to assert a proud superiority or maintain a prouder indolence. I shall be very glad to see Mr. Gray whenever he

will be pleased to do me the favour. I think he is the first poet of the age; but if he comes to my fireside, I will teach him not only to *speak prose*, but to talk nonsense, if occasion be. . . . I would not have a poet always sit on the proud summit of the forked hill. I have a great respect for Mr. Gray as well as a high admiration." . . .

Whenever Mrs. Montagu got up to ride a simile, there was ground for anxiety on the part of her friends; some among them, too, must have wished that she had called a nightingale a *nightingale*, and not "philomel." In travel, however, she saw what she saw, which many travellers never do. She was not at all like the wife of Sir George Cornewall, mentioned by Lady Malmesbury, in a letter to her son, written at Chambery, 1816: "She never looks at anything, but works in the carriage all day long. She will not even go to Chamouni;" or that other lady who, passing through the sublimest of mountain scenery, kept her eyes shut, declaring that it was too beautiful to look at.

## CHAPTER VI.

In 1769, the critical state of public affairs drew from Mrs. Montagu the following reflection :—"I hope I shall see all my friends safe and well at my return to town ; but, indeed, a wicked mob and a foolish ministry may produce strange events. It was better in old times, when the ministry was wicked and the mob foolish. . . . Ministers, however wicked, do not pull down houses, nor ignorant mobs pull down government. A mob that can read and a ministry that cannot think are sadly matched.'

In truth, however, Mrs. Montagu was engaged during this year on a work which was not only praiseworthy for the motive which induced her to undertake it, but honourable to her for its execution, and, it may almost be added, glorious to her personally in its results.

In 1769, Mrs. Montagu published, anonymously,

her "Essay on the Writings and Genius of Shakespeare." This work, once widely famous, may still be read with pleasure. It was written in reply to Voltaire's grossly indecent attack on our national poet. Some previous allusion which he had made, to Shakespeare, to show his own learning, had directed the notice of French readers to a new dramatic literature which soon won their admiration. Voltaire's jealousy induced him to denounce what he had before extolled, and he did this in the spirit of the tiger and the monkey—the component elements, according to his own mendacious saying, of all Frenchmen. He had no deep knowledge of the subject he affected to criticise, and was not made of the stuff that could lead him to feel sympathy with the lofty sentiments, or to be stirred by the searching wit of the greatest of dramatic poets. Voltaire could no more appreciate Shakespeare than he could estimate the divine character of Joan of Arc. If Joan's own countrymen betrayed her, Voltaire stands foremost among Frenchmen as the beastly polluter of her spotless reputation.

Mrs. Montagu makes the following playful allusion to her authorship, in a letter to Lord Lyttelton,

December, 1769:—"I am sorry to tell you that a friend of yours is no longer a concealed scribbler. I had better have employed the town crier to proclaim me an author; but, being whispered, it has circulated with incredible swiftness. I hear Mr. Andrew Stone is very indulgent to my performance, which much flatters my vanity. Mr. Melmoth, at Bath, flatters me; but I am most flattered that a brother writer says, the book would be very well if it had not too much wit. I thought there had been no wit at all in it; and I am as much pleased as M. Jourdain was when his preceptor told him he spoke prose. If my wit hurts anybody or anything, it is chance-medley—no premeditated malice; neither art nor part has my will therein. I don't love wit: it is a poor, paltry thing, and fit only for a Merry Andrew.

"I look very innocent when I am attacked about the essay, and say, 'I don't know what you mean!' I shall set about a new edition as soon as your lordship comes to town; for the first thousand is in great part sold, tho' the booksellers have done me all the prejudice in their power." The new edition was even more successful than the first.

Mrs. Montagu's defence may appear a little too

apologetic now; but it is marked by good taste, by evidences of deep thought, by flashes of wit, and by the grasp she has, firmly and gracefully, on her subject. She deals with dramatic poetry and the historical drama, examines the first and second parts of "Henry IV.," treats of the preternatural beings of Shakespeare, and ends by a comparison of "Cinna" and "Julius Cæsar." If any may differ with her in respect to Corneille, whose third act of "Cinna" is worthy of the great French dramatic poet, no reader will hesitate to praise the earnestness and delicacy with which this Lady of the Last Century has executed her noble task.

A French translation appeared in Paris in 1777, the year before Voltaire died. In England, six editions of the essay were published, the last in 1810. In 1827, it had the honour of being noticed with high praise, by M. Villemain, in his "Nouveaux Mélanges Historiques et Littéraires;" and in 1840, an edition in Italian was published in Florence.

Few English readers had read Voltaire so thoughtfully as Mrs. Montagu, and perhaps none reflected more on what they read than she did, or gave more graceful expression to consequent

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judgment. One side of Voltaire's character she described (while the witty Frenchman was preparing his attack on Shakespeare) to Lord Kames.

"Voltaire sent a tragedy to Paris, which he said was composed in ten days. The players sent it back to him to correct. At threescore and ten one should not think his wit would outrun his judgment; but he seems to begin a second infancy in wit and philosophy,—a dangerous thing to one who has such an antipathy to leading strings." It was Voltaire's self-praise that offended Mrs. Montagu as much as his offensive condescension to, and disparagement of, Shakespeare. When she was told that Voltaire had said boastingly: "C'est moi qui autrefois parlai le premier de ce Shakespeare. C'est moi qui le premier montrai aux Français quelques perles que j'avais trouvé dans son fumier." "Ah!" replied Mrs. Montagu, with great readiness, "C'est un fumier qui a fertilisé une terre bien ingrate." French fashionable circles, which loved wit and cared not a jot who suffered by it, received and repeated the saying of the accomplished English lady as if it had been ten times more brilliant than it was in reality.

Mrs. Montagu's defence of Shakespeare was not too tenderly treated by her own friends. All the frankness of friendship was cheerfully given to it. The plain-spoken Dowager Countess Gower thus wrote soon after the appearance of the Vindication :—

1769.—"Fortune has blest this forest with the geniuses of the age; Mrs. Montagu, Mrs. Carter, Mrs. Dunbar, &c., &c., and Lord Lyttelton are at Sunning Wells, and sport sentiment from morn till noon, from noon till dewy eve. I molest 'em not; contenting myself in my rustic simplicity. 'Tis a stupidity that may be felt, I don't doubt, but not by me. Mrs. Montagu has commenced author, in *vindication* of Shakespeare, who *wants none;* therefore her performance must be deemed a work of supererogation. Some commend it. I'll have it, because I can throw it aside when I'm tired." Johnson treated it with greater brutality. He had once compared Mrs. Montagu with Queen Elizabeth, and had recognized in the former the greater qualifications. Now, he denounced the essay when he had only looked into it. He had taken up an end of the web, and finding pack-thread, thought it useless, as he said, to go further in search of embroidery.

Reynolds thought it did her honour, which Johnson allowed, but he spoiled the admission by asserting that it would do honour to no one else. Garrick said she had pointed out Voltaire's blunders; to which Johnson replied, that it wasn't worth while, and that there was no merit in the way of doing it. Subsequently, he declared: "Neither I, nor Beauclerk, nor Mrs. Thrale could 'get through the book!"—a declaration which was unfounded, as far as Mrs. Thrale was concerned; for she protested that she had read it with pleasure. The great man, in short, talked nonsense, but dressed it in fine words. "There was no real criticism in it," he said, "showing the beauty of thought, as formed in the workings of the human heart." Mrs. Montagu did not feel called on to exhibit any such beauty or any such superstructure. She exposed the blundering arrogance of Voltaire, who first praised Shakespeare, for the annoyance of his own countrymen, and then, finding the French inclined to accept the praise, aspersed brutally the poet whom he had pillaged without mercy.

Johnson thought little of Garrick, probably because Garrick approved the object of Mrs. Mon-

tagu's Shakespearian essay, and because the lady gave very high praise to Garrick as an actor. Johnson thought it was fit that she should say much, and that *he* should say nothing, in Garrick's praise. Accomplished Bruin, however, said much to the great player's disparagement. He maintained that Garrick had been overpaid for what he had done for Shakespeare. "Sir, he has not made Shakespeare better known. He cannot illustrate Shakespeare!" When Johnson afterwards wrote to Mrs. Thrale, that speaking of "Shakespeare and Nature" rightly brought Mrs. Montagu into his mind, he is supposed to be inconsistent, when he was, it may be, only satirical. He certainly uttered a judgment on the essay, which is not to be gainsaid, when he maintained, according to Mr. Seward, that the work was "ad hominem, conclusive against Voltaire," and that "she had done, sir, what she intended to do."

The greatest praise which the essay received was awarded to it by Cowper many years after it was published. Writing in May 27th, 1788, to Lady Hesketh, Cowper said:—"I no longer wonder that Mrs. Montagu stands at the head of all that is called learned, and that every critic veils his bonnet

to her superior judgment. I am now reading and have reached the middle of her essay on the genius of Shakespeare—a book of which, strange as it may seem, though I must have read it formerly, I had absolutely forgot the existence.

"The learning, the good sense, the sound judgment, and the wit displayed in it fully justify, not only my compliment, but all compliments that either have been already paid to her talents or shall be paid hereafter. Voltaire, I doubt not, rejoiced that his antagonist wrote in English, and that his countrymen could not possibly be judges of the dispute. Could they have known how much she was in the right, and by how many thousand miles the Bard of Avon is superior to all their dramatists, the French critic would have lost half his fame among them."

While honour was being showered on the writer of the essay, ill health, from which she suffered long and frequently, marred her triumph.

Writing to Mrs. W. Robinson, from Hill Street, Nov. the 19th, 1770, she says :—. . . : "I fell ill on my journey to Denton, or rather, indeed, began the journey indisposed, and only aggravated my com-

plaints by travelling. Sickness and bad weather deprived me of the pleasure of seeing the beauties of Derbyshire. However, I got a sight of the stately Palace of Lord Scarsdale, where the arts of antient Greece and the delicate pomp of modern ages unite to make a most magnificent habitation. It is the best worth seeing of any house, I suppose, in England. But I know how it is that one receives but moderate pleasure in the works of art. There is a littleness in every work of man. The operations of nature are vast and noble, and I found much greater pleasure in the contemplation of Lord Breadalbane's mountains, rocks, and lakes than in all the efforts of human art at Lord Scarsdale's."

Mrs. Montagu's illness increasing at Denton, she writes:—"Dr. Gregory came from Edinburgh to make me a visit, and persuaded me to go back with him. The scheme promised much pleasure, and, I flattered myself, might be conducive to health, as the doctor, of whose medical skill I have the highest opinion, would have time to observe and consider my various complaints. I was glad also to have an opportunity of amusing my friend, Mrs. Chapone, whom I carried into the north with me. We had a

pleasant journey to Edinburgh, where we were most agreeably entertained in Dr. Gregory's house, all the literate and polite company of Edinburgh paying me all kind of attentions; and, by the doctor's regimen, my health improved greatly; so that I was prevailed upon to enjoy my love of prospects by another trip to the Highlands, my good friend and physician still attending me. The first day's journey was to Lord Buchan, brother to Mr. Charles Erskine, who was the intimate companion and friendly competitor of my poor brother Tom. Each of them was qualified for the highest honours of their profession, which they would have certainly attained, had it pleased God to have granted longer life. Lord Buchan had received great civilities at Horton when he was pursuing his law studies in England; so he came to visit me as soon as I got to Edinburgh, and, in the most friendly manner, pressed my passing some days at his house in Perthshire. I got there by an easy day's journey, having also walked a long time about the castle of Stirling, which commands a very beautiful prospect.

"Lord Buchan's place is very fine and in a very singular style. His house looks to the south, over

a very rich valley, rendered more fertile as well as more beautiful by the meanderings of the river Forth. Behind his house rise great hills covered with wood, and over them stupendous rocks. The goats look down with an air of philosophic pride and gravity on folks in the valley. One in particular seemed to me capable of addressing the famous beast of Gavaudan, if he had been there, with as much disdain as Diogenes did the great conqueror of the East. Here I passed two days very agreeably, and then his lordship and my doctor attended me to my old friend Lord Kinnoul's. You may imagine my visit there gave me a great deal of pleasure besides what arose from seeing a fine place. I was delighted to find an old friend enjoying that heartfelt happiness which attends a life of virtue. Lord Kinnoul is continually employed in encouraging agriculture and manufactures, protecting the weak from injury, assisting the distressed, and animating the young people to whatever in their various stations is most fit and proper. . . . He appears more happy in this situation than when he was whirled about in the vortex of the Duke of Newcastle. The situation of a Scottish nobleman

of fortune is enough to fill the ambition of a reasonable man, for they have power to do a great deal of good.

"From Dupplin we went to Lord Breadalbane's, at Taymouth. Here unite the sublime and beautiful. The house is situated in a valley where the verdure is the finest imaginable; noble beeches adorn it, and beautiful cascades fall down the midst of it. Through this valley you are led to a vast lake. On one side of the lake there is a fine country; on the other, mountains lift their heads or hide them in the clouds. In some places ranges of rocks look like vast fortifyed cittadels. I passed two days in this fine place, where I was entertained with the greatest politeness and kindest attentions, Lord Breadalbane seeming to take the greatest pleasure in making everything easy, agreeable, and convenient.

"My next excursion was to Lord Kames'; and then I returned to Edinburgh. With Lord Kames and his lady I have had a correspondence ever since I was first in Scotland, so I was there received with cordial friendship. I must do the justice to the Scottish nation to say, they are the most politely hospitable of any people in the world. I had

innumerable invitations of which I could not avail myself, having made as long a holiday from my business in Northumberland as I could afford.

"The newspapers will inform you of the death of Mr. George Grenville. I think he is a great loss to the publick; and tho' in these days of ribbaldry and abuse he was often much calumniated, I believe time will vindicate his character as a publick man: as a private one, he was quite unblemished. I regret the loss to myself. I was always pleased and informed by his conversation. He had read a vast deal, and had an amazing memory. He had been versed in business from his youth; so that he had a very rich fund of conversation, and he was good-natured and very friendly.

"The King's Speech has a warlike tone. But still we flatter ourselves that the French king's aversion to war may prevent our being again engaged in one. . . . Lord Chatham was to have spoken in the House of Lords to-day, if poor Mr. Grenville's death, which happened at seven this morning, had not hindered his appearing in publick. . . .

"Mr. Montagu did not leave Denton till almost a week after I came away; and he was stop'd at

Durham by waters being out; but I had the pleasure of hearing yesterday that he got safe to Darlington, where he was to pass a few days with a famous mathematician, but I expect him in town the end of this week. My nephew, Morris, has got great credit at Eton already. . . . My doctors order me to forbear writing, but this letter does not show my obedience to them. . . . The celebrated coterie will go on, in spite of all remonstrances, and there is to be an assembly thrice a week for the subscribers to the opera, so little impression do rumours of wars and apprehensions of the plague make in the fine world. . . .

"I am in your debt for my pretty neice's dancing-master, which I forgot when I had the pleasure of seeing you. I shall hope to supply her, as opportunity offers, with all the assistance of that sort which her happy genius will make of great use to her; but your constant care will supply many better things than those the artists teach, and I do not doubt of her making an amiable and valuable woman. With the most sincere regard, I am, dear madam, your very affectionate sister, and faithful friend, and humble servt., E. M. . . . I know you

will be very glad to hear I left everything in such order in the north, that I shall not pay my devotions to ye pole-star again for some years."

No two people had more delight in mutual conversation than Mrs. Montagu and Lord Kames. They were so agreed upon one subject,—the insincerity, ignorance, and meanness of Voltaire, as to make their conversation most lively when it turned upon the Frenchman who defiled the character of the most glorious of Frenchwomen, Joan of Arc,—who heaped abuse upon Shakespeare and on those who defended him,—and who hated and miscalled Lord Kames for having weighed his "Henriade" in the scales of criticism, and for having found it "wanting." Over this reply of Voltaire to Lord Kames, that judge and philosopher, reading it aloud, laughed himself, and raised irrepressible laughter in the lady who listened to him. The reply is in one of Voltaire's "Lettres à un Journaliste." "Permit me to explain to you some whimsical singularities of 'The Elements of Criticism,' in three volumes, by Lord Makames (*sic*), a justice of peace in Scotland. That philosopher has a most profound knowledge of nature and art, and he uses the utmost efforts to

make the rest of the world as wise as himself. He begins by proving that we have five senses; and that we are less struck by a gentle impression made on our eyes and ears, by colours and sounds, than by a knock on the head or a kick on the leg. Proceeding from that to the rules of time and space, M. Home concludes with mathematical precision, that time seems long to a lady who is about to be married, and short to a man who is going to be hanged. M. Home applies doctrines equally extraordinary to every department of art. It is a surprising effect of the progress of the human mind, that we should now receive from Scotland rules for our taste in all matters, from an epic poem down to a garden. Knowledge extends daily, and we must not despair of hereafter obtaining performances in poetry and oratory from the Orkney Islands. M. Home always lays down his opinions as a law, and extends his despotic sway far and wide. He is a judge who absorbs all appeals."

The famous mathematician to whom Mrs. Montagu refers in the above letter was William Emerson, of whom Mr. Montagu is believed to have been the original patron. Mr. Montagu may, in some

degree, have helped that poor and eccentric scholar, but the energies of the once idle Yorkshire dreamer were really developed by an injustice. He had married the niece of a clergyman, who basely cheated the bride out of her dowry of 500*l.* Whereupon the proud and angry husband sent back the whole of his wife's wardrobe, with the message that he would "scorn to be beholden to such a fellow for a rag!" When Mr. Montagu married Elizabeth Robinson, Emerson had just ready for the press the work which gave him a place in the highest rank of mathematicians—his "Doctrine of Fluxions." The distinction neither affected his eccentricity nor softened his audacity. He was wont to sign his mathematical solutions with a name that might have made Minerva breathless—"Philofluentimechanelgegeomastrolonzo," and he lived to shock Mrs. Edward Montagu by snapping his fingers at the Royal Society, and damning the fellows and their fellowships!

George Grenville and Burke are among the best samples of the men whom Mrs. Montagu appreciated, and who could thoroughly appreciate Mrs. Montagu. Burke has spoken in the highest terms

of both. Of the statesman who, five years before his death, resigned all his offices, Burke said: "With a masculine understanding and a stout and resolute heart, he had an application undissipated and unwearied. He took public business, not as a duty he was to fulfil, but as a pleasure he was to enjoy; and he seemed to have no delight out of the house, except in such things as in some way related to the business that was to be done within it. If he was ambitious, I will say this for him, that his ambition was of a noble and generous strain. It was to raise himself, not by the low, pimping politics of a court, but to win his way to power through the laborious gradations of public service, and to secure himself a well-earned rank in parliament, by a thorough knowledge of its constitution and in perfect practice in all its business." Mrs. Montagu might justly be proud of the good opinion of a friend who could express such a judgment of another friend like Grenville, for whom she herself entertained the highest esteem.

Mrs. Montagu to Mrs. Robinson.—"January 17, 1771. . . . I have kept very well all this frost, and what is more strange in a town lady, I have been very

discreet. I have improved upon Lady Grace's plan of doing very soberly. I have been serious, and solemn, and retired, and have sat as quietly at my fireside as any antiquated dowager when her quadrille party was gone into the country. But I have said enough upon such an atom, and I will now talk of ye great persons and things of this world. The Duke of Bedford died of a fit of the asthma. He departed singing the 104th Psalm. This shows he had some piety, but I think his grace sang out of tune; so I am not an admirer of his singing." (Walpole says he "had lost his sight, and almost his speech and limbs.") "I like a Psalm-singing cobler in death as well as in life. A poor man who has maintained a wife and children by his labour, has kept the ten commandments, has observed the Sabbath, kept the laws of the community, and lived kindly with his neighbours, may sing his own requiem with a comfortable and cheerful assurance. Of him to whom little is given, little shall be required. But the debtor and creditor of a long account is not so easily settled. Wealth, titles, power, give a great influence in society. Have the poor been relieved, the weak protected, the industrious been

encouraged, virtue countenanced, merit brought forth to view, the profligate discouraged, the commonwealth served equal to its great demands on a Duke of Bedford, the proprietor of a vast estate? I mean not to intimate that he was to dye in despair, for his Judge is merciful, but in his sight no man living shall be justified; so that, unless there is an uncommon merit or innocence of character, I see no reason for this kind of jollity. His grace has left enough to make the duchess's jointure 6000*l.* a year. She is to keep up the houses at Bloomsbury and at Wooburn. Her grace, Mr. Palmer, and the Duchess of Marlborough are trustees for the young duke. . . .

"As the late duke was sometimes headstrong, the court will have an advantage in having the duchess to deal with, as Lord Sandwich is her guide in politicks. The duke left Mr. Rigby 5000*l.*, a sum for which he had Mr. Rigby's bond. He has left a sum of fourscore pound a year to Miss Wrotesley; a year's wages to servants. I hear not of other legacies. It is believed Lord Suffolk will not accept of any place. . . .

"It is believed we shall have a Peace. The King

of Prussia and the Emperor joined to get a peace for the Turks. These potentates design to keep the French in order and to defend Germany. The Emperor wishes to recover Lorraine and Alsace. So it is supposed the French will sit quiet even if the Spaniards should go to war with us. I am not afraid of the Dons, if not assisted by French vivacity. All our family is well, and the père de famille best of all. . . . Mr. M. is pure well."

The following letter to Mrs. Robinson, the writer's sister-in-law, whose father, Mr. Richardson, was a private gentleman of Kensington, contains a reference to the Kensington "ladies'-school" of the writer's early time, and one to the Chelsea school, where she visited Mrs. William Robinson's daughter in 1772. These references are valuable illustrations of the female scholastic life of the two periods. "I called on my pretty neice at Chelsea, who I had the pleasure of finding in perfect health, with a little addition of embonpoint extremely becoming. She received me very politely, and her governesses spoke much in her praise. Indeed, she is a very good subject for them, appearing to have much good-humour, docility, and

everything I could wish." The young Sarah Elizabeth's extremely becoming embonpoint induced her sagacious aunt to look at her stays. "I found fault with her stays," she writes, "which lift up her shoulders; and they say they had your leave to get others, but I could not understand why they had neglected to do it. I was pleased to find my neice perfectly clean and neat, tho' I called on ye Saturday, which is usually only the eve of cleanliness. I remember at Mrs. Robartes', at Kensington, the girls used to be so dirty, sometimes one could not salute them!"

## CHAPTER VII.

Mrs. William Robinson, who, with her husband and children, had been so long abroad, had now returned to England, and had visited Mr. and Mrs. Montagu. Late in the year, Mrs. Montagu wrote to her sister-in-law:—

"August ye 9th, 1772. . . . I am quite ashamed to think how ungrateful I must have appeared to you and my brother for your kind visit and obliging letter, in letting so long a time pass before I returned my thanks. Your visit appeared to us like a pleasant dream, from which we were sorry to awake and find ourselves deserted by such agreable guests. The Duchess of Portland arrived in two or three days after your departure. She made me rather a longer visit than you did, but still a much shorter than I wished it. Her grace submitted with infinite

good-humour to all the awkwardnesses of a Tunbridge lodging. We had, happily, that kind of weather which makes pastoral life agreable. I was delighted to find that time had not robbed her grace of her pleasing vivacity, and we laugh'd as heartily as we used to do in our younger days. Her grace gave me as a fairing the most beautiful, rich, and elegant snuff-box I ever saw, for which I could only return her thanks; for I thought it would be putting myself too much upon a par with her, to make a return in kind. If I could get any natural curiosity to add to her collection, it would make me very happy.

"Every day after you left us the place began to fill with company.

. . . "We have had the finest weather I ever saw for any long continuance. As a farmer, I have some fault to find with it. Our wheat, and barley, and turnips have all suffered by drought. We had not any reason to complain of our hay, but the grass is very much burnt. The dearness of all kinds of provisions have reduced our poor neighbours to a state of wretchedness which I never saw before in England. . . . My father has been ill, but I believe his

complaints were nervous, and partly the effects of hot weather. I wonder how he can endure to live in a brick-oven all the summer season.

. . . "I went the other day to Winchester, and dined with Dr. Warton, and saw the school. The doctor allowed me to ask a play for the boys, which made them very happy, and gave him leisure to pass the time with me. My sweet, lovely Miss Gregory and I set out very early in the morning, so that we got to Winchester before eleven o'clock, and staid there till between six and seven, and were at home in good time. . . . Miss Gregory and Mrs. Morgan are much your humble servants. . . . When you have an opportunity to get the nankeen, tea, and handkerchiefs, I can pay what is due for them to your banker. If a blue tafety, or a white of a very fine colour should come in your way and seem a pennyworth, please to add it, or anything you may have offered that is plain. . . . Cheap, pretty, plain muslin for gowns would not come amiss. But, as smuggling is a dangerous trade, much counterband goods must not travel in the same box. All possible love to my dear nephew and neices, with whom I hope to make a

more intimate acquaintance before they have disposed of all their love and friendship."

Aug. 15, 1772. Mrs. Montagu to Mrs. Robinson. . . . "I was very sorry that your races happened so untowardly, that I could not edge in my visit without being complicated in them. I remember the time when the said races would have a very different effect than deterring me from the neighbourhood; but we change to everything and everything changes to us. I cannot say that as one grows older, one grows so much wiser as to despise foolish amusements, but one likes new kinds of follies. I mean we always like some of those things severe and frowning wisdom calls follies.

"I had the pleasure in finding Mr. Montagu in extreme good health, which gave me the higher satisfaction, as I had been alarmed about him some time before.

"I went a few miles out of my road to Sandleford, to fulfill my old promise to Mr. Burke to spend a day or two with him and Mrs. Burke, at Beaconsfield. I was sorry that I could not continue there longer than one whole day, as I was then not so assured

that Mr. Montagu was in perfect health. When the talents of a man of genius, the acuteness of a politician, the alert vivacity of a man of business are all employed to make conversation agreable and society pleasant, one passes one's time very delightfully in such company.

"At Beaconsfield, Mr. Burke is an industrious farmer, a polite husband, a kind master, a charitable neighbour, and a most excellent companion. The demons of ambition and party who hover about Westminster do not extend their influences as far as the villa. I know not why it is, but these busy spirits seem more tranquil and pleased in their days of retreat than the honest, dull justice of the quorum, who never stretched forth his hand to snatch the sceptre of power, or raised his voice in publick to fill the trumpet of fame. A little mind is for ever in a tracasserie, because it is moved by little things. I have always found that nothing is so gentle as the chief out of war, nor so serene and simple as the statesman out of place. If it were fit to name names and certify places, I would bring many examples to justify my assertion. I so much delight in these working master-spirits in their

holiday humour, that I had rather play at tee-totum or cross and pile with Julius Cæsar than with Sardanapalus. The first would have the easy indifference that belongs to play; the other, the seriousness and anxiety which belong to business.

"I am now preparing for a little excursion in which I shall see some of the busy folks of the great world; so I expect to enjoy my time in the more joyous tranquility. On Friday, I am to go to Stowe, Lord and Lady Temple having given me repeated invitations there. I am much afraid the weather will not favour my excursion; however, as I shall stay four days at Stowe, I hope to see those superbe gardens while I am there in favourable gleams of sunshine. I have not seen Stowe since I first married. Lord Temple, I hear, has much improved them.

"I shall have the pleasure of making a visit at another fine place which I never yet saw, which is Lord Nuneham's, in Oxfordshire. . . . Mr. Herbert has given me a very agreable neighbour in Lady Elizabeth. She has been very well educated, and I dare say will always behave with great propriety. Mr. Herbert is a young man of uncommon un-

derstanding and merit. He has come early, and not too early, into ye possession of an ample fortune.

. . . "I am much pleased to hear my neice is so tractable and good; a disposition to oblige her Parents, and to do what those who love her advise her to, will make her much happier than wilfulness and obstinacy. . . . My nephews, Morris and Matthew, are just arrived. They are fine boys. Morris grows very handsome, and he has a very good character amongst his school-fellows. These little men will be a great amusement to Mr. Montagu in my absence. I passed my time very well at Tunbridge, having so agreable a companion at home as my sister; so that I depend on the great world for nothing more than vagrant amusement at idle hours; and this is all one can reasonably expect of the great world. One should have one's solid comforts at home. One makes a good meal; the other a pleasant dessert.

. . . "I regret that poor Mr. Gray is now no more than Pindar. One fatal moment sets two or three thousand years aside, and brings the account equal. I really believe our British Pindar not

unequal in merit to the bard of Thebes. I hope Mr. Gray has left some works yet unpublished."

Walpole, who never appears in a more favourable light than when he speaks with affectionate reverence of Gray, supplemented Mrs. Montagu's hopes by saying, "I should earnestly wish, if he has destined anything for the public, to print it at my press. It would do me honour and give me an opportunity of expressing what I feel for him. Methinks, as we grow old, our only business here is to adorn the graves of our friends or dig our own."

From these reflections, Mrs. Montagu takes her readers back to life and its varieties, in a letter without date, but it is endorsed in a hand, not hers, 1773.

"In the early part of my life I was a most punctual correspondent; but of late I have been as much too remiss as I was formerly too diligent in writing letters. I have at length discovered that writing letters is idleness without ease, and fatigue without a purpose. When newspapers only told weddings, births, and burials, a letter from London bore some value; but now that the public papers

not only tell when men are born and dye, but every folly they contrive to insert between those periods, the literary correspondent has nothing left. Lies and dulness used to be valued in manuscript, but printing has assumed a right over the lies of the day and the amusement of the hour. On stamped paper and by authority are publish'd what Lady B—— L——e says of a fat alderman, and how Miss Biddy Bellair was dress'd at the last masquerade. I can, however, tell you some news from St. Vincent, which I had just now from a gentleman in a public office, which is, that an account has just arrived from Colonel Dalrymple, with news of the total reduction of the Caribs, in St. Vincent, and a treaty concluded with them, with small loss on our side. I could find in my heart to say 'poor Caribs!'

"I suppose you are not very deeply interested in Sir George C——ke's affairs. . . . I hope no one will lose anything of such importance as to affect them essentially, as this disaster has been so long expected. It was said the other day, his effects amounted to 700,000*l.*, his debts to 300,000*l.*; but his contracts and dealings have been so universal,

that I presume no one can tell ye just sum of the one or the other. Part of his effects are hemp and alum. Never was so much of the first used at Tyburn, nor of the second at the bakers', as at this moment; but as I presume those commodities do not bear a settled price, a just estimate cannot be made. In ye present lack of specie and of confidence, paper, estates and houses must sell badly. I hope his unmarried sister will not lose anything, and that his family will not fall from affluence to narrow circumstances. I hear Lady C——ke has an estate in Jamaica of 4000*l.* per annum settled upon her. It is said the Irish Bank has only stopped for awhile, and that nothing will be lost. The state of that country is very bad. The poor are wretched, and all people discontented. The condition of Scotland is not much better. The bankruptcies there are numerous, and ye manufactories are stopped. I wish the bankruptcies here may not have as bad an effect on our trade. I rejoice that my brother Robinson has returned to his native land, and wish he would come and visit his friends in town.

. . . "Mr. Montagu has (in the main) had a

pretty healthful winter. His cough is at present troublesome to him, but I hope the warm weather we have now a right to expect will soon cure him.

"The Archbishop of York's second son, a fine youth, dyed of a milliary fever this morning. I lament the young man, and am heartily concerned for his family.

"As I have good luck in smuggling, I will wait for my gown till you come to town, and will send you a black silk, for which it may serve as a lining. The taffety will serve for another year, if it be too warm for this season, when it comes to London.

"I am glad you intend to send my eldest neice to a boarding-school. What girls learn at these schools is trifling, but they unlearn what would be of great disservice—a provincial dialect, which is extreamly ungenteel, and other tricks that they learn in the nursery. The carriage of the person, which is of great importance, is well attended to, and dancing is well taught. As for the French language, I do not think it necessary, unless for persons in very high life. It is rarely much cultivated at schools. I believe all the boarding-schools

are much on the same plan, so that you may place the young lady wherever there is a good air and a good dancing-master. I dare say you will find great improvement in her air and her speech by the time she has been there a year, and these are points of great importance. The Kentish dialect is abominable, tho' not so bad as ye Northumberland and some others; but in this polish'd age, it is so unusual to meet with young Ladies who have any *patois*, that I mightily wish to see my neice cured of it.

"The Duke of Gloucester is relapsed into a bad state of health. Miss Linley, who I suppose you have seen at Bath, is much in vogue. I am to hear her sing to-morrow morn at ye Bishop of Bristol's.

. . . "Papa bears Sir G. C——'s shutting shop very patiently. If his money is safe, he has no objection to its being locked-up. I do not imagine we shall lose anything. I am only sorry for him and for his family, as these things must be very unpleasant. There is a great deal of poverty and distress in London and in the southern counties. I wish very much to see my brother Robinson

after his long absence. I rejoice that his health is so good. I wish you could persuade him to come to London. He improves society, and it is a pity he should not live in it."

Another of the writer's nieces is referred to in the following discursive letter:—

"January ye 1st, 1774. DEAR MADAM,—I was very glad to hear that my pretty little friend got safe to you. I dare say the holidays will pass with her and her brother and sister in all the gayety and jolly mirth which belong'd to them in former times. When our maccaronic beaux and cotterie dames go into the country to pass the Christmas holydays, I have no great opinion of the festivity and joy of the party. Mirth belongs to youth and innocence. When the World was young and innocent, its laugh was hearty, and its mirth sincere, and festivals were gay. Old Father Christmas must now be content to gambol in the nursery; but such is the force of custom, that many persons go at this dreary season to their dreary mansions to keep their Christmas, who will not laugh till they return to London.

. . . "I think the fish will come safest by my

neice, as it will escape being rummaged by the custom-house officers, who will be apt to suspect it has a pudding of Brussels lace in it. I thank you for two pound more of excellent tea. I think it full as good as that which costs me 16*s.* a pound. . . . My pretty neice is so good-humoured: she is never troublesome. She is a mighty orderly person; folds up her things very nicely. She will be both a notable housewife and a good-humoured woman, and therefore will make an excellent wife. Happy will be the man to whose lot she will fall. It is very rarely that one sees these characters meet. A good housewife is generally an anxious, peevish thing; and a good-humoured woman is too often careless and unmindful of her family. As she is your daughter, I do not wonder at her uniting perfections that are but rarely united. My brother William was a favourite of my mother's, and she certainly made his whole christening suit of that part of her linnen which is supposed to derive matrimonial blessings on the son. For what mother's darling my neice is reserved I do not know, but I hope one who will deserve her.

"I believe you will hardly be able to read my

scrawl, which is even worse than usual; for I have almost put my eyes out with accounts, of which our steward brings a plentiful quantity at this time of year. He is a very diligent Person, and expects that I will apply many hours in the day. Our affairs go on very prosperously and in great order, so that I have as little trouble as is possible in a case where so many and large accounts are to be look'd over.

. . . "It is said that gaming is carried on with greater spirit among the fine people than ever was known. I desire my most affectionate compliments to my brothers of Horton, Denton, and Canterbury. . . . My best love to ye dear little ones who adorn your fireside, and best wishes for the year begun, and for all succeeding years, to the parents and the babes."

It was in this year, 1774, that Mrs. Montagu wrote the following to Mrs. Robinson, from Sandleford, September the 5th, 1774:—

. . . "I had intended writing to you as soon as I could get a frank. . . . All frothy matter takes up a great deal of space, and my letters always run over the fourth side, and incur double taxes

at the post-office. By mistake, I had left my franks to you in London, so I waited till I could see Mr. Congreve, the only member of parliament in our neighbourhood.

. . . "The wet weather has hurt me as a valetudinarian, and mortified me as a farmer, so that I cannot say, in the pert fashionable phrase, it has not made me *sick nor sorry*, but more of the first than the last, and not greatly either. . . .We have a prodigious crop of barley, and there seems to be a great plenty of it everywhere, and yet the maltsters are contracting for it already at 30*s.* per quarter. I suppose the ensuing elections will raise the price of malt. I wish our poor people ate more and drank less.

"I am extremely mortified at Lord Mahone's too great vivacity. Lord Stanhope brought him to Tunbridge to spend a day with me. I was pleased with his conversation and manners, and particularly in not finding him so exotick as I expected. His sentiments and language appear to me perfectly good English, such as suited the heir of an English peer, and not borrow'd from un bourgeois de Genève, which, with all due respect to Jean Jacques, I take to be much inferior in nobleness of mind as

well as dignity of office. But his lordship's attack on Mr. Knight and his presenting articles to a candidate, looks as if he had steep'd his patriotism in the Lake of Geneva. Lord Stanhope is a very respectable man; has great virtues and great talents. These, under the military discipline of worldly warfare, do great things, while they lead and command regiments of inferior minds which fight under them. But in our days the unconnected patriot makes just such a figure in the political system as the preux chevalier would do now in the military. Nothing is to be done in these days by single combat. Neither the patriot nor the champion would be able to effect the abolition of the exorbitant toll of a bridge. If I had a son, I should desire him never to wander single in quest of adventures. Virtue, wisdom, honours, prosperity, happiness, are all to be found on the turnpike-road, or not to be found at all. . . .

"I had strong inclinations to make you and my brother at Horton a visit when I left Tunbridge; but as a northern journey was then in contemplation, I durst not propose such a measure to Mr. Montagu. He still talks of our going to Northum-

berland, but delays setting out. In the meantime, winter approaches. He is in very good health and spirits, but extremely feeble; goes to bed every afternoon by five o'clock, and seems by no means equal to so fatiguing a journey; so I hope it will end in talk. . . . Mr. Montagu loves delay so well, he intends not to set out till a fortnight after me. He did not leave London till the middle of August, tho' he had not any business to detain him.

. . . "If I had children, I should be much more solicitous about their temper than talents. As many hours in the day as a man of the finest parts is peevish or in a passion, he is more contemptible than a blockhead, and suffers (though he does not know it) the internal scorn and contempt of every rational creature that is in good humour. We are, too, much earlier able to judge of a child's temper than capacity. Minds ripen at very different ages. If the understanding is naturally slow, preceptors should be patient, and not put it too much out of its natural pace. Some children apprehend quick; others acquire everything with difficulty. In the latter case, they should be encouraged, led, and not driven."

Miss Gregory (a friend and companion of the writer) was very much liked at Cambridge. "Her sweet temper, good sense, and elegant simplicity of manners much charm every one who is well acquainted with her. She is perfectly free from missy pertnesses, airs, and minanderies, which put many of our girls of fashion upon a line with milliners' apprentices. Though she has lived so much with me, I never saw her out of humour. She seems as pleased with retirement as in a publick place; and is as sober and discreet in a publick place as in retirement.

"There is a report that Captain Darby is going to be married to a widow worth fourscore thousand pounds. It seems her first husband was a good-humoured, quiet, dull man. Elle s'en trouvait bien, and is going to take such another; but still, fourscore thousand pounds is a great price for a dull man. . . . Miss Snell is married to a gentleman of good character and six thousand pounds.

"I beg my best respects and most affectionate feel it pliments to my brother Robinson. Will he never esteem s have the pleasure of seeing him? I wish he both." d visit the farmer and farmeress of Sandleford."

In the course of the above year, 1774, when an invitation to Mrs. Montagu's house in Hill Street was not lightly sent and *was* highly esteemed, she despatched a card of invitation to Dr. Johnson. The philosopher neither went to her assembly nor acknowledged the invitation. In a subsequent apologetic note, he said: "Having committed one fault by inadvertency, I will not commit another by sullenness. . . . The favour of your notice can never miss a suitable return but from ignorance or thoughtlessness; and to be ignorant of your eminence is not easy but to him who lives out of reach of the public voice." Allegiance could not be more perfect! But Mrs. Montagu was not influenced by it, when, in 1775, she settled a small annuity on Dr. Johnson's friend, Mrs. Williams, saving her from misery; for which rescue Mrs. Williams expressed her thanks in words almost of divine adoration. Dr. Johnson was moved by the generous act, when he subsequently heard that Mrs. Montagu was in town, ill. He wrote like a gallant. "To have you detained among us by sickness is to [illegible] the your presence at too dear a rate." He wished not may be "so well as to be able to leave us, ar

kind as not to be willing." . . . Here is more: "All that the esteem and reverence of mankind can give you, are already yours; and the little I can add to the voice of nations will not much exalt. Of that little, however, you are, I hope, very certain."

The poor lady had now more serious matters claiming her attention than quarrels or compliments with Johnson. Her kind-hearted and now aged husband had long been slowly dying. His last hour seemed now approaching. In May, 1775, Mrs. Chapone, in a letter to Mrs. Delany, described Mrs. Montagu as being "in a most distressful situation." Mr. Montagu, "instead of sinking easily, as might have been expected from so long and gradual a decline, suffers great struggle, and has a fever attended with deliriums, which are most dreadfully affecting to Mrs. Montagu. If this scene should continue, I tremble for the effects of it on her tender frame; but I think it must very soon have an end, and she will then reconcile herself to a loss so long expected, tho' I doubt not she will feel it very sincerely. He is entitled to her highest esteem and gratitude, and, I believe, possesses them both."

The aged philomath might have been the original of the legendary mathematician, who, having been induced to read "Paradise Lost," asked, on reaching the last line of the poem, "Well, what does it prove?" Mr. Montagu's wonted fires and ruling passion partook exclusively of a mathematical ardour. His wife, who had, previous to her husband's fatal illness, passed from the most sincere spirit of free inquiry into the equally sincere acceptance of orthodoxy, was very anxious that her husband should be of the same faith with herself before they were parted for ever. She begged Beattie to effect this desired consummation, if it were possible. The aged mathematician was too much, however, for the minister and his clever wife together. "To her great concern," says Beattie, in a letter to Dr. Laing, "he set too much value on mathematical evidence, and piqued himself too much on his knowledge in that science. He took it into his head, too, that *I* was a mathematician, though I was at a great deal of pains to convince him to the contrary." Mr. Montagu died in May, 1775. The poor gentleman's death was immediately made the opportunity for speculation on the part of

his friends, as to the prospects of his widow. "Mr. Edward Montagu is dead," wrote Mrs. Delany. "He has left his widow everything, both real and personal: only charging it with a legacy of 3000*l.* If her heart prove as good as her head, she may do an abundance of good. Her possessions are very great." Walpole speculated in another fashion on this gentleman's demise. He wrote to Mason: "The husband of Mrs. Montagu, of Shakespearshire, is dead, and has left her an estate of 7000*l.* a year in her own power. Will you come and be candidate for her hand? I conclude it will be given to a champion at some Olympic games; and were I she, I would sooner marry you than Pindar!"

Johnson fully illustrated the charitable side of Mrs. Montagu's character, when he said, in 1776, in reply to a hint that her liberality was pharisaical, "I have seen no beings who do as much good from benevolence as she does from whatever motive." Johnson subsequently was less charitable and less accurate. Mrs. Montagu's letters abound with references to her complete ignorance of Greek and her small knowledge of Latin. "But," said Johnson, "she is willing you should think she

knows them, but she does not say she does." A hundred times she wrote that she did *not.* Johnson's were hardly the "respectful sentiments" he professed to have when he begged for a copy of her engraved portrait, as a reward for his love and adoration.

## CHAPTER VIII.

Mrs. Montagu respected her gentle husband's memory in the way he would have approved—by attending to the business which his death left on her hands. She withdrew to Sandleford, not to cover her face, but to woo the fresh air. She then travelled to Denton Castle, to plunge into occupation, and to show her steward that her recent grief had not rendered her insensible to her interests. From the castle, or hall (it is called by both names), she wrote on July the 10th, 1775, the following, not at all woe-begone, but sensible, letter to her sister-in-law:—

. . . "I know your good-nature will have suggested to you, and accepted as an excuse for my long delay of writing, the various business which my present situation occasions. My long and very melancholy confinement much affected my health

and spirits. The fresh air and constant exercise at Sandleford, proved of great service to me, and encouraged me to venture on a much longer journey. On the 30th of June, I set out on my expedition to Northumberland, and, on the 3rd of July, at noon, I got as far as my estate at Burniston. Exactly opposite to some of my land, there is a tolerable inn. I eat a hasty dinner, and taking my steward with me, went over as many of the farms as I could that night, and sent invitations to my tenants to dine with me the next day.

"Mine Host, by sending to the neighbouring markets, assembled together sirloins of beef, legs of mutton, loins of veal, chickens, ducks, and green peas, which, with ham, pigeon-pie, tarts, and custard, fill'd up every chink of table, and, I believe, of stomach. Unfortunately, there was not a room large enough to contain all my good friends, so the women and the young lasses dined with me, and the men with the steward.

"As Mr. Montagu had been always a very good landlord, I thought it right to show the good people they would have a kind landlady, and therefore I would not pass by without taking notice of them.

Several of them enquired after the young gentlemen that came from Horton to Allerthorpe. I assured them Mr. William Robinson was a profound divine, and Mr. Charles a sage counsellor at law. They rejoyced that Master Willie was happy in a good and rich wife, and had three fine Bairns. In the evening I went on to Darlington, where part of my estates come down to the turnpike-road. I stopped at a tenant's who has a pretty large house, desired them to dress a dinner the next day for me and my tenants. . . . Darlington was rather too far for the women to reach. I lay at Darlington, and early ye next day went over to this Estate, and passed the whole day there with great pleasure. A fine, rapid river, woody bank, and some of the most stately oaks and beech in Yorkshire, would recommend it sufficiently to the eye that does not behold it with the complacency of a proprietor, and you will believe it loses nothing of its charms by that circumstance. After dinner I wandered again about the place, visited most of my tenants' houses, and did not take leave of Eryholme (?) till night drew her sable curtain, which gave me occasion to recollect that the day of my life must soon close,

and all these things be hid from me; but if I make a proper use of them while they are mine, it is all I ought to be solicitous for, as I am not amongst those unhappy Persons whose views are bounded to the short day of human life.

"I was much pleased with all my tenants in Yorkshire. They are a very different sort of people from the farmers in ye south. They are alert in their business and interests, and far from the stupid state of savage. At the same time, they do not ape the manners nor imitate the dress of the fine folks. The farmer's wife spins her husband's shirts, and the daughters make butter and cheese at the hours our southern women work catgut and dress wire caps. Some of my tenants have been above fifty years on the estate; have married their sons to girls worth many hundred pounds, and have got their sons into their farms, and they are retired on a decent subsistance, gained by many years of frugal industry. They all pay duely on their rent-days. No complaint, on the part of the tenants, of poverty; or, on the landlord, of arrears. The land is in good condition, and by having been long settled, they have acquired an

affection for the farm they are placed upon, and will always give as good a rent as it deserves; and they know the nature of the undertaking too well to give more. It is a folly to let farms too cheap; and it is both wickedness and folly to let them too dear. This year has been particularly unfavourable to my tenants, as the estates are chiefly meadow and pasture; and yet, though these estates had been lately raised, they did not ask any indulgence or favour. They said there had not been such a dry season these fifty years; and, with great good-humour, said they hoped the next would be better. Indeed, the drought is terrible for the dairy-farms. Hay here will be at an excessive price. The coal-owners who are not provident with stocks of it will be at vast expenses. I have always two years' stock in hand. The further north, the greater the drought. I believe there has not been any material rain since the 18th of March. Cows there (and here) are obliged to be driven to the rivers to drink. Our little streams are all dry'd. My cows go every day to the Tyne to get drink. The Tyne Vale, where I live, used to look green and pleasant. The whole country is now a brown crust, with here and

there a black hole of a coal-pit, so that I cannot boast of the beauty of our prospects. As to Denton, it has mightily the air of an ant-hill: a vast many black animals for ever busy. Near fourscore families are employ'd on my concerns here. Boys work in the colliery from seven years of age. I used to give my colliery people a feast when I came hither, but as the good souls (men and women) are very apt to get drunk, and, when drunk, very joyful, and sing, and dance, and hollow, and whoop, I dare not, *on this occasion*, trust their discretion to behave with proper gravity; so I content myself with killing a fat beast once a week, and sending to each family, once, a piece of meat. It will take time to get round to all my black friends. I had fifty-nine boys and girls to sup in the court-yard last night on rice pudding and boil'd beef; to-morrow night I shall have as many. It is very pleasant to see how the poor things cram themselves, and the expense is not great. We buy rice cheap, and skimmed milk and coarse beef serve the occasion. Some have more children than their labour will cloathe, and on such I shall bestow some apparel. Some benefits of this sort, and a general kind

behaviour, gives to the coal-owner, as well as to them, a good deal of advantage. Our pitmen are afraid of being turned off, and that fear keeps an order and regularity amongst them that is very uncommon.

"The general coal trade and my concerns in it are, at present, in a thriving way, and if all goes on so well two years longer, and I live till then, I will establish a spinning, knitting, and sewing school for ye girls. When I say *establish*, I mean for my life, for one cannot be charitable longer. When the night cometh no man can work. Charitable institutions soon fall into neglect and abuse. I made a visit at Burniston to my Uncle Robinson's alms-houses. I gave each of the old people a guinea. I have sometimes sent them money; for what my uncle appointed near a hundred years ago is hardly a subsistence. Indeed, they would starve if they had not some helps.

"I have not been one moment ill since I set out on my journey. I walk about my farms, and down to my colliery, like a country gentlewoman of the last century. I rejoyce in the great improvement of my land here by good cultivation, but I do not like

my tenants so well as those in Yorkshire. We are here a little too rustick, and speak a dialect that is dreadful to the auditor's nerves; and as to the colliery, I cannot yet reconcile myself to seeing my fellow-creatures descend into the dark regions of the earth; tho', to my great comfort, I hear them singing in the pits. . . . If I did not think you kindly interested yourself, I would not trouble you with this long history of myself.

"I had the pleasure of seeing my neice in great good-humour, beauty, and health; and these are the fairest features of youth. Long may they dimple and bloom on her cheek. I approve much of my little nephews going to a school of a private sort at first. I think boys of a gentle and bashful disposition are discouraged at being thrust at once into the prodigious racket of a great school. . . .

"I think my sister Scott greatly mended by James's powders. I was very uneasy about her before she went to Bath, but Dr. Moisy has done great things for her. . . . I have not seen her look so well for some years. . . . I expect Dr. Beattie and his wife every day. I propose to return to the south the end of this month, in order to take some weeks at

Tunbridge. . . . I believe I shall pass the winter in the south of France, but have not yet determined, as all human projects are uncertain; but it is my wish to do so."

Illness delayed the realization of this wish. Mrs. Montagu was in Hill Street in November, receiving only a few of her most intimate friends. "I called on Mrs. Montagu," writes Mrs. Boscawen to Mrs. Delany, in the above month; "only Lady Townshend was there, and in her best way, very chatty."

In 1775–6, among the visitors at Bath occasionally seen by Mrs. Scott, was a little lame Scottish boy, between four and five years old. When he had bathed in the morning, got through a reading lesson at an old dame's near his lodging on the Parade, and had a drive over the Downs with the author of "Douglas" and Mrs. Home, the boy was sometimes to be seen in the boxes of the old theatre. On one such occasion, witnessing "As you Like It," his interest was so great, that in the middle of the wrestling-scene in the first act, he called out, "A'n't they brothers?" The boy, when he had become a man, said in his autobiography, "A few weeks' residence at home convinced me, who

had till then been an only child in the house of my grandfather, that a quarrel between brothers was a very natural event." This boy's name was Walter Scott. Much of the other company at Bath was then about to withdraw from the stage which the boy was to occupy with such glory to himself, and to the lasting delight of his countrymen.

The year 1778 opens with the following letter to Mrs. Robinson: . . . "I wish I could thank you for your letter in as fair characters as my neice returned hers for the books. I have ostentatiously shewed her letter to many of my friends. My sister and I have not let my brother share in the honour; for we confess no Robinson ever wrote so well; so that she inherits this, with many other good things, from her Mama. If she can compose a sermon as well as her brother, and writes it in her own hand, it will retrieve the honour of manuscript-sermons, which of late years have sold cheaper than even any other goods. . . .

"The town is very empty, and I know not how we who are here contrive to be as much engaged as at other seasons. The Bath has been very full of persons of distinction.

"Lord Villiers (the prince of maccaronies) gave, a few days ago, a play in a Barn. He acted Lord Townley; Miss Hodges, Lady Townley. I suppose the merit of this entertainment was, that people were to go many miles, in frost and snow, to see in a barn what would have been every way better at the theatre in Drury Lane or Covent Garden. There was a ball also prepared after the play, but the barn had so benumbed the vivacity of the company, and the beaux' feet were so cold, and the noses of the belles were so blue, many retired to a warm bed at the inn at Henley, instead of partaking of the dance. M. Texier acted Monsieur Pigmaleon, and Miss Hodges the Statue. Modern nymphs are so warm and yielding, that less art than that of M. Texier might have animated the nymph. My neice will never stand still to be made love to before a numerous audience. Miss Hodges' father is lately dead; her mother is dying. How many indecorums the girl has brought together into one petite peice!

"I dare not send you any publick news, as my brothers are engaged to the Congress and American Independency.

"I think the fine world goes on as usual at this time

of the year. "Caractacus" has succeeded very well on the stage, tho' it is more calculated for the study than the theatre.

"Our French ambassador pleases all people, of course, by his conversation and manners. By his splendour of living and polite attentions at table, he charms the great vulgar; so that he is in general esteem, and, indeed, deserves to be so. He dined with us ye other day, and I am to dine with him on Sunday. Mme. de Noailles cannot come to me till she is brought to bed. She is extremely sensible and agreable.

"Lord Granby very thoughtlessly carried his lady to Brussels, on a jaunt of amusement, soon after she was brought to bed, and, by getting cold, she is most dangerously ill. She is much better; but the duchess dowager is so uneasy about her, I am afraid we shall not be able to dissuade her from going to Brussels, tho' this weather makes sea voyages and, indeed, land journeys very terrible.

. . . "My brother Charles told me the good folks in Kent were angry with *me* or your consort for making a justice of peace of Dr. Pennington; but, indeed, I never heard the doctor had an ambition to

be of the worshipful quorum till my brother mentioned it. As it is not Greek and Hebrew, but lands and tenements and such solid property, which give a title to be justice of peace, I should not in any way have assisted the doctor's project, if I had had it in my power. I am so far from being a favourer of the Alliance of Church and State, I think the further they keep asunder the better—a two-edged sword is a terrible weapon."

In the summer of 1776, Mrs. Montagu was to be seen in Paris, welcomed to the first circles as a happy sample of an accomplished English lady. Voltaire, then in his dotage, took the opportunity of her presence to send to the Academy a furious paper against Shakespeare. The lady had a seat of honour among the audience while the vituperative paper was read. When the reading came to an end, Suard remarked to her, "I think, madam, you must be rather sorry at what you have just heard!" The English lady, Voltaire's old adversary, promptly replied, "I, sir! not at all. I am not one of M. Voltaire's friends!" She subsequently wrote:—"I felt the same indignation and scorn at the reading of Voltaire's paper, as I should have done if I had

seen harlequin cutting capers and striking his wooden sword on the monument of a Cæsar or Alexander the Great."

In October, after her return to Hill Street, she thus described to Garrick the influence exercised over her by French tragedy and French tragedians :—

. . . "Mrs. M. cannot help intimating that she never felt such pity and terror, which it is the business of tragedy to excite, as at the French theatre, where M. le Kain roars like a mad bull, and Molé rolls his eyes, and has all the appearance of a man in a phrensy . . . persons of real taste seem convinced of the false taste prevalent in their tragedies."

The "flutter of Paris" was almost more than her strength could bear. The idea of its being succeeded by the "racket of London" alarmed her. She avoided the "racket," and recovered from the "flutter," by spending a season of rest at Sandleford, where she dreamed over Voltaire's address against Shakespeare, became a rural cottager, feeder of pigs, cultivator of potatoes, or pretended to be so, and "did idleness." "There is as much an idleness to be done," she wrote to Garrick, "as there is a

darkness that may be visible, and is, like the other, a state and a condition, and a very pleasant and gentle one, when the working-day of bustle and hurry is over. . . . I came to do idleness, and it is not all done."

The visit to Paris is alluded to among an "infinite deal" of other subjects, in a letter to her brother William, dated Sandleford, June 9, 1777.

"It would be with much greater pleasure I should take up my pen to tell you I am at Sandleford, if I could flatter myself with the hope of alluring you to it: you would find me in the character of a housewife. The meagre condition of the soil forbids me to live in the state of a shepherdess-queen, which I look upon as the highest rural dignity. The plough, the harrow, and the spade remind us that the golden age is past, and subsistence depends on labour; prosperity on industrious application. A little of the clay of which you complain, would do us a great deal of good. I should be glad to take my dominions here from the goddess Ceres to give them to the god Pan, and I think you will agree with me in that taste; for wherever he presides, there Nature's republick is

establish'd. The ox in his pasture is as free and as much at his ease as the proprietor of the soil, and the days of the first are not more shorten'd to feed the intemperance of others, than the rich landlord's by the indulgence of his own. I look upon the goddess Ceres as a much less impartial and universally kind deity. The antients thought they did her honour by ascribing to her the invention of laws. We must consider her also as the mother of law-suits and all the divisions, dissentions, and distinctions among mankind. Naturalists tell us all the oaks that have ever been, were contain'd in the first acorn. I believe we may affirm, by the same mode of reasoning, that all arts and sciences were contain'd in the first ear of corn. To possess lasting treasure and exclusive prosperity, has been the great business and aim of man. At Sandleford, you will find us busy in the care of arable land. By two little purchases Mr. Montagu made here, my farm contains six hundred acres. As I now consider it an amazonian land, I affect to consider the women as capable of assisting in agriculture as much as the men. They weed my corn, hoe my turnips, and set my Pottatoes; and

by these means promote the prosperity of their families. A landlord, where the *droit du seigneur* prevailed, would not expose the complexions of his female vassals to the sun. I must confess my amazons hardly deserve to be accounted of the fair sex; and they have not the resources of pearl-powder and rouge when the natural lilies and roses have faded.

"You are very polite in supposing my looks not so homely as I described them; but tho' my health is good, the faded roses do not revive, and I assure you I am always of the colour of *la feuille-morte*. My complexion has long fallen into the sere and yellow leaf; and I assure you one is as much warned against using art, by seeing the ladies of Paris, as the Spartan youths by observing the effects of intoxicating liquors on the Helots. The vast quantity of rouge worn there by the fine ladies makes them hideous. As I always imagine one is less looked at by wearing the uniform of the society one lives in, I allowed my frizeuse to put on whatever rouge was usually worn. But a few years ago, I believe, my vanity could not have submitted to such a disfiguration. As soon as I got to Dover, I return'd to my former complexion. I own I

think I could make that complexion a little better by putting on a little rouge; but at my age, any appearance of solicitude about complexion is absurd, and therefore I remain where age and former ill health have brought me; and rejoice that I enjoy the comforts of health, tho' depriv'd of its pleasing looks.

"I am very glad to find my neice has recovered her health. I was much afraid of a consumption for her. . . . It has given me great pleasure to hear your health is pretty good. . . . but if St. Anthony's fire should menace, remember that his distemper, as well as his temptation, is most dangerous in a desart or wilderness, and repair to the city of Bath. Tho' I say this, I was never in my life more sensible of the charms of rural life and the blessings of tranquility, but at the same time I am sensible that my relish of them is much quickened by having been for a twelvemonth past in a very different mode of life. I regret very much that the emperor did not come to Paris last summer, tho' I suppose, among the French nobility, I met with men as polite; among the academicians, with men more learned, ingenious, and witty; yet, as I am a Virtuoso in what relates to the human cha-

racter, and love to see how it appears in various situations, I should have seen an emperor, as an emperor is an unique in human society at present; and the Austrian family has always had a strongly-marked personal character. All my French correspondents assure me that his imperial majesty veils his dignity on all occasions under the character of Count de Falkenstein. He sleeps at his ambassador's, but dines with the two noblemen of his Court who attend him at an Hotel garnie. When he goes to Versailles to visit his sister, he refuses to lodge in the palace, and lodges at a bagnio. He goes sometimes to Versailles in his coach; at others, in a fiacre, or walks. The French, who are much struck with everything that is new, are full of wonder and respect at the publick spectacles. They give a thunder of applause whenever he appears. In private society, his majesty is easy and affable, and, by what I can understand, glad to show he is more conversant in the common affairs of common life than princes usually are. The objects of his curiosity and the subjects of his discourse are such as seem to indicate he is a man of sense. Whether he has talents for empire, time must show. Without

understanding the doctrine of chances as well as Demeri (?), one may pronounce the chances are nearly infinite he has not. I am glad, however, princes begin to travel. One has a chance of meeting these itinerant monarchs somewhere; and they amuse, at least, as well as stuff'd eagles or lions in a museum. I was in great hopes that you would have come to town to hear Lord Chatham, in support of his motion, the other day."

In the following month, the letter below was written at Sandleford, July the 9th, 1777:—

. . . "As she" (one of Mrs. Montagu's nieces) "was not the worse for the ball, I am glad she partook of the pleasure of it. If she resembles a certain Miss Robinson who lived in the neighbourhood some years ago, she will reckon a ball amongst the first enjoyments of human life. Considering her state of health, I do not know whether it was very prudent in her brother to carry her there, but I am sure it was very amiable; the error should always be rather on the side of indulgence. We should consider that, though there will be dancing as long as the world endures, it is but a short time that an individual will dance.

. . . "The warmth of the weather prevented my seeing the 'School for Scandal,' but every one agrees with you to commend it. Of all the vices of the human disposition, a love of scandal and detraction is the most contemptible. It is now got from the gossips' tea-table to the press. The scriblers weekly let fly their pop-guns at the Duchess of Devonshire's feathers. Her grace is innocent, good-humoured, and beautifull; but these adders are blind and deaf, and cannot be charmed. However, the scriblers are all of them hungry; but the circulators of scandal, who have neither hunger for their excuse, nor wit to give it a seasoning, are sad vermin, and I am glad Mr. Sheridan has so well exposed them.

"The uncertainty of human life is certainly a discouragement to every enterprize, but to none less, I think, than to building a house. If it is a good one, there will be somebody to live in it and enjoy its comforts; if otherwise, its inconveniences will not make one uneasy in the tomb. To undertake a trust which, by not fulfilling, may be detrimental to some person; to bring children into the world when it is too late in life to hope to see them edu-

cated and established, are things about which a prudent person may hesitate; but even in this case, we can never do wrong when we follow the general principles by which the author of our nature has intended we should be directed. The shortness and uncertainty of life would discourage all great undertakings; and, as the human race is to continue, providence has ordered we should act as if we were to live for ever.

"We have had a series of the worst weather I ever knew since I came here, at this time of year. Sir William Temple says, the three greatest blessings are health, peace, and fine weather. The first two are the most important and I have enjoyed them in so perfect a degree, that I have well endured the want of the third. Dr. Robinson's 'History of America' has amused me by my fireside, when wind and rain have combined against my amusements abroad. A long deprivation of the quiet joys of rural life gave me a quick relish for them. If I had staid in town, the great numbers of foreigners who have lately arrived there, who have all brought letters of recommendation to me, or who would have been naturally introduced by my

previous acquaintance with them abroad, must have taken up much of my time and attention.

"Lord Shelburne called here the other day to invite me to Bowood, to meet l'Abbé Raynal, who I knew at Paris, and two French countesses who brought letters to me from some of the beaux esprits there; so to them I shall have an opportunity of expressing my regret at being out of town. But there is a Spanish Baron de Castille and some others who were also recommended to me, who I fear will depart with a bad opinion of my hospitality; for, twenty to one, my English porter in Hill Street could not make them understand, when they delivered their letters, that I was in the country. At present my scheme is to go to London for the melancholy pleasure of taking leave of the Lord Primate and my friend Mrs. Vesey. . . . When these friends leave London, I believe I shall set out for Mount Edgecumbe, having long promised Lady Edgecumbe a visit, and shall carry Montagu with me, who is a school-fellow of Mr. Edgecumbe, and is much invited. . . . Mr. and Mrs. Vesey are going to Mr. Burke's, at Beaconsfield, who has kindly asked me to be of the party; but I shall be a good

while absent from Sandleford, and have many domestick matters to settle before I depart. I had a most polite, entertaining letter the other day from my Brother Robinson. I wish we two honest farmers lived nearer together with brotherly love and rural sincerity. I flatter myself we should be very happy; but in this short life, how short a time does one enjoy the friends one loves.

. . . "In spite of my cure and Dr. Fothergill's skill, I have made but a poor progress towards health. . . . My nerves mend, but I cannot better bear the noise of a cannon now than I could the report of a pistol when I first return'd to Hill Street. My doctor keeps me very quiet. He will not allow me to see the wise, the witty, or the fashionable world. I have not dined below stairs these four or five days. The doctor has to-day begun to try a new medicine; but I have as little faith in doctors of physick as some of my family have in doctors of divinity. I imagine my fever at Canterbury was the influenza, which has lately raged so much. It leaves people very weak, and much affects the nerves. Some have lost their speech for a few days; others their hearing. My North-

umberland steward and my brother who left London when I did, were both taken ill on the road. I believe fatigue of preparation for my foreign journey did me some harm; but I believe my principal illness was owing to contagion in the air. My servants have all been sick. None of my family have escaped but Miss Gregory and Matt.

"The patriots are rather in despair of changing the ministry. This may damp their ambition, but will keep their patriotism in its vigour. There is something so mortal to patriotism in a place, that one can never wish those who have assumed that character to sacrifice it to the emoluments of an employment. . . .

"Mr. Burke is kept from the House of Commons by the death of his father-in-law. Lady Mary Sommerset has recovered her health, and her nuptials will soon be celebrated. Hymen may exult, for the pair are lovely. Miss Gregory often spends the evening with Lady Mary and Lady Betty. As Lord Granby is of the party, you may suppose Lady Betty and Miss Gregory attend most to each other. . . . Tell my neice I have not forgotten her

doll, but have not been well enough to accomplish an affair of such importance as dressing a lady. My nephews both shall come with the doll, thus teaching by allegory, that men are to be learned, and ladies elegant."

In Mrs. Scott's letter which now follows, the details refer to the death of the brother most dearly loved by both his sisters—Morris Robinson, who married Jane, daughter of John Greenland, of Lovelace. His two sons, Morris and Matthew, succeeded, in the order indicated, to the barony of Rokeby. Matthew was at this time domiciled with Mrs. Montagu, whose name he had taken as her acknowledged heir.

Mrs. Scott to Mrs. Robinson.—"Nov. 16, 1777. . . . The world has indeed become a very different scene to me since we parted. It has lost the greatest charm it had for me. The loss is not only a brother, but, as Solomon expresses it, that friend that was more than a brother, one with whom I had lived full forty years in the tenderest affection, in the most perfect harmony; never interrupted even by a mere dispute, except on his first connexion with his present widow. It is totally irreparable. I

own I loved nothing so well; and though I am not so new to misfortune as not to have learnt to bear patiently, and to see, while I lament the loss of a blessing, that I ought to be grateful for having so long enjoyed one so uncommon; yet the sense of it must ever lie a sorrow at my heart. There was a loveliness of nature in him that I never saw equalled. . . . I do not think he had a fault, except the weakness of complying with one who was not satisfied with that degree of expense which was proper for them; and for that he might make the same excuse that the great Duke of Marlbrough did when told he was too complying a husband: 'Friend, can a man live without sleep?' His own disposition did not lead him either to vanity or extravagance. I confess, therefore, he was guilty of a weakness, but it was one founded on the extreme sweetness of his temper; an unfortunate effect of a most amiable cause. However, she to whom it is owing is now much to be pitied. She would not believe what he frequently told her, but is now sadly awakened to the truth of it."

In the subjoined fragment of a letter from Mrs. Montagu, reference is made to the Scotch thief

and deserter, John Aitkin, the incendiary, otherwise known as Jack the painter, who was hanged, in 1777, for attempting to set fire to Portsmouth Dock-yard and shipping.

. . . "I was mortified to hear the dreadful box which was intended to destroy Portsmouth was made at the respectable city of Canterbury. Mr. Silas Deane will make no very respectable figure when John Painter's story is produced in public. If Dr. Franklin had been an incendiary, he would have been a more dangerous man than Mr. Deane; for you know he can bottle-up lightning; but philosophers are honester men than politicians. . . . Lord Temple has been very useful in getting this horrid affair of John the painter brought to light. . . . Dr. Dodd's affair is almost forgot. Some suppose that, for want of some formality on his trial, he will escape hanging. Lord Chesterfield has behaved with great kindness to the doctor's brother, who is a worthy man, and to Mrs. Dodd's nephew. . . .

"The match between Lord Powis and Miss Warren is not to take place, the young lady having expressed a predilection for Lord Bulkely, who is to have her.

"Lady Strathmore's conduct at Newcastle, in the election, is, perhaps, not generally known. Her ladyship sits all day in the window at a public-house, from whence she sometimes lets fall some jewels or trinkets, which voters pick up, and then she gives them money for restoring them—a new kind of offering bribes. What little interest I have I gave to Sir John Trevelyan, who, we hope, will carry the election by a good majority. My steward tells me he is very weary of the bustle and treating the voters; and that the town is in a wild uproar. Mr. Stoney Bowes has sold 5000*l.* a year of his lady's income for her life, to procure himself 40,000*l.* I believe this gentleman will revenge the wrongs Lord Strathmore suffered from her ladyship. It is said Sir Thomas Robinson died worth above 10,000*l.*, but it is supposed he has left it to his natural daughter."

Lady Strathmore had the misfortune to be an heiress, Mary Eleanor Bowes. Lord Strathmore took her, her money, and her name, in 1767. In nine years, he was removed by death; his widow soon after married Mr. Stoney, an Irish heiress-hunter, who adopted the name of Bowes, and thoroughly avenged the wrongs and sufferings of

the first husband. But Stoney Bowes was sorely mauled in the cruel and scandalous struggle. It is a disgraceful story, from which the reader may well turn to a few plain lines from Mrs. Scott, in a fragment of a letter of this date: "I shall be very glad of my niece's company on her way to Whitelands, and if I can find out any amusement for her, she shall have it. Plays, which I think are the best, it is so difficult for those to get places at, who do not give largely to the box-keepers, that I am discouraged from attempting, by having no hopes of success (but I shall try when my niece comes), tho' I feel no degradation to my *dignity* from sitting in a front box, and like it just as well as the side, if not further back than the second row. I went with my sister to 'Percy,' and that is the only one I have seen."

The side boxes ranked then as the orchestra stalls do now—the most fashionable, but among the very worst seats in the house. Mrs. Montagu, in the letter opening the next chapter, takes her correspondent to houses of a more agreeable quality.

## CHAPTER IX.

"SANDLEFORD, Sep. 26, 1777. . . . Nuneham is a very fine place, and the owners of it are so amiable and agreable, that one passes one's time very pleasantly. It sometimes resembles a congress of all the ambassadors in Europe; for Lord Harcourt, having been in a publick capacity, all the ambassadors, and, indeed, all the foreigners of distinction come thither. I remember passing three days there once without hearing a syllable of English spoken. Had every one of the company spoken his mother-tongue, it would have resembled Babel. Monsieur and Madame de Noailles are most agreable persons, and I wish we may not have any other foreigners while they stay.

. . . "I do not know any one who makes his house so agreable to his friends as my brother (William). His parts and knowledge make him an excellent

companion; and his apparent benevolence, integrity, and virtues endear his talents. . . . I agree entirely with the Primate that your rev. consort would grace a Stall; but he is of so unambitious a spirit, I believe he will not take any pains to get into one. Dean of Canterbury would suit him very well. A dean is not obliged to fast or pray, nor has the troublesome care of any soul but his own.

. . . "We are now very busy with the arvest. We had a great deal of hay, and, fortunately, very little of it was spoiled. We have a prodigious crop of Wheat this year, and I dare say our neighbours have the same; and yet old wheat sold at 7*s.* 6*d.* a bushel last week; and some new wheat for 8*s.* I hope, though I am a farmer, that the prices will soon fall, for the poor labourers cannot earn a subsistence for their families when bread bears such a price. I have about forty reapers at work, at present, to take advantage of the fine weather. I brewed seven hogsheads of small beer for them, and fear it will not last till the end of harvest. The poor reapers and haymakers bring nothing but water into the field, which, with bad cheese and fine bread, is their general fare. I think our northern

people are much more notable. Their meals are more plentiful and less delicate. They eat coarse bread, and drink a great deal of milk, and have often salt beef.

. . . "I must not congratulate you on the taking of Ticonderoga, as I imagine all the prophecies in your House foretold it would not be taken; and I observe, in general, if people have predicted a misfortune, they had rather it should happen than have their prediction fall into discredit."

London life began to try her strength. In a note to Garrick, at the close of the year: "I'm hurried to death with assemblies," is the form of her excuse for not calling on Mrs. Garrick; "and I am forced to manage *mon souffle de vie.*" She hardly dares hope to secure Lord Lyttelton's company to meet Garrick, unless on a Saturday or Sunday; "for the peers are as inactive as Jews on Saturday, and as jolly as the idlest Christians on Sunday."

The shadow of the loved brother Morris falls on the following letter:—

"Jany. 8th, 1778. . . . My spirits felt a great damp at first returning to London, where I used

to enjoy the friendly converse of my poor departed brother. Death, disasters, and incidents have reduced a large fireside to a small circle. A few years, indeed, shows me that the flattering hopes one entertained in the nursery, of living in social gaiety and freedom with those nearly allied in blood, were mere pleasing delusions. If other things do not sever these natural connections, the fatal scissors cuts their thread.

"Tho' my poor brother never had opportunity of amassing great wealth, I was in hopes he would have left some thousands more behind him; but the easiness and flexibility of his temper, and a certain placid indolence, made him give into more expense than was prudent. The world lays the whole blame on him, and is loud in compassionate lamentations for his widow. Indeed, her present condition is very lamentable, and I pity her extremely; but certainly she loved expense better than he did. I imagine, poor man, he thought her fine dress and appearance raised her in the eyes of the world. There is no end of the bad consequences of an improper marriage. When men and women make an indiscreet match, they say it is no concern of

any one; but when any distress is the consequence, the friends who were thought impertinent if they troubled themselves about the match, are thought cruel if they take no part of the evil.

. . . "M. de Jarnac, who married an Irish beauty, in the mistaken opinion that she was also a fortune, has been stock-jobbing here prodigiously; but if we should really have a French war, he will be bit.

"A very superb theatre is going to be built in the Haymarket. It is to be in prices the same as the opera; no places taken, and the play to begin at eight o'clock, which certainly suits better the present hour of dining. Once a week, each of the other theatres, on certain conditions, are to lend their actors; so they will each save the expence of a sixth part at least of their theatrical shows. The other five nights their houses will be the fuller. If ye London apprentices of these days are half as bold as he who kill'd the lion, I think they will assault our new theatre. Neither its price, hours, nor situation will suit them. The town has been very sickly. Lady George Germaine has been dangerously ill of the measles, but is better.

. . . "Montagu" (her nephew and heir) "is in fine

health; and as to spirits, he never wants them. He rides in the manège from eleven till twelve, and then his tutor sets him on Pegasus. The day before yesterday was the first time he had attain'd the honour of riding between the pillars, and he was as proud of it as Alexander when he had tamed Bucephalus. He dances, under the care of the celebrated M. Valonys, early every morning. These exercises make a boy more healthy as well as more graceful. On Tuesday he returns to Harrow, where his master tells me he does very well. I carried him to-day to see Mr. Lever's museum. The collection of birds, both as to their variety and preservation, exceed that in the King of France's collection of natural curiosities; but, not being shown me by M. de Buffons and Monsr. D'Aubenton, I did not see them with so much pleasure. The finest as well as rarest bird being a wise and learned man. Mr. Lever is gone into the country, and I was disappointed at not seeing a man who would sell in exchange an acre of good land for an extraordinary fungus."

Hill Street. Feb. 21, 1778. . . . "The town is now full of company; full of bustle. Real busi-

ness and serious occupation have their hours of retreat and rest, but the pursuits of pleasure have no intermissions. The change of objects is the delassement in that case. As to me, I am, like other light and insignificant matters, whisked about in the whirlwind.

"I approve my dear neice's ambition to excel in dancing a minouet; not that dancing a minouet is a matter of great importance; but a desire to do everything well will carry her on to perfections of a higher kind. . . . A little ball, a frolick now and then, is very good for young persons, but I think you and my brother judged very well in not carrying my neice to assemblies. In our silly, dissipated town, girls never are produced into assemblies till after seventeen, and, indeed, they would never have anything but absurdity and affectation, if they were introduced into the world in their infancy.

. . . "I am glad my father has agreed to allow Mrs. (Morris) Robinson an hundred pounds a year, to which I have added fifty. She now knows that she will have a subsistence, and must accommodate herself to it. So far it is comfortable to her, and I am sure it is happy for the family that the world

should not have a reason to be talking about it. Mr. Danne, Mr. Wilmot, and several persons of credit in the law and in other professions, came to me with strong remonstrances at the cruelty of letting Mr. Morris Robinson's widow be destitute. So that, for the honour of the family, I would have given her what she now has, if my father had refused it. I have had only a thousand pounds out of my family, and for Mrs. (Morris) Robinson I have no partiality; but in Italy you have heard the most powerful of all arguments to do right, it is the address of beggars, their 'Fate ben per voi!' To be justifying bad things by others' faults is never graceful; but in family connections there is great folly in it, and it is only giving people occasion to throw disgrace when it comes too near one.

"It has been a great mortification that Mrs. (Morris) Robinson's name has been often mentioned at this end of the town lately. I was always desirous that it might remain on the other side Temple Bar; but my brother was so generally beloved, that, out of respect to him, his widow was an object of compassion."

The subject is pursued in the next letter to Mrs. William Robinson.

"Feb. 28th, 1778. . . . I am sure you who have a feeling and a generous heart will be pleased with Mr. Thomas Harris and Mrs. Harris's behaviour to Mrs. M. Robinson. Besides paying her all kinds of civilities, Mr. Harris desired that when she went to a new habitation, he might present her with a hundred pounds towards furnishing it. Bad as the world is, and tho' selfishness makes so great a part of the human composition, yet a social, kind character like my poor brother's makes its impression on tempers of the like kind, and, indeed, one has a comfort in seeing his memory so much beloved and respected. Mrs. M. Robinson has continually some marks of attention paid to her. As hard hearts love to insult adversity, tender ones endeavour to console it. The civilities the poor woman receives are paid, not to her merits, but to her distress or my brother's memory. In either case, they do honour to human nature."

An incident that might have cost Mrs. Scott her life, from her cap having caught fire, is cheerfully noticed in a letter, dated Saturday, March 1,

1778, from Mrs. Scott to Mrs. Robinson: "I am burned pretty deep in the back of my neck.... From thence to my face, I have reason to hope, will be more speedy of cure, and the little damage my face received is well already, except an abridgment of eyebrow and eyelash, which, perhaps, may never come again, and I am perfectly indifferent whether they do or no; for at fifty-five (at least), half an eyebrow is just as good as a whole one. I have reason to think myself most happy in having come off so well as I did, considering all the very horrid circumstances of the affair." . . .

Of one of her nephews, she significantly adds:— "I think how much better a good dull man is than a Charles Fox and many others, whose talents and vices have grown together in a superlative degree." And in a subsequent letter she treats of her young niece and what young nieces love:—

May 7, 1778. Mrs. Scott to Mrs. Robinson.— "I had the pleasure of seeing your daughter on Monday look very well and dance a good minuet. . . . Her mantua-maker is certainly the most insatiable of that insatiable tribe. She requires two yards more of lutestring, tho' she has already had

twenty-three, which is most shameful; and her art gives her no right to be so, for it is not well made; at least, the sleeves set abominably. . . The ball was resplendent—was full, and the children's dresses extremely expensive, and very pretty and whimsical; but I could not forbear being sorry to see so much extravagance used, to breed girls as early as possible to the love of it, as if it would not come quite soon enough; though my niece's dress was not chargeable with that fault: being white, it looked very nice and genteel, and became her. . . .

"It is reported that Lord Percy's haste for a divorce is increased by his having fallen violently in love with Miss Burrell. It is so like a story to be made that the truth appears to me doubtful." . . .

The same writer subsequently touches on a variety of subjects: "Mrs. (Morris) Robinson tells me she finds a good dinner more necessary than ever; . . . and as she is determined to live in London, tho' she should be able to afford but one room, yet she has friends who will often invite her to a good house and a good dinner.

. . . "Her resentment appears to me very unreasonable, but her anger was always more ready

at call than her reason, and, by her present distresses, seems to have gained superior strength. Had the late misfortunes softened her temper into mildness, she might justly have said, It is good for me that I have been afflicted!"

In speaking of a tutor recommended for young Morris Robinson, Mrs. Scott writes: "At Mrs. Cockerell's he taught the young ladies to read, had a few pupils of his own, and read and preached well as curate in Chelsea Church. . . . The only blot in Mr. Sympson's character is that he was, I presume, two or three years married before he acknowledged it, in order to keep his fellowship; for when he brought his wife to Chelsea, she had a child or two. Though necessity ought not to be without law (we are told it is so), it may justly be pleaded as some alleviation of the breach of law. As his wife, on this account, came among us under a little cloud, the quality of Chelsea did not visit her, except Mrs. Freind and one or two more who spoke well of her. . . . The other Miss Burrell (one, you know, married Lord Algernon Percy) is going to be married to Duke Hamilton, and they are going to consummate their unfinished loves on ship-board;

for she is to accompany him to America, where it is very proper he should go, as the amplest field for him to indulge his passion for shooting. He has exercised himself with shooting across Hanover Square out of a wind-gun, to the utter dismay of old Lady Westmoreland and Sir Thomas Fredericks. A bullet whistled by the ear of the latter, as he sat in his dining-room, and lodged in the wainscot; two more penetrated into other parts. Surprized at so dangerous an incident, he ran to the window, and there saw the duke, his vis à vis, at *his* window, with a gun in his hand. He immediately sallied forth to give his grace a deserved chiding, but during the time, the duke, having had leisure to charge again, he shot dead a favorite dog which bore Sir Thomas company."

In a later letter, Mrs. Montagu, referring to the above marriage, says: "Miss Burrell has no reason to be afraid of Duke Hamilton. He might boyishly fire off a gun, but he has the character of a very good-humoured young man. He has no vices, is handsome, and is, in all respects, like other people. He does not make any great *eclat;* but the next best thing to great and good reputation is, to

be little spoken of. When there are not talents for the first, there is prudence in the latter.

. . . "I suppose you know there was a report of my father's death. My porter had a very fatiguing morning with messages. I had promised to introduce the Dowager Duchess of Beaufort to the French ambassadress on Wednesday night. So, tho' the weather was terrible, I went out, and such was the report of poor papa, that I was stared at as a ghost as I enter'd the room, and the servants below were very busy questioning my footmen. To-day I had a message from Lady Anne and Lady Betty Finch, with an apology, that not having heard of that melancholy event till to-day, they had not sent their enquiries. All this while the old gentleman is in as good health as he has been this twelvemonth."

This purely private subject is followed, in a letter of April 10th, 1778, by one of public importance.

. . . "I am sure you will be desirous to hear a true account of Lord Chatham's accident in ye House, and of his present condition of health. The newspapers are in but little credit in general, but their account of that affair has been very exact. His

lordship had been long confined by a fit of the gout, so was debilitated by illness and want of exercise. The House was invaded by numbers who went to hear him on so critical a state of affairs. The thunder of his eloquence was abated, and the lightning of his eyes was dimmed in a certain degree, when he rose to speak; but the glory of his former administration threw a mellow lustre around him, and his experience of publick affairs gave the force of an oracle to what he said, and a reverential silence reigned through the senate. He spoke in answer to the Duke of Richmond. The Duke of Richmond replied. Then his lordship rose up to speak again. The genius and spirit of Britain seemed to heave in his bosom, and he sank down speechless. He continued half an hour in a fit. His eldest and second sons and Lord Mahon were in great agony, waiting the doubtful event. At last, he happily recovered; and though he is very weak still, I am assured by his family, that he looks better than he did before this accident. The next day, Lord Shelburne and the Duke of Richmond carried on the same debate, and Lord Shelburne's speech was much admired.

. . . "It is said my friend, Mr. Pulteney, has been twice at Paris, negotiating with Dr. Franklin; but the result is not known. Mrs. Pulteney was here last night, but I was too discreet even to mention the affair.

. . . "Montagu came home to-day. The school in a manner broke up yesterday, but as the weather is hot, the town sickly, and I was to have an assembly, I would not bring him home. He goes to Sandleford on Tuesday, and I am to follow him on Wednesday. The weather is inviting, and I hate this season of the year in London. If I am here, I am obliged often to have company, and my eating-room is not large enough nor high enough for large dinners and numerous guests.

. . . "Dr. Robinson, who call'd on me this morning, told me, a gentleman he met in Berkely Square just before, assured him the French had taken two of our armed ships. The doctor is an historian of great veracity, but in an affair of this kind, he could not examine the evidence.

. . . "Lord Kerry's fine furniture sold very dear these bad times. I bought a large glass at the French ambassador's sale, and some other things

for my new house, pretty cheap. I suppose so great a sale just before made the second sale more reasonable.

Oct. 10, 1778. Mrs. Scott to Mrs. W. Robinson. . . . "He" (Rev. Wm. Robinson, who had published a political pamphlet,) "has won the heart of the wax-worker, Mrs. Wright. Mr. Roweller went to see her performances, and, in conversation, asked her if she had seen the pamphlet. She told him she was charmed with it, had sent over a great number into her country, and assured him the author would be adored there; and desired, if he knew him, that he would tell him, that if he liked her or either of her daughters, they were entirely at his service. One of the girls cried out, 'Lord, mamma, we never saw the gentleman. We may not like him!' 'I don't care a farthing for that,' replied Mrs. Wright; 'if he likes you, you shall marry him!'"

Ladies of another quality come upon the stage in the following chapter.

## CHAPTER X.

Dec. 20, 1778. Mrs. Scott to Mrs. Robinson, Denton. . . . "Miss Coke is a most extraordinary character, and, in my opinion, a most contemptible one, though I suppose she thinks herself a heroine. I have great compassion on one who blushes at her frailties, or rather her vices, for I hate those mincing names, designed only to palliate wrong actions; but I detest a woman who glories in her shame, and sets the world at defiance. Such desperate spirits should not be clad in feminine bodies. They are fit only for Sixteen-string Jack and his brother ruffians. Your daughter may in due time fall in love; nay, tho' not very probable, she may even fall, in a stronger sense of the word; . . . but I will venture to answer for her never being one of those intrepid damsels who brazen out their vices, and, without any change of countenance, raise blushes on the cheeks of all their

sex. If she ever does ill, she will do it sneakingly; will feel the censure of others, and, suffering for her own, will rectify her errors. However, I am apt to believe she will escape clear of any of this nature."

. . . "The new singer at the Pantheon is said to be the most extraordinary that ever was heard; unlike every one that ever sang before; very much like a bird, and the compass of her voice far above whatever was known. She has one hundred guineas a night. When, in infancy, she was taken out of a ditch, after a boar or a hog had devoured one fesse,—car elle est aussi mal partagée que la suivante de la Princesse Cunegonda,—who would have imagined she could ever be so great a lady? All her charms are centered in her voice; for she is exceedingly ugly."

Dec. 31, 1778. Mrs. S. to Mrs. R.—"On my brother (William) Robinson's return from Burfield, he will be in better spirits, as a light heart and a thin pair of breeches is a conjunction he has little notion of. I fancy when he feels the gain of godliness in his pocket, he will be mighty alert and joyous, and have a better idea of a merry Christmas than he has ever yet formed."

Mrs. Montagu's letters now succeed.

To Mrs. Robinson.—"Tunbridge Wells. 1778 . . . . I love London extremely, where one has the choice of society, but I hate ye higgledy-piggledy of the watering places. One never sees an owl in a flock of wild geese, nor a pigeon in the same company as hawks and kites. I leave it to the naturalists to determine on ye merit of each species of fowl. All I assert is, that nature has designed birds of a feather should flock together. On the menagerie of the Pantiles there is not so just an assortment. However, I have been fortunate now in finding Lady Spencer, Lady Clermont, Mrs. Boughton, Mr. and Mrs. Wedderburne, and many of my voluntary London society here. There was a pretty good ball last Tuesday; and Lady Spencer and the Duchess of Devonshire were so good as to chaperone Miss Gregory; so I did not think it necessary for me to sit and see the graces of Messrs. L'Epy Valhouys and Mlle. Heinel exhibited by the misses. I understand there are not above three dancing men, and the master of the ceremonies makes one of this number.

"Minouet dancing is just now out of fashion; and,

by the military air and dress of many of the ladies, I should not be surprised if backsword and cudgell playing should take place of it. I think our encampment excellent for making men less effeminate; but if they make our women more masculine, the male and female character, which should ever be kept distinct, will now be more so than they have been.

. . . "We still have fine weather here, and I agree with you, that the dust and other little inconveniences that attend a dry season are not to be put in any account. I would have months of dust for one fine day.

. . . "I have not said anything yet to you of my poor father. The subject is a very melancholy one. At present, all one can hope for him is an easy exit. The great decay of his mental powers has for some time rendered him an object of great pity; yet, to my unspeakable indignation, I was told by a gentleman here, that one of ye whist-party at the coffee-house some months ago, had not only refus'd to pay a debt of eighteen guineas, which he owed my father, but had triumphed over him in a shocking manner, asserting his loss of memory and imbecillity.

What a wretch must it be that would insult an old man. Extream old age is little to be coveted. In a long life one must outlive one's friends, and, perhaps, oneself. I imagine by the accounts of to-day, that the great deliverer from human woes has before this time given him his release. My porter calls every night, just before the last letter bell, to let me know how he does. . . .

"It is much the fashion here to go and see the camp at Coxheath. . . . My father's illness would make it impossible for me to go; and I had much rather have the honour of seeing their majesties at St. James's. Of all fields, the field of Mars is that I like least. The fields which sustain manhood are pleasant objects; those in which they are destroyed, suggest melancholly ideas.

"The fine condition in which I found my estates in Northumberland and in Yorkshire, and the universal prosperity there, made me wish we might enjoy our plenty in peace, run no new hazards, and incur no new taxes. The labouring people in the north do not suffer the poverty we see in the same rank in the south, and our parish rates are very low.

. . . "Lord Kames and Mrs. Drummond, his

wife, came from Edinburgh, which is an hundred miles from Denton, on purpose to spend a few days with me. His lordship is a prodigy. At eighty-three he is as gay and as nimble as he was at twenty-five. His sight, hearing, and memory perfect. He has a great deal of knowledge and a lively imagination, and is a most entertaining companion. I have promised to return his visit two years hence. I think as he has not grown old in the space of eighty-three years, two years more cannot have much effect. If it should abate a little of his vivacity, he would still have enough left."

"Sandleford. Feb. 10th, 1779. . . . I am inform'd that our minister at Lisbon sends an account that Admiral Rodney fell in with the Spanish fleet in the Gulf of Gibraltar, has blown up the admiral's ship of ninety guns, taken four or five ships, and only one has got into Cadiz. This news is but just arrived. *Rule, Brittannia, rule the waves.* There is an admirable work of Mr. Anstey's just published called 'Speculation; or, a Defence of Manhood,' a poem.

. . . 'Montagu is still at Harrow. . . . His master says more of him than it becomes me to repeat; so

I will, for once in my life, show more discretion than vanity."

To Mrs. Robinson.—"Sandleford. June ye 15th, 1779. . . . As I had not been to Bath since the Circus was finished and the Crescent began, I was much struck with the beauty of the town. In point of society and amusement, it comes next (but after a long interval) to London. There are many people established at Bath who were once of the polite and busy world, so they retain a certain politeness of manner and vivacity of mind which one cannot find in many country towns. All contracted societies, where there are no great objects of pursuit, must in time grow a little narrow and *un peu fade;* but then there is an addition of company by people who come to the waters, from all the active parts of life, and they throw a vivacity into conversation which we must not expect from persons whose chief object was the *odd trick* or a *sans prendre*. Cards is the great business of the inhabitants of Bath. The ladies, as is usual in little societies, are some of them a little gossiping and apt to find fault with the cap, the gown, the manner, or the understandings of their neighbours. But that

does not much concern the water-drinkers, who not being resident, are not the objects of their envy; and, I must say, they are all very obliging to strangers. As the primate of Ireland was at Bath almost all the time, I was there, I had the daily pleasure of passing my time in the most agreable society; for such is that of a person of his noble mind, endeared still more by his friendship to our family.

"I did not go at all to the publick rooms, which are hot and noisy. As much as I could, I excused myself from private assemblies. So, when the primate, Lord Stormont, and some others of my acquaintance who happened to be at Bath, had an idle hour, they bestowed it on me. The Bishop of Peterborough, very unluckily for me, went away the day I came to Bath. We just met at Marlbro'. Another agreable acquaintance of mine, the Provost of Eton, arrived only just before I came away. Mr. Anstey was often with me, and you will believe he is very droll and entertaining; but what recommends him more, is his great attention to his family. He has eight children. He instructs his boys in the Greek and Latin, so that

they are fitted for the upper forms of Eton School, where their education is finished. He has a house in the Crescent, at which he resides the greatest part of the year. Mrs. Anstey is a very sensible, amiable woman, and does not deal in the gossip of the place. There is also Mr. Hamilton in the Crescent. He is very polite, agreable, and has been much abroad and lived much in the great world.

"I should dislike the Bath much less, if the houses were larger. I always take the largest that can be got in the Circus or Crescent. On the outside it appears a good stone edifice; in the inside, it is a nest of boxes, in which I should be stifled, if the masonry were not so bad as to admit winds at many places. The society and mode of life are infinitely preferable to what one can find in any other country town, but much less agreable than London. I believe if I was to act the part of Minos in this World, I should use it as a kind of purgatory, to which I should send those who had not the taste or qualifications which deserved to be put into the capital city, nor were yet so disagreably unsociable as to merit suffering the terrors and horrors of a long winter in the country."

The devotion of Bath visitors to cards has been satirized in many an epigram, more or less pointed. There were certain individuals among them who were not likely to come under the eye of Mrs. Montagu but who did not escape the notice of Fielding. "I have known a stranger at Bath," he says, in the first volume of "Amelia," "who has happened fortunately (I might almost say unfortunately) to have four by honours in his hand almost every time he dealt for a whole evening, shunned universally by the whole company the next day!"

"Mr. Anstey, in a little excursion from home, called here on his way to London, where he arrived just to behold the horrors of the conflagration. On his return back, he made me another visit, and his countenance bore the impression of horror, from the dreadful things he had beheld. He got back to Bath just in time to be present at ye riots there.

"Tho' I am not personally acquainted with the family of Sir E. Knatchbull, I cannot help being glad the heir of it has made so proper a match. I have heard a good character of the young

lady. She has a noble fortune, and, by her mother, must be allied to the best families in Kent. Commerce has so enriched this kingdom, that in every county there are some new gentry who eclypse those ancient families which once had the superiority, and I must own I love to see it return to them. The mellow dignity of a gentleman is infinitely preferable to the crude pride of a nabob. I believe you are acquainted with Sir Archer and Lady Croft. They are now come to live in their house in this neighbourhood. It had been lett to a mad West Indian, who ruined his fortune and then shot himself; after that, to a nabob. I never visit the West Indians in my neighbourhood, because they would teach my servants to drink rum; nor the nabobs, lest they should teach them to want to eat turtle and rich dainties. So I had not been at Dunstan till the other day since the old proprietor left it.

"I find the lower kind of neighbours are not pleased with Sir A. and Lady Croft, because they are not so profuse as the West, nor magnificient as the East, Indian; but they seem to me very well bred people.

"My nephew Robinson, according to the primate's advice, is studying hard at Cambridge this vacation. He has very good sense and an uncommon memory, so he will reap great advantage from application to study. The generality of young people in these days spend all their time in travelling from place to place. Such a life may fit them to be surveyors of high roads, or, if very ingenious, to make maps of England, but for nothing better. An uniformity of life goes far in forming a consistency of character.

"It would have done no harm to Montagu to have practised lessons of idleness rather than study; from the last, there is not anything to divert him here.

"I am very sorry I have not a frank in Denton. However, that my double letter may not put your pocket, as well as patience, to double expence, I convey it to London in a frank, to save half the charges."

To Mrs. Robinson.—"Sandleford. Aug. 18, 1779. Montagu's master wrote me a letter on my nephew's leaving Harrow, giving him every praise I could have wish'd, and desiring me to give him

his portrait to hang up with those of four of his distinguish'd scholars who had left his school there. Those young men have since had a considerable reputation at the university, and I hope my young friend will have the same. But one fears for youth in every new stage it is to pass through. He was this summer admitted of Trinity College. I should have preferr'd St. John's, as the discipline there is stricter; but his tutor, Mr. Gilbank, being of Trinity, I could not continue my nephew under his daily inspection if he was not at the same college; and tho' the salary I give the tutor makes a considerable difference in the expence, yet if parents are to be pardon'd who spoil the child by sparing the rod, they are not so who spoil the child to spare the guinea."

Referring to the marriage of the daughter of her brother Charles, she says . . . . "I imagine this week my neice at Canterbury is made a happy bride, and what is better, in the probability of being a happy wife. Mr. Hougham has a very good character, and I believe my neice is very amiable. Discretion and good-humour are the great sources of domestick happiness. . . . "I dare say my dear neice (Mary)

adorned the ball at Canterbury with a charming minouet. I believe the present Miss Robinsons excell by far in that respect the former Miss Robinsons. And I heartily wish all the steps they take in life may be with more smoothness and more graces.

"I am impatient to have my new house fit for habitation, as I think the large and high rooms and its airy situation will be of great service to my health; and I am sure such noble apartments will be a great addition to my pleasures. In the winter of the year and the winter of our life, our principal enjoyments must be in our own house. . . . I suppose I shall be advised to take some Bath waters before the winter sets in. . . . I will get the better of my passion for my new house, which is almost equal to that of a lover to a mistress whom he thinks very handsome and very good, and such as will make him enjoy the *dignity of life with ease*, yet I will give as much of the autumn as I shall be advis'd to the Bath waters. . . . I have found much more benefit from Bath waters than I have from Tunbridge for some years past; and the accommodations at Bath are infinitely preferable. There are not above two houses on Mount

Ephraim and Mount Pleasant that are not mere hovels; the bed-chambers so low and small that one is stifled; and, if the weather is bad, one is confin'd all day in a little parlour not much larger than a bird-cage; so that unless one goes to Tunbridge at the beginning of the season, one is miserably accommodated.

"The airings round Bath are delightful. From every window of my house in the Crescent I had the most beautiful prospects imaginable; so that I enjoyed the sweet face of the fair month of May in all her blooming charms.

. . . "I am very far from laughing at you, as you suppose, for indulging reveries about your sons marrying. I often allow my fancy to dance at Montagu's wedding; and the times are such I can hardly restrain it from attending his divorce bill through the Houses of Lords and Commons. However, it is better to suppose the times will mend. We do more wisely, when we sweeten present cares with the prospect of future pleasures, than when we embitter present pleasures with future apprehensions."

When Mrs. Montagu made the last reflection,

she probably had in her mind the lines in her favourite "Comus:"—

—— "Be not over exquisite
To cast the fashion of uncertain evils;
For grant they be so, while they rest unknown,
Why need a man forestall his date of grief,
And run to meet what he would most avoid?"

. . . "I have two objects in a daily state of improvement—my nephew Montagu and my new house. Many people would say my pleasure in both will be less when they are arriv'd at their state of perfection, but I am not of that opinion. The pleasures of expectation and of possession are different, but the quiet serenity of the latter is, methinks, the best.

To Mrs. Robinson. "Dec. ye 29th, 1779. . . . Our town amours present us with every thing that is horrible. Women without religion or virtue, and men, void even of a sense of honour. Never till now did one hear of three divorces going forward in one session, in which the ladies of the most illustrious rank and families in Great Britian were concern'd. Lady Percy was the wife of a nobleman of a most distinguished merit, who had a

mind too noble to be satisfied with the greatest hereditary wealth and honours, has, merely to serve his king and country, exposed himself to all the difficulties and dangers of military service. Lord Carmarthen is the prettiest man in his person; the most polite and pleasing in his manners, with a sweet temper and an excellent Understanding, happily cultivated. As to Lord Derby, to be sure, he has nothing on his side but the seventh commandment; but that should be sufficient, and was sufficient, in former times. Her family, it is said, triumph that this divorce is only an ugly step to an elevation of title. However, the name of an adulteress will surely blot whatever shall be written over it, even were it an imperial title. It is said, however, that Lord D. will be only divorced in the Spiritual Court; and, in that case, he will have the revenge of keeping her in her present awkward situation; but while he is punishing the faithless Wife, he is doing the greatest service to her gallant (the Duke of Dorset), whom he prevents from incurring infamy and also getting a most extravagant wife.

"I approve much of your getting a dance once a week for the young folks, and I am particularly

glad my nephew is of the party. Grace of person is more important for a woman than a man; but the capacity of dancing a minouet is more serviceable to a young man, for, by so doing, he obliges many young ladies, while the minouet miss seldom pleases any girl but herself. Unless a girl is very beautiful, very well-shaped, and very genteel, she gives little pleasure to the spectators of her minouet; and, indeed, so unpolite are the setters-by in all assemblies, that they express a most ungrateful joy when the minouets are over. For my part, tho' I feel as great *ennui* as my neighbours on those occasions, I never allow myself to appear so; for I look upon a minouet to be generally an act of filial piety, which gives real pleasure to fathers, mothers, and aunts. . . . In France, good minouets are clapped; but I believe no nation arrived at such a degree of civilization as to *encore* them.

. . . "I do not know whether I am more stupid than other people, but I neither find any of the vexation some find in building, nor the great amusement others tell me they experience in it. Indeed, if it were not that a house must be building before it can be built, I should never have been a builder. . . .

I have not had a quarter of an hour's pain or pleasure from the operation. I have not met with the least disappointment or mortification. It has gone on as fast and well as I expected, and, when it is habitable, I shall take great pleasure in it; for it is an excellent house, finely situated, and just such as I have always wish'd, but never hoped, to have.

. . . "I know that in some little alterations we made at Sandleford, the country workmen were so tedious, we were obliged to send for carpenters from London; but here we have such plenty of Hands, that everything goes continually on.

. . . "I was grieved to see Scott's Hall advertised to be sold. It is a pity such an ancient family should be rooted-up to plant some upstart nabob in its place.

. . . "I suppose your consort was concerned at the indiscretion of his Pallas, Mrs. Macaulay. Had she married a great-great-grandson of one of the regicides, however youthful he had been, it might have been pardonable; but the second mate of a surgeon to an Indian man-of-war, of twenty-two, seems no way accountable. If ye Minerva she

carried on the outside of her coach had been consulted, no doubt but the sage goddess, even in effigy, would have given signs of disapprobation. I have sent you some verses of Mr. Anstey's on the subject. The first copy he put into the urn, at Mrs. Millar's, at Batheaston; and being desired, when he drew them, to read them a second time, instead of so doing, he read the other copy."

"Bath. Nov. ye 21, 1780. . . . It was time for Montagu to go to Cambridge, where I had rather he had lectures and took degrees under alma mater than under the goddess of folly and dissipation here. In these water-drinking places, every one is more idle and more silly than at their respective homes, where all have some business, and many most important pursuits. I consider, really, life here as a mere dream. Some walk very gracefully, and talk very agreably in their sleep; but a young man should not begin life by acting Le Sonambule. It is very well to do so between the acts of a busy drama, or, alas! as a farce, when the chief catastrophe is over, and the curtain is dropped between the *busy* world and us. . . . The primate of Ireland is here. He very kindly sent to my

nephew Morris to come to him. Under such protection, I think Bath as good a place as any he can be in. The advantage of domestick society with the primate is the greatest imaginable; nor could any parent behave with more real kindness to the young man, whose gratitude and deference to his grace make the best return that can be to such goodness. . . . My Nephew very wisely and laudably pursued, with the greatest application, the course of classical studies the primate wish'd him to fall into; and it is with great satisfaction I hear his grace speak of what he has done, with the highest approbation.

. . . "My new house is almost ready. . . . I propose to move all my furniture from Hill Street thither, and to let my house unfurnished till a good purchaser offers. Then, should I get a bad tenant, I can seize his goods for rent; and such security becomes necessary in these extravagant times.

. . . "Dr. Moisey being dead, I applied to Dr. de la Cour, your friend, when I had my cold, to know if I might drink the waters. The poor doctor is very sickly, and, perhaps, from that reason, he is

the most inattentive physician I ever knew or heard of. He is very agreable in conversation, but does not remember for a whole day what he has ordered. He suits me very well at present; for I want no medical help, and I always love a lively companion. He took three guineas of me, for which I had some saline draughts and a long direction as to food, the quantity of water to be taken. . . . The saline draughts were very good and the food was very wholesome; but as I knew before that those drafts were good for a cold, and mutton and chicken easy of digestion, I rather regret my three guineas. But this is between ourselves; for I never say what may hurt a man in his profession; so that, when others complain of a loss of memory and inattention, I am silent."

The period has now arrived in which some notice is required of the Blue Stockings, of the date of whose origin Boswell has made an erroneous statement.

## CHAPTER XI.

### THE BLUE STOCKINGS.

To Mrs. Montagu, Mrs. Vesey (a warm-hearted Irish lady), and Mrs. Ord (daughter of an eminent surgeon, named Dillingham, and subsequently a wealthy widow,) is generally ascribed the merit of having founded parties where conversation should form the chief, if not only, occupation. But there was a lady much connected with the above, and, indeed, with *all* the *Blues*, to whom may be assigned the honour of first attacking what it was the object of the Blue Stockings to overthrow, namely, Miss Mulso, better known to us as Mrs. Chapone,—a name which she acquired by marriage in 1760. When this lady was about twenty-three (1750), she, in concert with Johnson, wrote the tenth number of the "Rambler." Under the character of Lady Racket, she sent compliments to that

censor of manners, and "lets him know she will have cards at her house every Sunday, . . . where he will be sure of meeting all the good company in town. . . . She longs to see the torch of truth produced at an assembly, and to admire the charming lustre it will throw on the jewels, complexions, and behaviour of every dear creature there."

Of course, this note was written as a text to which Johnson might append a comment that should sharply censure that card-playing against which intellectual ladies were beginning to set their faces and close their doors. Accordingly, the "Rambler" remarks: "At card-tables, however brilliant, I have always thought my visit lost; for I could know nothing of the company but their clothes and their faces. I saw their looks clouded at the beginning of every game, with a uniform solicitude now and then in its progress, varied with a short triumph; at one time wrinkled with cunning; at another, deadened with despondency, or, by accident, flushed with rage at the unskilful or unlucky play of a partner. From such assemblies . . . I was quickly forced to retire; they were too trifling for me when

I was grave, and too dull when I was cheerful." When Johnson suggests to Lady Racket to "light up her apartments *with myrtle*," he seems to have made the suggestion which ladies of sense and means adopted, and *for* which they were ridiculed and nick-named by persons as brainless as any of the figures staring stupidly at nothing on the court cards.

There already existed, however, conversation parties that were as little attractive to persons of good taste, as the ruinous card-tables were to persons of prudence. . . . In one of the few letters of Mrs. Scott which survived her unfortunate request that all should be destroyed, she thus wrote of card-parties and "conversations," in the very year, 1750, that Johnson and Miss Mulso combined in the "Rambler," to reform both:—

"I find no objection to large companies, except the want of society in them. . . . I have not the natural requisite for society—the love of cards. . . . I excuse myself from card-parties by saying I have a great dislike to sitting by a card-table, which no one can pretend is unreasonable; and I find nothing is so useful as asserting one's liberty in these cere-

monious points: it gives little offence, and without it, one may remain all one's life the suffering slave of a painful civility. . . . I am glad, by-the-bye, there are such things as cards in the world; for otherwise one would be teazed by eternal conversation parties, which are terrible things. I seldom venture into a Sunday-night circle, and I quite disclaimed them a year before I left London. The principal speakers are always those to whom one is the least inclined to attend. Every day in the week would be as much taken up with these parties, if cards did not conquer even the love of talking."

Mrs. Montagu, a year before she acquired that name, had expressed her distaste for the flashy conversation of her time. In a letter to her sister Sarah, she describes one of the "talkers" with great vivacity. "Mr. B——'s wife put out her strength to be witty, and, in short, showed such a brilliant genius, that I turned about and asked who it was that was so willing to be ingenious; for she had endeavoured to go off two or three times, but had unhappily flashed in the pan." In 1750, Mrs. Montagu and some other ladies attempted to reform manners, by having parties where cards could not

be thought of, and where the mental power was freshest for conversation.

In that year, 1750, there was a charming French lady taking notes amongst us. Madame du Bocage, in her "Letters on England, Holland, and Italy," notices Mrs. Montagu; and from the notice may be learned, that the last-named lady was already giving entertainments of a nature to benefit society. While, at the Duke of Richmond's, as many as eighteen card-tables were "set for playing" in the gallery of his house near Whitehall, with supper and wine to follow, for the consolation of the half-ruined, and congratulation of the lucky, gamblers, Mrs. Montagu gave breakfasts. Madame du Bocage thus speaks of them and of the hostess:—

"In the morning, breakfasts, which enchant as much by the exquisite viands as by the richness of the plate on which they are served up, agreeably bring together the people of the country and strangers. We breakfasted in this manner to-day, April 8, 1750, at Lady Montagu's" (as Madame du Bocage mistakenly calls her), "in a closet lined with painted paper of *Pekin*, and furnished with the choicest movables of *China*. A long table, covered with

the finest linen, presented to the view a thousand glittering cups, which contained coffee, chocolate, biscuits, cream, butter, toasts, and exquisite tea. You must understand that there is no good tea to be had anywhere but in London. The mistress of the house, who deserves to be served at the table of the gods, poured it out herself. This is the custom, and, in order to conform to it, the dress of the English ladies, which suits exactly to their stature, the white apron and the pretty straw hat, become them with the greatest propriety, not only in their own apartments, but at noon, in St. James's Park, where they walk with the stately and majestic gait of nymphs."

Mrs. Montagu was not the only lady who gave those literary breakfasts. Lady Schaub (a foreign lady who *would* marry Sir Luke) received company at those pleasant repasts. Madame du Bocage met Frederick Prince of Wales at one of them. The prince, who, with all his faults, was an accomplished gentleman, came incog., so as to enjoy and to allow greater freedom. Madame du Bocage treated him as an ordinary gentleman, and was perfectly delighted with his conversation, as well as

with his thorough knowledge of the literature of her own country. They gossipped beneath the Sigismunda (one of many fine pictures possessed by Sir Luke), which stirred Hogarth to paint the same subject, in rivalry, as he thought, with Corregio; but the picture was since discovered to be by Farini.

When the breakfasts gave way to the evening coteries for conversation (with orgeat, lemonades, tea, and buscuits) is not known. After these had lasted a few years, the word "Blue-stocking" occurs for the first time in Mrs. Montagu's letters. Writing, in March, 1757, to Dr. Monsey, she says: "Our friend, Mr. Stillingfleet, is more attached to the lilies of the field than to the lilies of the town, who toil and spin as little as the others, and, like the former, are better arrayed than Solomon in all his glory. I assure you, our philosopher is so much a man of pleasure, he has left off his old friends and his blue stockings, and is at operas and other gay assemblies every night; so imagine whether a sage doctor, a dropsical patient, and a bleak mountain are likely to attract him." Mr. Benjamin Stillingfleet used to be seen as often at Mrs. Vesey's gatherings as at Mrs. Montagu's. "Blue Stock-

ing" was not a term exclusively applied to Mrs. Montagu's assemblies. To all assemblies where ladies presided and scholars were welcomed, the name seems to have been given. A "Blue Stocking *club*" never existed. The title was given in derision by persons who, as before said, lacked the brains, or who were not distinguished by other merits that would have entitled them to an invitation. The assemblies of Mrs. Montagu, Mrs. Vesey, and Mrs. Ord were spoken of indifferently as *bas-bleu* assemblies.

Sir William Forbes, in his "Life of Beattie," states that the society of eminent friends who met at Mrs. Montagu's, originally consisted of Mrs. Montagu, Mrs. Vesey, Mrs. Boscawen, Mrs. Carter, Lord Lyttelton, the Earl of Bath (Pulteney), Horace Walpole, and Mr. Stillingfleet. Around these some of the most distinguished persons of intellect used to assemble. Mrs. Vesey (daughter of the Bishop of Ossory and wife of Agmondesham Vesey), says Sir William, was another centre of pleasing and rational society. Without attempting to shine herself, she had the happy secret of bringing forward talents of every kind, and for diffusing over the

society the gentleness of her own character. Mrs. Boscawen (née Granville, wife of the renowned admiral), unknown to the literary world, but made familiar to modern readers by her pleasant letters in the Delany correspondence, made herself welcome by "the strength of her understanding, the poignancy of her humour, and the brilliancy of her wit." Sir William adds, that Stillingfleet was a learned man, negligent in his dress, and wearing *grey* stockings, which attracted Admiral Boscawen's notice, and caused the gallant seaman to call the assembly of these friends the Blue Stocking Society, as if to indicate that when those brilliant friends met, it was not for the purpose of forming a dressed assembly.

To one of the so-called Blue Stocking Ladies, the once renowned Literary Club owed its name. Sir Joshua Reynolds proposed the formation of such a club; Johnson joyfully acceded, and "*The* Club" was formed. Hawkins, one of the members, has left on record that "a lady, distinguished by her beauty and taste for literature, invited us two successive years to dinner at her house." Hawkins does not name the hostess (opinion is divided between Mrs. Montagu, Mrs. Vesey, and Mrs. Ord); but he

ascribes her hospitality to curiosity as to a desire to intermingle with the conversation of the members the "charms of her own." This idea of "conversation," in place of gambling and other fashionable follies, was the leading idea with the ladies who share the merit of having founded the Blue Stocking assemblies. The hostess who received the club "affected," says Hawkins, "to consider the members as *literary* men;" and he thinks it probable that the club thence derived an appellation which it never arrogated to itself. The Blue Stockings and the Literary Clubbists seem to have had this in common: their discourse was miscellaneous, chiefly literary: politics were alone excluded. The last, however, were sometimes quietly discussed in one or other of the groups into which the assemblies under the leadership of ladies divided themselves.

Mrs. Montagu, being a thorough woman of business as well as a recognized leader in social life, did not make her house in Hill Street a "court for the votaries of the Muses" all at once. She had a wholesome horror of being in debt, and she indulged her tastes only when her purse authorized the outlay. In 1767, she completed the Chinese-room

which had charmed Madame du Bocage years before. "Mr. Adams," as Mrs. Montagu informed Lord Kames, "has made me a cieling, and chimney-piece, and doors which are pretty enough to make me a thousand enemies. Envy," she said, jestingly, "turns livid at the first glimpse of them."

At this time, Mrs. Montagu had been living in Hill Street more than thirty years. It was not even at the later period the well-macadamized and broadly-paved street it now is. A few of the original and noble houses still dignify the street. Mrs. Montagu began to reside there a short time before Lord Chesterfield removed from Grosvenor Square to Chesterfield House; namely, in 1748. In the June of that year, Chesterfield wrote to Mr. Dayrolles: "I am now extremely busy in moving to my new house, where I must be before Michaelmas next. . . . As my new house is situated among a parcel of thieves and murderers, I shall have occasion for a house-dog." Chesterfield House is within a stone's throw of Hill Street. The "thieves and murderers" were among the butchers of May Fair and Sheppard's Market—not then cleared out for such streets as have since been erected on the site.

Park Lane was then Tyburn Lane, and, what with the fair of six weeks' duration (with blackguardism and incidents of horror that will not bear repeating), and the monthly hangings at Tyburn, from which half the drunken and yelling spectators poured through May Fair, Hill Street, and adjacent outlets on their way to home and fresh scenes of riot,—between the fair, the gallows, and the neighbouring rascalry,—the district was not to be entered after dark without risk of the wayfarer being stripped by robbers. Footpads were as common between Hay Hill and Park Lane as highwaymen between Hounslow and Bagshot. *Now*, Hill Street, looks as if no mounted gentleman of the road had ever quietly ridden through it on a summer's evening westward, on felonious thoughts intent. Chesterfield House stands, but new mansions occupy its once brilliant gardens, whence all the gay spirits have been driven, In *that* locality no longer can it be said that—

> —— "round and round the ghosts of beauties glide,
> Haunting the places where their honour died!"

In 1770, Hill Street, still unpaved, was most crowded with the carriages of visitors to Mrs. Mon-

tagu's rooms. In the assemblies held there, the hostess had words for all, but she had no special idols; and this was not always gratifying to those who looked for idolatry. Boswell notices one night when "a splendid company had assembled, consisting of the most eminent literary characters. I thought he (Johnson) seemed highly pleased with the respect and attention that was shown him, and asked him on our return home if he were not highly *gratified* by his visit. 'No, sir,' said he; 'not highly *gratified*, yet I do not recollect to have passed many evenings with fewer objections.'"

How "objectionable" Johnson could be to others is well known; but they took it good-naturedly. Soame Jenyns having been roughly treated by the doctor on one of these occasions, revenged himself by writing an anticipatory epitaph. It was probably read aloud at one of Mrs. Montagu's coteries. The original is preserved, with half a hundred sprightly letters by Garrick, among the MSS. belonging to Earl Spencer.

"Here lies poor Johnson! Reader, have a care,
Tread lightly, lest you rouse a sleeping bear!
Religious, moral, generous, and humane
He was; but, self-sufficient, rude, and vain.

Ill-breed, and over-bearing in dispute,
A scholar, and a Christian, and a brute.
Would you know all his wisdom and his folly,
His actions, sayings, mirth, and melancholy,
Boswell and Thrale, retailers of his wit,
Will tell you how he wrote, and talked, and coughed, and spit!"

Mrs. Garrick was among the ladies who met in Mrs. Montagu's drawing-room, and she remained the fast friend of the latter till death parted them. About a quarter of a century had elapsed since, as Eva Violetti, Mrs. Garrick, had made her first appearance on the stage as a dancer. In what guise she made her debût was, doubtless, laughingly alluded to by the Blue Stockings. The Earl of Strafford, who died childless, in 1791, has left a record of the fact in an unpublished letter (March, 1746) in the Cathcart collection. "She surprised her audience at her first appearance on the stage; for at her beginning to caper, she showed a neat pair of black velvet breeches, with roll'd stockings; but finding they were unusual in England, she changed them the next time for a pair of white drawers." This was a joke for the more intimate circle in Hill Street. It is probable that it was at the more

exclusive gatherings at Mrs. Montagu's, that the satirists, who had no title to enter, flung their shafts. "Beattie used to dwell with enthusiasm and delight," says Sir William Forbes, "on those more private parties into which he had had the happiness of being admitted at Mrs. Montagu's, consisting of Lord Lyttelton, Mrs. Carter, and one or two other most intimate friends, who spent their evenings in an unreserved interchange of thoughts; sometimes on critical and literary subjects; sometimes on those of the most serious and interesting nature."

Mrs. Montagu's assemblies were held within-doors. Other ladies varied the character of their entertainments. Lady Clermont (for example) was not more remarkable for her conversational parties than for her al fresco gatherings. In May, 1773, when living in St. James's Place, she issued invitations to three hundred dear friends, "to take tea and walk in the Park." It is said that the Duchess of Bedford, who then resided on the site now occupied by the north side of Bloomsbury Square, sent out cards to "take tea and walk in the fields." It was expected that syllabubs would soon be milked in Berkeley Square, around the

statue of his majesty. Walpole speaks of being invited to Lady Clermont's conversation pieces. These conversation pieces led to such easy manners, that etiquette was sometimes disregarded when it was most expected. Lady Clermont, for instance, being at a card-party at Gunnersbury, with many royal personages, and many witty ones, including Walpole, she remarked aloud, that she was sure the Duke of Portland was dying for a pinch of snuff! and she pushed her own box towards him, across the Princess Amelia. Her fluttered royal highness, remembering that my lady had been much favoured by the Queen of France, said: "Pray, madam, where did you learn that breeding? Did the Queen of France teach it to you?"

The district around Berkeley Square, Hay Hill, Hill Street, &c., continued to be a dangerous district. Lord Cathcart, in an unpublished letter to his son William, dated December, 1774, affords an instance of the peril which people ran on their way to the houses of Mrs. Montagu, Lady Clermont, Lady Brown, and other residents of that neighbourhood. Lord Cathcart tells his son, that as his sisters and Mr. Graham (afterwards Lord

Lyndoch) were going to Lady Brown's, in a coach, they were attacked by footpads on Hay Hill. One opened the door and demanded the company's money. The future Lord Lyndoch showed the stuff of which that gallant soldier was made. He upset the robber who addressed them, then jumped out and secured him. The confederate took to his heels.

One night in the autumn of 1776, the house in Hill Street was crowded. The French ambassador and Mme. de Noailles were there, but the hero of the night was Garrick, who electrified his audience by reciting scenes from Macbeth and Lear. "Though they had heard so much of you," Mrs. Montagu wrote to Roscius, "they had not the least idea such things were within the compass of art and nature." Lady Spencer's eyes were more expressive than any human language. . . . She amazed them with telling them how you could look like a simpleton in Abel Drugger, and many comic arts equally surprising, when murderous daggers and undutiful daughters were out of the question." Mme. de Noailles was so profuse, as she descended the stairs, in thanks for the great intellectual enjoyment, that

Mrs. Montagu was afraid she would forget herself, and, by a false step, break her neck. She fervently hoped, too, that Garrick had not caught cold by going out into the air, "when warmed with that fire of genius which animated every look and gesture."

In March, 1779, Johnson wrote to Mrs. Thrale: "On Monday, I came late to Mrs. Vesey. Mrs. Montagu was there. I called for the print" (of Mrs. Montagu, in the costume of Anne Boleyn) "and had good words. The evening was not brilliant, but I had thanks for my company." In October of the same year, Johnson wrote to Mrs. Thrale: "I have been invited twice to Mrs. Vesey's *conversation*, but have not gone."

Johnson has described a scene at one of the Blue Stocking assemblies (Mrs. Ord's), where, as he wrote to Mrs. Thrale: "I met one Mrs. Buller, a travelled lady of great spirit and some consciousness of her own abilities. We had a contest of gallantry an hour long, so much to the diversion of the company, that at Ramsay's, last night, in a crowded room, they would have pitted us again. There were Smelt, and the Bishop of St. Asaph, who comes to every place, and Lord Monboddo, and

Sir Joshua, and ladies out of tale." On another night he was at Miss Monkton's, the then young lady whom many may remember as the old and eccentric Lady Cork. Mr. Langton, in a letter to Boswell, thus paints the groups of Blue Stockings at the house of the lady who shared with Mrs. Montagu the glory of being their founder. . . . "The company consisted chiefly of ladies, among whom were the Duchess Dowager of Portland, the Duchess of Beaufort, whom, I suppose, from her rank I must name before her mother, Mrs. Boscawen, and her eldest sister, Mrs. Lewson, who was likewise there, Lady Lucan, Lady Clermont, and others of note, both for their station and understandings. Amongst other gentlemen were Lord Althorp, Lord Macartney, Sir Joshua Reynolds, Lord Lucan, Mr. Wraxall (whose book you have probably seen, the 'Tour to the Northern Parts of Europe,' a very agreeable, ingenious man), Dr. Warren, Mr. Pepys the master in chancery, and Dr. Barnard the Provost of Eton. As soon as Dr. Johnson had come in and *had taken the chair*, the company began to collect round him till they became not less than four, if not five, deep, those behind standing and listening over the heads

of those that were sitting near him. The conversation for some time was between Dr. Johnson and the Provost of Eton, while the others contributed occasionally their remarks." How well Mrs. Montagu could converse, Johnson has pourtrayed in a few comprehensive words to Mrs. Thrale: "Mrs. Montagu is par pluribus. Conversing with her, you may find *variety in one*." These assemblies were miscalled and sneered at only by the blockheads. Walpole was scarcely sincere when he affected to laugh at them. He not only attended them, but stirred others to do so. Four years after this, he writes to Hannah More: "When will you blue stocking yourself and come among us?"

In 1781, Hannah More took the Blue Stockings for a theme for her sprightly little poem, which she entitled "Bas Bleu," and dedicated to Mrs. Vesey. In a few introductory words, the author explained the origin and character of the assemblies to which the well-known epithet was given. "Those little societies have been sometimes misrepresented. They were composed of persons distinguished in general for their rank, talents, or respectable character, who were frequently at Mrs. Vesey's and a

few other houses, for the sole purpose of conversation, and were different in no respect from other parties, but that the company did not play at cards."

Hannah More describes the hours she passed at these parties as "pleasant and instructive." She states that she found there learning without pedantry, good taste without affectation, and conversation without calumny, levity, or any censurable error.

From the following lines, the names of the founders of the new assemblies may be learnt. Their object was to rescue—

——— "Society o'errun
By Whist, that desolating Hun;"

and from despotic Quadrille, the 'Vandal of colloquial wit." Three ladies, according to Hannah More, effected the reformation.

"The vanquish'd triple crown to *you*, (Mrs. Vesey)
*Boscawen* sage, bright *Montagu*,
Divided fell. Your cares in haste,
Rescued the ravaged realms of taste."

Among the genial and the lofty spirits found in the rooms of those ladies, and of Mrs. Ord

and others, Hannah More names accomplished Lyttelton, witty Pulteney, polished, sometimes sarcastic, Walpole, with humourists who charmed and never wounded, critics who recorded merits before they looked for defects, Christian poets, skilled physicians, honest lawyers, men of all shades of politics, with princes of the church, ladies of ton, and "reasonable beauties." Roscius (Garrick), Mars (Mason), Cato (Johnson), and Hortensius (Burke), are recorded amongst those who, at those intellectual gatherings, at various times, led the conversation, and made it as glorious as Hannah More, who shared therein, proceeds to describe it.

The chief incident in Mrs. Montagu's life in the year 1781, one which threw a shade over several succeeding years, was her quarrel with Dr. Johnson, founded on certain depreciatory passages in Johnson's "Life of Lyttelton." When Johnson sent to Mrs. Montagu his MS. of the life before it went to press, the homage implied that he submitted it to her judgment for approval or correction. Mrs. Montagu disapproved the tone, and Johnson sent his copy to press without altering a word or modifying a sentiment.

Nevertheless, Johnson's account of Lyttelton seems fair enough to readers of the present day, though it greatly offended the lady who paid Lyttelton a homage of reverential affection. Johnson duly records Lyttelton's precocity at Eton, and his creditable attempt in his "Blenheim," to become a poet, at Oxford. His political career, as the opponent of Walpole, by whose fall Lyttelton came into office, is told without passion, and Lyttelton's honest progress from honest doubt to honest conviction of the truth of Christianity is delicately and sympathetically narrated. His merits as a landlord, his good fortune as a politician, his fidelity as a friend, and his anxiety to be at least accurate as an historian, are chronicled without reserve. The details of Lyttelton's dignified death might have made his best friend forget and forgive the criticisms on some of his writings. Mrs. Montagu might forget a part, but she could not forgive an expression of compassionate contempt, which was worse than adverse criticism. She might forget that Johnson spoke of "The Progress of Love" as verses that "cant of shepherds and flocks, and crooks dressed with flowers." She may have been

only momentarily stung by the censurer's remark that, in the "Persian Letters," the ardour for liberty which found expression there, was only such "as a man of genius always catches when he enters the world, and always suffers to cool as he passes forward." She might herself have sneered at Johnson's praise of the "Advice to Belinda," on the score of its purity, truth, vigour, elegance and prudence, whereas, with some merits, it is a poem which no one now would dare to read aloud, where it was meant to be read, to Belindas of the time being. The paragraph in the Life which gave Mrs. Montagu such exquisite pain was the following, in reference to the "Dialogues of the Dead:"—"When they were first published, they were kindly commended by the critical reviewers; and poor Lyttelton, with humble gratitude, returned his acknowledgments in a note which I have read; acknowledgments either for flattery or justice." This paragraph gave the great offence. The words "poor Lyttelton" rendered it almost unpardonable. Notwithstanding the offence, Mrs. Montagu subsequently invited Johnson to dinner; but she could not treat him with her old cordiality, nor would she fall into

conversation with him. General Paoli sat next to the doctor. Johnson turned to him and remarked, "You see, sir, I am no longer the man for Mrs. Montagu!" He was not indifferent to this condition of things. "Mrs. Montagu, sir," he afterwards said to a friend, "has dropt me. Now, sir, there are people whom one should like very well to drop, but would not wish to be dropt by."

Good-natured friends embittered the quarrel. Mrs. Vesey "sounded the trumpet," as was remarked by Walpole, who added: "It has not, I believe, produced any altercation; but at a blue-stocking meeting, held by Lady Lucan, Mrs. Montagu and Johnson kept at different ends of the chamber, and set up altar against altar there. She told me, as a mark of her high displeasure, that she would not ask him to dinner again. I took her aside and fomented the quarrel, and wished I could have made Dagon and Ashtaroth scold in Coptic." Walpole (who in this quarrel was quite as malicious as Mrs. Vesey, whom he affected to laugh at, was indiscreet) called Johnson in another letter referring to this quarrel, "Demagorgon," and says that the doctor and the lady kept aloof "like the west

from the east." He states that Lady Lucan, whose house was the scene of the comedy, "had assembled a blue-stocking meeting in imitation of Mrs. Vesey's Babels. It was so blue, it was quite mazarin blue. There were Soame Jenyns, *Persian* Jones, Mr. Sherlock, the new court, Mr. Courtenay, besides the outpensioners of Parnassus."—And *besides* those named, every man of whom was a man of intellect, there was Mr. Horace Walpole himself, who certainly was present, because he knew he would not be among fools, though he pretended to go as if he found amusement in their folly. He seems, in the above extract, to recognise the good-natured Irish lady Mrs. Vesey (whose house in Bolton Row, or subsequently in Clarges Street, was hospitably open to people of merit—proved or promised) as the founder of assemblies to which the slang name of *bas-bleu* assemblies was given. Referring to Mrs. Montagu, with whom he was very glad to dine, he says (in this year, 1781), "She is one of my principal entertainments at Mrs Vesey's, who collects all the graduates and candidates for fame, where they vie with one another till they are as unintelligible as the good folks at Babel." We should honour any

lady of the present century who, like Mrs. Vesey Mrs. Montagu, Mrs. Ord, Lady Lucan, and others in the last century, welcomed to their houses, not only all the graduates, but also the candidates for fame. Johnson himself was annoyed when not invited to those intellectual meetings. In 1780, he writes, "I told Lady Lucan how long it was since she sent to me; but she said, I must consider how the world rolls about her." From the lips of the guests whom Walpole met at the houses indicated he could not carry away the stories that he loved so well as to insert them, in his most exquisite hand, into folios carefully arranged. These still exist; they illustrate phases of life among high-born women and men of the last century who were graduates, not in fame, but in infamy. Nothing could well be worse, except the infamy of him who must have passed many a night in penning that unutterably horrible and scandalous chronicle. The chronicler, on the other hand, is not to be blamed for noting the little affectations of those whom he encountered, as in the following example, the date of which is 1781:—"I met," he says to Lady Ossory, "Mrs. Montagu the other night at a visit.

She told me she had been alone the whole preceding day, quite *hermetically sealed.* I was very glad she was uncorked, or I might have missed that piece of learned nonsense." However, "Mrs. Montagu," writes Mrs. Boscawen to Mrs. Delany, "is in perfect health and spirits in her Château Portman." But, in Montagu House, Portman Square, the so called Blue-Stockings were much less at home than in Hill Street. Nevertheless, there, and at similar houses supposed to be of a blue-stocking class, Walpole was much more amused than when he was at the Princess Amelia's, at Gunnersbury, with the 'cream of the cream' of Europe, and playing commerce with the grandest of them. He never had to say of himself at Mrs. Montagu's, as he did of his doings at the Princess's, 'Played three pools of commerce till ten. I am afraid I was tired, and gaped!'"

There died in this year, 1781, a provincial Blue Stocking,—who has been delicately praised by Miss Seward, and furiously attacked and ridiculed by Horace Walpole,—Mrs. Miller, the neighbour of Mrs. Scott and Lady Bab Montagu at Batheaston. There is an old story that Walpole, declining to recognise a man in London whom he had known

at Bath, explained himself by saying, that he would be happy to know the same individual again—at Bath! So, with regard to literary or bas-bleu assemblies, he acknowledged those only of London. Provincial meetings he treated as shams and covered them with ridicule. Mrs. Miller's house,—to which she invited a rather mixed assembly of persons distinguished for intellectual merit, or persons who were distinguished only by the accident of birth,—Walpole mis-named the "puppet-show Parnassus at Bath-easton" (or Pindus)—"a new Parnassus, composed of three laurels, a myrtle tree, a weeping willow, and a view of the Avon, which has been new-christened *Helicon*." Miss Rich, Lady Lyttelton's sister, took Walpole to dine there. . . . He ridiculed his hosts, described Captain Miller as officious, though good-natured, who, with his wife, had caught "taste," and outlived their income. Having (like wise and honest people) recovered themselves by living economically abroad, they resumed their old home with improved habits. "Alas!" says Walpole, "Mrs. Miller is returned a beauty, a genius, a Sappho, a tenth Muse, as romantic as Mademoiselle de Scuderi, and as sophisticated as Mrs. Vesey.

They have introduced bouts-rimés as a new discovery. "They hold a Parnassus fair every Thursday, give out rhymes and themes, and all the flux and quality of Bath contend for the prizes. A Roman vase, decked with pink ribbons and myrtle, receives the poetry, which is drawn out every festival. Six judges of these Olympic games retire and select the brightest compositions, which the respective successful acknowledge, kneel to Mrs. Calliope Miller, kiss her fair hand, and are crowned by it with myrtle. . . . The collection is printed, published,—yes, on my faith, there are *bout-rimés* on a buttered muffin, by her grace the Duchess of Northumberland, receipts to make them, by Corydon the Venerable, alias George Pitt; others, very pretty, by Lord Palmerston; some by Lord Carlisle; many by Mrs. Miller herself, that have no fault but wanting metre. . . . There never was anything so entertaining or so dull."—It may be added here, that Lord Palmerston's lines "On Beauty," are more than "very pretty," and that the duchess could not avoid the subject laughed at, since two of the rhymes given to her were "puffing" and "muffin," and she came out of the difficulty with skill and

dexterity. There, are, perhaps few people in a mixed company at the present time, who could more pleasantly dance such an intellectual hornpipe in similar fetters.

Miss Seward modifies Walpole's satirical account without disturbing the main facts. She adds, with reference to the volumes of these prize poems then published: "The profits have been applied to the benefit of a charity at Bath, so that Lady Miller's institute" (her husband had been knighted) "was not only calculated to awaken and cultivate ingenuity, but to serve the purposes of benevolence and charity." Walpole suppressed the fact that any one profited by the assemblies at Lady Miller's, of whom and of whose husband, who presumed to have Walpole's predilection for *virtu*, Horace says: "They make themselves completely ridiculous, which is a pity, as they are good-natured well-meaning people."

Some fine spirits contributed to the Batheaston vase, and their contributions, for which the writers generally had a fortnight's notice,—the one theme being given to all competitors,—are often marked by power, grace, fancy, and, in the comic pieces, rough

humour. On one occasion, some scandalous verses were dropped into the vase, the reading of which in the very first lines called up blushes on the cheeks of the modest, and caused suspicion to rest on the rather audacious Christopher Anstey. "An enemy hath done this," was the sum of the general comment. Lady Miller's death soon followed. Miss Seward has generously spoken of her really intellectual friend, though she begins with a curious figure of speech. "Lady Miller," she says, "was surrounded by a hornet's nest," which was, as she goes on to state in more common-sense style, "composed of those who were disappointed in their expectations of being summoned to her intellectual feast, and of others whose rhyming offerings could neither obtain the wreath, nor be admitted to a place in her miscellany. "Who knows not the active malice of wounded vanity to blot the fairest worth and blast the brighest fame?" From its venom, excellence cannot even find repose in the grave, and it never fails to descend upon those who dare defend the claims of the deceased!"

Reference has been made, in a previous page (see p. 65), to Boswell's error in stating that the

Blue Stocking Clubs were originally established about this time, 1781, when Hannah More was writing of them as institutions the chief members of which had already passed away. The amiable philosopher and thoroughly honest, modest, and accomplished man Benjamin Stillingfleet (the grandson of the bishop), from whom they are supposed to derive their name, had been dead ten years. In his early days, he made the ascent of Mont Blanc; his last were spent in Kensington Barracks, where his salary as barrack-master satisfied his wants and left him wherewith to help those who were in need. He contributed towards the social reform commenced by Johnson, Miss Mulso (Chapone), and Mrs. Montagu in 1750, a poem on "Conversation." It rings with echoes of Pope, and lays down some very excellent rules that, implicitly followed, would make conversation impossible. Boswell refers to Hannah More's poem on the Blue Stockings without noticing her record that so many of the persons named in it were then dead. The institution, in fact, was in "the sere, the yellow leaf," and one, at least, of its old leaders was weary. In 1782, when Mrs. Montagu was established in her palace (as

Wraxall says the Italians would call, and as many English people *did* call, it) in Portman Square, her assemblies were more crowded than ever. She herself, queening it beneath the cieling painted by Angelica Kaufmann, felt, or affected to feel, a little weary of her splendour.

"I think," she wrote to Lord Kames, in 1782, "the calm autumn of life, as well as of the year, has many advantages. Both have a peculiar serenity —a genial tranquility. We are less busy and agitated, because the hope of the spring and the vivid delights of the summer are over; but these tranquil seasons have their appropriate enjoyments, and a well-regulated mind sees everything beautiful that is in the order of nature."

In 1785, Cumberland took the new assemblies, at Montagu House, for the subject of an essay in "The Observer." He places Mrs. Montagu, under the name of Vanessa, in the fore-ground, and mingles praise with mockery. He does not refer to the slang word by which the assemblies conducted by ladies were known; he calls Vanessa's assembly the Feast of Reason. Throughout life, according to this essayist, Vanessa had been a beauty or a wit,

whose vanity had this good quality, namely, that it stimulated her to exercise charity, good nature, affability, and a splendid hospitality—qualities which carried her into all the circles of fine people, and crowded all the fine people into hers. . . . In her saloons there was a welcome for every follower of science, every sort of genius,—a welcome which extended, so the satirical essayist affirms, from the manufacturer of toothpicks to the writer of an epic poem. Authors looked to her for fees in return for dedications; and players, for patronage and presents on their benefit nights.

According to Cumberland, the lady of Montagu House was seated, like the statue of Athenian Minerva, incensed by the breath of philosophers, poets, orators, and their intellectual brethren. Hannah More states, on the contrary, that at the original blue stocking parties, previous to 1781, the company, instead of being a formal unity, were broken up into numberless groups. Something too of this fashion seems to be referred to by Cumberland, who describes Vanessa as going from one to another, making mathematicians quote Pindar, persuading masters in chancery to write novels,

and Birmingham men to stamp rhymes as fast as buttons.

We are further told that the books on Vanessa's table (and Mrs. Montagu often complained of the number of presentation copies which were sent to her) indicated who were among her guests. This little civility is sneered at, and she from whom it emanated was also occasionally sneered at by some of her guests; which would have been more natural than courteous if the lady of the house ever dressed herself, as Cumberland describes her with boundless exaggeration, in a dress on which were embroidered the ruins of Palmyra! The same exaggeration is applied to the description of the company, among whom figure cracked philosophers and crazy dreamers, with Johnson alone grand, powerful, majestic, eloquent, and ill-mannered.

Next, and perhaps equal with Johnson, is the unmistakable presence of Mrs. Siddons, who, since the October night of 1782, when she took the town by the passion and pathos of Isabella, had been the idol of the time. There she sits at Mrs. Montagu's, on a sofa, leaning on one elbow, in a passive attitude, counting, or seeming to count, the sticks of her fan,

as homage and compliments are profusely laid at her feet. To silly questions she has sensible replies—replies which indicate the queries: "I strove to do it the best I could; I shall do as the manager bids me; I always endeavour to make the part I am about my best part;" and, "I never study anything but my author." There is, probably, no exaggeration in this; and the more fantastic side of Mrs. Montagu's character is not overcharged in the incident that follows. The hostess introduces a "young noviciate of the Muses," in a white frock. A fillet of flowers crowns her long hair, and the novice advancing to Melpomene, addresses her with—

> "O thou, whom Nature's goddess calls her own,
> Pride of the stage, and fav'rite of the town;"

which puts poor Mrs. Siddons to the blush, and half of those who are within hearing to flight.

In 1790, the so-called Blue Stocking Club puzzled dwellers in country places. Nestor, of Bark Place, Salop, was sadly perplexed as to what the club was, and also as to the meaning of another slang term then prevailing. He writes to Sylvanus Urban accordingly, with a sort of apology for being old and living in remote Shropshire. Among others, he

frequently meets with the term "white bear," applied to many characters of eminence; and often reads of "the Blue Stocking Club," which he knows consists chiefly of the literati. But being ignorant of the derivation and propriety of application of those terms, he will be much obliged to any correspondent who will condescend to inform him. It does not appear that any correspondent, not even the editor himself, could enlighten Nestor, either as to the bear or the club.

Among the latest writers who have, as Hannah More, said, misrepresented these intellectual parties is Miss Mitford. She speaks of Batheaston in her "Recollections of a Literary Life" (A.D. 1857) as "memorable for the blue-stocking vagaries of a certain Lady Miller, a Somersetshire Clemence Isaure, who, some seventy years ago offered prizes for the best verses thrown into an antique urn; the prize consisting, not of a golden violet, but a wreath of laurel, and the whole affair producing, as was to be expected, a great deal more ridicule than poetry." In Lady Miller's case, the original object, "conversation," was lost sight of; and some vanity was mixed up with the doings of the Batheaston Muse.

But to stir up even dull minds to make an attempt to write some sort of poetry was an intellectual exercise at least as beneficial as the process which counts honours, and eternally asks — "What's trumps?"

## CHAPTER XII.

RETURNING to the year 1781, it is to be observed that after that year, the blue stocking assemblies gradually died out. Cumberland's caricature of them excited the displeasure of good Queen Charlotte; and Miss Burney, who recognized herself as alluded to under the guise of an Arcadian nymph, has given a description of a breakfast at the palace in Portman Square, which did not the least resemble that which was described, a generation earlier, by Madame du Bocage. The later breakfast was sumptuous, gorgeous, over-crowded. In splendour of company, banquet, and locality, it could not be surpassed; and hundreds were there. But we miss the more select number of intellectual people, who used to fill the smaller house in Hill Street, where the Blue Stockings met, and dignified their place of meeting. From the year 1781, Mrs. Montagu's letters take

a graver tone, which is occasionally enlivened by some of her old brilliancy of expression. The following letter is without date of the year, but it was written when Hill Street was about being abandoned for the palace in Portman Square.

"Hill Street. 2nd March, 178 . . . . You will find this town more gay and splendid than ever; so little effect has the combined evil of wars, and devastation, and hurricanes. The profuse liberality to Vestris, ye dancer, and the enthusiastic admiration of his capers exceeds all the folly I ever knew. Making a visit to a wife of one of the corps diplomatique, the other night, I had the mortification of overhearing a group of foreigners ridiculing the English for the bustle made about Vestris

. . . "I have already on my chimney-piece a multitude of cards for assemblies for every day till near the end of passion week. I hope some of the fine people will spend the Easter holidays in ye country; for such a succession of assemblies is tiresome.

. . . "I have, greatly to my satisfaction, got my new house finished and fit for habitation; and I should have taken possession at this very time, but the wise people and the medical people say it would

be dangerous to go into a new house just after the winter damp. . . . As I always leave London early in May, I was convinced it was not worth while to run hazard for a few weeks' pleasure. It is much the fashion to go and see my house, and I receive many compliments upon its elegance and magnificence, but what most recommends it to me is its convenience and cheerfulness. A good house is a great comfort in old age and among the few felicities that money will procure.

. . . "I shall be much obliged to you if you will bring to London Thou's History, which I lent to your caro sposo five years ago. I suppose he has long done with it, and I want to read it."

"London. Dec. ye 4th, 1781. . . . At this time of ye year, the great city is solitary, silent, and quiet. Its present state makes a good preface to the succeeding months of crowd, noise, and bustle. . . One always finds some friends in town; a few agreable people may at any time be gathered together; and, for my own part, I think one seldom passes the whole of one's time more agreably than before the meeting of parliament in January; and this never appeared more strongly to me than this

year, when so excellent a house was ready to receive me.

. . . "As age is apt to bring with it a certain degree of melancholy and discontent, I endeavour to prevent its having that effect, by sympathising in the joy of my young friends and of improving the objects about me. . . . As fast as time wrinkles my forehead, I smooth the grounds about Sandleford, or embellish my town habitation. In a little while, I shall never see anything belonging to me that is not pretty, except when I behold myself in the looking-glass. . . . At Sandleford, I can assure you, Mr. Brown has not neglected any of its capabilities. He is forming it into a lovely pastoral—a sweet Arcadian scene. In not attempting more, he adapts his scheme to the character of the place and my purse. We shall not erect temples to heathen gods, build proud bridges over humble rivulets, or do any of the marvellous things suggested by caprice, and indulged by the wantonness of wealth. The noble rooms which Mr. Wyatt was building when you were at Sandleford are now finishing with the greatest simplicity.

. . . "To-morrow is look'd to with anxious ex-

pectation, as it will in some measure declare on what terms peace may be obtain'd. I believe all the belligerent powers are tir'd of the war. But what difficulties the cunning of statesmen, the pride of kings, or the caprice of the people may put in the way, one cannot tell. The Spaniards are proud, the French are petulant, the Dutch are avaricious, and the English are a happy compound of all these things.

. . . "My steward (from Northumberland), who made his annual visit to me in November, told me that north of my estates there were many fields of oats and barley lying under the snow. I have been very busy with him, settling our year's accounts, for these ten days past.

"Lord Edward Bentinck is going to be married to Miss Cumberland. The Bishop of St. Asaph's eldest daughter to the learned and ingenious Mr. Jones."

"Portman Square. Jany. ye 17th, 1782. . . . Montagu," she writes to her sister-in-law, "returns to me only at Christmas and the long vacation. The last is spent entirely at Sandleford; for I think the worst thing one can do by young persons is to

give them a habit of restlessness, which is now so prevalent in the fine world, that all domestick duties, even the tender parental attentions, are neglected for it. . . .

"I think you did wisely, as well as kindly, in letting my neice partake of the pleasures of your neighbourhood. To be within the sound of a ball, and not allow'd to go to it, must seem a hardship to a young person. . . . Life never knows the return of spring, and I am always an advocate for their gathering the primroses of their time. A young person not allow'd to please himself, sometimes will lose any desire to please others.

"I think it would be very desirable for my brother to be a prebend of Canterbury. There is a local dignity in it, and a clergyman in the neighbourhood of Canterbury ought to have a stall in the cathedral, in which he can take a nap with decorum. I should think from the kind disposition the primate has shown for the family, he will lend a favorable ear to my brother's application. . . . So great is his respect and tenderness for his brother, Sir William, that perhaps the request, supported by him, would have additional force.

. . . "I am glad my good friend, Mr. Brown, is employed by so rich a person as Lord Bristol. Such an income as his lordship's cannot be annually expended on domestick expenses without foolish prodigality and waste. . . . I am very glad Mr. Brown likes me as a correspondent; for I am obliged to make a very paltry figure to him as an employer. He is narrowly circumscrib'd, both in space and expense; but he really gives the poor widow and her paltry plans as great attention as he could bestow on an unlimited commission and an unbounded space. He has made a plan to make my grounds, in prospect of the house and new rooms, very pleasing, and will execute as much of it every year as I choose, the expense being agreed upon, which will keep pace with the improvements. The only way to cheat old Time is, while it robs us of some enjoyments and pleasures, to be providing new ones. I am a great deal younger, I think, since I came into my new House, from its cheerfulness; and, from its admirable conveniences and comforts, less afraid of growing old. My friends and acquaintances are much pleased with it, . . . and I am not afraid to confess the pleasure I take in their

finding it agreable and commodious for company. But the great satisfaction I feel, as its inhabitant, I dare confess to few; for few would hear it without envy. People are not very envious at any advantages they see another possess, if they do not perceive those advantages add to the happiness of the possessor. Many a wrinkled old virgin makes it a necessary article of merit in a blooming girl, that she should not know she is handsome.

. . . "The Bishop of Durham is going to be married to Miss Boughton. She is a very proper Person for a wife to a grave bishop—a woman of good family, good character, and good temper.

. . . "Pray have my neices read "Le Théâtre de l'Education," by Mme. de Genlis? If they have not, I will get it for them. . . . I think it is one of the prettiest books that has been written for young persons. The author is governess to the Duc de Chartres' children."

Even Walpole acknowledged the beauty of the house which Mrs. Montagu had built for her old age and for her heirs—till Lord Rokeby vacated it recently, the ground lease having "fallen in," and the edifice passing to the ground landlord. "I

dined," writes Walpole to Mason, in February, 1782, "On Tuesday with the Harcourts, at Mrs. Montagu's new palace, and was much surprised. Instead of vagaries, it is a noble, simple edifice. Magnificent, yet no gilding. It is grand, not tawdry, not larded, and embroidered, and pomponned with shreds, and remnants, and clinquant, like all the harlequinades of Adam, which never let the eye repose an instant."

The next letter is addressed to the writer's niece, Miss Robinson.

"July ye 9th, 1782. . . . I was, in my youth, directed in the choice of friends by their solid merit and establish'd character, which was oftener found in persons older than myself than in my contemporaries. If from hence I have often wept for dying, I have never been obliged to blush for my living, friends. . . . The chief honour and felicity of my life has been derived from the superior merit of my friends; and, from my experience, I would, above all things, recommend to every young person to endeavour to connect themselves with persons whom they can esteem, and, indeed, reverence, rather than with those whose understandings and virtues they think merely on a level with, or, perhaps

inferior to, their own. . . . Principles, opinions, and habits are acquired and formed from those with whom we live and converse most. . . . Be cautious, be delicate, be a little ambitious, my dear neice, in the choice of your friends. I would be far from inculcating a supercilious contempt for persons of weak understanding, or a censorious condemnation of their levity of manners. Humility and charity are the greatest virtues, and let them ever guide your manners and regulate your conversation. . . . Be assured that the wisest persons are the least severe, and the most virtuous are the most charitable."

"Sandleford. July 9, 1782. . . . I had a great deal of occupation of a more important kind, which was the examination and payment of ye workmen who had been employed in building and adorning the said house. . . . As I got everything accomplished before I left London, I had the satisfaction of getting a receit in full of all demands from the various artificers. I will own my taste is unfashionable, but there is to me a wonderful charm in those words '*in full of all demands.*' My house never appeared to me so noble, so splendid, so pleasant,

so convenient, as when I had paid off every shilling of debt it had incurred. The worst of haunted houses, in my opinion, are those haunted by duns.

. . . "Mr. Wyatt has nearly completed what belonged to the architect; and Mr. Brown, by removing a good deal of ground and throwing it down below, to raise what was too low, while he sank what was too high, has much improved the view to the south; and, having, at my request, made a fanlight over the east window, so that, the arch formed by the trees is now visible, these rooms are the most beautiful imaginable. With the shelter, comfort, and convenience of walls and roofs, you have a beautiful passage and the green shade of a grove. . . . The celebrated Mr. Brown has already beautified our pastoral scenes extreamly.

. . . "I can easily give you credit when you say you love society, because I know society loves you, and I am perfectly of the opinion of the common maxim, that nobody lives out of the world who is fit to live in it. Now your husband's party have got into power, I have no doubt but they will bestow a prebendary upon him, if he asks them. However, his income will very well afford

your spending some months in London every winter."

"Sandleford. June ye 16th, 1783. . . . You must know, as many authors with whom I have not any personal acquaintance do me the favour to send me their works, I found the carriage of them to be amongst my weekly expenses during the summer. So, of late, if I make a short excursion into the country, I order the literature to wait until my return. Or, if I go for a longer time, to be sent down at proper opportunities, with the tea, or groceries, or some other of the vulgar necessaries of life. So my dear nephew's letter was supposed to come with a pamphlet from a bookseller's shop, and my porter kept it, with other things from the same source, till my return from Bath.

. . . "I found Sandleford improv'd by the attentions of the great Mr. Brown. My pleasure in those improvements was mix'd with regret for his death. . . . Brown was certainly a man of great genius. . . . Happily for me, he made a plan for all that is intended to be done here. As I do not allow my yearly expenses to exceed my yearly

income, I go on softly; so that the plan will hardly be completed by this time two years.

. . . "I dare say my brother has read with great pleasure Mr. Potter's "Enquiry into some Passages of Dr. Johnson's Lives of the Poets." Mr. Potter has also ably vindicated his friend Mr. Gray's Odes, &c., from cruel and unjust criticism, and this is done with great wit, taste, and good manners,—ingredients rarely put into the bitters of criticism. Modern witts and modern orators are apt to fall into the Billingsgate style, and from every kind of chastisement, made more severe and outrageous than the fault it should correct, one takes the part of the culprit against the harshness of the corrector."

"Sandleford. Sept. ye 30th, 178 . . . . We are all very well and very happy; these are the best articles a country journal can contain, and most likely to be found in a journal when ambitious pursuits and tumultuous pleasures are perfectly excluded.

. . . "There is a mode of taking exercise which, from my own experience, I think I shall recommend to all my friends who are not riders, and that is a one-horse chair. Sir Richard Jebb, just before I left London, advis'd me to the use of this carriage.

I objected to it, as unpleasant and unsafe. He assur'd me, that would I allow him to order me one of his coachmaker, after a model of one he had used on every kind of roads, he would answer for my finding it easy and secure. To this I consented, and, in a very obliging manner, he attended almost daily to see it was properly constructed, and, about six weeks ago, he wrote me word it was finished. I sent to London for it; and I find it the most delightful way of taking exercise imaginable. I take an airing sometimes of sixteen or seventeen miles (ye going and return included), and I am never weary while abroad, nor fatigued when I get home. My machine is hung so low, I am exalted but little above the grazing herds, and at ye same time can hear distinctly the song of the skylark above my head. No rural sight or rural sound is intercepted. Miss Gregory is my charioteer: she prides herself more on caution than dexterity, so avoids every thing that could alarm me. As my driver is young, I chose an old horse to draw me; but so much has every danger been obviated by the construction of the carriage, I believe I should be very safe with a steed of more vivacity and spirit.

If the weather is doubtful, my post chaise follows, that we may take shelter against its inclemencies. I am much pleased with this prescription of Sir Richard Jebb's.

. . . "We are doing a great piece of work in feathers. Every sort of feather is useful; so shall be much obliged if you can collect some for me."

The old formality towards her sister-in-law never changed, as the following letter will show:—

"Nov. 26th, 1783. . . . You mention, my dear madam, with regret that you had not asked me to dine; but you wrong your hospitality, for you offered me a very comfortable dinner; but knowing, in your unsettled state at Burfield, dining guests must be very troublesome, I had calculated and contrived all things so as to make you merely a noonday visit. To tell you the truth, I am so afraid of my postillion and servants getting a too great dose of ale at the houses of gentlemen in a country neighbourhood, that I make a rule never to dine from home. I have enjoy'd your kind and elegant hospitality at your house in Kent, and am sure the same spirit would ever exert itself to give an agreable welcome to your friends.

. . . "Mr. Barret has been very judicious in his choice of Mr. Wyatt for his architect. He has a most happy art of improving an old house. Where a part is to be extended beyond the first intention, the additions should be Gothick; for symmetry not being the object of the Gothick architects, irregularity is not considered an imperfection in their designs. Additions made to houses in any other taste destroy the intended proportions, and introduce confusion and deformity. I am more a friend to the Gothick on the outside than within; for, unless by great expense and care, the Gothick fitting-up is clumsy and gloomy. Mr. Walpole tells me Mr. Wyatt has made a most beautiful design for Mr. Barret. I shall make my ingenious friend show it to me when he has leisure.

"Pray do you not begin to entertain hopes that you may one day sail in the air to our planet? Miss Gregory went yesterday to see our air balloon launched. I had letters to write, and expected company to dine with me and to stay the evening, so I could not find time to attend this aerial machine. All the philosophers at Paris are busy, making experiments on their balloons, and their

beaux esprits are making verses and uttering des bons mots on them. A friend of mine brought me a dialogue, written at Paris, between the cock, the duck, and the sheep, which made the air voyage together. The cock was the only animal that seem'd the greater coxcomb for his travels. It is impossible to say whether this new invention may not lead to discoveries of importance. At present, it is merely a philosophical shuttle-cock for the amusement of old children. As we are not so eager for new playthings as our lively neighbours the French, we do not make such a bustle about these balloons as they do; for I understand they are the subject of conversation in all the polite circles at Paris.

. . . "Of the many obligations I have received from Mr. Montagu, I do not reckon it among the least that he permitted me to have my younger brothers to dine with me every Sunday while they were at Westminster School; and, after the death of my mother, to have them at Sandleford during holydays and vacations. Whether these attentions make any impression on those who receive them or not, the person who has paid them must ever reflect

with pleasure on having done their part. Fate ben per voi, do good for your own sake, is an admirable moral maxim.

. . . "The Prince of Wales has given many brilliant entertainments, but his present bad condition of health will suspend, at least, those gaieties. It is thought he has an abscess forming in his side. It is said he suffers a great deal, but if those sufferings bring him into a habit of temperance, it will be good for him to have been afflicted. His political engagements have been productive of some salutary chastisements. He has been hiss'd à toute outrance at the theatres.

"The French ambassador has fitted up his house with much gayety and splendor. He is much connected with that party which is at present very unpopular. It is affirmed that his court has remitted 70,000*l.* to him, to support the party in elections. The French Cabinet has ever made use of bribery whenever they could introduce it for their purposes; and alas! there are few places or persons to whom gold does not find access!

. . . "I think your evening readings must be very improving to my neice. History presents

to young persons many good examples, and will counteract the impressions of our newspapers, which give an account of the vices, follies, and extravagances of ye times. It is much better for a young lady to read the characters of the Lucretias and Portias than to defile her mind with paragraphs of crim. con., elopements, &c.

. . . "My health has not been interrupted by the bad weather we have had. I believe Portman Square is the Montpellier of England. I never enjoy'd such health as since I came to live in it."

"1784. Sandleford. . . . The improvements out of doors have advanced greatly from the time I left Sandleford last August. What I left a little rivulet had assumed the air of a river. Charming walks on its banks and through the wood make me often think with gratitude of the late Mr. Brown, by whose plans all these things were accomplish'd. . . . We are now embellishing the grounds to the south and making an approach to the house, which will be far preferable to the present. Mr. Wyatt has built me a large bed-chamber and dressing-room, which command a beautiful prospect. . . . Mrs. More and Mrs. Garrick are now with me,

and, I flatter myself, will not leave me before I may hope for my lord primate's return."

It was in the above year that Johnson gave the following testimony to the quality of Mrs. Montagu's intellect:—"Mrs. Montagu, sir, does not make a trade of her wit; but Mrs. Montagu is a very extraordinary woman; she has a constant stream of conversation, and it is always impregnated—it has always meaning." He further said, "That lady exerts more *mind* in conversation than any person I ever met with. Sir, she displays such powers of ratiocination, such radiations of intellectual eminence, as are amazing." . . .

## CHAPTER XIII.

To Mrs. W. Robinson.—"Sandleford. Feb. 3, 1784. . . . The air-balloons, without a pun, may be said to rise higher and higher, by every experiment. Messrs. Roberts performed a journey of 150 miles in six hours. By this mode of travelling I might go hence to my house in Northumberland in twelve hours; but till the aerial navigation is more ascertained, I shall not attempt it; lest, instead of finding myself at the verge of my coal-pits, the end of my journey, I should alight on the summit of a Welsh mountain.

"Montagu had last night the pleasure of receiving a very kind and sensible letter from your son, and every stroke of his pen sets ye mark of a good heart. I think you will have great comfort in him. The most brilliant persons are not always the happiest or most esteem'd; more rarely still the best-beloved. Too much presumption in their own

excellencies, too little indulgence to the defects of others, if it does not totally destroy our admiration, certainly eliminates our affection; and it is far better to be beloved than admired.

. . . "As to the new plantations (at Sandleford), their progress to perfection will be so much slower than mine to decay, I cannot expect to see much advance there; but the hope of their giving pleasure to those I love, when I am no more, will render them objects of pleasant contemplation. . . . If you have seen the Recorder lately, he would perhaps tell you that we had an alarm of fire one night, but it was extinguished and all danger over in less than an hour. The fire began from my old dressing-room. It is the second time it has happened there. The first accident was many years ago. You may imagine we no longer hazard making a fire in a chimney which has such communication with timber. I assure you, on the cry of Fire! in the house at four in the morning, Montagu jump'd out of bed, rush'd into my room, and begg'd that he might immediately conduct me down stairs, with a tender zeal, equal to that of the pious Æneas to the old Anchises. The end of the passage, from the

dressing-room to my bed-chamber, appeared to be in flames, but we had one staircase at a distance, which promised a safe retreat; so that really I was not so much agitated, or he any way disordered. Montagu, by his alacrity, was of infinite use. The first water thrown on the flames boil'd up; but he and a blind man whom I have kept ever since he lost his sight, which is about fifteen years since, were more useful than all the rest of the family. I sent to Newtown, to call up the workmen employ'd at my new offices, and they pull'd up the beams and rafters as soon as the flames were quench'd. My Newtown neighbours behav'd with great neighbourly kindness, but all the assistance had been in vain, if I had not been awake and rais'd the family at the first crackling of the fire; for it made very rapid advances. I was much complimented on my courage, from which my composure was suppos'd to arise, but I confess that composure had its rise in cowardice. I was so glad to find our lives were not in danger, that ye consequences threatened to my property made little impression. The coward's declaration, 'Spare my life and take all I have!' seem'd to be the expression of my mind.

Thank God! the damage has been in all respects very trifling. I am very glad that this alarm did not happen after my lord primate and Sir W. Robinson arrived. A fire is the worst fête champetre one can treat one's friends with.

. . . "Business will detain me here for a fortnight longer. . . . I shall then go to Bath for about a month, to enjoy the primate's society, who generally spends the evening with me. I have not any pretence to drink the waters, being perfectly well. I may take a little of them, perhaps, as I love to fall in with the customs of the place in which I reside.

. . . "My great piece of feather-work is not yet compleated; so, if you have an opportunity of getting me any feathers, they will be very acceptable. The brown tails of partridges are very useful, tho' not so brilliant as some others."

At sixty-five, Mrs. Montagu did not consider herself too old to figure at court. The poets had not ceased to take interest in her and to make her the subject of their rhymes. "Have you seen Mr. Jerningham's lines on Mrs. Montagu falling down stairs at the Drawing-room?" asks little Miss Port of her father, in a letter dated February, 1785,

in the Delany correspondence. "In case you should not, I will send them to you."

> "Ye valiant Fair! ye Hebes of the day,
> Who heedless laugh your little hours away!
> Let caution be your guide, whene'er you sport
> Within the splendid precincts of the Court.
> The event of yesterday for prudence calls,
> *'Tis dangerous treading where Minerva falls!'*

Minerva's sympathies were now aroused by a family incident, thus narrated to Mrs. Robinson:— "March ye 15, 1785. . . . I know my brother and you and your daughters will be glad to hear Montagu is going to be married, in a manner which is agreable to himself and to me. The young lady is so form'd and qualified as to please both the fancy and the judgment, and her fortune such as to content any reasonable wishes. She has 45,000*l.* in present; 3000*l.* more is to remain in the funds to secure an annuity to a very old person during his life, and who has been sometime bedridden; so it will soon come into Miss Charlton. She has also an annuity of 300*l.* a year on the life of a young prodigal; but the regular payment of this is not to be depended upon. She has also some other little contingencies; so that her fortune is not esti-

mated at less than fifty thousand pounds, by her guardians.

"From Montagu's good character, those guardians and her relations are very desirous of the match, which will take place when the lawyers compleat the settlements—an affair which I fear will take up no small time, as they have no mercy on the impatience of lovers. She is a ward of Chancery, so, many forms are necessary. You may imagine pretty large settlements in land, both present and future, will be required from me; but, as Montagu's happiness and prosperity is my great object, I shall comply with every reasonable condition. Miss Charlton's excellent understanding, and her gentle and unaffected manners, render her very agreable. She has a very pleasing countenance, and tho' rather little, is finely made and remarkably genteel. She is an orphan, but is with her grandmother—a very sensible, well-bred woman, and who is almost as much in love with Montagu as her granddaughter is. It adds much to my satisfaction that those who were at Mrs. Terry's boarding-school with Miss Charlton, are very fond of her, and speak highly of her good temper; to which, indeed,

her guardians and intimate acquaintance give ye strongest testimony. As good humour is the great ingredient of human happiness, it gives me much delight to find my dear Montagu will find it in his partner. His own temper is the happiest I ever knew. We dined yesterday at the Bishop of Salisbury's. I was glad his lordship did not ask how many months in the year your caro sposo spent at Burfield. . . . Mr. Pitt is thought to gain ground daily, and the opposition babble is little attended to in the House. The town is very gay. The balls are protracted to seven in the morning. Montagu danced till that hour the other night at the Duchess of Bolton's, but he yawned so horribly the next morning, I think when he is Benedict ye married man, he will not caper at that hour to please ye young ladies. He din'd to-day at ye young lady's guardians, and is not come home, or would send his duty."

"July ye 12th, 1785. . . . You would know by various sources of intelligence how our matrimonial negotiations went forward, and the day on which they were happily compleated. So I will begin my history where your information ended,—our getting into our carriages at the door of Marybonne Church.

"Venus no longer sends her car and doves; but a post chaise with four able horses and two brisk postillions do as well. At Salt Hill, we stopp'd to take some refreshment. I eat a good deal of cold ham and chicken. The lovers *sigh'd and look'd, sigh'd and look'd, and sigh'd again*, and piddled a little on a gooseberry tart. At Reading, we drunk tea, and there Lord Lansdowne, being also on the road, came to us and made his compliments, but with so much delicacy as not to bring ye maiden's blush into ye cheeks of the bride. Indeed, for fear of distressing her, I did not present her to his lordship, so he only made her a low bow, accompanied by an emphatical look. To the bridegroom, he wished joy. At eight, we arrived at Sandleford. Our soup and bouillie had been ready for some hours; the rest was soon dress'd. We avoided passing through the town of Newbury; so the bells there, which were jangling on the happy occasion, did not give us any disturbance. The decent dignity of the bride's behaviour and the delicacy of the bridegroom's did them honour, and gave me great pleasure; and we are three as happy people as can be found in any part of the habitable globe.

"Mrs. Matthew Montagu is much pleased with Sandleford. It was always the favorite of her husband; and now he has got a fair Eve, it appears to him a Paradise. I am in perfect health and perfect content, which is enough for me. Joy and rapture are for youth.

. . . "The Bath is a dull place. Tunbridge has a pert character. The Pantile Walk in summer is pleasanter than the Pump Room at Bath in ye winter; and as anything original pleases more than a bad imitation, I must own I pass'd my time there with less ennui than in the city of Bath, where the London life is awkwardly imitated.

. . . "It is believed that Lady Sutherland will marry Lord Trentham; and some suppose Miss Pulteney will be bestow'd on Lord Morton. I am glad, for the credit of our sex, neither of these ladies make a scamper to Gretna Green.

. . . "Our brother, the Recorder, has acted in a very friendly and generous manner towards us,—bestow'd without favour or reward much patience and skill on the voluminous settlements, which the mercenary spirit of the lawyers employ'd to draw them had extended over as many acres of parch-

ment as, converted into green land, would make a pretty little farm; and for which, I suppose, they will charge as much as would purchase a tolerably good one. To effect this, they were so tedious in their proceedings; for my proposals were immediately and perfectly approved both by the Lord Chancellor and Master in Chancery.

. . . "The bride and bridegroom beg you all to accept their proper respect."

The following descriptive letter, addressed to Mrs. Robinson, Castle Street, Reading, was franked by Mr. Matthew Montagu, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, September the 22nd, 1786:—

. . . "I arrived at Mrs. Garrick's, at Hampton, the evening of the day on which I visited you at Reading, and spent five days with her; making, indeed, almost every day an excursion to London, to visit my poor friend, Mrs. Vesey, whom I found in a very declining state of health. From Hampton I went to the Dowager Lady Spencer's, at St. Albans, where I passed two days very agreably, and regretted that my business here would not allow me to prolong my visit. The history of La Fée Bienfaisante is not half so delightful as seeing the

manner in which Lady Spencer spends her day. Every moment of it is employed in some act of benevolence and charity. Her ladyship carried me to see the remains of the seat of the great Lord Bacon, at Gorhambury, where remains, but is soon to be pulled down, the gallery in which he passed those hours of study which pointed out the road to science, and investigation of the works of nature. The estate is now in the possession of Lord Grimston, who has built a fine house there; but I could not help sighing at the reflection that the posterity of the ridiculous author of "Love in a Hollow Tree," should build on the ruins of Lord Bacon's habitation.

"From St. Albans I struck into the high road at Welling, not without paying the tribute of a sigh to the memory of my old friend Dr. Young. From that place till I got into Yorkshire, I did not see any interesting objects but the mile-stones. . . . Here, at my Gothick mansion near Newcastle, the naiads are dirty with the coal-keels, and the dryads' tresses are torn and dishevelled with the rough blasts of Boreas. My lot has not fallen on a fair ground, but it would be ungrateful not to own

it is a goodly heritage, and makes a decent figure when it arrives at ye shop of Hoare and Co., in Fleet Street. A week after me, arrived in perfect health my nephew and neice Montagu. We are always here plagued with high winds, and this season they have raged with great violence; but as this house was built in 1620, I hope it will not now yield to storms it has braved for now two hundred years. The walls are of immense thickness, having been built of strength to resist our Scottish neighbours, who, before the Union made frequent visits to this part of the world. My Gothick windows admit light, but exclude prospect; so that, when sitting down, I can see only the tops of the trees.

. . . "I observe with great pleasure that Montagu has a happy turn for business, and applies himself to learning the science of coal-mine-working, of which many coal-owners are ignorant entirely, but none ought to be so. Without working in the mines, the process may be, to a certain extent, understood by any one who possesses any mathematical knowledge. The late Duke of Northumberland was very able in all those matters. Lord Mount-Stewart is now at Newcastle attending the

business of the collieries he acquired by his marriage with Lord Windsor's daughter. Lord Carlisle never comes into Northumberland, but leaves his affairs entirely to agents. Lord Ravensworth was very attentive to his collieries, but his heir, Sir Henry Liddell, is of a very different character. He amused himself and neighbours with the exhibition of two Lapland women whom he imported. He collects all sorts of wild beasts; and his ale-cellars make beasts of men. It is strange that Lord Ravensworth should prefer such a nephew to his grandsons.

. . . "I am obliged to you for your kind attention to my feather-work. The neck and breast feathers of the stubble goose are very useful, and I wish your cook would save those of the Michaelmas goose for us. Things homely and vulgar are sometimes more useful than the elegant, and the feathers of the goose may be better adapted to some occasions than the plumes of the phœnix."

Mrs. Montagu was ever touching and re-embellishing her famous "feather-hangings." Cowper has told in song how—

> "The birds put off their every hue,
> To dress a room for Montagu."

Peacock, pheasant, swan, and "all tribes beside of Indian name," says the poet, contributed plumage of—

—— "splendour ever new,
Safe with protecting Montagu."

To 'her court,' thus decorated, resorted Genius, Wit, Philosophy, Learning, and Fancy:

"All these to Montagu's repair,
Ambitious of a shelter there.
She thus maintains divided sway,
With yon bright regent of the day;
The plume and poet both, we know,
Their lustre to his influence owe;
And she, the works of Phœbus aiding,
Both poet saves, and plume, from fading."

To Mrs. Robinson.—"Portman Square. Feb. 8, 1787. . . . I have been in town almost three weeks, in all which time I have not had three hours of leisure. At my arrival in Portman Square, my porter presented me with an infinite number of cards of invitation, letters, notes, and not a few books, presents from their authors. I flattered myself that in four or five days this bustle would begin to subside, but another cause of receiving visits and writing notes and letters began. The occasion was, indeed, such as gave me great pleasure, even that on which

you so obligingly congratulated me. So good-natured was the world to the old aunt, that many members of the House of Commons who had heard his speech, and many of the House of Lords who had heard of it, called in the morning to congratulate me, and, indeed, for several mornings, I had a levée like a minister. Nothing ominous; I hope that ye young man who was the occasion, will never be in that situation which, I perfectly agree with my friend Soame Jenyns, is the most miserable of any, except that of king in a free country. Ladies wrote me congratulatory notes from all quarters of the town, and I have since had letters from my distant correspondents in the country, on the subject of the Drawing-room. I received many compliments, but those which most flattered my vanity were from the greatest lady there, the first minister, the Lord Chancellor, and some distinguished persons in the opposition. However, as these glories soon fade away, and such a kind of speech is forgotten in a few days, the most heartfelt joy I had, arose from the delight his brother express'd on his success. The wise man says, A brother is born for the day of adversity; and, indeed, there are few men so

wicked as not to pity and assist a brother in misfortune. But the good and great mind alone takes delight in the success and fame of a brother. The envious think they can escape censure when they neglect a friend or relative in prosperity, and indulge their malice safely in giving little hints to their disadvantage; but my nephew show'd a different kind of spirit. As soon as the House was up, he ran to Mrs. M. Montagu, to his mother, and to me, and with a most joyous countenance, and in a most expressive manner, told me in what manner our young orator's speech had been received in the House. Montagu felt this instance of fraternal affection with the tenderness and gratitude it deserved, and I hope they will be through life an honour and happiness to each other. You rightly imagine the wife and aunt are not without anxiety, lest parliamentary exertions and attendance should hurt our young man's health, but at present he is perfectly well.

. . . "The only thing that induces the primate to prolong his stay at Bath is that *he is not lame.* The dumb gout, as he calls it, which used to make him so, has for some months in a manner forsaken him, and he thinks it prudent to endeavour to bring it back.

. . . "I should have been very anxious if such a cargo as the virtues and amiabilities of dear Miss Arnold had been put on board the horrid mail coach; so, I am obliged to her for complying with my entreaties to take a slower but safer conveyance. . . . I write in much hurry; the letter-bell tinkles."

The speech referred to in the above letter was made by Mr. Matthew Montagu, when seconding the motion on the royal address with which parliament was opened. The speech was warmly eulogistic of Mr. Eden's commercial treaty. Fox praised the young speaker and tore his argument to pieces.

Wraxall, referring, in the "Memoirs of his own Time," to Mrs. Montagu's nephew, Matthew Robinson, says:—"The celebrated Mrs. Montagu, his aunt, who so long occupied the first place among the 'gens de lettres,' in London, having adopted him as her heir, he received her husband's name. At her feet he was brought up,—a school more adapted to form a man of taste and improvement than a statesman or a man of the world. After this gentleman entered the House of Commons, there was some difficulty in distinguishing between him

(Matthew Montagu) and Montagu Matthew. General Matthew himself defined the distinction. 'I wish it to be understood,' said he, 'that there is no more likeness between Montagu Matthew and Matthew Montagu than between a chesnut-horse and a horse-chesnut.'"

To Mrs. Robinson.—"Sandleford. July 14, 1787. . . . That I was delighted at becoming a grandmother, for such I account myself to the dear babe, cannot be doubted; and surely it is the most agreable and becoming office of old age. I have always wonder'd at the wild and rash ambition which impell'd men to wish and seek for conditions and offices to which they were not by talents or circumstances well adapted; but I may say without vanity, I have the age, the experience, the wrinkles, the foibles which form the compleat character of grandmother; and I long to be in full office, but it will be above a fortnight before father, mother, child, and cradle will be fix'd at Sandleford. . . . I should have been under dreadful anxieties if she had not been so well; for she is the most amiable, agreable, and valuable young woman I ever knew. She is a mere mortal, and, I suppose, she must have some

faults; but tho' I have watched her continually, I have never been able to discover any in her.

. . . "I am not interested in the Christmas quarter. When one is too old to play at blind man's buff and hunt the whistle, I think one cannot pass a merry Christmas in the country.

'Tower'd cities pleased us then,
And the busy haunts of men.'

Good society and the animated circle of a great town supply all that the winter season deprives us of.

. . . "I was much pleas'd with a work of Mr. Morgan's, your son's tutor, which he had the goodness to send me. I think it not only very ingenious and well-written, but that it will have a very good effect upon the shallow wits and foolish pedants who affect to be infidels by way of showing their parts and learning. . . . I have visited and been visited by the Pocock family, settled here. They seem very good kind of people."

"Friday, Sept. ye 14th, 1787. To Mrs. Robinson, at Mr. Baker's Circulating Library, Southampton. —I think there is greater variety in the environs of Southampton than in any part of England perhaps; and all in the noble style,—the great ocean, the wide

forest, and scenes of rural beauty are all within reach of our airing. So, as the humour points to the allegro or the penseroso, you may direct your jaunts, and find the nereids, or the dryads, or Pomona receive you with their best graces and softest smiles.

. . . "The lord primate departs from Bristol to-day, and intends to come to Sandleford the beginning of next week. His grace had appointed a day for doing me that favour six weeks ago; but the journey caused a return of the gravel, and he was oblig'd to stop at Marlbro', and sent a servant to tell us of the disappointment. So Mrs. Scott and I went to him and staid two days, at the end of which he was able to return to Bristol by gentle journeys, and return to the use of the Bristol waters, which, indeed, his physician was very loth he should quit; and, thank God, he has not since had any return of the complaint.

. . . "I have had a succession of company in my house; attention to them, and morning airings, and domestick business have engross'd my time. In the present state of my house, I have only one spare room, which was first occupied by Dr. and Mrs.

Wharton; then by Dr. Beattie; then by Mr. and Mrs. Smelt and their neices.

. . . "Montagu set out for Denton on Monday last, to give his attention to opening a new seam of coal. It gave me great pleasure to see him apply to the knowledge of collieries, which not above two or three of our gentlemen, interested in those valuable possessions, will take the trouble to do.

. . . "You will find Sandleford embellish'd since you saw it. I have now thirty men at work, making a piece of water down to ye river from ye water on the side of the wood. It will have a very beautiful effect.

. . . "Will you pardon my making a bold and impertinent petition. The trout season being now over, I shall be distress'd how to provide fish for the primate. If any day after Wednesday next, you would let one of your servants purchase the finest dish of fish the sea produces and direct it, accompanied by a crab and a lobster, to me, to be left at the turnpike at Newtown, Hants, I will not grudge any price for it. I would not be thus troublesome for any guest I did not so much wish to indulge as the primate. . . . Mrs. M. Montagu desires her most respectful compliments to you."

"Portman Square. Jany. ye 10th, 1788. . . . I found London on my arrival, the 11th of November, according to the old song, 'A fine town and a gallant city.' I never knew it so full of the fine world at that season of the year. At Christmas it is the *Ton* to go into the country for the holydays; but yet, on New Year's Day, the Drawing-room was as much crowded as it used to be during the sitting of the parliament; but what adds most to the pleasure of society is the satisfaction all people express at our triumphs over the ungrateful Dutch and the insidious French. The Mynheers and the Mounseers bow before us, and all this obtain'd without any bloodshed, and at little expense.

"I cannot by the best information form any conjecture how the fermentations in France will end. I rather think the spirit of liberty they have imported from America will be beat up into the froth of remonstrances and satires, than have any solid effect. A nabob has purchas'd Mr. Sawbridge's house, who, being as prudent in domestick as sagacious in publick affairs, is oblig'd to give it up to his creditors."

In 1788, Mrs. Montagu adopted a fashion which

had been introduced by the Duke of Dorset, of giving a *thé*. The Duke had been our ambassador in France, and had brought thence a fashion, reasonable enough, of offering a tea at eight to people who dined at two; but unreasonable in England, where the hour for dinner, in great houses, was six o'clock. Hannah More describes the teas as Mme. de Bocage, nearly forty years before, had described Mrs. Montagu's breakfasts. From fifty to a hundred guests were seated at a long table or made up little parties at small ones. The cloth was laid as at breakfast, and the tea was made by the company. Every one had a napkin, as at a public breakfast. The table was covered with hot buttered-rolls, muffins, bread and butter, and wafers. Hannah More adds to her description, made in nearly the above words: "Of all nations under the sun, as I take it, the English are the greatest fools." At the breakfasts in Hill Street there was appetite with clear intellects; at the "Blue-stocking" coteries there, a select circle, and not a fool among them; but what wit could there be among people eating buttered muffins two hours after a heavy dinner and strong port wine?

"December, 1788.—My dear Neice. As I was indebted to you for the favour of a letter, when I left Sandleford, I should have fulfill'd my promise of sending you whatever news I could collect in the great metropolis; but instead of finding this town the seat of gayety, I found it the abode of melancholly. Every countenance (except of the *fox* kind) looked dejected. The king's illness and our country's danger occupied every mind, and tinctured every conversation with melancholly and anxiety. The reports of his majesty's condition for these three days have been much more favorable than any time since he was first taken ill; so the hopes of being again under the government of a good king are revived, and the dread of a bad set of men who wanted to usurp his power, has, from the spirited conduct of the houses of parliament, much abated.

"Mr. Fox is in a very bad state of health. His rapid journeys to England, on the news of the king's illness, have brought on him a violent complaint in the bowels, which will, it is imagined, prove mortal. However, if it should, it will vindicate his character from the general report that he has no

bowels, as has been most strenuously asserted by his creditors.

"After I left Mrs. Boscawen's, at Richmond, I passed a week very agreably with my dear friends at Shooter's Hill; and should have prolonged my stay there if I had not been afraid to meet December in the country. The weather has justified my apprehensions. Weather makes small part of the comforts of a London life, and I have pass'd my time very comfortably. Twice or thrice a week, I invite seven or eight agreable persons to dine with me. On other days, I often prevail on some intimate friend to partake of my mutton and chicken, which, with the visits of such of my acquaintance as are in town, give me enough of society. I have not been out of my house above four times since I came to town, the 1st of December, for I am afraid to expose my weak eyes to the northern blast.

"My nephew Robinson set out for Horton on Christmas Day. Montagu and his family intend to continue at Shooter's Hill till ye parliament meet daily. . . . He comes up in a morning to attend the House, and returns the next morning, but gives me the pleasure of seeing him when he comes to

town; and a kind visit I had also from *her* yesterday. Few of the gentlemen of either House of Parliament have yet brought their ladies to London, so you will not wonder there is little news stirring but of the political kind. However, there is a marriage going forward, at which I am rejoyced, as it will add to the happiness of two persons whose paternal conduct well deserves that reward. Many in our town dissipate the estates they inherited from their ancestors, and suffer their noble mansions to fall to ruin; but Lord and Lady Mount Edgcumbe, by prudent conduct, have retrieved the family estates, which his lordship's elder brother had embarrass'd; all which will now be secured by settlements and inherited by their posterity. Mr. Edgcumbe is going to be married to Lady Sophia Hobart. Lord Mount Edgcumbe behaves very generously in his settlements. . . . The joy those good parents express at seeing their son now out of danger of any imprudent choice or vicious connection is great. Indeed, a parent's satisfaction in his son can never be compleat till the important point of his marriage is accomplish'd; for, if he marries a trumpery girl, she not only does not bring

any addition to the family property, but the elevation of her situation so much above her birth, will probably make her extravagant and fall into absurd method that will ruin it."

To her niece.—"Portman Square. Dec. 31, 1789. . . . The kind of life one leads at Bath, tho' it offers but few amusements, allows no leisure. Sauntering is the business of the place. Beaux in boots, and misses in great coats, visit all the morning, and, having nothing better to do themselves, will not suffer others to do anything that is better. My evenings are always agreably engaged with my friends. The Bath is chiefly fill'd with Irish, but there were many persons there with whom I live in a great degree of intimacy when in London. I had the pleasure of finding and leaving the primate and Sir William Robinson in perfect health. I expect his grace will be in town in a few days. Sir William will remain at Bath and pursue the warm bathing, which he finds very beneficial.

. . . "My nephew Robinson was so good as to be with me at Bath. . . . I came to town yesterday sennight. The cold lodging-houses at Bath, and the chill journey, made me feel myself wonder-

fully comfortable in this good and substantial mansion. Ever since I first inhabited it, I have been sensible how much a good habitation softens the severity and enlivens the gloom of winter.

"Montagu is gone to Lord Harrowby's to spend ye holydays. He acquitted himself admirably of all his devoirs at Bath. He danced as many minouets, caper'd as many cotillions, and skipp'd as many country-dances as any young gentleman at ye place. He usually open'd the ball and danc'd to the last. Indeed, with a great deal of prudence and discretion, he has as lively, gay spirits as any one I ever knew; so, he is happy at all times and in all places, and makes those who are with him so.

. . . "We all imagine Mr. Pitt will have little to fear from the opposition. I do not hear any news. It would be doing too much honour to ye slanders of the newspapers to contradict them.

. . . "You did my letters undeserved honour in taking the trouble to copy them. As I am arrived at an age to look back on my past life with more pleasure, perhaps, than to future expectations, I have found some satisfaction in the recollection of former days, which letters then written present to

the mind in a more distinct and lively manner than memory can do. Whatever gave one great joy or great grief, leaves strong marks on the mind, but the soft, gentle pleasures, like ye annual flowers in a garden, pass away with ye season, unless thus preserved." These reflections denote the way whither this Lady of the Last Century was going. Hannah More noted, in 1790, the change that had come over the old order of things. In April, she chronicles, indeed, "a pleasant party," at Mrs. Montagu's, including Burke, "a sufficiently pleasant party of himself," and Mackenzie, "the man of feeling;" but she also adds, "the old little parties are not to be had in the usual style of comfort. Every thing is great, and vast, and late, and magnificent, and dull." Wilberforce, too, was one of the welcome guests, and so intimate, that Mrs. Montagu called him by a pseudonym "the Red Cross Knight." But the splendid stage, the superb style, the pillars of verd antique, the room of feathers, these could not compensate for the less showy, but more real, delights of the old Blue Stocking days in Hill Street. But the lady of the house had still the same inexhaustible spirits, the same taste for business and magnificence. Three

or four great dinners in a week with Luxembourgs, Montmorencies, and Czartoriskis. "I had rather," said the sage Hannah, "for my part, live in our cottage at Cheddar. She is made for the great world, and is an ornament to it. It is an element she was born to breathe in."

Hannah More's duties were consistent with cottage life; but Mrs. Montagu held her fortune in trust, and spent it in gratifications, the cost of which made glad hearts in a hundred homes. At some of her assemblies, eccentric as well as intellectual people seem now to have been admitted. Miss Burney notes, in 1792, having encountered at Montagu House, "a commonish, non-nothingish sort of a half good-humoured and sensibilish woman!" Soon, however, increasing infirmities weakened Mrs. Montagu's powers and affected her spirits. But she who was, as Fanny Burney said, so "magnificently useful" in her generation, kept up her magnificence and tried to maintain her usefulness to the last. Her supreme effort to get together the little, comfortable, intellectual parties that delighted Hannah More, was made in 1798. "I have been at one bit of Blue there," wrote Dr. Burney to his

daughter. "Mrs. Montagu is so broken down as not to go out. She is almost wholly blind and very feeble."

In the succeeding year, Mrs. Carter wrote to Hannah More: . . . "She has totally changed her mode of life, from a conviction that she exerted herself too much last year, and that it brought on the long illness, by which she suffered so much. . . . She never goes out except to take the air of a morning; has no company to dinner (I do not call myself company); lets in nobody in the evening, which she passes in hearing her servant read, as her eyes will not suffer her to read herself." Mrs. Carter hopes that "a taste for the comfort of living quietly will, for the future, prevent her from mixing so much with the tumults of the world, as to injure her health."

Her interest in the education of girls was not affected by her decaying powers. After Mrs. Hannah More had published her celebrated work on that subject, and it had been read to Mrs. Montagu, the latter wrote to the author a letter, in which is the following passage:—"Sandleford. May, 1799. You have most judiciously pointed out the

errors of modern education, which seems calculated entirely to qualify young women for whatever their god-fathers and god-mothers had renounced for them at their baptism; and what is most shocking is, that a virtuous matron and tender mother values herself much on not having omitted anything that can fit her daughter for the world, the flesh, and the devil." This was the final judgment of a lady, who, in her own girlhood, had expressed herself in much the same terms, and who, later in life, had laid it down as a law for her own niece, that to dance a minuet well was of more importance than to have a knowledge of a foreign language. She had escaped perils herself, because she was always occupied. If, when a nymph, she so sported in the Marylebone waters, that lords wrote sonnets on her, she forgot the homage in her higher enjoyments of native and foreign literature. If she went joyously any number of miles to a ball, danced with the very love of dancing, and shrieked with delight at being upset on her way home, the next day she had purer enjoyment in reading, analysing, and judging a translation of a Greek play or a volume of ancient or modern history. She did not despise being

attractive, but she dressed her mind even more carefully than she did her person. As she grew in years, she was as ready for increasing duties as for increasing delights, and looked as fascinating among her Berkshire farm-servants and her Northumbrian pitmen as she did, blazing with diamonds and lively spirits, in the Throne-room at St. James's. She never had a fool for an acquaintance, nor ever an idle hour, in the sense of idleness. Mistress of an ample fortune, she lived up to her income, and never beyond it. All around her profited by such stewardship. She is said to have done all things with a grace, and most things with ease. It was not more difficult for her to vanquish Voltaire than to make a grouse-pie for Garrick. When she passed to her rest, in 1800, she was prepared to go that way thankfully. Some few of her acquaintances dwelt, as such candid persons will, upon her little faults. But there was one good woman who remembered only her great merits. "With Mrs. Montagu's faults," wrote Hannah More to Dr Whalley, in 1808, "I have nothing to do. Her fine qualities were many. From my first entrance into a London life till her death, I ever found her an

affectionate, zealous, and constant friend, as well as a most instructive and pleasant companion. Her youth and beauty were gone long before I knew her."

But even in the days of her maidenhood, when she was glad in her youth and in her beauty, and conscious of her intellect, yet unconscious of the pleasures, duties, and trials before her, yet when she feared she might live idle and die vain, she said, "If ever I have an inscription over me, it shall be without a name, and only,—Here lies one whom, having done no harm, no one should censure; and, having done no good, no one can commend; who, for past folly, only asks oblivion." She lived, however, to do much good, to make great amends for small and venial follies, and by the magnificent usefulness, which Little Burney has recorded, to merit such pains as it may cost a poor chronicler to rescue her name and deeds from the oblivion which she asked in the pleasant days of her bright youth and her subduing beauty.

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