ANNA SEWARD
THE SWAN OF LICHFIELD
From the painting by Romney

"Mrs. Knowles... says Romney's picture of me is one of the finest portraits she ever saw. I sent for the handsomest frame London would produce. It ‘embles, with its breadth of gold, the centre of the dining-room, opposite the fire-place."—Miss Seward
A SWAN
AND HER FRIENDS

BY
E. V. LUCAS

"The British muse brings, with triumphant aim,
Her richest tablet, grac'd with Seward's name."
—The Rev. W. B. Stevens.

"Quotation is at once the highest and most
delicate kind of praise our writings can receive."
—Miss Seward to Miss Ponsonby.

WITH TWENTY-FOUR ILLUSTRATIONS

METHUEN & CO.
36 ESSEX STREET W.C.
LONDON
SONNET TO MISS SEWARD

Not in thy bowers, Valclusa, when the strain,
   Breath'd by the Spirit of love to night's still ear,
Fondly bewail'd fair Laura's timeless bier,
And mourn'd, on Sorga's banks, her loss in vain,
Did purer melody the soul enchant,
Than when, of late, the Muse, to Britain dear,
Tun'd her chaste lyre, that heaven might stoop to hear,
And with its magic charm'd her native plain.

Then why, thou sweet enthusiast, bid farewell
   To the rich music of its various chime?
O sweep, with volant touch, thy chorded shell,
   Yet, yet again, and swell the lofty rhyme
To virtue's praise; nor with less rapture dwell
   On nature's awful scenes and works sublime!

—CHRISTOPHER SMYTH, ESQ.
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STANZAS WRITTEN IN THE GEORGE-INN
WINDOW, AT LICHFIELD

By the Rev. W. B. STEVENS

I
Fair city! lift, with conscious glory crown'd,
The spiry structures of thy Mercian state,
While history bids her ancient trump resound
How war, in wrath, unbarr'd thy blood-stain'd gate.

II
Not that the praise of ancient days alone
Is thine, fair city, blest thro' every age;
War's scythed car, yon miracles of stone,
Bow to the splendours of thy letter'd page.

III
Here Johnson fashion'd his elaborate style,
And Truth, well-pleas'd, the moral work survey'd;
Here, on her darling's cradle wont to smile,
Thalia with her Garrick fondly play'd.

IV
And here the flower of England's virgin train,
Boast of our isle, Lichfield's peculiar pride,—
Here Seward caught the dew-drops for her strain
From grief, and pity's intermingled tide.
Exult, fair city! and indulge the praise
A grateful stranger to thy glory pays.
A SWAN AND HER FRIENDS

CHAPTER I

MISS SEWARD AND THE CITY OF LICHFIELD

The Little Athens—Miss Seward’s attraction—The first poetess and the performing dog—The modern woman—Miss Seward’s day and our own—The golden age of the bas bleu—Mutual admiration—The re-birth of humour in women—Miss Austen—Charles Lamb among the blue-stockings—Miss Pinkerton—Miss Seward’s sentimentalism—Miss Austen—Miss Seward hears the younger generation knocking at the door—Fine writing—Lichfield to-day—The two cats—The clerics and the asparagus—The Dead March—Lichfield and George Fox—The Minster Pool—The Cathedral—Dr. Johnson’s copy of South’s Sermons—The Palace in Miss Seward’s day—Dr. Johnson’s willow.

My first idea in writing this book was to attempt to reconstruct the intellectual society of Lichfield in its Swan’s day and show what provincial culture a hundred and fifty years ago was like. I proposed then to call the book A Little English Athens, and perhaps to pass on in a companion volume to Norwich at the same period, exchanging the Swans and Johnsons and Days and Darwins and Hayleys for the Opies and Taylors and Martineaus and Gurneys. But as I proceeded with the task Miss Seward (whose name, by the way, on her own authority should be pronounced not “Suward” but “Se-ward”) steadily became too much for me. As in Lichfield in her life, so in my Lichfield inquiries in her death, she took the first place. Bit by bit the other Athenians receded until, struggling
against such masterfulness no more, I too submitted to the Swan and made her my principal theme.

Why one should do such a thing I have asked myself a thousand times during the progress of this book. What is there about Anna Seward that calls to be revived, displayed? I think the answer is that it is always amusing, not only in life but in literature, to mark changes; and nothing could be less out of place in the present day than Anna Seward's pontifical confidence, her floridity and her sentimentalism. To expose these characteristics to the matter-of-fact, one might almost say cynical, eye of this generation ought not to be unentertaining, if not positively instructive, particularly if we meet by the way some very odd people, to say nothing of the Great Panjandrum himself.

Not only are Miss Seward's own characteristics an interesting study; but their impact on her time is an interesting study too. Her reception was extraordinarily warm. Indifferent writers are still often the darlings of the great-hearted public; but there is no such praise reserved for them now as was poured out upon Miss Seward. The answer to the question, Why was she acclaimed with such enthusiasm? also answers the question, Why should this book be written? Because she was a pioneer, and pioneers are not negligible. I have no doubt that a great part of Miss Seward's reputation as a poetess was due to the fact that poetesses were so rare before her day—at any rate poetesses who would voice any national emotion and feeling. Men had had practically sole charge of the lyre, save for a few chance feminine poems here and there. And then arose a woman to compete with them, and every one was astonished and apparently pleased. It is difficult to-day to understand how Miss Seward's artificial conventions can have warmed any one to such cordiality, except by the theory that a fashion for poetry was in the air, poetry meaning the conjunction of a certain
number of nouns with an equal number of florid adjectives in rhymed couplets, and by remembering Johnson's attitude to the performing dog; the remarkable thing being not that Miss Seward wrote verse so well, but that—a woman—she wrote it at all. A period of female literary efflorescence was certainly at hand, but Miss Seward was well in the van of it. She was an early blue. It is of course largely the fault of herself and her imitators that there have been so many women writers since. They showed how easy it is.

_Bas bleus_ are a little out of fashion now. _Salons_ have been abandoned, and women who write, write for the most part rapidly, and write novels. Criticism they rarely touch, and their poems are concerned rather with passing emotions than with great circumnavigators or unfortunate soldiers. They have opinions, it is true, and they air them; but these are practical opinions that go with short skirts, if not quite with hockey sticks, and form part of a definite female policy. The solemn delivery of final opinions on all subjects is a pastime that has gone out among women, even the women who approximate nearest to the old _bas bleus_. Perhaps there may be an exception; but that only proves the rule.

There is too much dubiety in our atmosphere: Miss Seward's contemporaries had assurance. They knew what they knew; nor did they want the moon. The ordinary women were feminine and satisfied, with plenty of time for knitting, while the learned ones had opinions on everything and uttered them. Eminent men sought their company: Pope and Walpole and Swift and Johnson and Garrick all visited or corresponded with women of wit. Mrs. Montagu's rooms were filled nightly; Miss Seward was called the Swan of Lichfield and the magazines were crowded with poems in her honour; Hannah More was the first of living moralists.

Surely it was woman's day—the end of the eighteenth century. Women have not—in literature—had such a time
since. There are many ladies writing to-day and writing very much better than Miss Seward ever did; but is there one among them with Miss Seward's reputation? I doubt it, and certainly there is none with Hannah More's. It is not that the ladies are less clever, but they are more diffident. Not all, maybe: I seem as I write to recollect recent feminine utterances that were not marked by a quality to which the loosest of talkers could apply the word diffidence; but in the main our ladies are more diffident, uncertain of themselves. It is a sceptical, hesitating age. We are no longer sure; and no sooner do we lose certitude than we lose followers. Anna Seward always knew her mind, and never lacked a retinue.

The circumstance that Miss Seward's opinions were almost always wrong has nothing to do with it, although that in itself is an interesting point. For although the study of bad criticism is not cheering, it is yet not utterly a waste of time. There are certain phases of human incompetence that really are worth examination, and the mutual admiration of Miss Seward's contemporaries is, I think, among them. I suppose that never before or since in English literature was the second and third rate so swallowed and commended as in Miss Seward's letters.

Miss Seward was not only one of the last things before the re-birth of poetry; but she was also one of the last things before the re-birth of humour—at any rate in women. Humorous women no doubt there were in private: in fact we know as much from their letters; but so far as the world generally is aware no one came between that Merry Wife, Mistress Page, and Jane Austen, who was born when Anna Seward was thirty-three. Miss Seward was the last and greatest of the unhumorous women just as Miss Austen was the first of the humorous ones.

It is a thousand pities that Miss Austen had no fun with
the Lichfield type of *bas bleu*. What a novel she could have written with a Miss Seward in it. No one else save Lamb at that day had the requisite sense of mischief to do justice to these tremendous ladies. Lamb’s opportunity came once only, but he took it instantly. It was in 1800. Coleridge, safely ensconced in the Lakes, had given Miss Wesley an introduction to Lamb, and Miss Wesley had led to Miss Elizabeth Ogilvy Benger, who in her thirteenth year wrote a poem entitled *The Female Geniadi*. Later she was to produce many books of fact and fancy, but in 1800 she was but twenty-two and had only just come to London. Miss Benger Lamb and his sister visited, up two pairs of stairs in East Street, off Red Lion Square, one April evening. He told Coleridge their adventures in a good letter, in which, with characteristic want of accuracy, he calls Miss Benger Miss Benjay. “Tea and coffee, and macaroons—a kind of cake—much love. We sat down. Presently Miss Benjay broke the silence, by declaring herself quite of a different opinion from *D’Israeli*, who supposes the differences of human intellect to be the mere effect of organisation. She begged to know my opinion. I attempted to carry it off with a pun upon organ, but that went off very flat. She immediately conceived a very low opinion of my metaphysics; and, turning round to Mary, put some question to her in French,—possibly having heard that neither Mary nor I understood French. The explanation that took place occasioned some embarrassment and much wondering. She then fell into an insulting conversation about the comparative genius and merits of all modern languages, and concluded with asserting that the Saxon was esteemed the purest dialect in Germany.

“From thence she passed into the subject of poetry; where I, who had hitherto sat mute, and a hearer only, humbly hoped I might now put in a word to some advantage, seeing that it was my own trade in a manner. But
I was stopped by a round assertion, that no good poetry had appeared since Dr. Johnson’s time. It seems the Doctor has suppressed many hopeful geniuses that way, by the severity of his critical strictures in his Lives of the Poets. I here ventured to question the fact, and was beginning to appeal to names, but I was assured ‘it was certainly the case’. Then we discussed Miss More’s book on education, which I had never read. It seems Dr. Gregory, another of Miss Benjay’s friends, has found fault with one of Miss More’s metaphors. Miss More has been at some pains to vindicate herself,—in the opinion of Miss Benjay not without success. It seems the Doctor is invariably against the use of broken or mixed metaphor, which he reprobrates, against the authority of Shakspeare himself.

“We next discussed the question, whether Pope was a poet? I find Dr. Gregory is of opinion he was not, though Miss Seward does not at all concur with him in this. We then sat upon the comparative merits of the ten translations of Pizarro, and Miss Benjay or Benje advised Mary to take two of them home (she thought it might afford her some pleasure to compare them verbatim); which we declined. It being now nine o’clock, wine and macaroons were again served round, and we parted, with a promise to go again next week, and meet the Miss Porters, who, it seems, have heard much of Mr. Coleridge, and wish to meet us, because we are his friends. I have been preparing for the occasion. I crowd cotton in my ears. I read all the reviews and magazines of the past month, against the dreadful meeting, and I hope by these means to cut a tolerable second-rate figure.”

That was the way. But who else was there to take it? No art has so few practitioners as that of pricking bubbles gently.

Thackeray perhaps had not the Swan absolutely in his
mind when he drew Miss Pinkerton, but he was aware of the tradition and was very willing to make fun of it. For one very good reason Miss Pinkerton clearly is not Miss Seward; for Miss Pinkerton venerated the Great Lexicographer, whereas the Swan's critical gaze, as we shall see, rested upon that luminary as unwinkingly as ever eagle's daring the sun. None the less it needed the Seward age to produce Miss Pinkerton's letter as surely as a Jurassic age to produce a Cretaceous.

"The Mall, Chiswick, June 15, 18—"

"Madam,—"

"After her six years' residence at the Mall, I have the honour and happiness of presenting Miss Amelia Sedley to her parents, as a young lady not unworthy to occupy a fitting position in their polished and refined circle. Those virtues which characterise the young English gentlewoman, those accomplishments which become her birth and station, will not be found wanting in the amiable Miss Sedley, whose industry and obedience have endeared her to her instructors, and whose delightful sweetness of temper has charmed her aged and her youthful companions.

"In music, in dancing, in orthography, in every variety of embroidery and needlework, she will be found to have realised her friends' fondest wishes. In geography there is still much to be desired; and a careful and undeviating use of the blackboard, for four hours daily during the next three years, is recommended as necessary to the acquirement of that dignified deportment and carriage so requisite for every young lady of fashion.

"In the principles of religion and morality, Miss Sedley will be found worthy of an establishment which has been honoured by the presence of The Great Lexicographer, and the patronage of the admirable Mrs. Chapone.

"In leaving the Mall, Miss Amelia carries with her the hearts of her companions, and the affectionate regards of her mistress, who has the honour to subscribe herself,

"Madam,

"Your most obliged

"Humble servant,

"Barbara Pinkerton."

There is no doubt that Miss Austen had Miss Seward's sentimentalism in mind, although with the genius of the satirist-artist she had divined it only. It was in the air, and it is as peculiarly the prerogative of the satirist to discern treasure in the air as it is of the modern chemist to find
mauve in coal and gold in the sea. The sentiment which
lies bare to our gaze in Miss Seward's letters (published in
1811) had already been crystallised by Miss Austen in three
or four novels which, the time not being ripe, no one had
yet read. But their day was dawning, just as the sun of
Lichfield’s Sappho was setting.

Poor Miss Seward was not unaware of this herself. In
one of her last letters she recalls a perfect orgy of sentiment
that she had once enjoyed, when her friend Mr. Saville
welcomed a shower after a long drought by singing the
anthem, “He giveth rain upon the earth,” as composed by the
“Orpheus of the choirs, Dr. Green”. “The evening,” she
wrote, “was warm, and the clouds, which had been many days
of flattering gloom, had not increased in their lower. Some
friends were with me in the saloon, the doors of which were
opened on the lawn. The long-expected, long-desired rain
dropt silently, yet amply, down. Mr. S. immediately stept
to the door, and, with clasped hands and moist uplifted
eyes, sung that super-human strain. We all caught his
grateful piety, and shed those tears, which to shed, seems a
foetast of heaven.

“Probably;” Miss Seward continues, “never more shall
eyes be thus surcharged; for I have survived the dear
friends of my youth whose habitations were near mine. Kind
voices speak to me yet, but they are the voices of later years.
They who utter them listen to me, but they cannot talk with
me in the animation of conscious remembrance concerning
the events and associates of my blossomed life; of those
customs and manners which have so changed their character.
Art and labour have given richness to cultivation, taste has
made every garden a landscape, and architecture has ex-
panded and adorned our mansions. Our young females
are all artists. They draw, and paint, and play, sing, and
dance, with professional skill, and nothing but the under-
THE SWAN'S REMARKABLE GIFTS

standing and the heart are left incultivate. The sensibilities are sacrificed to cold vanity, ambition, and the desire of exhibiting. Thus the charming simplicity, the fervour, and wild graces of youth are lost, which shine in the companions of my blossoming years. Is this truth, or the day-dream of waning life, which gilds the past with imaginary light, and wraps the present in gloom not less ideal? Health and parental hopes give your mind better employment than ‘gathering with me the wintry wreaths of regret, and pouring the dirge of departed days’. Adieu!"

One more reason for the existence of this book: Miss Seward was one of the masters of the art of fine writing, and to-day when fine writing also is under a cloud she is worth attention for that gift alone. She was a word-painter in the fullest sense of the term. Her pen never ceased to be a brush. To adapt Goldsmith's joke about her tête noire, she made all the little fishes talk like anemones.

But of course the Swan's remarkable gifts of vanity and flattery and (shall I say?) absurdity, come first.

Lichfield to-day cannot be very different from the Lichfield that basked in the greatness and goodness of Miss Seward. Cathedral towns have the secret of conserving their antiquity, their obsolescence; long after other towns have capitulated to Progress these still fly the flag of serenity. Motor-cars now rush about streets lighted by electricity; but Lichfield's Close remains as quiet and discreet as when in 1780 Dr. Darwin's Persian cat Snow was wooing Miss Seward's Po Felina. In vain.

"Marry you, Mr. Snow," replied that humanitarian, "I cannot; since, though the laws of our community might not oppose our connection, yet those of principle, of delicacy, of duty to my mistress, do very powerfully oppose it"—Miss Seward's cat having been drilled into such consideration for
her natural prey that one of the Palace doves actually was
allowed to sit on her back, while a tame lark and robin habitu-
ally fluttered about the room; whereas Snow's massacres of
birds and mice were a byword.

I thought of this model creature as I strolled slowly
about the Close late on an April night, an object of sus-
picion to a policeman, and, with the exception of that guardian,
the only living thing about save a very colony of cats, to whom
nothing is sacred.

Dr. Darwin's house still stands, not much altered, and
the Palace at heart is the same although it has put forth
wings. The house where Mr. Edgeworth and Mr. Day lodged
stands too. As for the Cathedral, so tender have been the
hands of the restorers that it can be said hardly to have
turned a stone.

I entered Lichfield in a station omnibus filled other-
wise with a commercial traveller and three rural deans
on their way to a meeting at the Palace. After a spirited
argument as to which had the largest number of parishioners,
the rural deans fell to a discussion of asparagus, and this was
still in progress when they got out. So far as I could gather
it is better to sow it than to plant it. Salt must be used
liberally; but in the long run the important thing is to keep
a good man. The rural dean who had already cut one dish
and was preparing to cut another on his return to-morrow
had an excellent man; but neither of his hearers was quite
satisfied with his. It seemed to me, as they alighted from
the bus at the corner of Conduit Street, that I could not
have entered this famous ecclesiastical stronghold more
fittingly than in such company exchanging such pretty first-
fruit counsels.

With Miss Seward so much in my mind it was natural that
I should wish to stay at the Swan; but on reaching that inn
I found it full to overflowing, a state due to the combined
causes of military manoeuvres on Cannock Chase and the
sudden death of an officer in the neighbouring barracks, for
whose funeral—now at this very moment in progress—a
number of other officers had come down. I therefore went
to the George, where one room was still vacant, and stood on
the steps to see the cortège pass.

It was my first military funeral, and will be, I hope, the
last, for Chopin's music under such circumstances is almost
too moving.

It took me some time to readjust myself to the Lichfield
I had come to see. I could not get Miss Seward back again,
Chopin and death and the pomp of war intervening; nor
was I assisted by a visit to the Museum, since the curator
and custodian of that building had never even heard Miss
Seward's name, although Dr. Darwin's he knew, and Garrick's
and, of course, the Great Lexicographer's. But I was glad
I tried the Museum, for there was a picture on its walls that
took me back instantly to my early school days in Yorkshire
and my first meeting with Lichfield's name; for at this
school the Journal of George Fox was read aloud by a
master capable of an intense and almost fanatic eloquence,
and it chanced that on the very first time I made one of his
audience he had come to the Quaker apostle's ill-starred
visit to this cathedral town, which was then much more im-
portant than it now is, the diocese extending vastly farther.
George Fox was rarely welcome, but he and his message
appealed even less to Lichfield than to most towns, and he
left it, after suffering humiliation and worse, crying in a loud
voice, "Woe to the bloody city of Lichfield! Woe to the
bloody city of Lichfield!"—words which I had forgotten, but
which, with the whole scene attached—the hall with its
raised seats, the boys listening in spite of themselves, the
white tense face of the reader—now came back to me with
the vividness that belongs only to impressions gathered in
the early years, before one has learned to think of three things at once. That was in 1879, and here I was in 1907 before a picture representing Fox's curse—or what stood for a curse to a disappointed Quaker—in the very city that gave him provocation.

But I was still far from Miss Seward. On emerging, however, from the building all was well once more, for there in front of me was a beautiful sheet of water with trees on one side and houses and a walk on the other, and on its surface—what? A swan. Instantly I had Miss Seward in my grasp again, for had I not read a charming essay upon her and her affectations by Mrs. Meynell some years ago in the Pall Mall Gazette, in which the writer complained that to call her the Swan of Lichfield when Lichfield had no water, was to pile absurdity upon the absurd? But Lichfield has water; and here was a live swan upon it, floating double, to justify my heroine's admirers. And walking beside its margin I was pleased to see that not only did the swan float double upon it, but Lichfield Cathedral floated, as one might say, double too.

And so, quite happy again, and with every trace of Chopin's divine melancholy driven away, I came into the Close and for the first time saw the Cathedral as a whole.

After a white cathedral, such as Salisbury, or a grey cathedral, such as Winchester, Lichfield's ruddy stone may for the moment disappoint; but only for a moment, so gentle is the tint and so rich and serene the architecture. For it is not red like Worcester, which has a colour that would not, I think, carry such spires: a tower colour. It is merely a reddish tinge: just enough to warm it and humanise the beauty of it. If one had a criticism against Salisbury it would be perhaps that it is perfect and flawless, too good for human nature's daily food. But Lichfield, with all its wonder and its lovely dignity, is yet welcoming. You are not at all afraid of it.
Johnson and Garrick both lie in Westminster Abbey, but both have monuments in the Cathedral of their native city. Miss Seward lies there too. But I suspect that if a census of visitors were taken it would be found that more were attracted by Chantrey’s sculpture of the two sleeping children.

In the Chapter Library is an interesting Johnsonian relic in the shape of the copy of South’s Sermons in which he noted words for his Dictionary, with the passages in which they occur marked for use as illustrations. I spent an amusing ten minutes with the librarian in tracing these marked words in the pages of the Dictionary itself.

The Palace, which is now occupied by the Bishop of Lichfield, but was for more than half a century the home of Miss Seward, who lived there for some years quite alone, is at the north-east corner of the Close. By the kindness of Mrs. Legge I was enabled to explore it and also the garden, part of which is the old moat, now dry, which enclosed the Cathedral and at one part formed a dingle in Dr. Darwin’s grounds. From this garden, as from certain windows of the house, one has a beautiful view of the Stow Valley, with St. Chad’s Church at the end of the intervening sheet of water.

Miss Seward thus described her garden and her view, in a letter to the Ladies of Llangollen Vale: “This day a summer’s sun warmly gilds the fields, the gardens, and the groves, now diffusing fragrance, and bursting into bloom. Fresh and undulating breezes from the east lured me into my drawing-room, having placed in its lifted sash the Æolian harp. It is, at this instant, warbling through all the varieties of the harmonic chords. This apartment looks upon a small lawn, gently sloping upwards. Till this spring, it was shrubbery to the edge of the grassy terrace on its summit; but I have lately covered it with a fine turf, sprinkled with cypresses, junipers, and laurels. It is bordered
on the right hand by tall laburnums, lilacs, and trees of the Gelder rose,

—throwing up, mid trees of darker leaf,
Its silver globes, light as the foamy surf,
Which the wind severs from the broken wave.

Beyond this little lawny elevation, the wall which divides its terrace from the sweet valley it overlooks, is not visible. These windows command the loveliest part of that valley, and only its first field is concealed by the sloping swell of the foreground. The vale is scarcely half a mile across, bounded, basin-like, by a semicircle of gentle hills, luxuriantly foliaged. There is a lake in its bosom, and a venerable old church, with its grey and moss-grown tower on the water's edge. Left of that old church, on the rising ground beyond, stands an elegant villa, half shrouded in its groves;—and, to the right below, on the bank of the lake, another villa with its gardens. The as yet azure waters are but little intercepted by the immense and very ancient willow that stands opposite these windows in the middle of the vale; that willow, whose height and dimensions are the wonder of naturalists. The centre of the lake gleams through its widespread branches, and it appears on each side like a considerable river, from its boundaries being concealed. On the right, one of our streets runs from the town to the water, interspersed with trees and gardens. It looks like an unbraged village, and is all we see from hence of the city, so that nothing can be more quiet and rural than the landscape. It is less beautiful in summer than in spring, from the weeds that sprout up in the lake, and from the set which partially creeps upon its surface."

The willow—once known as Dr. Johnson's willow—is now no more, but few are the other changes. The sheet of water has become a reservoir and is rather larger—that is all.
CHAPTER II

THE CYGNET’S FIRST NOTES

Anna Seward’s birth—Garrick and Johnson—The Rev. Thomas Seward—The “Female Right to Literature”—A frugal poet—“Source of my Life”—Dr. Johnson meets Mr. Seward—An epigram—Boswell meets Mr. Seward—Mr. Jebb’s recollections—Anne, Anna, Julia and Nancy—Eyam and the nobility—The Cygnet’s precocity—First notes—A visit and the seeds of embonpoint—Enter Erasmus Darwin—The challenge—Mr. Seward discourages the Muse.

Anna Seward was not a native of Lichfield. She was born at Eyam in Derbyshire, in the Peak district, of which place her father was rector and continued to be rector after he was made a Canon Residentiary of Lichfield. The Rev. Thomas Seward had been a tutor in noble families and as such had contracted a taste for titles which his daughter inherited and cherished.

It was about 1750 that Mr. Seward removed to Lichfield, to take up his canonry, installing himself in the Bishop’s Palace, which remained the family residence to the end of Anna’s life in 1809, Lichfield’s bishops preferring to dwell elsewhere.

In 1750, David Garrick and Samuel Johnson, the city’s two most famous sons, were respectively thirty-three and forty-one. With Garrick Miss Seward had no association; but with Johnson she had, for it was her mother’s father, the Rev. John Hunter, headmaster of the Lichfield Grammar School, who taught the Great Lexicographer his rudiments; and, as we shall see, not only Sarah Seward,
Anna's only surviving sister, but Anna herself, came near marrying Mr. Porter, Dr. Johnson's stepson. Garrick, I may say here, died in 1779, when Miss Seward was thirty-six, and Johnson in 1784, when she was forty-one.

Mr. Seward was himself a poet in a small amateur way, just as was Sneyd Davies, another Lichfield canon. His effusions, some of which are to be found in Dodsley’s Collection, include a defence of woman's right to intellectual equality with man, and some light couplets (printed in the Gentleman's Magazine for June, 1786, at a time no number was complete without a contribution from the Sewardian muse) on moving into the Palace. The lines in praise of woman's intellect, although first printed when his gifted daughter was still a child, might seem to have been inspired in a moment of acute prevision, as a kind of precautionary measure, placing their writer at any rate on the safe side. I quote the kernel of the argument here, not only because it is interesting to see how the paternal Swan wrote, but also because the lines, although more than a hundred and fifty years old, strike a chord to-day.

But say, BRITANNIA, do thy sons, who claim
A birth-right liberty, dispense the same
In equal scales? Why then does Custom bind
In chains of ignorance the female mind?
Why is to them the bright ethereal ray
Of science veilt? Why does each pedant say,
"'Tis man's, with science to expand the soul,
And wing his eagle flight from pole to pole;
'Tis his, to pierce antiquity's dark gloom,
And the still thicker shades of time to come;
'Tis his to guide the pond'rous helm of state,
And bear alone all wisdom's solid weight.
Let woman with alluring graces move
The fondling passions and the baby love;
Be this her only science, be her doom
Fix'd to the toilette, the spinnet and loom."
Tongue-doughty pedant, was Athena's\(^1\) soul
Form'd for these only? Bring th' exactest rule
Of judgment to the trial, prove that e'er
Thy school-proud tribe engross’d a greater share
Of mental excellence; tho' vernal youth
Just swells her lovely bosom, yet blest truth,
Offspring of sense and industry, has there
Long fixt her residence; and taught the fair
Or wisdom's deep recesses to explore,
Or on invention's rapid wings to soar
Above th' Aonian mount; and can'st thou think
That virtues, which exalt the soul, can sink
The outward charms? must knowledge give offence?
And are the graces all at war with sense?
Say, who of all the fair is form'd to move
The fondest passions, most ecstatic love,
More than Athena? in her gentle eye
Soft innocence and virgin modesty
Incessant shine, while still a new-born grace
Springs in each speaking feature of her face,
Her sprightly wit no forward pertness spoils;
No self-assuming air her judgment soils;
Still prone to learn, tho' capable to teach,
And lofty all her thoughts, but humble all her speech.

The lines on becoming the tenant of the Palace at Lichfield after Eyam rectory are pleasantly done. This is the conclusion:—

My friends (themselves a feast) in state shall sit;
Vyse\(^2\) shall serve up a rich desert of wit;
Davies\(^3\) shall bring a concert of the Nine,
And treat with genuine Heliconian Wine;
The worthy Dean shall every palate please,
With sense, good nature, elegance, and ease.
Horbury shall see his curling columns rise,
And mark their progress nearer to the skies,
Whose thoughts seem only to his pipe confin'd,
While Locke and Hooker reason in his mind.

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\(^1\) Athena was Miss Pratt, afterwards Lady Camden.
\(^2\) Canon Vyse, who later earned Miss Seward's resentment by expressing the opinion that she had no right to paraphrase Horace without knowing Latin.
\(^3\) Sneyd Davies, of whom much may be read in Nichol's *Literary Anecdotes*.
THE CYGNET'S FIRST NOTES

Garrick's sheer humour shall have ampler bound,
And thy gay jokes from wall to wall resound,
The stately rooms we'll furnish well with mirth,
And laugh as loud as any Lords on earth.

Mr. Seward was the poet that so amused Horace Walpole
by his frugality as an elegist, for having written an anticipatory memorial poem on a young and noble pupil who was
given up by the doctors, when the doomed man had the
tactlessness to recover he altered the name and used it for
some one else.

Miss Seward's opinion of her father's verse was high. In
some lines beginning—

    Source of my Life and all its joys
    That from a cultured mind arise,

she says that his—

    Silver lyre's harmonious sound
    Made lovely Lichfield classic ground.

The footnote that accompanied the invocation runs
thus: "Source of my life—Rev. Thomas Seward, Canon of
Lichfield. In conjunction with Mr. Simpson, he published
in 1751, an approved Edition of Beaumont and Fletcher's
Plays, with critical notes of much ingenuity. The excellent
preface was entirely his. His Female Right to Literature,
published in the second volume of the first edition of Dodsley's
Miscellany, has been much and justly celebrated. That
same volume, p. 302, contains Mr. Seward's Verses on
Shakespeare's monument at Stratford-upon-Avon. They
do not yield, either in spirit, or beauty, to any panegyric on
that great poet, which has been given by our noblest Bards.
In the subsequent editions of that Miscellany, there is an
idiot alteration in that poem, made by some man, who
thought a completer rhyme a good atonement for grossly
injuring the sense:—
The editor chose to print Swan Swain, at the expense of all consistency in the metaphor."

Of Mr. Seward's personality little is known. He is described by Walpole as a very learned man, but from an anecdote of him that the same writer tells he would seem to have been not very imaginative. He is said to have been the original of the Canon in a dull and rather coarse novel by Richard Graves (author of The Spiritual Quixote) called Columella, but as a piece of character-drawing that is not worth considering. Johnson described him to Boswell in these terms: "Sir, his ambition is to be a fine talker; so he goes to Buxton, and such places, where he may find companies to listen to him. And, Sir, he is a valetudinarian, one of those who are always minding themselves. I do not know a more disagreeable character than a valetudinarian, who thinks he may do anything that is for his ease, and indulges himself in the grossest freedoms. Sir, he brings himself to the state of a hog in a styte." Discounting the Sage's censure a little, we may suppose Mr. Seward to have accepted his ill-health with some of the composure of a sedentary scholar in a comfortable house.

Dr. Darwin grouped Johnson and Mr. Seward in an epigram:

\begin{verbatim}
From Lichfield famed two giant critics come,
Tremble, ye Poets! hear them! "Fee, Fo, Fum!"
By Seward's arms the mangled Beaumont bled,
And Johnson grinds poor Shakespeare's bones for bread.
\end{verbatim}

One of Boswell's descriptions of the Canon is that of a "genteel, well-bred, dignified clergyman". On a later occasion he found him in bed, "drest in his black gown, with a white flannel night-gown above it; so that he looked like a Dominican friar". He was, however, "good-humoured
and polite, and under his roof my reception was very pleasing”.

Miss Seward's references to her father, whom she seems to have idolised, are not illuminating, for they bear chiefly upon his escapes from the grave. She met, in 1796, a venerable nonagenarian named Jebb, who in his anecdotes of Mr. Seward thus described him: “I remember your father a sprightly bachelor.—I travelled down from London with him, when he went to take possession of the living of Eyam. He was a lovely man, of a fine person and frank communicative spirit. Soon after that period, he married a beautiful young Lady, your mother, Madam. Mr. Seward, as you know, had travelled, and spoke admirably of the customs and manners of foreign nations.” “I wept with pleasure,” Miss Seward adds, “at this testimony of respect, this justice to my father's memory, from a character thus venerable.”

Miss Seward was born on 12th December, 1742, and baptised Anne on 24th December. Anna was her own translation of Anne into Sewardese. To her youthful sentimental friends (and in later life to a few special intimates) she was Julia, but to the family Nancy. Families can always adjust these things.

That Eyam, where Nancy spent her childhood, is among the Dukeries is a circumstance which gave Miss Seward no pain to remember. She writes in one of her letters, to Mr. Repton, the landscape-gardener: “Chatsworth is my native soil—the first scene of rural grandeur that met my infant eyes. It is only five miles distant from the village in which we lived during my childhood. With my father's friend, the then clergyman of Edengor, and afterwards Dean of Rapho in Ireland, we used to pass a frequent week, and the splendours of the Chatsworth scenery gratified my young admiration, beneath morning, noon-tide, and evening suns. I soon discerned capabilities in the magnificent situation of
THE REV. THOMAS SEWARD
AFTER THE PAINTING BY WRIGHT OF DERBY
which the possessor had not, nor has yet, availed himself; and I exult that the genius of the groves resigns his wand to your guidance. That forced and formal cascade, in which the sullen waters take their measured leaps, always offended me. If the penurious Naiad suffers not their descent to be more than temporary, surely they might yet be allowed to strike the eye with transient sublimity, and roar adown the mountain over craggy fragments, and flash through intercepting bushes."

In the *British Lady's Magazine* I find this testimony to the Cygnet's precocity: "The mind of Miss Seward was early imbied with the vivid and sublime imagery of Milton, and she lisped 'L'Allegro' and 'Il Penseroso' when only in her third year".

"We have been informed," says another authority, in the *European Magazine* for April, 1782, "by a lady who knew her in her infancy, when the family lived at Eyam, in Derbyshire, and who used to walk out with her on a summer's evening, that when she was not more than five years old, in the midst of that childish playfulness with which she bounded amongst the rocks and over the Alpine heights of her native mountains, she would frequently stop, and with eyes swimming in delight, and an air of the most animated enthusiasm, repeat poetical passages from her memory, and apply them to every smiling, or awful grace of prospect which met her young and wandering attention. To her, therefore, we may apply those beautiful lines of Gray:—

``
And oft before her infant eyes would run
Such forms as glitter'd in the muses ray.
"

"She put several of the Psalms into verse at nine years old; and in her tenth year, her father having promised her half a crown if she would produce him a copy of verses upon the first fine day of a stormy spring, she earned her reward
THE CYGNET'S FIRST NOTES

in a few hours, by writing twenty-five lines upon the subject—that first four of them ran thus:—

Fairest quarter of the year,  
Dost thou then at last appear,  
Clad in this thy golden dress,  
Bright presage of happiness?

We may, surely, without partiality, considering her youth, pronounce that these lines presaged a poetic summer, whose flowers and fruits should not be crude or immature."

Thus was the Swan of Lichfield started upon what she would have called, and in fact often did call, her Aonian career.

Before we look at any more of her juvenile verse, let me interpolate an incident of Nancy Seward's thirteenth year contained in a letter written in 1789, in which we get a glimpse not only of Miss Seward as a girl (together with the secret of her later plumpness), but also a glimpse of Miss Seward in one of her less stilted and robust moments, indicating that if she had given her mind to social satire or quizzical excursions she might have done excellent work:

"I have," she writes, "this morning seen a very old acquaintance, unbeheld since my thirteenth year. I believe you know him: that shadow of a shade, Sir G. C. His figure is not an atom more formidable than in those my heedless and very youthful years, when, about seven years older than myself, the sight of him, and his tiny brother, dispersed my father's apprehensions about my accepting their mother's invitation to pass a month with her at the old family seat at B——n;—apprehensions which had arisen from her odd declaration that she hoped her sons would be men of gallantry and intrigue.

"'Ah, ah!' said my father, seeing them alight with their mamma, from the coach, 'what have we here? these Cold-brands the giants! these same mighty men!'—In the name
of chastity let the girl go. If she can be in danger from such heroes, she must be infinitely too seductive to escape by any possible restraints parental prudence can impose.’

‘I, who had been educated in the strictest temperance of diet, and who had run about the fields in the bounding vigour of health, and with the gay hopes of dawning womanhood, was yet charmed with the novel ideas of B—luxuries, and of bowling thither in a coach and four, with two out-riders.

‘Deuce take my Eveish desire of rambling from my pleasant home, and healthy deprivations. Mrs. C—fed me up in that fatal month, like a porket, with chocolate, drank in bed at eight; a nap till ten; tea and hot-rolls at eleven; pease soup at one; a luxurious dinner at four; and an hot and splendid supper at midnight—the day-light intervals filled up with slow airings in the old coach, along the dusty roads, for it was in the heats of a blazing summer; and with lying on a couch, picking honesty for madam’s flower-pots, without any danger of molestation from her puny sons. I wanted to read to her: ‘No child, I detest reading’.—I begged permission to walk about the gardens; no, that would spoil my complexion; to pursue my needleworks in her presence; no, that was vulgar. You will imagine how soon I sickened of the joyless luxury, and unsocial grandeur, for they visited but little with the neighbourhood families, who were too rational to please, or be pleased with the fine town-lady, who professed to think the months of country-residence worse than annihilation.

‘Alas! my month of vegetation was pledged, and during its oppressive progress, the change of diet, and total want of exercise, gave my constitution its first propensity to plumpness, which, to my regret, no future temperance, or resumed activity, could subdue.—Till this luckless excursion I was light as a wood-nymph.’
Mrs. Seward did not at all share her husband's interest in her daughter's attempts at poetry, and did her best to discourage them. But these maternal efforts were rendered useless by friends of the family, who did not spare their inflammatory praise. Throughout her life indeed Miss Seward was the victim of foolish praise; but the ironical stars, who arrange these matters with skill and symmetry, saw to it that throughout her life others also were the victims of the foolish praises uttered by herself. Before, however, she was of age to do much harm in this way her own doom had, I fear, been sealed. Self-esteem, especially perhaps in a cathedral city, can take deep root very early.

"Such," says the British Lady's Magazine, "was the impression her little fugitive pieces made on the minds of those into whose hands they chanced to fall, that a gentleman of some genius and erudition, conceiving them superior to the abilities of a girl under sixteen, and suspecting them to be the production of her father, took an opportunity of calling when he knew Mr. Seward was from home, and interrogating her. After discoursing some time on literary subjects, he observed that some doubts were entertained whether she was really the author of the various verses attributed to her, as they so much surpassed what could possibly be expected from so young a lady, and wished she would enable him to maintain their authenticity, by immediately writing a little poem on any subject. He then wrote the first stanza of the following and requested her to complete it:—

\begin{quote}
To mark how fair the primrose blows,
How soft the feathered muses sing,
My wandering step had press'd the dews,
My soul, enraptur'd, hail'd the spring."
\end{quote}

This gentleman, it may be said at once, was Dr. Erasmus Darwin. The gifted Anna accepted the challenge, and the following stanzas resulted:—
THE CHALLENGE ACCEPTED

But in an evil hour I stray'd,
   Since, from a yew tree's cleaving side,
Issued a pale disdainful maid;
   No good to me she did betide.

A squalid, sickly, tasteless dame,
   Of false incongruous pride the child;
She lights her innovating flame,
   And scornful sports her fancies wild.

CAPRICE her name.—Disdain (said she)
   To sail along the common tide;
But launch upon the wider sea,
   While I thy towering bark shall guide.

Alas! what notice canst thou claim,
   Condemning what has no one's laud?
Be thine a nicer, subtler flame,
   To blame what all the world applaud!

She ceas'd—but still my ears retain'd
   The deep vibration of her lays,
And, in her magic fetters chain'd,
   She guides my censure and my praise.

Hence he, who, on seraphic wings,
   Soar'd high above the starry spheres;
And, heaven-inspired, enraptured sings
   Seraphic strains to mortal ears.

Impell'd by her vain whims, I tried
   To veil his bright meridian rays;
And fain I would, ah! strange the pride!
   From Milton's temples snatch the bays.

"When," the British Lady's Magazine adds, "the gentleman called the next morning, and saw the completion of the task, he was too well convinced of the justice of the sarcasm it contained, and too much astonished at the brilliancy of style in which the deserved satire was conveyed, not to excuse the one and admire the other; nor did he from that moment entertain the least doubt of the young lady's great literary abilities."

We may think what we like of the satire and the brilliancy; but the fact remains that Miss Seward even at that
early age was mapping out for herself a career which she did
her best to follow. Her passion for criticism and her attempt
to be always lofty in language are both foreshadowed here.
Never again did she call a spade a spade.

After this Mr. Seward, however, also joined willingly in
discouraging his daughter, Dr. Darwin, she informs us,
having "unluckily" told the Canon that his daughter's verses
were better than his: "a piece of arch injustice to my father's
muse which disgusted him with mine". "Thus repressed,"
wrote her cousin, Mr. White, in 1797, "she cast away,
during some years, her own poetic lyre, or at least awakened
it only at short and seldom-returning intervals, devoting
much of her time to fancied needleworks, and the gay
amusements of her juvenile companions. Irrestrainable,
however, was the ardour she felt to peruse, with discriminating
attention, the writings of our finest poets."
CHAPTER III

ANNA SEWARD, SARAH SEWARD AND THE TENDER PASSION

The juvenile letters—A female ideal—Mr. Porter woos Sarah Seward—
A good letter—Family life and the justification of Miss Austen—The death
of Sarah Seward—A vision—Enter Honora Sneyd—Anna Seward's lovers
—Mr. Taylor—Cornet Vyse—Misunderstandings—Colonel Taylor's infatua-
tion—Advice to a friend—Miss Austen justified again.

Our knowledge of Miss Seward's early life comes chiefly
from the magazines from which I have quoted and
from the juvenile letters which are placed before her Poetical
Works. These letters, written when she was about twenty,
are very little less affected than those of her later life: the
Swan sprang from the egg almost fully fledged; but here and
there they have a sprightliness which afterwards she steadily
suppressed. Whatever she may have been in private con-
versation—and there is reason to believe that she talked
well and gaily—Miss Seward was true to the belief that the
first duty of the self-conscious pen is to be serious if not
melancholy. She cultivated all her life a wistful backward
look. If one did not know better one would think of her as
sitting for ever by an urn beneath a willow. It was a com-
mon female pose in those days, and indeed has not so long
gone out. But it is obsolete now. Hockey . . . .

The best of the juvenile letters is a shrewd and amusing
description of the arrival in the Seward family circle in the
year 1764 of Mr. Porter of Leghorn, Dr. Johnson's step-
son-in-law and the accepted suitor of the hand of Sarah
Seward, Anna's younger sister. The letter was written to a girl friend of a sensibility equal, I should guess, to Anna's own. Her age at the time was twenty-one. "At last he is here,—this brother elect!—We had heard of his being arrived in London a week before; but he fixed not with his sister the period at which she would see him, mentioning business that might detain him more than a fortnight.

"My mother had engaged half Lichfield to play at cards with her on Wednesday se'nnight. About one o'clock that day, Mrs. [Lucy] Porter sent to inform us, that her brother was that instant arrived, and would accompany her hither to tea. She was one of the party engaged here, so neither of them could be ignorant that, upon this plan, the first interview must be witnessed by twenty pair of curious eyes. But it was not for us to make that an objection. Unluckily, Mrs. Porter's recommendation had transpired, and was become a card-table theme. Nothing can be a secret if my father is to know it, so frank are his communications. We had been unpleasantly conscious of this publicity.

"On the message being delivered, sweet Sarah's serenity became considerably discomposed during a few minutes. 'Some natural tears she dropt;,' but soon smiled them away. The elements seemed in unison with her feelings; for the sun was just then looking mildly through one of those vernal showers in which the present April has been so rich. Look, love, said I, that calm and gilded rain promises flowers and fruits in abundance; may those kindred tears prepare thy mind, as that shower prepares the earth, for the flowers and fruits of wedded happiness!

"I stood by her toilet while she dressed. It was with no particular attention. If she was longer about that operation than usual, it was from absence, not from solicitude. She sighed often; and once or twice exclaimed,—'Ah! Heaven!' in a pensive and languid tone, and with an
emphatic shake of the head, as she put on her light hat and ribbons.

"'Bless me!' said I, 'one would think thou wert adorning a victim, and not a mistress. If that idea has passed across thy mind, prithee, put a stop to this business at once!—Study a pretty harangue of dismissal, full of esteem, wayward heart, and so forth.'

"Behold us then in the drawing-room. Everybody arrived, except the most interesting among the guests.—A loud rap at the hall door! A deep carmine spread over my Sarah's cheek, not generally crimson.

That cheek, a stranger to the rose,
That best in ruddy milk-maids glows;
The courtier lily opens there,
With all that's soft, and all that's fair.

Restrained smiles pursed up the face of many a waning virgin of the company, till it looked like a thin pikelet, half toasted.

"The drawing-room door opens!—and in rustles, in all the pomp of blue and white tissue and Brussels lace, and with the most satisfied air, our honest friend, Mrs. Porter, led by the intended,—a thin, pale personage, somewhat below the middle height, with rather too much stoop in the shoulders, and a little more withered, by Italian suns, than are our English sober bachelors, after an elapse of only forty years, in a black velvet coat, and a waistcoat richly embroidered with coloured flowers upon gold tissue; a bag wig, in crimp buckle, powdered white as the new-shorn fleece.

"An unfortunate idea of a mountebank doctor, produced by the black velvet coat and gold waistcoat, gave me some difficulty in managing my risible muscles.

"Mr. Porter's features are not irregular; his teeth very fine, though in a mouth which, being rather concave,
convex, seldom shews them, and he looks extremely clean. The great desideratum, perceived at first view, is the air of a gentleman, which I have often seen liberally and gracefully diffused about some of our English merchants. It was here in vain to look for it; neither did the tone of his voice, in speaking, please me. These are, in my estimation, most important personalities; mind having so much to do in producing the one, and in harmonizing the other.

“You know the Lichfield young women do not play at cards. Six or seven of us were loitering at the windows and round the card-tables,—expectation too busy with us for us to be busy with our needles. The beau was presented by his sister to every one in turn, and judiciously made no particular address to my sister. He said, gallantly enough, that he had pleasure in seeing his native country the richest in beauty of any nation through whose cities he had passed.

“Our glowing Nannette was there, with her large and languishing hazel eyes, warm cheek, and the tender fascination of her smile. Eliza W——, in all her aquiline beauty, and with that air of grandeur, though hardly yet sixteen, whose form so often reminds me of a passage in Ossian: ‘Lovely, with her raven hair, is the white-bosomed daughter of Sorglan’. She also, whose charms are in their summer ripeness, whose name seems to have been prophetic of her seldom-equalled beauty, the celebrated Helen White; yet has her cast of countenance more of Raphael’s Madonna, than of that less-chastened loveliness with which imagination invests the faithless wife of Menelaus.

“Miss A—— also was in the group, of shape correct, and of air sprightly, with my sister, the fair bride-elect, whose form is so light and elegant, whose countenance has so much modest intelligence, and, by her side, Honora, ‘fresh and beautiful as the young day-star, when he bathes his fair beams in the dews of spring’. Often, when Mr. Porter’s
attention was otherwise engaged, she looked up in my sister's face with eyes moistened by solicitous tenderness.

"This dear child will not live; I am perpetually fearing it, notwithstanding the clear health which crimsons her cheek and glitters in her eyes. Such an early expansion of intelligence and sensibility partakes too much of the angelic, too little of the mortal nature, to tarry long in these low abodes of frailty and of pain, where the harshness of authority, and the impenetrability of selfishness, with the worse mischiefs of pride and envy, so frequently agitate by their storms, and chill by their damps, the more ingenuous and purer spirits, scattered, not profusely, over the earth.

"This child seems angel before she is woman; how consummate shall she be if she should be woman before she is actually angel! What delight must then result to me from the consciousness that my sister and myself have been instrumental in the cultivation of talents and of virtues, in which the imagination, the sensibility, and warm disdain of every grovelling propensity, which are, I flatter myself, characteristic of one monitress, shall be united with the sweetness, the unerring discretion, and self-command of the other! She will, by all those who know how to appreciate excellence, be acknowledged, like Miranda, 'to have been formed of every creature's best'.

"But how I have wandered from a subject, certainly more important to me at present, even than all the (perhaps) flattering promises which the future makes in the glance, the tear, the smile of my Honora! Yet it is one thing to be important to one's feelings, and another to bear them away on the light wings of heart-expanding Hope. But descend, thou excursive pen, from these visionary altitudes, upon the firm, though not flowery ground, of this projected marriage!

"After tea, Mr. Porter talked and attended chiefly to me. Declining cards, and my father and mother engaged
in them, it became a duty of politeness to show attention to some of the family he came to visit. It must have distressed my sister to have been singled out for this purpose. Yet, so prone are folk to gather opinions, as they gather flowers, from the surface, instead of implanting them in their minds, by taking them up from the roots, that I saw in the half-suppressed, but significant smiles of our guests, that they thought the elder sister likely to bear away the Hymeneal wreath from the milder brow of the appointed fair-one.

"Our party broke up at nine. Mr. and Mrs. Porter supped, by engagement, with their relation, Mr. White. A few of my mother's intimates, with our beauteous Helen, staid supper here. The instant the brother and sister were decamped, everybody spoke at once, and all in jocose invective upon your poor friend's mischievous eyes, as they called them.

"Sarah, smiling, claimed of me the promise I had asked of her, viz., that she might accompany me into Italy. She claimed it with a rising blush, and a tremulous motion in the eye-lid, visible only to my searching glance, 'which knows each line and trick of her sweet countenance'; but to that glance it discovered a little latent chagrin, so natural to the delicacy of virgin-pride.

"Ah! sweet one, thought I, thou wilt never go into Italy under the Porter auspices, if thou goest not a principal of the party. However, you may be sure no such premature and needless assertion escaped my lip; yet, vexed at an undiscerning idea of such apparently general influence, I warmly declaimed upon its absurdity.

"Honora gazed upon me while I was speaking, with eyes which bore animated assent to my protest, and then turned them, with a smile of scorn, upon the group, who were interrupting me with laughing, but earnest and clamorous dissentient. Throwing my arms round Honora's neck, and
kissing her, I exclaimed, ‘Here is this child looking down upon you all as the idlest dupes existing, to a style of behaviour which, being otherwise, the man must have had too coarse a mind for the endurance of a woman of delicacy’. Helen vowed she would find it all out at her uncle W——’s. We shall know, added she, what our Italian prince thinks of these rival sisters. ‘Rival!’ I could have beat her.

“Conceive this provoking Helen, rushing in as we were at breakfast, the ensuing day, her fine face all in a glow, her hands spread: ‘It is verily, and even so!—this irresistible madame Anne! Sarah must wear the willow, but I think it will not be with a very aching heart.’ ‘No, indeed!’ said the sweet maid, with a look of blended, or rather instantaneously changing sensation, the result of which was ineffable. It was a gleam of disdain, immediately softening into the most affectionate sweetness, as her eyes remained fixed on me.

“I asked Helen on what grounds she built her mighty probable conclusion. ‘My uncle W——,’ replied she, ‘told me he had asked Mr. Porter how he liked Mr. and Mrs. Seward?’ ‘Extremely!’ ‘And Miss Seward?’ ‘I think her charming.’ (And Helen ran on in a string of hyperbole which I have no inclination to repeat.) ‘The youngest?’—‘She seems a modest, pleasing young woman.’

“‘Now, for all this,’ cried out Honora, ‘I don’t believe he likes Nancy best.’ I called her wiser than the aged, and grew so saucy to my mother, that she looked grave, and took her pinch of snuff first at one nostril, and then at the other, with swift and angry energy, and her eyes began to grow dark and to flash. ‘Tis an odd peculiarity; but the balls of my mother’s eyes change from brown into black, when she feels either indignation or bodily pain.

“Reports of this imaginary preference of the eldest sister spread rapidly through our little city; and, before night, it
was asserted that he had made proposals in form to Miss Seward.

"Messages of inquiry concerning our healths only passed between us and the Porters through the course of that day; but, at eleven the next morning, the brother and sister called upon us to go with them to Mrs. Porter's new house, just built, but not yet inhabited. He looked much better; the mountebank had vanished with the black velvet. Helen joined our party. Mr. Porter's whole attentions were devoted to Sarah; and Honora and I exulted not a little over Helen about her prediction. He took an opportunity of frankly offering his hand and heart to her acceptance, ere we reached home, where he passed the remainder of the day with us.

"The general misconstruction of his civility to me had been much in his favour. Hence maiden-pride was busy with its whisper, that now rejection, on her part, would be deemed dislike on his, and preference of another. So this circumstance acted as a powerful counterpoise to the quack-doctor impression given by the black velvet and fine waistcoat, which I had not been able to forbear imparting to her. She owned her heart had recoiled a little from the unusual tout-ensemble produced by those habiliments. How much better did he look in his brown coat!

"Behold him an accepted lover! and a very pressing one. He wants to hurry the nuptials, saying he must be in Italy before winter. I am afraid I see about him an impolite impatience of contradiction; a proud, not an enamoured jealousy, and a considerable degree of peevishness. Heaven protect my sweet Sarah's peace!

"When people are tolerably happy, how dangerous is a material change in the habits of life! Ah! what halcyon days have this dear girl and I passed with our little Honora, beneath the fair spires of tranquil Lichfield! How immaterial
were the clouds of an horizon so azure! Some violence of temper, and vapourish despondency, from causes provokingly trivial, on my mother's part, some absurdities on my father's; yet, left so much to ourselves, and perfectly aware of the value of time, how interesting have been our employments, how animated our pleasures!

"You enquire after the duration of my enfranchisement from the fetters of love. My heart has not resumed them; but, indeed, all its sensations have, of late, been absorbed in my sister's impending destiny.

"The continual disgust you express to the joyless crowds and dissipation of London, is worthy of an ingenuous mind, to which domestic pleasures are, above all others, dear. Remember you have a relation in Lichfield, who would be happy to receive you into her family.

"In the dread of disappointment, I hardly dare trust myself with an idea so agreeable, which flatters me with seeing you every day, and often all the day, when I am in England.

"In England!—Ah! now that my continental vision approaches its realization, I begin to tremble at the thought how large a tract of seas and shores, mountains and plains, must shortly divide me from the home of my youth!—from my parents!—from my dear Honora!—That, during two long years, I shall not see the rising sun slant his beams into the lake of Stow Valley, or change into pale gold the stone of the cathedral turrets. Yet, though tempted, like the swallows, into warmer climates afar off, my wings, any more than theirs, will not be cropt. I can fly back again when I please. But Sarah, my dear Sarah! she must be borne back by permission, and in a cage! a golden one, 'tis true, but still a cage.

"However, if she enters it, most voluntary will be that entrance. After my mother, good literal being, had ceased
her expressions of wonder that he could so distinguish her Anna, yet like her Sarah best, she desired she would reject Mr. Porter’s addresses, if they were not perfectly agreeable to her. She sent for my father, and desired him to join her in this request, which he did willingly and earnestly; and since, on some alarming appearances of a fretful and despotic disposition, they have warmly and solemnly adjured her to break off the affair. But, alas! she is become attached, and partial to him in the extreme.

“By this generous adjuration, our parents have proved themselves really parents, making their child’s happiness their first object. Whenever it is otherwise, a miserable proof is exhibited of human depravity.

“Adieu! adieu!—This Hymeneal gale begins to blow cold and ungenial upon my once warm hopes, and ‘all their fires grow pale.’”

To learn that that letter was not published to the world until 1810, or several years after Sense and Sensibility and Pride and Prejudice were written, is to appreciate still more fully the faithful genius of Miss Austen.

Mr. Porter’s romance was destined to end abruptly and tragically: for a day or so before the wedding-day Sarah Seward died; and though he is said to have transferred his attentions—after, I am sure, a fitting interval—to the sorrowing sister, it was in vain, and the Bear of Lichfield (as, to be in the fashion, we may here call Dr. Johnson) never became her stepfather-in-law. Nor did Miss Seward ever get to Italy, or indeed leave England at all—to the eternal impoverishment of English prose.

Such a melancholy event as Sarah Seward’s untimely death could not fail to inspire the youthful poetess’s muse, and The Visions, an Elegy resulted—the first poem in the three-volume edition. In this poem two shades appear to the poet at the tomb of the unfortunate girl, who is more
HONORA'S DESTINY

poetically called Alinda. One adjures her to bid a long farewell to the joys of life; the other offers her the company of "two sister handmaids of the will divine," whose duty it is to bring comfort to her sorrowing mind "and warmly renovate its fainting powers"—Patience and Cheerfulness. The poet determines to do her best, and in the closing stanza, turns for assistance to her new sister, Honora Sneyd:—

And young Honora, in each rising charm
Of form and mind, the pious task shall aid;
O! like their loved Alinda, soft and warm,
Gloves this transplanted flower that decks their shade.

Scarce o'er her head are thirteen summers flown,
Yet clear intelligence, unswerving truth,
And every soothing sympathy, have thrown
Meridian lustre o'er her morn of youth.

And dost thou stretch, dear maid, those gentle arms,
Smile through thy tears, in pity's hallow'd guile?
Shield me, my love, from woes o'erwhelming harms,
Thy tears are balm, and peace is in thy smile.

Thy tender accents, on my grief-chill'd soul
Fall, like the vernal breath on wintry bowers,
When, from the fleecy clouds, that lightly roll,
Silent and mild descend the sunny showers.

And since in Thee, to every worth alive,
The sacred energies of Friendship burn,
Thy love, my dear Honora, shall revive
The joys that faded o'er Alinda's urn.

Honora was at that time a child of twelve or so, who upon the death of her mother was placed by her father in Mrs. Seward's charge and brought up by her with every mark of affection. She remained in the family until her marriage in 1773, the idol of Anna Seward, whose power of expending love upon others was boundless. At some shrine or other she had to adore. For although she exacted homage and affection from others it was never done selfishly. She gave too. All her life she gave.

After making every allowance for her tendency in her poetry and letters to idealise the dead and exaggerate the
tender ecstasies of the past—a kind of sentimental fidelity which in those days almost amounted to poetry, or at any rate by the exercise of which quite a decent reputation as a poet could be won—we must believe that Miss Seward's feelings for her sister and Honora, both of whom died young, remained deep and true to the end: in the case of Honora almost passionately so.

To Honora's crowded emotional hours we shall come later; but in the death of Sarah Seward was the beginning of that worship of her which Anna carried to the grave.

Although the Swan lived and died a spinster, yet from the days of her sister Sarah's, and later, Honora Sneyd's romance, she never ceased to take the liveliest interest in the affairs and marriages of others. But it was not for lack of falling in love that she remained single. For that she herself succumbed early to Cupid's dart (as she would have said) we know from her own words in a letter written many years later to the wife of one of her lost lovers; that she did so in her thirties we know from Charles Darwin's memoir of his grandfather; and that she did so in later life we know from a hundred signs quite as eloquent as words in many of her letters, and also from her last will and testament. The loves of her youth were two young soldiers named Taylor and Vyse; the love of her thirties was Erasmus Darwin, or at any rate, if he were not exactly her love, her desire to be the second Mrs. Erasmus Darwin was sincere; while the love of her middle age and maturity was John Saville, the singer. Whether she would have been happier as Mrs. Vyse, Mrs. Taylor, Mrs. Darwin or Mrs. Saville is another matter. I am inclined to fancy not. I think Miss Seward was happiest alone. To use a favourite word of her own, she would not have liked her authority to be "dividual".

I quote largely from the letter to Mrs. Taylor, because it is one of the best that Miss Seward wrote. It is also inter-
estling as being written by an old love many years after, to the woman who had supplanted her—not a common form of epistle at all. Mrs. Taylor, it seemed (and considering that she was very unhappy with her husband, it was not unnatural), wished to meet Miss Seward in person. This was in 1796. Miss Seward replied thus:—

"You are under a spell, of strange potency, respecting me. It is enough to make me dread our meeting, aware as I am of the consequences of high-raised expectations;—that it is with them as with the sea,

The higher their full tides impetuous flow,
The farther back again they ebbing go,

when experience banishes the moon-struck influence.

"I cannot endure to see a creature, so imperfect as myself, invested with attractions and excellencies to which I have no pretence. Perfectly do I feel the ground on which I stand. I know that I have talents, and some good qualities; that I am ingenuous; that my mind is neither stained nor embittered by envy; that I detest injustice, and am grateful for every proof of affection. I can believe what I am told about my countenance expressing the feelings of my heart; but I have no charms, no grace, no elegance of form or deportment. If, in youth, my complexion was clear, glowing, and animated; if my features were agreeable, though not regular, they have been the victims of time. When tolerably well, the cheerfulness of my temper is unclouded,—but beneath the pressure of disease, I am weakly dejected. I wish to be obliging; yet, if my manners are not rustic, there is about me an hereditary absence, which always did, and always must prevent their taking the polish of perfect good breeding; and, to balance my tolerable properties, there is frequent indiscretion from an excess of frankness, and from native and yet unconquered impetuosity of temper;—and fortitude, alas! I almost wholly want.
As to an actual picture, which you express so fervent a desire to possess, it was always my resolve never to sit for one between the periods of forty and sixty, if I should live to attain the latter. A portrait, where any portion of youthful appearance can be preserved, may be pleasing, and it may be interesting in the mellow tints of venerable age; but the hardness of middle life is detestable on canvas, or ivory.

"I sat for a miniature to Smart, twenty-five years ago. He was esteemed eminent, and I sat to Miers six years after, of whom Mr. Hayley has beautifully and justly said, in his poetic Epistles on Painting,

His magic pencil, in its narrow space,
Pours the full portion of uninjur'd grace.

Miers took immense pains with my picture; he made it a very fine one, but he did not make it like; and Smart's had still less resemblance. Both of them were long since given away.

"Ten years ago, Romney painted me nearly at full length. [See the frontispiece.] It is a graceful, expressive portrait, and some people think it like, others deny the resemblance. Several of my old friends have made the same request which you, with so much flattering earnestness, express. What I have refused in this the interdicted period to old friends, I cannot, with any shadow of justice, grant to a new one. Suffer, I entreat you, circumstances so imperious to expiate a refusal which, without them, would be churlish.

"There is no enduring that you should be at the trouble of so circuitous and laborious an inquiry after my health. If you will accept, once in three months, a few brief lines on that subject from myself, or from one of my friends here, they shall be yours. I grieve that prior engagements, and the rapid flight of time, deprive me of ampler correspondence with one so kind to me. I was unfortunate in being absent from Lichfield when, in the summer 1785, you were
ANNA SEWARD
AFTER THE PAINTING BY KETTLE, 1762

"I keep the one by poor Kettle, for which you know I sat at nineteen, as a foil to Titiano's, (the frontispiece to this volume), and am diverted with people taking it for my mother's picture, after they looked at Romney's."—

Mrs Seward
here, else you would have honoured me with a visit, which must have broken the spell of your imagination. Spells are not good things for the mind. Illusions may be pleasurable, but we recollect them with something like shame when truth has dissolved the charms of Fancy.

"I wonder not that you are rallied upon the enthusiasm you so openly express about me. Surely you are the first female that ever fondly attached herself to the idea of a woman she never saw, to whose remembrance she fancies her beloved husband attached by an impression which, she says, he tells her is indelible.

"Colonel T—— had a grave and pensive cast of manners when I first knew him, in the flower of our mutual youth. Without doubt there is a marked congeniality in some of the circumstances of your and my destiny. To me as to you, Colonel T—— appeared interesting in that juvenile period, from a dignified seriousness, an air of refined attachment, not to a present but an absent object. His brother officers confirmed the idea which that shaded address, if I may so express myself, had excited, and named the late Lady Middleton, then Miss Georgiana Chadwick, as the lovely source of its pensiveness.

"I made an experiment upon his heart, as he will tell you, and own that I was not its first passion. I felt a wish to hear from himself the history of his mind, and to pour the balm of pity into the wounds of love. My experiment succeeded; the shock of jealousy was apparent. I did not like to see him suffer, and almost instantly told him that the intelligence was fabulous, and invented for a test of the truth of the report which had reached me. He ingenuously acknowledged that it was not unfounded, talked freely to me of his impression and of its hopeless nature. It was only in the latter part of many weeks' association that he gave me slight and transient hints of transferring attachment.
"The regiment then removing, we separated with tender, but not visibly impassioned regret. Two years after, in the winter 1764, we met accidentally in London, renewed our friendship, which soon became mutual, and acknowledged love; but in him so apparently reasonable and serene, as not once to inspire an idea that, if authority should break our engagement, his passion would prove unextinguishable. My father, on discovering, disapproved and dissolved it. I believed that so placid a lover would not suffer severely from the disappointment, nor once imagined that his attachment would be proof against time. This conviction extinguished that part of my own regard, which was more tender than esteem, and left my heart vacant to receive another impression more instant and enthusiastic than I had ever previously experienced. Its vivacity induced me to think that I had till then mistaken friendship for love. This happened the ensuing year, 1765. The inspirer was the present General, then Cornet V[yse], a native of Lichfield, but absent six years to receive a military education in France and at Dublin, where he was page to the Lord-Lieutenant. At that period he returned, with the united graces of early youth, the dignity of manhood, and with politeness which had the first polish. He was tall, and, in my eyes, extremely lovely. If my susceptibility of these attractions was culpable fickleness to Mr. T——, Mr. V——'s inconstancy to me avenged it at full.

"During three months, in which we were frequently together, V—— had appeared assiduously attentive, and ardently attached to me. His behaviour then suddenly altered from enamoured fervour to cool civility, bordering upon utter neglect.

"I believe this change resulted from higher views, excited from ambition, awakened by the remonstrance of a person whom he believed his friend, and who, I knew, was not mine.
THE SWAN IS JILTED

His father and sisters had observed our growing attachment with pleasure, and seemed to regret its dissolution.

"I felt, during a short time, tortured and wretched in the extreme; but I had pride, high spirits, intellectual resources, and fancied myself not born to be the victim of contemned affection. I resolved, however, not again to hope that I could be the object of lasting passion. I had proposals of marriage from several, whom my father wished me to approve; but such sort of overtures, not preceded by assiduous tenderness, and which expected to reap the harvest of love without having nursed its germs, suited not my native enthusiasm, nor were calculated to inspire it. I had known what it was to love, to all the excess of the sentiment; and the sweetness and vivacity of the impression, though obliterated by ingratitude, was not forgotten. My liberty seemed a thousand times preferable to the dispiriting fetters of an unimpassioned connexion.

"The changed V—— soon after deserting me, joined his regiment in Ireland, and staid there two years. On his return, he attached himself to one of my most intimate friends; a graceful but not beautiful young lady. Her fortune, in her own possession, exceeded my future prospects. Yes, to her he devoted his attentions, on whose bosom I had shed those mingled tears of indignation and lacerated tenderness which he had caused to flow.

"Their loves, however, nothing weakened my amity to her; they carried with them my best wishes to the altar, and I heard their nuptial peals without a sigh. She died in childbirth the next year. Her early fate excited my sorrow, and his sufferings my sympathy. I wrote a monody on her death. It has never been published, but may one day appear in a collection of my poems.

"General, then Captain V——, after the elapse of a few years, married the daughter of a man of rank, and high in
military command, and soon again became a widower. By the co-operation of his father-in-law's interest, with the distinguished gallantry of his own conduct, in the course of this disastrous war, he rose to the rank of General.

"Four years after parental authority had dissolved my engagements to Colonel T——, we again accidentally met in London. Imagine my feelings when he declared his unceasing affection, and told me that he had returned to England, with the hope that an acquisition to his fortune would induce my father to consent to our union! Conceive the shame of which I became susceptible, on finding myself so much surpassed in constancy! Never had Colonel T—— said, either with his lip or pen, that he could not become indifferent to me. Not one of his letters had ever breathed a tenth part of the enthusiastic partiality to me of which yours is so full.

"Yet, ah! how humiliating was my consciousness! I could not, on the instant, explain my sentiments; but I wrote to him, the next day, confessing the change in my heart respecting himself; but I forget whether pride did, or did not, withhold the circumstance which had produced it, and the acknowledgment that I had been, in my turn, forsaken.

"Here is a world of egotism——into which the retrospections of your letter has betrayed me. So intimately relating to him you love, perhaps it may not prove wearying."

Mrs. Taylor seems to have returned very generous replies to this letter, for three months later, in June, 1796, Miss Seward writes again thus, carrying the story a little farther:

"To certain incidents, mentioned in your last, I cannot be silent. Upon my solemn word of honour I did not find, nor ever knew, that Colonel T—— had lost, in the year 1770, the ring you mention, once my present; neither did I give away the locket with which he had presented me. It
HONORA’S MARRIAGE

is at this moment in my drawer. Totally unfounded, therefore, was his conviction on both those subjects; so also was the information he received of the gaiety with which I appeared in our little provincial world, the year preceding his marriage with you, &c., 1774.

"To account for the impossibility that this information could be true, it is necessary to go a few years back from the period at which he received it. When my attachment to General, then Cornet V——, sunk in the snow-drifts of his altered conduct, Honora Sneyd, educated in our family from five years old, was commencing woman, and only eight years younger than myself; more lovely, more amiable, more interesting, than any thing I ever saw in the female form. As a child, I had loved her with the extremest fondness. Death had deprived me of my beloved and only sister, in the bloom of her youth, who had shared with me the delightful task of instructing our angelic pupil; and, when disappointed love threw all the energies of my soul into the channel of friendship, Honora was its chief object. The charms of her society, when her advancing youth gave equality to our connection, made Lichfield an Edenic scene to me, from the year 1766 to 1771. Her father then recalled her to his own family, after having been fourteen years resident in ours. The domestic separation proved very grievous; but still she was in the same town; we were often together, and her heart was unchanged. Then it was that I wrote the little poem of my late collection, ‘Time Past’.

"In May, 1773, she married. Ah! how deeply was I a fellow-sufferer with Major André on this marriage!—but her attachment to him had never the tenderness of her friendship for me; it was a mere compound of gratitude and esteem, of which his letters show that he was always aware. We both lost her for ever. That form, the light of
my eyes, was divided from me for life by the Irish sea; and that heart, whose affection I prizd more than life, to me became indurated.

"Family discontents combined to increase the pressure of that bosom-woe. Another friend, scarcely less dear to me than Honora, was injured, was unhappy—and those misfortunes were of a nature that, though my sympathy might soothe, it could not remove them. By that depriva
tion, and by these regrets, were the precious established habits of my life broken, and the native gaiety of my spirit eternally eclipsed, however time might restore constitutional cheerfulness. If I did not renounce society, I avoided it as much as with civility I could. No sprightly parties did I promote, or, when I could help it, join, through the years 1773-4-5-6. How totally, therefore, was Colonel T——
misinformed!"

Before we quit the story of this early attachment there is one more letter I must quote—written in 1796, when Miss Seward was nearly fifty-four. Colonel and Mrs. Taylor, as I have said, were on very bad terms, a result due, in part, we are led to suppose, to his still cherishing a passion for his early love. But let me tell the story in a letter to another friend: "All you write on the subject of Colonel and Mrs. [Taylor] is beautiful. The picture the lady draws of her husband's mind in her letter, on which you comment, is so strangely, so extravagantly, and so darkly coloured, as to leave my experience and observation without the means of justifying it to nature and probability, by any approximation in the apparent feelings or conduct of others. It resembles nothing one knows, and nothing one has read of, except the Falkland of Caleb Williams.

"But there was a cause which, when revealed, fully accounts for the terrible gloom and sad dereliction of his spirit;—but that a disappointment in the enamoured affec-
tions, thirty-one years ago, in a man who had never, to their object, appeared a passionate lover; that it should operate, with unabating corrosiveness, through such an immense lapse of time!—that its bitterness should have resisted the tender attentions of a wife, younger and lovelier than her whom he had lost, and indurate his feelings against the enlivening power of filial attentions, even from objects to whose welfare he was sedulously attentive!—all this seemed to me so inconceivable, that I concluded Mrs. —— had nursed an enthusiastic fancy, which causelessly imputed to unextinguished passion for another object, a constitutional and morbid discontent of heart and temper:—but the strange manner of his attempted visit last June, vouches for the reality of this represented, this long delirium.

"He inquired for me at the door, and sent up his name, Lieutenant-Colonel ——. I was dressing. My man-servant brought his card up stairs. While he did that, my house-keeper, coming up the stairs from the kitchen, saw a gentleman whom she did not know, stand at the foot of the next flight of stairs, looking up them with earnest melancholy eyes. Perceiving her, he went back into the hall; and when the man brought my message to request his going into the parlour, and to say that I would be down immediately, lo! he had vanished.

"I found a letter from his lady on my return from my summer's excursion, in which she thus speaks of that attempt to see me, so strangely renounced in the instant of making it.

"Of Colonel ——'s flying visit to you in June, I knew not a syllable till I learnt it from your letter—which, on perusing, I exclaimed, Good Heaven! how could you leave the place without seeing Miss S—— at last, since she was at home! He replied, with much solemnity, "The momentary gratification must have been followed by regret
and pain, that would sufficiently have punished the temerity of attempting to see her at all. I had no sooner entered the house, than I became sensible of my perilous state of feeling, and fled with precipitation."

"Mrs. —— laments the abortion of this design, alleging reasons exactly similar to those you express, for wishing the renewal of our acquaintance. I regret it too, from a motive not acknowledged by either of you, though doubtless felt by both, viz., that it would have proved a spell-dissolving interview. He had then found in his Eloisa, that disenchanting change which St. Preux could not find in Mrs. Wolmar. An absence of ten and of thirty-one years are very different things. Small traces would have been perceived in me of that image so unhappily impressed on his mind, and which yet glows in the gay bloom of youth. If there is any reality in this described infatuation, and Colonel —— feels pain from it, why does he shun the infallible remedy—'the sensible and true avouch of his own eyes?'"

Let us now return to the sixties. Among the Juvenile Letters (if such an epithet can be applied to them) is one that was written to the unknown correspondent Emma soon after the termination of the affair of 1764. Emma, like a true friend, had also had an emotional experience. Mr. L—— had trifled with her heart, and the whole story had been confided to the unhappy yet resolute victim of Mr. T—— and Cornet V——. Strong from her own misfortunes Anna, or Julia, as she signed herself, was instant with advice. Having delivered her mind of some criticisms on Ossian, she gets to work: "And now let the objects of the imagination recede, and the affairs of the heart resume their place on my paper. Those of mine were sufficiently discussed in my last letter.

"The business of yours is much more interesting, because it is more full of hazard. I am in the quiet harbour of a
probably life-long absence from him to whose pilotism I had
resigned my sensibility on the dangerous sea of love; but
we kept, as you see, pretty near the coast, and the worst evil
I had to encounter, on a voyage which reason must deem a
fruitless one, was the pain of absence. Disappointment I
could not know, since no illusive Hymeneal hopes had hung
out false lights in my brain-built watch-tower. But, for you,
I fear the rocks and quicksands of an improsperous and
unequal marriage; a marriage of mental inequality, which
is the very worst sort.

"You start, and repeat what you said in your last, that
you do not think there is any strong attachment on either
side. He has not yet declared himself your lover; he has
‘only been attentive, respectful, insinuating!’

"Dangerous wretch!—For is he not a libertine? and do
we not know, from the destiny and feelings of one dear and
amiable friend, from those pensive smiles which so superfici-
ally cover an aching heart, how incompetent even the kind-
ness of a libertine husband to the happiness of a woman of
delicacy!

"A being of this order may temporarily assume that
softness of manners, which a very little observation would
teach him is necessary to subdue the heart of such a woman
as yourself; but he is incapable, after they have obtained
their purpose, of preserving this refined respect and engaging
tenderness. The habits of his life militate against them,
and those will resume all their wounding coarseness in the
bosom of security.

"If he should treat you, after marriage, with tolerable
kindness and good nature, it is the best you have reasonably
to expect. What counterpoise, in the scale of happiness, can
be formed by that best against the delights you must re-
nounce in the morning of your youth?—the bright prospects
of hope, whose animating charm is heightened by un-
certainty; and those precious hours from seventeen to twenty-one, which an intelligent young woman will employ in such a cultivation of her talents, as shall accomplish her for a companion to a man of sense and knowledge; for the momentous task of educating her children properly when she becomes a mother, and give her the pleasing power of diffusing the spirit of intellectual refinement wherever she goes, and of providing better resources against the lassitude of declining life, than can be supplied by that annihilator of ideas, the card-table?

"My dearest friend, take your resolution in time. Love is seldom to be subdued, except at its first onset; and every hour, by which you prolong your stay within eye-shot of the enemy, renders the victory more doubtful. Justly does Madame d'Enclos observe, that, 'in the amorous warfare, the Parthian exercise is the best discipline'.

"Determine, therefore, to quit Shrewsbury as soon as possible. London, however, is not the best place of retreat. An attached heart, in the absence of its object, may find that solitude in crowded rooms, and in the whirl of dissipation, which, in quiet though not absolute retirement, the attentions of friendship will, with industrious kindness, preclude; conscious that the solitude of abstracted musing presents fuel to the dangerous fires of hazardous or ineffectual love.

"Return to Lichfield to me for the remainder of the winter! We will banish all mention of Mr. L——, which is a much better method than abusing him. We will read ingenious authors, who shall rather give our minds new ideas from the stores of science and observation, than increase the susceptibility of our hearts. We will even venture to criticise, as well as admire those authors, since the brightest gem has some sullying vein, and since the sun itself has its spots.
"The little Honora, who recites with the most perfect justness, and whose comprehension is wonderful in such a child, shall read to us while we work, and so cultivate her own fast-springing talents, while she amuses and improves us.

"The winter evenings, thus beguiled, will not seem long. We shall not sigh for the viol and the harp to drown the noise of storms, which we shall not hear, or of the drops from the eaves, which we shall not count. . . .

"Yes! my dear Emma, we will employ ourselves from morn to midnight, and the idea of Mr. L. shall quickly fade away:

For mark'd I where the bolt of Cupid fell,
It fell upon a little western flower,
Before milk-white, now purple with Love's wound,
And maidens call it love in idleness.

"Adieu! adieu!"

Is not Miss Austen again justified?"
CHAPTER IV

"LOUISA"

INTO Miss Seward's verse it is unprofitable to look with any thoroughness. I quote a little here and there, as it comes naturally into the narrative; but that is all. It is enough, however, to show the reader that she fulfilled few if any of the standards by which we judge poetry to-day.

I am, however, tempted at this point to lay before the reader some extracts from Miss Seward's most popular poem "Louisa," because it was begun at the age of nineteen and it bears upon the tender passion.

"Louisa," described as a poetical novel in four epistles, was not only begun when its author was nineteen, but was intended for those readers who are always nineteen. It reeks of sentiment. It is an epic of sighs and tears and aching bosoms. In its preface the author says it had little chance to be popular; but she was wrong. It had every chance. "The poem [I quote her words] has little chance to be popular. A feeling heart, and a fondness for verse must unite to render it interesting. A feeling heart without a glowing imagination will be tired of the landscape-painting, somewhat luxuriantly interspersed. An imagination that glows, while the heart is frozen, has a propensity to fancy everything prosaic which is not imagery, and will probably yawn over the reasoning of these lovers, and sicken over their tenderness. If, however, this little work has the honour to interest and please the few, in whom the kind and sweet
affections are blended with poetic taste, the end for which it is published will be obtained."

The characters are Louisa, who is probably Anna herself at nineteen; Emma, her friend in Jamaica, and probably her friend also of the letter just quoted; Eugenio, Louisa's lover; Ernesto, Eugenio's father, and Emira, a bad woman. In the first letter Louisa tells Emma of the progress of her love and the disaster that had overtaken her. Eugenio was a friend of Lorenzo, her blooming brother, from Oxonia's towers,

Who sought [at the beginning of the long vacation] with tender haste his native bowers,

and came upon his sister teaching

the soft echoes of the neighbouring plains,
Milton's sweet lay, in Handel's matchless strains.

Here we see autobiography peeping out.

The brother and sister having embraced, Eugenio was introduced. This is Eugenio:—

O'er his fine form, and o'er his glowing face,
Youth's ripen'd bloom had shed its richest grace;
Tall as the pine, amidst inferior trees,
With all the bending osier'spliant ease.
O'er his fair brow, the fairer for their shade,
Locks of the warmest brown luxuriant play'd.
Blushing he bows!—and gentle awe supplies
Each flattering meaning to his downcast eyes;
Sweet, serious, tender, those blue eyes impart
A thousand dear sensations to the heart;
Mild as the evening star, whose shining ray
Soft in the unruflled water seems to play;
And when he speaks—not music's thrilling pow'r,
No, not the vocal mistress of the bow'r,
When slow she warbles from the blossom'd spray,
In liquid banishment, her evening lay,
Such soft insinuating sweetness knows,
As from that voice in melting accent flows!

Eugenio and Louisa were quickly betrothed, and happiness reigned. He had now left Oxonia's towers and was
destined for business in London. Poetically put the fact emerges thus:

Where Thames expands with freedom’s wealthy pride,
Attractive Commerce calls him to her tide;
As with firm step she runs along the strand,
And points to the tall ship, the distant land.
His rising interests on the call attend,
For with a father’s prosperous fate they blend.

Here begins the tragedy, for four months after Eugenio had left Louisa, his letters ceased. Louisa was distracted. Rumours reached her of another lady, and at length his marriage was announced in the public records.

Eugenio married!—Oh!—yon village bell,
That flings on the cold gale its mournful knell!
The solemn pause,—the loud repeated toll,
Calling the pale corse to its darksome goal,
Not plainer there the tale of death relate,
Than these detested words pronounce my fate!
Eugenio married, seals Louisa’s doom,
Her sure, though lingering passport to the tomb!

That is the first letter. In the next Eugenio informs Emma of the reasons which had caused his apparent perfidy. It seems that when riding one evening near his home in Wales, thinking only of his Louisa, he heard cries of distress and hastened to the rescue. The events that quickly followed must be told in verse:

On fibrous oaks, that roughen all the ground,
My steed’s fleet hoofs with hollow noise resound;
And, doubled by the echoes from the caves,
Appal a guilty band of desperate slaves;
For soon, in ruthless, felon-gripe, I found
A beauteous female, screaming on the ground;
Dragged from her horse, that grazed unconscious near,
Her tresses torn, and frantic with her fear.
Two liveried youths, attendant on the maid,
At the first onset in that gloomy glade,
Had, or seduced by gold, or winged by dread,
From danger, and from duty, coward fled.
Alarm’d, the villains quit their struggling prey,
And two, with terror struck, speed fast away.
The swooning fair, on coming to, thanked him profusely and consented to recuperate beneath his father Ernesto's modest dome. Eugenio therefore lifted her to her horse, and in so doing observed that she was of elevated rank. Miss Seward shall tell how—

All the vestments of the lovely dame
The pride of elevated rank proclaim.
The costly lace had golden leaves imprest
Light on the borders of the pearly vest;
Her taper waist the broider'd zone entwines,
Clasp'd by a gem, the boast of orient mines.

Once beneath Ernesto's dome Emira's true nature appeared. She was rich and vain, and self-indulgent. Desiring Eugenio, she ridiculed his love for Louisa and flung herself at him on all occasions.

Like the honourable man he was, he repulsed her gently but firmly. He told his sister Matilda to explain to Emira how he was situated. Matilda did so, and Emira thus replied:

Can Eugenio prove
Cold, and obdurate to my lavish love?
Has beauty's magic zone my bosom bound,
Does rank exalt me, and has fortune crown'd,
That faint attractions in a village maid
Should shield the passions which these eyes invade?
Impossible!—but oh! thy lips impart
The sting of jealousy, that goads my heart.
Matilda, all my waking dreams divine
Thy charming brother shall at length be mine
This grovelling flame was but ordain'd to prove
Thy friend's wish'd triumph at the shrine of love,
And, by comparison of brighter charms,
To light Eugenio to Emira's arms.
At last her chance came. Ernesto, who had been speculating rather wildly under the advice of his false friend Belmor, learned that he was ruined. The dome was plunged in grief until Emira arranged that all his liabilities would be paid by her—on one trifling condition, namely, that Eugenio married her. The case was put to Eugenio very clearly by his father:

"Thy dearest Mother!"—Here he turn'd his head,
And pausing wept;—at length, resuming, said,
"These hovering woes, that o'er our house impend,
Thou, my dear Son, e'er their dread weight descend,
Thou canst avert!—but oh! at what a price!
Persuasion shall not urge—nor prayers entice.
Two hours ere thy return Emira found
Thy Sisters' eyes in streaming torrents drown'd;
Learn'd, from their trembling lips, the cruel cause,
Which the dark cloud of consternation draws
Wide o'er my roof—that yesterday survey'd,
Domestic comfort's fair, and favourite shade.
We know that fortune on Emira pours
Her golden treasures in unstinted showers.—
Eugenio! she stands ready to replace
Thy Father's comforts on a lasting base!
Rescue his failing fame!—the numbers save,
Whose hopes in his destruction find a grave;
And light, while woe's dark cloud her wealth removes,
Joy's living spark in many an eye he loves!
But at the price—Great God!—thy Father's fears
Shrink from the sound, and whelm it with his tears!
By sharp distress at last to name it driven!—
Thy hand to her,—e'en at the altar given!"

Eugenio naturally demurred. No Nietzsche had then arisen to suggest that responsibility to oneself comes first; and so after another long speech from his father, pointing out that penury would mean death to his mother, he consented.

So saying, to his couch my sire I led,
And smoothed the pillow for his languid head.
With softer tears his trembling eye-balls shone,
And faltering accents ardent blest his son.
Then up the mountain's steep and craggy side,
With step precipitate, I wildly stride;
A CHEERFUL WEDDING

Now stung with tortures of the last despair;
Now sunk in grief;—now energiz’d by prayer;
Not yet in vain the heart-rending efforts prove,
Warm duty rises over bleeding love!

Excusing himself to Emma for this apparent faithlessness, he explains that to have continued faithful to Louisa would have been to

stamp my constancy with parricide,

which is positively Chinese in feeling.

The third letter is from Louisa (who had not yet died) to Emma, written on the day after she had received from Emma Eugenio’s defence. Louisa, although not happy, has yet serenity in her unhappiness, knowing now that Eugenio’s fault was not perfidy but nobility and filial love. She tells Emma a long story of Clairmont and Clarissa, two lovers separated by shipwreck, and herself determines to get well again :-

I too shall live!—Health’s warmer current’s speak,
Yet unconfirm’d, upon my faded cheek:
Last night their honey’d dews prolong’d my rest,
As soft they sprung within my cherish’d breast.

Finally she describes meeting an aged man and abruptly stops.

In the last letter, also from Louisa to Emma, all is made symmetrical. The aged man whom she had just met was Ernesto, who had come to summon Louisa to the death-bed of Emira, to receive her confession. On the way Ernesto told the whole story, beginning with the wedding, which seems to have been anything but a gay one :-

“When to the altar my unhappy son
Led the gay bride, whom all unsought he won,
Pensive his eye, and serious was his air;
Though, with attentive, and respectful care,
He strove to hide the sorrows of his soul,
But could not oft their bursting sigh controul.”
"LOUISA"

The marriage quickly proved a mistake, although a sweet cherub daughter blest Emira's arms. Maternal tenderness, however, was foreign to her: she belonged to the smart set, and loved pleasures frivolous and vain, play ruinously high, and dark intrigue. Things came to a head on the night of a masquerade. Ernesto and Eugenio were with the baby, who was listening to the fond throbblings of a grandsire's breast when Emira entered. How she was dressed is not clearly explained, but her licentious vestment was either too much or too little for Eugenio.

With heartfelt pain the injur'd husband saw
The fair thus scorn decorum's guardian law.

Words succeeded to words and Emira was lost for ever, her new lover being a "swarthy opera dancer". Enfeebled by her wild pursuit of pleasure she was an easy prey to consuming fever's fiery dart, and lying at last on her death-bed required Louisa's forgiveness.

The bedside scene is very painful; such things were not to be scamped at that emotional day. But Emira at last died, having expressed contrition and commended her infant daughter to Louisa's care, to be taught honour, faith and truth.

Eugenio appears instantly to have claimed Louisa's hand, and the story ends in a burst of rapture:—

For thy LOUISA—Words can ill impart
How dear the comforts eddying round her heart!
How soft the joy, by sorrow's shading hand
Touch'd into charms more exquisitely bland!
Or paint Eugenio's transports as they rise,
More sweet for generous pity's mingled sighs;
Sweet above all, from the exalting pride
Of self-approving virtue, strongly tried.
Applauding Conscience, yes! to thee 'tis given,
To inspire a joy, that antedates our heaven!
CHAPTER V

HONORA SNEYD'S FIRST LOVE

John André—A meeting at Buxton—A young man writes Seward—
Three letters—Enter Richard Lovell Edgeworth—Mr. Sneyd says No—A
fateful vision—André’s unhappy career and fate—The “Monody”—Miss
Seward’s footnotes—A heroine-worshipper at Lichfield—The Palace and the
portrait—General Elliot admires the “Monody”—Miss Seward admires
General Elliot.

Honora Sneyd’s first love was the ill-fated John
André, who was shot as a spy in the American War.

André and Honora met in 1769, when he was eighteen
and she nineteen. His father having just died, the young
man was travelling with his mother and family among the
inland watering-places, and the Swards and Honora being
at Buxton, the two families became acquainted and André
quickly lost his heart.

The young man’s three letters, printed by Miss Seward
after her “Monody on Major André,” are so loving, and also
so indicative of his docility to Miss Seward, that I quote
them here in full. They were written not to Honora, al-
though meant for her eye, but to Miss Seward, or Julia as
he was instructed to call her, she having assumed the
conduct of this romance.

JOHN ANDRÉ TO MISS SEWARD

I


“From their agreeable excursion to Shrewsbury, my
dearlest friends are by this time returned to their thrice
beloved Lichfield.—Once again have they beheld those fortunate spires, the constant witnesses of all their pains and pleasures. I can well conceive the emotions of joy which their first appearance, from the neighbouring hills, excites after absence; they seem to welcome you home, and invite you to reiterate those hours of happiness, of which they are a species of monument. I shall have an eternal love and reverence for them. Never shall I forget the joy that danced in Honora’s eyes, when she first showed them to me from Needwood Forest on our return with you from Buxton to Lichfield. I remember she called them the ladies of the valley—their lightness and elegance deserve the title. Oh! how I loved them from that instant. My enthusiasm concerning them is carried farther even than yours and Honora’s, for every object that has a pyramidal form recalls them to my recollection, with a sensation that brings the tear of pleasure to my eyes.

“How happy must you have been at Shrewsbury! only that you tell me, alas! that dear Honora was not so well as you wished during your stay there.—I always hope the best.

“My impatient spirit rejects every obtruding idea, which I have not fortitude to support—Dr. Darwin’s skill, and your tender care will remove that pain in her side, which makes writing troublesome and injurious to her; which robs her poor Cher Jean¹ of those precious pages with which, he flatters himself, she would otherwise have indulged him. So your happiness at Shrewsbury scorned to be indebted to public amusements—five virgins united in the soft bonds of friendship!—how I should like to have made the sixth!—but you surprise me by such an absolute exclusion of the beaux.—I certainly thought that when five wise virgins were

¹ A name of kindness which Mr. André was often called by his mother and sisters, and generally adopted by the persons mentioned in these letters.

—(Miss Seward’s footnote.)
SERENA READING BY CANDLELIGHT

"I have been fortunate enough in procuring another copy of Romney’s Serena, which I mentioned to you as having accidentally formed a perfect similitude of my late Honora Seward’s face and figure, when she was serenely perusing the printed and unimpassioned thoughts of others. To the varying glories of her countenance, when she was expressing her own, or listening to the effusions of genius, no pencil could do justice. But that sweet, that sacred decency, that reserved dignity of virgin grace, which characterized her look and air, when her thoughts were tranquil, live in this dear portrait, while the turn of the head and neck, and every feature, reflect hers, as in a mirror."

Anna Seward
watching at midnight, it must have been in expectation of
the bridegroom's coming. We are at this instant five
virgins, writing round the same table—my three sisters, Mr.
Ewer and myself. I beg no reflections injurious to the
honour of poor Cher Jean. My mother is gone to pay a
visit, and left us in possession of the old coach; but as for
nags, we can boast of only two long-tails, and my sisters say
they are sorry cattle, being no other than my friend Ewer
and myself, who to say the truth have enormous pig-tails.
My dear Boissier is come to town; he has brought a little
of the soldier with him, but he is the same honest warm in-
telligent friend I always found him. He sacrifices the town
diversions, since I will not partake of them. We are jealous
of our correspondents, who are so numerous.—Yet write to
the Andrés often, my dear Julia, for who are they that will
value your letters quite so much as we value them?—The
least scrap of a letter will be received with the greatest joy
—write therefore, though it were only to give us the comfort
of having a piece of paper which has recently passed through
your hands; Honora will put in a little postscript, were it
only to tell me that she is my very sincere friend, who will
neither give me love nor comfort—very short indeed, Honora
was thy last postscript!—But I am too presumptuous;—I
will not scratch out, but I unsay.—From the little there was
I received more than I deserved.

“This Cher Jean is an impertinent fellow, but he will
grow discreet in time.—You must consider him as a poor
novice of eighteen, who, for all the sins he may commit, is
sufficiently punished in the single evil of being 120 miles
from Lichfield. My mother and sisters will go to Putney in
a few days to stay some time—we none of us like Clapton.
—I need not care, for I am all day long in town; but it is
avoiding Scylla to fall into Charybdis.—

“You paint to me the pleasant vale of Stow in the richest
autumnal colouring;—In return I must tell you that my Zephyrs are wafted through cracks in the wainscot; for murmuring streams I have dirty kennels; for bleating flocks, grunting pigs; and squalling cats for birds that incessantly warble.—I have said something of this sort in my letter to Miss Spearman, and am twinged with the idea of these epistles being confronted, and that I shall recall to your memory the fat knight's letters to Mrs. Ford and Mrs. Page. Julia, perhaps thou fanciest I am merry—Alas!—

"But I do not wish to make you as doleful as myself; and besides when I would express the tender feelings of my soul, I have no language which does them any justice; if I had, I should regret that you could not have it fresher, and that whatever one communicates by letter must go such a round about way before it reaches one's correspondent; from the writer's heart, through his head, arm, hand, pen, ink, paper, over many a weary hill and dale, to the eye, head, and heart of the reader.

"I have often regretted our not possessing a sort of faculty which should enable our sensations, remarks, &c., to arise from their source in a sort of exhalation, and fall upon our paper in words and phrases properly adapted to express them, without passing through an imagination whose operations so often fail to second those of the heart. Then what a metamorphose should we see in people's style! How eloquent those who are truly attached! how stupid they who falsely profess affection!

"Perhaps the former had never been able to express half their regard; while the latter, by their flowers of rhetoric, had made us believe a thousand times more than they ever felt—but this is whimsical moralizing.

"My sister's penserosos were dispersed on their arrival in town, by the joy of seeing Louisa and their dear little brother Billy again, our kind and excellent uncle Giradat, and uncle Louis André.
THE TREES IN THE CLOSE

"I was glad to see them, but they complained, not without reason, of the gloom upon my countenance.—Billy wept for joy that we were returned, while poor Cher Jean was ready to weep for sorrow. Louisa has grown still handsomer since we left her. Our sisters Mary and Anne, knowing your partiality for beauty, are afraid that when they shall introduce her to you she will put their noses out of joint.

"Billy is not old enough for me to be afraid of in the rival-way, else I should keep him aloof, for his heart is formed of those affectionate materials, so dear to the ingenuous taste of Julia and her Honora.

"I sympathize in your resentment against the canonical dons, who stumpify the heads of those good green people, beneath whose friendly shade so many of your happiest hours have glided away,—but they defy them; let them stumpify as much as they please, time will repair the mischief—their verdant arms will again extend, and invite you to their shelter.

"The evenings grow long—I hope your conversations round the fire will sometimes fall on the Andrés; it will be a great comfort that they are remembered. We chink our glasses to your healths at every meal. Here's to our Lichfieldian friends, says Nanny;—Oh-h, says Mary;—With all my soul, say I;—Allons, cries my mother;—and the draught seems nectar. The libation made us begin our unalloying theme, and so beguile the gloomy evening.

"Mr. and Mrs. Seward will accept my most affectionate respects.—My male friend at Lichfield will join in your conversation on the Andrés.

"Among the numerous good qualities he is possessed of, he certainly has gratitude, and then he cannot forget those who love and esteem him.—I in particular, shall always recall with pleasure the happy hours I have passed in his company.—My friendship for him and for your family has
diffused itself, like the precious ointment from Aaron’s beard, on everything which surrounds you, therefore I would beg you to give my amities to the whole town. Persuade Honora to forgive the length and ardour of the enclosed, and believe me truly your affectionate and faithful friend,

“J. Andre.”

II


“From the midst of books, papers, bills and other implements of gain, let me lift up my drowsy head a while to converse with dear Julia.—And first, as I know she has a fervent wish to see me a quill-driver, I must tell her, that I begin, as people are wont to do, to look upon my future profession with great partiality. I no longer see it in so disadvantageous a light.

“Instead of figuring a merchant as a middle-aged man, with a bob wig, a rough beard, in snuff coloured cloaths, grasping a guinea in his red hand; I conceive a comely young man, with a tolerable pig-tail, wielding a pen with all the noble fierceness of the Duke of Marlborough brandishing a truncheon upon a sign-post, surrounded with types and emblems,ued canopied with cornucopias that disembogue their stores upon his head; Mercuries reclined upon bales of goods; Genii playing with pens, ink, and paper; while in perspective, his gaudy vessels ‘launched on the bosom of silver Tl’mes,’ are wafting to distant lands the produce of this commercial nation.

“Thus all the mercantile glories crowd on my fancy, emblazoned in the most refulgent colouring of an ardent imagination.—Borne on her soaring pinions I wing my flight to the time when Heaven shall have crowned my labours with success and opulence.

“I see sumptuous palaces rising to receive me—I see
orphans, and widows, and painters, and fiddlers, and poets, and builders, protected and encouraged; and when the fabric is pretty nearly finished by my shattered pericranium, I cast my eyes around, and find John André, by a small coal fire, in a gloomy compting-house in Warnford Court, nothing so little as what he has been making himself, and in all probability never to be much more than he is at present. But oh! my dear Honora!—it is for thy sake only I wish for wealth.—You say she was somewhat better at the time you wrote last. I must flatter myself that she will soon be without any remains of this threatening disease. It is seven o'clock.—You and Honora, with two or three more select friends, are probably encircling your dressing-room fireplace. —What would I not give to enlarge that circle! The idea of a clean hearth, and a snug circle round it, formed by a few sincere friends, transports me. You seem combined together against the inclemency of the weather, the hurry, bustle, ceremony, censoriousness, and envy of the world. The purity, the warmth, the kindly influence of fire, to all for whom it is kindled, is a good emblem of the friendship of such amiable minds as Julia's and her Honora's.—Since I cannot be there in reality, pray imagine me with you; admit me to your conversazioni;—Think how I wish for the blessing of enjoying them!—and be persuaded that I take part in all your pleasures, in the de' s. hope, that ere it be very long, your blazing hearth will burn again for me. Pray keep me a place;—let the poker, tongs, or c' vel represent me;—but you have Dutch tiles, which are infinitely better;—so let Moses, or Aaron, or Balaam's ass be my representative. But time calls me to Clapton.—I quit you abruptly till to-morrow: when, if I do not tear the nonsense I have been writing, I may perhaps increase its quantity. Signora Cynthia is in clouded majesty,—silvered with her beams I am about to jog to Clapton upon my own stumps;—musing
as I homeward plod my way—Ah! need I name the subject of my contemplations!

"Thursday.

"I had a sweet walk home last night, and found the Claptonians, with their fair guest, a Miss Mourgue, very well. —My sisters send their amities, and will write in a few days.

"This morning I returned to town.—It has been the finest day imaginable.—A solemn mildness was diffused throughout the blue horizon;—Its light was clear and distinct rather than dazzling; the serene beams of the autumnal sun!—Gilded hills, variegated woods, glittering spires, ruminating herds, bounding flocks [the apt pupil!], all combined to enchant the eyes, expand the heart, and 'chace all sorrow but despair'. In the midst of such a scene, no lesser grief can prevent our sympathy with nature.

"A calmness, a benevolent disposition seizes us with sweet insinuating power.—The very brute creation seem sensible of these beauties;—There is a species of mild cheerfulness in the face of a lamb, which I have but indifferently expressed in a corner of my paper, and a demure, contented look in an ox, which, in the fear of expressing still worse, I leave unattempted.

"Business calls me away—I must despatch my letter,—Yet what does it contain?—No matter—You like anything better than news.—Indeed you never told me so, but I have an intuitive knowledge upon the subject, from the sympathy which I have constantly perceived in the taste of Julia and Cher Jean.—What is it to you or me,

If here in the City we have nothing but riot,
If the Spital-field weavers can't be kept quiet,
If the weather is fine, or the streets should be dirty,
Or if Mr. Dick Wilson died aged of thirty.

—But if I was to harken to the versifying grumbling I feel within me, I should fill my paper, and not have room left to
intreat that you would plead my cause to Honora more elo-
quently than the enclosed letter has the power of doing.—
Apropos of verses, you desire me to recollect my random
description of the engaging appearance of the charming
Mrs. —.—. Here it is at your service—

Then rustling and bustling the lady comes down,
With a flaming red face, and a broad yellow gown,
And a hobbling out-of-breath gait, and a frown.

This little French cousin of ours, Delarise, was my sister’s
play-fellow in Paris. His sprightliness engages my sisters
extremely. Doubtless they talk much of him to you in
their letters.

“How sorry I am to bid you adieu! Oh let me not be
forgot by the friends most dear to you at Lichfield! Lichfield!
Ah! of what magic letters is that little word composed!—
How graceful it looks when it is written!—Let nobody talk
to me of its original meaning! ‘The field of blood!’—Oh! no
such thing!—It is the field of joy! ‘The beautiful city, that
lifts her fair head in the valley, and says, I am, and there is
none beside me!’—Who says she is vain?—Julia will not say
so—nor yet Honora—and least of all their devoted

"JOHN ANDRÉ."

III

"CLAPTON, Nov. 1, 1769.

“My ears still ring with the sounds of Oh Jack! Oh
Jack! How do the dear Lichfieldians?—What do they say?
—What are they about?—What did you do while you were
with them?—Have patience, said I, good people!—and

1 Here is a small mistake—Lichfield is not the field of blood, but “the
field of dead bodies,” alluding to a battle fought between the Romans and the
British Christians in the Dioclesian persecution, when the latter were
massacred.—Three slain kings, with their burying-place, now Earrowcop-hill,
and the cathedral in miniature, form the city arms. Lich is still a word
in use. The church-yard gates, through which funerals pass, are often calld
Lich-gates, vulgarly light-gates.—(Miss Seward’s footno.)
began my story, which they devoured with as much joyful avidity as Adam did Gabriel's tidings of heaven. My mother and sisters are all very well, and delighted with their little Frenchman, who is a very agreeable lad.

"Surely you applaud the fortitude with which I left you! —Did I not come off with flying colours?—It was a great effort, for, alas! this recreant heart did not second the smiling courage of the countenance; nor is it yet as it ought to be, from the hopes it may reasonably entertain of seeing you all again ere the winter's dreary hours are past.—Julia, my dear Julia, gild them with tidings of our beloved Honora!—Oh that you may be enabled to tell me that she regains her health, and her charming vivacity!—Your sympathizing heart partakes all the joys and pains of your friends.—Never can I forget its kind offices, which were of such moment to my peace!—Mine is formed for friendship, and I am blessed in being able to place so well the purest passion of an ingenuous mind!—How am I honoured in Mr. and Mrs. Seward's attachment to me!—Charming were the anticipations which beguiled the long tracts of hill, and dale, and plain, that divide London from Lichfield!—With what delight my eager eyes drank their first view of the dear spires! —What rapture did I not feel on entering your gates!—in flying up the hall steps!—in rushing into the dining-room!—in meeting the gladdened eyes of dear Julia and her enchanting friend!—That instant convinced me of the truth of Rousseau's observation, 'that there are moments worth ages'.—Shall not those moments return? Ah, Julia! the cold hand of absence is heavy upon the heart of your poor Cher Jean.—He is forced to hammer into it perpetually every consoling argument that the magic wand of Hope can conjure up; *viz.* that every moment of industrious absence advances his journey, you know whither.—I may sometimes make excursions to Lichfield, and *bask* in the light of my
Honora's eyes!—Sustain me, Hope!—nothing on my part shall be wanting which may induce thee to fulfil thy blossoming promises.

"The happy social circle, Julia, Honora, Miss S—n, Miss B——n, her brother, Mr. S—e, Mr. R——n, &c. are now, perhaps, enlivening your dressing-room, the dear blue region, as Honora calls it, with the sensible observation, the tasteful criticism, or the elegant song;—dreading the iron-tongue of the nine o'clock bell, which disperses the beings whom friendship and kindred virtues had drawn together.—My imagination attaches itself to all, even the inanimate objects which surround Honora and her Julia—that have beheld their graces and virtues expand and ripen—my dear Honora's, from their infant bud.

"The sleepy Claptonian train are gone to bed, somewhat wearied with their excursion to Enfield, whither they have this day carried their favourite little Frenchman;—so great a favourite, the parting was quite tragical. I walked hither from town, as usual, to-night—no hour of the twenty-four is so precious to me as that devoted to this solitary walk.—Oh, my friend! I am far from possessing the patient frame of mind which I so continually invoke!—Why is Lichfield an hundred and twenty miles from me?—There is no moderation in the distance! Fifty or sixty miles had been a great deal too much, but then, there would have been less opposition from authority to my frequent visits—I conjure you, supply the want of these blessings by frequent letters—I must not, will not ask them of Honora, since the use of the pen is forbid to her declining health;—I will content myself, as usual, with a postscript from her in your epistles.—My sisters are charmed with the packet which arrived yesterday, and which they will answer soon.

"As yet I have said nothing of our journey. We met an entertaining Irish gentleman at Dunchurch, and being
fellow-sufferers in cold and hunger, joined interests, ordered four horses, and stuffed three in a chaise. It is not to you I need apologize, for talking in raptures of an higgler whom we met on the road. His cart had passed us, and was at a considerable distance, when, looking back, he perceived that our chaise had stopped, and that the driver seemed mending something. He ran up to him, and with a face full of honest anxiety, pity, good-nature, and every sweet affection under Heaven, asked him if we wanted anything; that he had plenty of nails, ropes, &c. in his cart.—That wretch of a postillion made no other reply than, ‘We want nothing, master.’ From the same impulse the good Irishman, Mr. Till, and myself thrust our heads instantly out of the chaise, and tried to recompense to the honest creature this surly reply, by every kind and grateful acknowledgment, and by forcing upon him a little pecuniary tribute. My benevolence will be the warmer while I live, for the treasured remembrance of this higgler’s countenance.

“I know you interest yourself in my destiny—I have now compleatly subdued my aversion to the profession of a merchant, and hope in time to acquire an inclination for it. Yet, God forbid I should ever love what I am to make the object of my attention!—that vile trash, which I care not for, but only as it may be the future means of procuring the blessing of my soul—Thus all my mercantile calculations go to the tune of dear Honora.—When an impertinent consciousness whispers in my ear, that I am not of the right stuff for a merchant, I draw my Honora’s picture from my bosom, and the sight of that dear talisman so insiprits my industry, that no toil appears oppressive.

“The poetic task you set me is a sad method—my head and heart are too full of other matters to be engrossed by a draggletailed wench of the Heliconian puddle. I am going to try my interest in Parliament—How you stare!—it is to
procure a frank.—Be so good to give the enclosed to Honora;—it will speak to her—and do you say everything that is kind for me to every other distinguished friend of the dressing-room circle—encourage them in their obliging desire of scribbling in your letters, but do not let them take Honora’s corner of the sheet.

"Adieu!—May you all possess that cheerfulness denied to your Cher Jean. I fear it hurts my mother to see my musing moods; but I can neither help nor overcome them.

—The near hopes of another excursion to Lichfield could alone disperse every gloomy vapour of my imagination.—Again, and yet again, Adieu!"

"J. André."

Those are good letters, and to read them—with all their gaiety and hope and ingenuousness—is to feel André’s tragedy with the more poignancy.

A year later André was again in Lichfield, and it was then that he was met at the Seward’s house by one who, although then married, was destined to be his Honora’s husband—the debonair Richard Lovell Edgeworth. "Whilst I was on this visit," he writes in his complacent Memoirs, "Mr. André, afterwards Major André, who lost his life so unfortunately in America, came to Lichfield. . . . The first time I saw Major André at the palace, I did not perceive from his manner or from that of the young lady, that any attachment subsisted between them. On the contrary, from the great attention which Miss Seward paid to him, and from the constant admiration which Mr. André bestowed upon her, I thought that, though there was a considerable disproportion in their ages, there might exist some courtship between them. Miss Seward, however, undeceived me. I never met Mr. André again; and from all that I then saw, or have since known, I believe that Miss Honora
Sneyd was never much disappointed by the conclusion of this attachment. Mr. André appeared to me to be pleased and dazzled by the lady. She admired and estimated highly his talents; but he did not possess the reasoning mind which she required.

This statement of the case, coming as it does from the reasoning mind which afterwards won Honora, must perhaps be discounted.

That was in 1770. In 1771 Mr. Sneyd uttered his ultimatum to the effect that his daughter and André should never marry, and André retired from the scene. Shortly afterwards he joined the army—on 4th March, 1771. Miss Seward, however, in her “Monody,” as we shall see, with more poetic symmetry makes his enlistment the result of Honora’s marriage, which did not occur until 1773.

“Before leaving England,” says his biographer Sargent, “it is asserted that André paid a final visit of farewell to Miss Seward and to the scenes of his former happiness; which was attended by circumstances of a character so strange as to be worthy of repetition, if not of belief. During his stay, we are told, Miss Seward had made arrangements to take him to see and be introduced to her friends Cunningham and Newton, both gentlemen of a poetical turn. On the night preceding the day appointed for her appearance, Mr. Cunningham dreamed that he was alone in a great forest. Presently he perceived a horseman approaching at great speed; but as he drew near to the spot where the dreamer imagined himself to stand, three men suddenly sprung from their concealment among the bushes, seized on the rider, and bore him away. The captive’s countenance was visible; its interesting appearance, and the singularity of the incident, left an unpleasant feeling on Mr. Cunningham’s mind as he awoke. But soon falling to sleep again, he was visited by a second vision even more
troubling than the first. He found himself one of a vast multitude met near a great city: and while all were gazing, a man, whom he recognized as the same person that had just been captured in the forest, was brought forth and hanged on a gibbet. These dreams were repeated the following morning to Mr. Newton; and when, a little after, Miss Seward made her appearance with André, Mr. Cunningham at once knew him to be the unhappy stranger whom he had seen stopped and hanged."

Here it is time to sketch André's subsequent career and fate, which I do by borrowing the words of the writer of his memoir in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, having made no personal study of the story. In 1775, it seems, he was taken prisoner at St. John's. "Upon his release he became successively aide-de-camp to General Gray and to Sir Henry Clinton, who entertained so high an opinion of him as to make him adjutant-general, notwithstanding his youth and the short period of his service. This position unhappily brought him into connection with Benedict Arnold, who was plotting the betrayal of West Point to the British. As Clinton's chief confidant, André was entrusted with the management of the correspondence with Arnold, which was disguised under colour of a mercantile transaction, Arnold signing himself Gustavus, and André adopting the name of John Anderson.

"When the negotiations were sufficiently advanced (20th Sept., 1780), André proceeded up the Hudson River in the British sloop *Vulture* to hold a personal interview with Arnold. To avoid treatment as a spy, he wore his uniform, and professed to be aiming at an arrangement with respect to the sequestered property of Colonel Beverley Robinson, an American loyalist. His letter to Arnold on the subject having been shown by the latter to Washington, the American generalissimo so strongly protested against any interview
that Arnold was compelled to resort to a secret meeting, which took place on the night of 21st September. Arnold then delivered to André full particulars respecting the defences of West Point, and concerted with him the attack which the British were to make within a few days.

"Meanwhile the Vulture had been compelled by the fire of the American outposts to drop further down the river, and André's boatmen refused to row him back. He spent the day at the farm-house of Joshua Smith, a tool, but probably not an accomplice, of Arnold's, and had no alternative but to disguise himself as a civilian, which, as he was within the American lines, brought him within the reach of military law as a spy. He started the following morning with a pass in the name of Anderson signed by Arnold, and under the guidance of Smith, who only left him when he seemed past all danger. By nine on the morning of the 23rd he was actually in sight of the British lines when he was seized by three American militiamen on the look-out for stragglers. Had he produced Arnold's pass, he would have been allowed to proceed, but he unfortunately asked his captors whether they were British, and, misunderstanding their reply, disclosed his character. He was immediately searched, and the compromising papers were found in his boots.

"Refusing the large bribes he offered for his release, the militiamen carried him before Colonel Jameson, the commander of the outposts, who had actually sent him with the papers to Arnold, when, at the instance of Captain Talmadge, André was fetched back, and the documents forwarded to Washington. Jameson, however, reported his capture to Arnold, and the news came just in time to enable the latter to escape to the British lines. André acknowledged his name and the character of his mission in a letter addressed to Washington on 24th September, in which he declared:

'Against my stipulation, my intention, and without my
knowledge beforehand, I was conducted within one of your posts'.

"On 29th September he was brought before a military board convoked by Washington, which included Lafayette and other distinguished officers. The board found, as it could not possibly avoid finding, that André had acted in the character of a spy. He was therefore sentenced to execution by hanging. Every possible effort was ineffectually made by the British commander to save him, short of delivering up Arnold, which of course could not be contemplated. Washington has been unreasonably censured for not having granted him a more honourable death. To have done so would have implied a doubt as to the justice of his conviction. André was executed on 2nd October, meeting his fate with a serenity which extorted the warmest admiration of the American officers, to whom, even during the short period of his captivity, he had greatly endeared himself. A sadder tragedy was never enacted, but it was inevitable, and no reproach rests upon any person concerned except Arnold. Washington and André, indeed, deserve equal honour. André for having accepted a terrible risk for his country and borne the consequences of failure with unshrinkling courage; and Washington for having performed his duty to his own country at a great sacrifice of his feelings.

"André's countrymen made haste to do him honour. The British army went into mourning for him. A monument was erected to his memory in Westminster Abbey, and in 1821 his remains were transferred to the spot."

In reading Miss Seward's "Monody" it is difficult not to believe that she loved André more than Honora did. She begins by asking if it is possible for her, the poetess, to be silent in the presence of the tragedy. But here are her words:—
HONORA SNEYD'S FIRST LOVE

From public fame shall admiration rise
The boldest numbers of her raptur'd lyre
To hymn a stranger?—and with ardent lay
Lead the wild mourner round her Cook's moral,
While Andromeda's pale looks upon his dreary bier,
And Julia's only tribute is her tear?

Dear, lovely Youth! whose gentle virtues stole
Through Friendship's soft, sweet medium on her soul
Ah no!—with every strong resistless plea,
Rise the recorded days she pass'd with thee,
While each dim shadow of o'erwhelming years,
With eagle-glance reverted, Memory clears.
Below'd companion of the fairest hours
That rose for her in joy's resplendent bow'rs,
How gaily shone on thy bright morn of Youth
The Star of Pleasure, and the Sun of Truth!

Full from their source descended on thy mind
Each generous virtue and each taste refined.
Young Genius led thee to his varied fane,
Bade thee ask all his gifts, nay, nor ask in vain;
Hence novel thoughts in ev'ry lustre drest
Of pointed wit, that diamond of the breast;
Hence glow'd thy fancy with poetic ray,
Hence music warbled in thy sprightly lay;
And hence thy pencil, with his colours warm,
Caught ev'ry grace, and copied ev'ry charm,
Whose transient glories beam on beauty's cheek,
And bid the glowing ivory breathe and speak.
Blest pencil! by kind fate ordain'd to save
Honora's semblance from her early grave.

1 "Julia."—The name by which Mr. André addressed the author in his correspondence with her.—(Miss Seward's footnote.)

2 "All his gifts."—Mr. André had conspicuous talents for poetry, music, and painting. The newspapers mentioned a satiric poem of his upon the Americans, which was supposed to have stimulated their barbarity towards him. Of his wit and vivacity, the letters [printed above] subjoined to this poem afford ample proof. They were addressed to the author by Mr. André when he was a Youth of eighteen.—(Miss Seward's footnote.)

3 "Early grave."—Miss Honora S——, to whom Mr. André's attachment was of such singular constancy, died in a consumption, a few months before he suffered death at Tappan. She had married another gentleman, four years after her connection with Mr. André had, by parental authority, been dissolved. To that marriage her father gave a reluctant consent. So groundless was the idea of the Reviewers, who, when this poem was first published, imagined, from some expressions, whose sense they had mistaken, that she was urged into wedlock against her inclination.—(Miss Seward's footnote.)
POETIC LICENSE

Oh! while on Julia's arm it sweetly smiles,
And each torn thought, each long regret beguiles,
Fondly she weeps the hand, which form'd the spell,
Now shroudless mould'ring in its earthy cell!

Miss Seward, as I have said, attributed André's enlistment to Honora's marriage. This is the beginning of the soliloquy she made him utter:—

"Honora lost! my happy rival's bride!
Swell, ye full sails! and roll, thou mighty tide!
O'er the dark waves forsaken Axoâb bear
Amid the volleys thunder of the war!
To win bright glory from my country's foes,
E'en in this ice of love, my bosom glows.
Voluptuous London! in whose gorgeous bow'rs
The frolic Pleasures lead the dancing Hours,
From orient vales sable odours bring,
Nor ask her roses of the tardy Spring;
Where Painting burns the Grecian need to claim,
From the high temple of immortal Fame,
Bears to the radiant goal, with ardent pace,
Her Kauffman's beauty, and her Reynolds' grace;
Where music floats the glitt'ring roofs am'ng
And with meand'ring cadence swells the song,
While sun-clad poesy the bard inspires,
And foils the Grecian harps, the Latin lyres.—
Ye soft'ning luxuries! ye polish'd arts!
Bend your enfeebling rays on tranquil hearts!
I quit the song, the pencil, and the lyre,
White robes of peace, and pleasure's soft attire,
To seize the sword, to mount the rapid car,
In all the proud habiliments of war.—
Honora lost! I woo a sterner bride,
The arm'd Bellona calls me to her side;
Harsh is the music of our marriage strain!
It sounds in thunder from the western plain!
Wide o'er the wat'ry world its echoes roll,
And rouse each latent ardour of my soul.
And though unlike the soft melodious lay,
That gaily wak'd Honora's nuptial day,
Its deeper tones shall whisper, ere they cease,
More genuine transport, and more lasting peace.

1 Julia's arm.—Mr. André drew two miniature pictures of Miss Honora S——, on his first acquaintance with her at Buxton, in the year 1769, one for himself, the other for the author of this poem.—(Miss Seward's footnote.)
HONORA SNEYD'S FIRST LOVE

Resolv'd I go!—nor from that fatal bourn
To these gay scenes shall André's step return!
Set is the star of love, that ought to guide
His refulent bark across the mighty tide!—
But while my country's foes, with impious hand,
Hurl o'er the blasted plains the livid brand
Of dire sedition, Oh! let Heav'n ordain,
While André lives, he may not live in vain."

The Monodist thus describes André's capture and fortitude at St. John's in 1775:—

Around the hero crowd th' exulting bands,
And seize the spoils of war with bloody hands;
Snatch the dark plumage from his awful crest,
And tear the golden crescent from his breast;
The sword, the tube that wings the death from far,
And all the fatal implements of war!
Silent, unmov'd, the gallant youth survey'd
The lavish spoils triumphant ruffians made;
The idle ornament, the useless spear
He little recks, but oh! there is a fear
Pants with quick throb, while yearning sorrows dart
Through his chill frame, and tremble at his heart.

"What though Honora's voice no more shall charm!
No more her beamy smile my bosom warm!
Yet from these eyes shall force for ever tear
The sacred image of that form so dear?—
Shade of my love!—though mute and cold thy charms,
Ne'er hast thou blest my happy rival's arms!
To my sad heart each dawn has seen thee prest!
Each night has laid thee pillow'd on my breast!
Force shall not tear thee from thy faithful shrine;
Shade of my love! thou shalt be ever mine!

"Tis fixed!—these lips shall resolute inclose
The precious soother of my ceaseless woes.
And should relentless violence invade
This last retreat, by frantic fondness made,

1 Shade of my love.—The miniature of Honora. A letter from Major André to one of his friends, written at that period, contained the following sentence. "I have been taken prisoner by the Americans, and stript of every thing except the picture of Honora, which I concealed in my mouth. Preserving that, I yet think myself fortunate."—(Miss Seward's footnote.)
THE ONLY WAY

One way remains!—Fate whispers to my soul
Intrepid Portia, and her burning coal!
So shall the throbbing inmate of my breast
From love's sole gift meet everlasting rest!"
While these sad thoughts in swift succession fire
The smother'd embers of each fond desire,
Quick to his mouth his eager hand removes
The beauteous semblance of the form he loves.
That darling treasure safe, resign'd he wears
The sordid robe, the scanty viand shares;
With cheer ful fortitude content to wait
The barter'd ransom of a kinder fate.

Miss Seward's "Monody on Major André," which was published in 1781, was, after "Louisa," her most popular poem. Its only rival was her "Elegy on Captain Cook". I do not quote more from it here because it seems to me, with most of Miss Seward's poetry, unreadable to-day except for reasons the opposite of those which she intended. Of its and its author's popularity, and the homage which she seems to have aroused in certain of her contemporaries, an indication is to be obtained in a passage in *A Tour through the South of England, Wales, and part of Ireland made in the Summer of 1791*, the work of a Mr. Clarke. Of Lichfield he writes: "We were now in a place that I was particularly anxious to see. If there is a part of England peculiarly sacred to literature and the muses, it is Lichfield. It is the land of poetry itself, and as long as the names of Garrick, of Johnson, and of Seward shall endure, Lichfield will live renowned. . . ."

"Our guide pointed to the house where the delightful poetess, the friend of André, now lives. I walked by the house twice or three times, and could not help wishing to steal a short glance at the genius of Lichfield. The guide

1 *Intrepid Portia.* —"Brutus. Impatient of my absence,
And grieved that young Octavius, with Mark Antony
Had made themselves so strong, she grew distract,
And, her attendants absent, swallow'd fire."
*Julius Caesar*, act 4, sc. 4.—(Miss Seward's footnote.)
observed me; 'Sir,' said he, 'Miss Seward is gone to Bristol; if you wish to see the house, I can procure you admittance from my acquaintance with the servants.' This was just what I wished; the door soon opened, and in I ran, impatient to see where genius and poetry had fixed their abode, and happy even in the opportunity of treading the same ground. Indeed it would be impossible for the most rigid stoic to enter such a spot without emotion.

"When the gallant André plighted his warm vows to Honora, these walls were sacred to his protestations; they witnessed the ardour of his passion, and echoed to his loud sorrows, when the rigid interference of parental authority severed the texture which they had mutually interwoven. From this hallowed spot originated that beautiful bud of British poetry, which, like the morning rose impearled with the dew of heaven, expanded in tears. It was here that the distracted mourner imprecated vengeance upon the base abettors of an ignominious doom, that sent the soldier and the lover to an early grave. It was here that the genius of Britain sung the fall of heroes, and, scattering her inspired lays, would

Light with vestal flame her André's hallow'd pyre,

or wander

With wild unequal step, round Cook's moral.

"A harpsichord stood open in the room, and as I touched the keys, which had answered to more pleasing vibrations, a portrait of a beautiful female caught my attention. I guessed right—indeed it could be no other than her's. It so happens, that in reading the production of genius one cannot help forming some idea of the features of the author; at least this has always been the case with me, and was so in the present instance. I was pleased to find the idea, which I had formed, correspond with the picture, and in-
A HAPPY RELATIVE

'teed should have felt very angry with the painter for tracing features unjustly, if it had turned out otherwise. But my reader frowns. This Lichfield muse has led me from the main road, and I hasten to regain it."

That was one reward which the "Monody" brought to its author. She describes another in a letter in 1787: "Soon after our troops returned from Gibraltar, leaving their glorious General, intent upon the restoration of the ravaged fortifications, a military gentleman, of pleasing appearance, announced himself Lieutenant Seward, the son of a merchant at Southampton, to whom we knew ourselves related. He told us he had travelled from that place purposely to see me, whom he considered as the source of one of the most important, as well as flattering circumstances of his life.

"I was much surprised. He continued, 'I was at the siege of Gibraltar, adoring the virtues and the abilities of the Commander in Chief, without the most distant hope of obtaining the honour of his notice, much less of his friendship, to which high rank, or particular recommendation, were considered as the only channels, unless an officer could be fortunate enough to render very conspicuous service to the British cause.

"'I received an invitation to dine with General Elliot, and was charmed and surprised at my good fortune, without an idea to what circumstance I could possibly owe it.

"'The General met me half-way on my entrance into his apartment, where he was surrounded by officers of distinction. His eyes shone with benevolent pleasure; and he held in his hand the Monody on Major André.

"'Mr. Seward," said he, "I am glad to see you. The instant I read this poem, it occurred to me, that I had seen the name of Seward on my list of the garrison's officers. I inquired your character. It was answerable to my wishes.
Are you related to the author of the Monody on Major André?"

"I replied, that I had the honour of being very distantly related, but had not the happiness of her acquaintance. It is sufficient, Mr. Seward, that you bear her name, and a fair reputation, to entitle you to the notice of every soldier who has it in his power to serve and oblige a military brother. You will always find a cover for you at my table, and a sincere welcome; and whenever it may be in my power to serve you essentially, I shall not want the inclination."

The result of this incident—for Miss Seward was always grateful—was the composition of her ode on "General Elliot's Return from Gibraltar in 1787". The poem I do not quote, but here is Miss Seward's account to Captain Seward of the hero's visit to Lichfield and to her. The date is the 2nd September, 1787:—

"You excited the flattering hope of his staying a few days with me. Could that have been fulfilled,—nay, had he passed only one night in Lichfield, the compliment of a general illumination through our little city had been paid. The words Elliot, Gibraltar, Victory, enwreathed with flowers, were to have shone in phosphorus upon the walls of our town-hall, and over the arms of the city. It was the contrivance of an ingenious young surgeon, of the name of Green, who prepared it when you taught me to expect one of the most flattering distinctions of my life; but arriving on a Sunday morning, and departing in the afternoon, he frustrated the wish of our inhabitants to have welcomed, with public éclat, the restorer of the nation's glory.

"My father had not sufficiently recovered from a recent epileptic fit for me to venture introducing him to my noble guest.¹ Greatly was I disappointed that he could not have

¹ Elliot had just been made Lord Heathfield.
the happiness of paying his respects to one, whose name he always mentions with a tear glistening in his dear eyes.

"I had presented all my publications to Lord Heathfield, elegantly bound. He would not suffer his aide-de-camp to carry the book to the inn, but held it in his own hand as he walked through our streets."
CHAPTER VI

HONORA SNEYD'S LATER LOVERS

Richard Lovell Edgeworth—The false coach-builder—Enter, on a stretcher, Mrs. Darwin's brother—Lichfield society—The Swan at a festive board—Honora Sneyd—Enter Mr. Thomas Day—Cleebys plus Willoughby Patterne—Training a wife—The description of a philosopher—Sabrina's martyrdom—Miss Seward as matchmaker—Mr. Day warns Mr. Edgeworth—Mr. Day proposes and is refused—A fever and Dr. Darwin—Enter Elizabeth Sneyd—Mr. Day goes to France to learn to be a gentleman—Elizabeth prefers the blackguard—Mr. Day's later life—Mr. Edgeworth's quick marriage—Honora Edgeworth's later life—Mr. Edgeworth's quick marriage—Mr. Edgeworth and Miss Seward—Byron's testimony—Lovell Edgeworth.

We have already seen something of Mr. Richard Lovell Edgeworth. He now enters the story seriously.

This very plausible, self-satisfied, wealthy young Irishman was born in 1744 and was thus two years younger than Miss Seward. After a rackety time at Trinity College, Dublin, he went to Oxford, and there, while still an undergraduate, eloped to Scotland with Anna Maria Elers and married her. In 1764 his first child (the first of nineteen) was born, and by 1765 he was beginning to rove. Edgeworth had an active, creative mind that left nothing where it found it, and he invented a number of useful things, including a velocipede, a turnip-cutter and a chaise to run on one wheel. Had he lived to-day he would undoubtedly be experimenting with flying machines. It was, as we have seen, his interest in Dr. Darwin's patent carriage that first took him to Lichfield in 1769.

His account in his Memoirs of the visit is so amusing
that I quote it in full: "When I arrived at Lichfield, I went to inquire whether the Doctor was at home. I was shewn into a room, where I found Mrs. Darwin. I told her my name. She said the Doctor expected me, and that he intended to be at home before night. There were books and prints in the room, of which I took occasion to speak. Mrs. Darwin asked me to drink tea, and I perceived that I owed to my literature the pleasure of passing the evening with this most agreeable woman. We walked and conversed upon various literary subjects till it was dark, when Mrs. Darwin seemed to be surprised that the Doctor had not come home, I offered to take my leave: but she told me, that I had been expected for some days, and that a bed had been prepared for me; I heard some orders given to the housemaid, who had destined a different room for my reception from that which her mistress had upon second thoughts appointed. I perceived that the maid examined me attentively, but I could not guess the reason. When supper was nearly finished, a loud rapping at the door announced the Doctor. There was a bustle in the hall, which made Mrs. Darwin get up and go to the door. Upon her exclaiming, that they were bringing in a dead man, I went to the hall: I saw some persons, directed by one whom I guessed to be Doctor Darwin, carrying a man who appeared motionless.

"'He is not dead,' said Doctor Darwin. 'He is only dead drunk. I found him,' continued the Doctor, 'nearly suffocated in a ditch: I had him lifted into my carriage, and brought hither, that we might take care of him to-night.'

"Candles came, and what was the surprise of the Doctor, and of Mrs. Darwin, to find that the person whom he had saved was Mrs. Darwin's brother! who, for the first time in his life, as I was assured, had been intoxicated in this manner,
and who would undoubtedly have perished, had it not been for Doctor Darwin's humanity.

"During this scene I had time to survey my new friend, Doctor Darwin. He was a large man, fat, and rather clumsy; but intelligence and benevolence were painted in his countenance: he had a considerable impediment in his speech, a defect which is in general painful to others; but the Doctor repaid his auditors so well for making them wait for his wit or his knowledge, that he seldom found them impatient.

"When his brother was disposed of, he came to supper, and I thought that he looked at Mrs. Darwin, as if he was somewhat surprised, when he heard that I had passed the whole evening in her company. After she withdrew, he entered into conversation with me upon the carriage that I had made, and upon the remarks that fell from some members of the society to whom I had shown it. I satisfied his curiosity, and having told him, that my carriage was in the town, and that he could see it whenever he pleased, we talked upon other mechanical subjects, and afterwards on various branches of knowledge, which necessarily produced allusions to classical literature; by these he discovered, that I had received the education of a gentleman.

"'Why! I thought,' said the Doctor, 'that you were only a coachmaker!'—'That was the reason,' said I, 'that you looked surprised at finding me at supper with Mrs. Darwin. But you see, Doctor, how superior in discernment ladies are even to the most learned gentlemen; I assure you, that I had not been in the room five minutes, before Mrs. Darwin asked me to tea.'"

Edgeworth then turns to some of his friends. I continue his narrative: "The next day I was introduced to some literary persons, who then resided at Lichfield, and among the foremost to Miss Seward. How much of my
future life has depended upon this visit to Lichfield! How little could I then foresee, that my having examined and understood the Microcosm at Chester should lead me to a place, and into an acquaintance, which would otherwise, in all human probability, have never fallen within my reach! Miss Seward was at this time in the height of youth and beauty, of an enthusiastic temper, a votary of the muses, and of the most eloquent and brilliant conversation. Our mutual acquaintance was soon made, and it continued to be for many years of my life a source of never-failing pleasure."

Again, later in the book he says: “The bishop’s palace at Lichfield, where Mr. Seward, a canon of the cathedral, resided, was the resort of every person in that neighbourhood who had any taste for letters. Every stranger, who came well recommended to Lichfield, brought letters to the palace. This popularity in the literary world was well deserved, for Mr. Seward was a man of learning and taste; he was fond of conversation, in which he bore a considerable part, good-natured, and indulgent to the little foibles of others: he scarcely seemed to notice any animadversions that were made upon his own. His simplicity, or what we understand by the French word naïveté, was beyond what could easily be believed of a man of such talents, or of one who had seen anything of the world. Mrs. Seward was a handsome woman, of agreeable manners, she was generous, possessed of good sense, and capable of strong affection.”

Of Miss Seward’s table conversation we have a glimpse in Edgeworth’s account of his first social evening at Lichfield: “It seems that Mrs. Darwin had a little pique against Miss Seward, who had in fact been her rival with the Doctor.¹ These ladies lived upon good terms, but there frequently occurred little competitions, which amused their friends and

¹ Edgeworth is confused here, I think. It was the second Mrs. Darwin who might have felt jealous.
enlivened the uniformity that so often renders a country town insipid. The evening after my arrival, Mrs. Darwin invited Miss Seward, and a very large party of her friends, to supper. I was placed beside Miss Seward, and a number of lively sallies escaped her, that set the table in good humour. I remember, for we frequently remember the merest trifles which happen at an interesting period of our life, that she repeated some of Prior's Henry and Emma, of which she was always fond, and dwelling upon Emma's tenderness, she cited the care that Emma proposed to take of her lover, if he were wounded,

To bind his wounds my finest lawns I'd tear,
Wash them with tears, and wipe them with my hair.

"I acknowledged, that tearing her finest lawns, even in a wild forest, would be a real sacrifice from a fine lady; and that washing wounds with salt water, though a very severe remedy, was thought to be salutary; but I could not think, that wiping them with hair could be either a salutary or an elegant operation. I represented, that the lady, who must have had by her own account a choice of lawns, might have employed some of the coarse sort for this operation, instead of having recourse to her hair. I paid Miss Seward, however, some compliments on her own beautiful tresses, and at that moment the watchful Mrs. Darwin took this opportunity of drinking Mrs. Edgeworth's health. Miss Seward's surprise was manifest. But the mirth this unexpected discovery made fell but lightly upon its objects, for Miss Seward, with perfect good humour, turned the laugh in her favor. The next evening the same society reassembled at another house, and for several ensuing evenings I passed my time in different agreeable companies in Lichfield."

So far no mention of Honora, who was at this time too young to attract the notice even of so determined a lady-
EDGEWORTH MEETS HONORA

killer as Richard Lovell Edgeworth. When, however, he returned to Lichfield some years later, more weary of his wife than before, he looked at Honora with new eyes. This is how he first mentions her: “Under the fond and truly maternal care of Mrs. Seward was bred up Miss Honora Sneyd, daughter of Edward Sneyd, Esq., youngest son of Ralph Sneyd, Esq., of Bishton, in Staffordshire. Mr. Sneyd had become a widower early in life. He had been in great affliction at the death of his wife; and his relations and friends, who were numerous, had been eager to take charge of his daughters. Nothing could exceed the kindness, and care, with which Mrs. Seward executed the trust that she had undertaken. Nobody could have distinguished Miss Honora Sneyd from Mrs. Seward’s own daughters by any thing in Mrs. Seward’s conduct, or in her outward deportment. Miss Sally Seward, who was nearer in age than Miss Seward to Honora Sneyd, became extremely attached to her; I have heard Honora often declare, that she felt for this lady all the tenderness of a sister; and that her own sentiments and character were formed by imitation of this early friend of her youth. Miss Sally Seward died when Honora was but thirteen, and she then became the more immediate pupil of Miss Seward. From her she acquired an ardent love of literature, and she afterwards formed for herself a refined and accurate taste. She was, however, so much eclipsed by that lady’s more shining talents, that it was not on a first acquaintance, or to careless observers, that Honora Sneyd’s uncommon understanding and clear judgment became conspicuous.”

But now we come to a new character—a curious, wilful, capricious bachelor of some twenty-two years of age, who, at the time we have reached, 1770, was living at Stow Hill, close to the city—thinking almost without cessation, morning, noon and night, of nothing whatever but himself and the
marriage that such a remarkable person (a kind of Cœlebs and Willoughby Patterne in one) ought to make.

This strange philosophic gentleman was Thomas Day, later to be known as the author of *Sandford and Merton*. He had been educated at the Charterhouse, where he fought William Seward, author of the *Anecdotes* (who knew the Swan, but was no relation, and who much annoyed her by pronouncing his name as if it were spelt Suward). Afterwards Day had gone to Oxford, where he practised teetotalism, met Edgeworth, and discussed with him the merits of Rousseau's philosophy. Afterwards, like Mr. Hayley, he entered the Middle Temple, but did not practice, having the competency common to Miss Seward's acquaintances.

Having loved in vain a lady whom he met at Shaftesbury while on a wife-hunting expedition, and also one of Edgeworth's sisters, Mr. Day decided to have no more to do with ready-made eligible women that objected to a husband who would not on principle comb his hair, and who closed every conversation by satirical references to the evils brought upon mankind by the tender passion, but instead to make a wife for himself by educating a small girl for that high if difficult office. He therefore sought the assistance of a legal friend named Bicknel, who afterwards collaborated with him in his poem “The Dying Negro,” and together they chose from an orphanage at Shrewsbury a fair-haired child and from the Foundling Hospital in London a dark-haired child. These children Mr. Day undertook to bring up strictly on principles in which he believed, and when they were marriageable to marry one and endow the other.

The blonde, Mr. Day called Sabrina Sidney, after the river Severn and Algernon Sidney, and apprenticed her nominally to Edgeworth, Edgeworth fulfilling the necessary condition (however lightly) of being a married man; the brunette he called Lucretia. At first they were lodged near
THOMAS DAY
AFTER THE PAINTING BY WRIGHT OF DERBY

"In the course of the year 1770, Mr. Day stood for a full-length picture to Mr. Wright of Derby. A strong likeness and a dignified portrait were the result. Drawn as in the open air, the surrounding sky is tempestuous, lurid, and dark. He stands leaning his left arm against a column inscribed to Hampden. Mr. Day looks upward, as enthusiastically meditating on the contents of a book, held in his dropped right hand. The open leaf is the oration of that virtuous patriot in the senate, against the grant of ship-money, demanded by King Charles the First. A flash of lightning plays in Mr. Day's hair, and illuminates the contents of the volume."—Miss Seward
MR. DAY

Chancery Lane, but finding England not congenial for so drastic an experiment, Day and his budding brides—they were eleven and twelve years old and he only twenty—moved to France, to Avignon, where later Miss Seward's friend Mr. Whalley was to settle and word-paint.

Having cleared the way, I take up Miss Seward's narrative in her Life of Darwin, for the digressions in which we may now be thankful. This is her description of the young experimentalist: "Mr. Day looked the philosopher. Powder and fine clothes were, at that time, the appendages of gentlemen. Mr. Day wore not either. He was tall and stooped in the shoulders, full made, but not corpulent; and in his meditative and melancholy air a degree of awkwardness and dignity were blended. We found his features interesting and agreeable amidst the traces of a severe small-pox. There was a sort of weight upon the lids of his large hazel eyes; yet when he declaimed,

---Of good and evil,

Passion, and apathy, and glory, and shame,

very expressive were the energies gleaming from them beneath the shade of sable hair, which, Adam-like, curled about his brows. Less graceful, less amusing, less brilliant than Mr. E., but more highly imaginative, more classical, and a deeper reasoner; strict integrity, energetic friendship, open-handed bounty, sedulous and diffusive charity, greatly overbalanced, on the side of virtue, the tincture of misanthropic gloom and proud contempt of common-life society, that marked his peculiar character."

And this is Miss Seward's account of the experiment: "Mr. Day went into France with these girls, not taking an English servant, that they might receive no ideas except those which himself might choose to impart.

"They teased and perplexed him; they quarrelled, and fought incessantly; they sickened of the small-pox; they
chained him to their bed-side by crying, and screaming if they were ever left a moment with any person who could not speak to them in English. He was obliged to sit up with them many nights; to perform for them the lowest offices of assistance.

"They lost no beauty by their disease. Soon after they had recovered, crossing the Rhone with his wards in a tempestuous day, the boat overset. Being an excellent swimmer he saved them both, though with difficulty and danger to himself.

"Mr. Day came back to England in eight months, heartily glad to separate the little squabblers. Sabrina was become the favourite. He placed the fair Lucretia with a chamber milliner. She behaved well, and became the wife of a respectable linen-draper in London. On his return to his native country, he entrusted Sabrina to the care of Mr. Bicknel's mother, with whom she resided some months in a country village, while he settled his affairs at his own mansion-house, from which he promised not to remove his mother.

"It has been said before, that the fame of Dr. Darwin's talents allured Mr. Day to Lichfield. Thither he led, in the spring of the year 1770, the beauteous Sabrina, then thirteen years old, and taking a twelve months' possession of the pleasant mansion in Stow Valley, resumed his preparations for implanting in her young mind the characteristic virtues of Arria, Portia, and Cornelia. His experiments had not the success he wished and expected. Her spirit could not be armed against the dread of pain, and the appearance of danger. When he dropped melted sealing-wax upon her arms she did not endure it heroically, nor when he fired at her petticoats pistols which she believed to be charged with balls, could she help starting aside, or suppress her screams.
"When he tried her fidelity in secret-keeping, by telling her of well-invented dangers to himself, in which greater danger would result from its being discovered that he was aware of them, he once or twice detected her having imparted them to the servants, and to her play-fellows.

"She betrayed an averseness to the study of books, and of the rudiments of science, which gave little promise of ability, that should, one day, be responsible for the education of youths, who were to emulate the Gracchi.

"Mr. Day persisted in these experiments, and sustained their continual disappointment during a year's residence in the vicinity of Lichfield. The difficulty seemed to lie in giving her motive to exertion, self-denial, and heroism. It was against his plan to draw it from the usual sources, pecuniary reward, luxury, ambition, or vanity. His watchful cares had precluded all knowledge of the value of money, the reputation of beauty, and its concomitant desire of ornamented dress. The only inducement, therefore, which this lovely artless girl could have to combat and subdue the natural preference, in youth so blossoming, of ease to pain, of vacant sport to the labour of thinking, was the desire of pleasing her protector, though she knew not how, or why he became such. In that desire, fear had greatly the ascendancy of affection, and fear is a cold and indolent feeling."

Such was the state of things at Christmas, 1770, when Mr. Edgeworth paid Mr. Day a visit. Mr. Day, living at Stow Hill with his difficult charge, was just beginning to wonder if a ready-made wife might not after all suit him best; Edgeworth, increasingly tired of his own lawful encumbrance, was only too ready for sympathetic female society; Honora Sneyd was betrothed to the youthful John André, but was not (so far as I can gather) by any means carried off her feet by him; and Anna Seward was watching with match-making eyes over all and quoting poetry to each in turn.
Her maternal tolerance seems to have extended even to Edgeworth, who rapidly became more interested in Honora than any of them, and knew better how to touch her heart; for he says: "Miss Seward shone so brightly, that all objects within her sphere were dimmed by her lustre. When she perceived the impression that her young friend had made upon me,—an impression, which I believe she discovered, long before I had discovered it myself—she never showed any of that mean jealousy, which is common among young women, when they find that one of their companions, who had never before been thought equal to themselves, is suddenly treated with pre-eminence. On the contrary, she seemed gratified by the praises bestowed upon her friend, and took every opportunity of placing whatever was said or done by Honora in the most advantageous point of view."

Edgeworth having stayed at Stow Hill as long as it was safe, if not longer, returned to Hare Hatch and his inventions. That was early in 1771, and immediately the way was clear Mr. Day seems to have discovered that the real object of his desire was not Sabrina but Honora. He therefore sent Sabrina away to school, and in his odd, oblique manner began to court Honora, who, since her flirtation with André had been closed by Mr. Sneyd's command, was now free to listen to him or to any one, except the married Edgeworth. Mr. Day, however, was not without his suspicions of that gentleman's feelings towards Honora. In Edgeworth's words: "He wrote me one of the most eloquent letters that I ever read, to point out to me the folly and meanness of indulging a hopeless passion for any woman, let her merit be what it might; declaring, at the same time, that he 'never would marry so as to divide himself from his chosen friend'. 'Tell me,' said he, 'have you sufficient strength of mind, totally to subdue love, that cannot be indulged compatibly with peace, or honour, or virtue?'"
"I answered, that nothing but trial could make me acquainted with the influence, which reason might have over my feelings; that I would go with my family to Lichfield, where I should be in the company of the dangerous object; and that I would faithfully acquaint him with all my thoughts and feelings."

With Edgeworth to think of a thing was to do it, and he straightway packed off to Lichfield with his children, one of whom was Maria, afterwards the novelist, and settled down with Mr. Day in a house that still stands, in the Close.

Here let Edgeworth continue the story: "I saw him continually in company with Honora Sneyd: I saw, that he was received with approbation, and that he looked forward to marrying her at no very distant period. When I saw this, I can affirm with truth, that I felt pleasure, and even exultation. I looked to the happiness of two people, for whom I had the most perfect esteem, without the intervention of a single sentiment or feeling, that could make me suspect I should ever repent having been instrumental to their union. I was the depository of every thought, that passed in the mind of Mr. Day; and from every thing he told me, and from my own observations, I was persuaded, that nothing now was wanting, but a declaration on his part, and compliance on the part of the lady.

"Just at this period, when we were walking together one summer's evening in the Close, a public walk at Lichfield, which was then much frequented by the young people, something was said in allusion to the intended match; and Miss Honora Sneyd in reply expressed doubts as to its conclusion. I supposed that she adverted to the state of Mr. Day's mind; and I warmly gave it as my opinion that nothing was likely to prevent what I so much desired. She shook her head. The next morning Mr. Day, in a very
solemn manner, delivered to me a packet of some sheets of paper, which he said was a proposal of marriage to Honora Sneyd. 'It contains,' said he, 'the sum of many conversations that have passed between us. I am satisfied,' he continued, 'that, if the plan of life I have here laid down meets her approbation, we shall be perfectly happy. Honora Sneyd is so reasonable, so perfectly sincere, and so much to be relied on, that, if once she resolves to live a calm, secluded life, she will never wish to return to more gay or splendid scenes. If she once turn away from public admiration, she will never look back again with regret.'

"I took the packet; my friend requested that I would go to the palace, and deliver it myself. I went—and I delivered it with real satisfaction to Honora. She desired me to come the next morning for an answer. Mr. Day expressed extreme anxiety during the interval; more, indeed, than I had ever heard him acknowledge upon any other occasion.

"In the morning I received an answer, which from the manner in which it was delivered to me, seemed to require a farther communication. I gave it to Mr. Day, and left him to peruse it by himself. When I returned, I found him actually in a fever. The letter contained an excellent answer to his arguments in favour of the rights of men, and a clear dispassionate view of the rights of women.

"Miss Honora Sneyd would not admit the unqualified control of a husband over all her actions; she did not feel that seclusion from society was indispensably necessary to preserve female virtue, or to secure domestic happiness. Upon terms of reasonable equality, she supposed, that mutual confidence might best subsist; she said, that, as Mr. Day had decidedly declared his determination to live in perfect seclusion from what is usually called the world, it was fit she should decidedly declare, that she would not change her present mode of life, with which she had no
reason to be dissatisfied, for any dark and untried system, that could be proposed to her.

"Mr. Day continued really ill for some days. Dr. Darwin ordered him to be bled, and administered, wisely, to that part of him which was most diseased—his mind. The intimacy which subsisted among the inhabitants of Lichfield prevented any estrangement between Mr. Day and the family at the palace; and in some weeks a new object of attention was presented to the Lichfield world. Mr. Sneyd (Honora's father), who had hitherto lived in London, now came to establish himself at Lichfield. He assembled all his daughters to reside with him, and with them came his fifth daughter, Miss Elizabeth Sneyd."

This is the first we have heard of Honora's sister, who was destined to take her turn in the affections of both these gentlemen. Miss Elizabeth Sneyd, says Edgeworth, "was in the opinion of half the persons who knew them, the handsomest of the two sisters; her eyes were uncommonly beautiful and expressive, she was of a clear brown, and of a more healthy complexion than Honora. She had acquired more literature, had more what is called the manners of a person of fashion, had more wit, more vivacity, and certainly more humour than her sister. She had, however, less personal grace; she walked heavily, danced indifferently, had much less energy of manner and of character, and was not endowed with, or had not then acquired the same powers of reasoning, the same inquiring range of understanding, the same love of science, or, in one word, the same decisive judgment as her sister.

"Notwithstanding something fashionable in this young lady's appearance, Mr. Day observed her with complacent attention. Her dancing but indifferently, and with no symptom of delight, pleased Mr. Day's fancy; her conversation was playful, and never disputatious, so that Mr. Day had
liberty and room enough, to descant at large and at length upon whatever became the subject of conversation. She was struck by his eloquence, her attention was awakened by the novelty of his opinions; he appeared to her young mind as the most extraordinary and romantic person in the world. His educating a young girl for his wife, his unbounded generosity, his scorn of wealth and titles, his romantic notions of love, which led him to think, that, where it was mutual and genuine, the rest of the world vanished, and lovers became all in all to each other, made a deep impression upon her, and made her imagine, that, if such a man loved her with truth and violence, she was capable of as strong attachment, and of as disinterested sacrifices, as could be made to her. Every body perceived that Miss Elizabeth Sneyd had made a greater impression in three weeks upon Mr. Day, than her superior sister had made in twelve months.

"One restraint, which had acted long and steadily upon my feelings, was now removed; my friend was no longer attached to Miss Honora Sneyd. My former admiration of her returned with unabated ardour. The more I compared her with other women, the more I was obliged to acknowledge her superiority. This admiration was unknown to every body but Mr. Day. He could not see more plainly than I did the imprudence and folly of becoming too fond of an object, which I could not hope to obtain. With all the eloquence of virtue and of friendship, he represented to me the danger, the criminality of such an attachment. I knew that there is but one certain method of escaping such dangers—flight.

"I resolved to go abroad: Mr. Day determined to accompany me to France, and to dedicate a large portion of his time to the acquirement of those accomplishments which he had formerly treated with sovereign contempt. Miss Elizabeth Sneyd had convinced him, that he could not with
propriety abuse and ridicule talents, in which he appeared obviously deficient. She told him, that she considered such acquirements as frivolous, in many situations ridiculous; but that she could not be satisfied with the abhorrence, which upon all occasions he expressed, of accomplishments which he had not been able to attain. On her part she promised not to go to London, Bath, or any other public place of amusement, till his return; and she engaged with alacrity, to prosecute an excellent course of reading, which they had agreed upon before his departure.

"We determined," says Edgeworth, "to pass the winter at Lyons, as it was a place where excellent masters of all sorts were to be found; and there Mr. Day put himself to every species of torture, ordinary and extraordinary, to compel his antigallican limbs, in spite of their natural rigidity, to dance, and fence, and manage the great horse. To perform his promise to Miss E. Sneyd honorably, he gave up seven or eight hours of the day to these exercises, for which he had not the slightest taste, and for which, except horsemanship, he manifested the most sovereign contempt. It was astonishing to behold the energy with which he persevered in these pursuits. I have seen him stand between two boards, which reached from the ground higher than his knees: these boards were adjusted with screws, so as barely to permit him to bend his knees, and to rise up and sink down. By these means M. Huise proposed to force Mr. Day's knees outward; but his screwing was in vain. He succeeded in torturing his patient; but original formation, and inveterate habit, resisted all his endeavours at personal improvement. I could not help pitying my philosophic friend, pent up in durance vile for hours together, with his feet in the stocks, a book in his hand, and contempt in his heart."

Having come to the end of his lessons Mr. Day returned
to England to claim his Rachel—but she would have none of him. She confessed that Thomas Day blackguard had pleased her more than did now Thomas Day gentleman.

That was the end of Mr. Day so far as Lichfield was concerned. After a while he returned to Sabrina, who was growing up into a beautiful and sensible girl, and would have married her but for a misunderstanding of a trifling nature, which, however, to such a mind as his meant everything. He therefore, in spite of her wealth and petite figure, both of which he disliked, married in 1778 a Miss Milnes, who was known as Minerva. What kind of a husband he made we do not know; but in spite of his very odd caprices (including the building of his house with his own hands and forgetting the windows) his widow refused ever to see daylight after his death.

He was killed by being thrown from an unbroken colt which he was convinced he could control by kindness. His great book *Sanford and Merton* appeared between 1783 and 1789. Sabrina, I might add, married Mr. Bicknel.

We left Edgeworth at Lyons, where he was a great man, a social success, and an amateur engineer of real service in diverting the Rhone. In March, 1773, he heard the glad news that his wife was dead, and on the 17th of July he married Honora Sneyd, by special license, in the ladies' choir, in the Cathedral at Lichfield. "Mr. Seward, under whose care (which had been the care of a parent) Honora had been brought up, married us. The good old man shed tears of joy, while he pronounced the nuptial benediction. Mrs. Seward showed us every possible mark of tenderness and affection; and Miss Seward, notwithstanding some imaginary cause of dissatisfaction which she felt about a bridesmaid, was, I believe, really glad to see Honora united to a man, whom she had often said she thought peculiarly suited to her friend in taste and disposition."
Of Honora's married life little is known, but she may have been very happy. She bore Edgeworth two children, Lovell and Honora, before her untimely death in April, 1780. In December of the same year Edgeworth married her sister, Elizabeth Sneyd.

One word more before we leave this conquering Irishman. He leads us to suppose in the foregoing narrative, first published in 1820, that his relations with Miss Seward were cordial. But this, I think, was not the case, although Edgeworth when writing may, in his gay, Hibernian way, have thought so. Things said in print and in conversation can be very different, and it is a lamentable fact that few persons have enough courage to be one's friend behind one's back.

Although no gay Irish carelessness was hers, Miss Seward also, in print, referred to Edgeworth (in her *Life of Darwin*) with kindness if not positive enthusiasm. Their private feelings were, however, not like this. Writing to her friend Whalley in 1791, Miss Seward mentions having seen "the false, the cruel, the murderous Edgeworth," while in Byron's journal we find this passage: "Old Edgeworth, the fourth or fifth Mrs. Edgeworth, and the Miss Edgeworth were in London, 1813. Miss Edgeworth liked, Mrs. Edgeworth disliked, old Edgeworth a bore—the worst of bores—a boisterous Bore. I met them in society once at a breakfast of Sir H. D.'s. Old Edgeworth came in late, boasting that he had given 'Dr. Parr a dressing the night before,' (no such easy matter, by the way). I thought her pleasant. They all abused Anna Seward's memory."

It is not reasonable to suppose that Miss Seward could have really felt any friendliness for any man who deprived her of Honora's company; for she loved Honora much more even than she knew. However, it is rarely given to us to admire our early friends' husbands or wives. And in addition to his
offence in taking Honora away, Edgeworth, in Miss Seward's mind, lay under suspicion of having neglected to care properly for his delicate wife, and thus hastened her end.

To the close of her life Miss Seward dwelt fondly on her early tenderness for Honora, about whose head the halo increased and increased until it assumed the dimensions of an aurora borealis. The first volume of the Swan's collected works has Honora's name on almost every page: Honora was the subject of the last poem she wrote. In later life it was not the least of her melancholy pleasures to discern in others the features of her lost ideal; and it did not add to her distress if the resemblance was observed in a lady of title. This is from Buxton: "Soon after I came, the youthful and lovely Lady Foster Cunliffe descended, like a goddess, amongst us. She unites the most engaging affability to the powers of an ingenious mind and a cultivated understanding, and to the attractions of radiant beauty and majestic grace. She is on a larger scale, both as to face and figure, but I never saw features, or a countenance, so like my lost Honora's. Her complexion is of as glowing bloom, with a superior degree of fairness;—the contour of the face; the form of the mouth; the nose, that between Grecian and Roman, is lovelier than either; the ethereal smile on the lip, and the bright glance of intelligence and joy, are all Honora. The same soft complacency shone in her eyes while she conversed with me. I was obliged to explain the source of those involuntary tears which so often filled my eyes, as she hung on my arm in animated conversation. The regret I felt when we parted was extreme,—more indeed than the shortness of our acquaintance warranted, but for the influence of this endearing, this fascinating resemblance. . . .

"The autumnal glory of this day puts to shame the summer's sullenness. I sit writing upon this dear green terrace, feeding, at intervals, my little golden-breasted
songsters. The embosomed vale of Stow, which you know it overlooks, glows sunny through the Claud-Lorrain tint, which is spread over the scene, like the blue mist over a plumb. How often has our lost Honora hung over the wall of this terrace, enamoured of its scenic graces! Never more will such bright glances discriminate and admire them."

The letters contain also one or two references to Honora's son, Lovell, who inherited the family property. I quote from one to Whalley; the date is 25th November, 1792: "I have seen the dear, dear youth, of whose countenance the former was, at your kind request, induced to take such discriminating notice. On a gloomy afternoon, the 19th of September, as I sat alone in the drawing-room, 'ruminating sweet and bitter thoughts,' a young stranger entered the room with such an interesting though pensive smile, as made him seem 'Wiveners, no elder than a boy'. After desiring him to be seated, I asked if I had ever before had the pleasure of seeing him. He answered hesitatingly, 'yes'. 'Then my recollection strangely fails me; your name sir?' 'Lovell Edgeworth!' Ah, dear Mr. Whalley, what a rapid, what a never till then sensation took possession of my soul! Fervent, instantaneous affection rushing upon my heart for a being whom, the preceding moment, I had considered as a stranger! Involuntarily I seized his hand and burst into tears, exclaiming, 'Do I then indeed behold the very child of dear lost Honora?' When I had become more composed, I looked eagerly for the wished resemblance. I found, or fancied I found, some, but it was in countenance only, not at all in features, and did not amount to likeness. I then walked with him through the apartments of that mansion, which had been the home, the acknowledged happy home, of his amiable, his lovely mother and of her blooming infancy and consummate youth—apartments that yet seemed to breathe of her, that yet retained the vestige
of her enchanting influence; her name inscribed on the windows, her profile on the walls! To these I directed his attention; and above all, to the beauteous print of Romney's Serena, which is exactly what she was at sixteen. I am sure his spirit and heart are all his mother's. His voice has the most touching sweetness, and there seemed the glow of sensibility in every little word, in every gentle exclamation; but he did not look in health, and if 'the silken primrose must fade timelessly,' I shall wish I had never beheld its graces. Ill does that mild spirit seem calculated to sustain the tyrannous caprices of an unfeeling father. He stayed only half an hour. When he took leave, it seemed as if my soul went with him. My eye pursued him to the gate, and, when he vanished, I returned sighing to a solitude which seemed solitude indeed."

One feels that here, at any rate, Miss Seward was entitled to every sigh.
CHAPTER VII

DR. DARWIN

Miss Seward as biographer—An illustrious physician—A soberer of the county of Derby—The benevolent Dr. Darwin—A caustic wit—Lady Northesk's anaemia—Miss Seward offers her blood—A letter to a titled lady—Dr. Darwin's love-letter—Mrs. Darwin's valuable end—The second Mrs. Darwin—The botanic garden and The Botanic Garden—Miss Seward's impromptu—Parody—The Loves of the Triangles—Miss Seward's appreciation of it—Miss Seward's magnanimity.

Next to Garrick and Johnson, Erasmus Darwin was the most considerable man connected with Lichfield; but Garrick and Johnson were born there: Darwin, like Miss Seward, was an alien, merely fixing upon Lichfield as a good place in which to practise as a physician. He came to Lichfield in 1756, at the age of twenty-four, and remained there until 1780, when he moved to Derby.

While he was at Lichfield Dr. Darwin was intimate with the Seward family; it was he, as we have seen, who encouraged the Cygnet's young mind to express itself poetically; and when he died it was Miss Seward who wrote a so-called life of him, which for many years was the only memoir to be obtained. It was not until 1879 that the Doctor's illustrious grandson, Charles Darwin, supplied a really human account of his ancestor, and incidentally set right many of Miss Seward's distortions. For a biography Miss Seward's book could not well be worse; and it is dull too. Everything great in the Doctor's character is omitted; while such trifling as he occasionally condescended to, as in the correspondence
in 1780 between his cat and Miss Seward's, is turned into silliness. It is of the highest importance to read Charles Darwin's memoir (which stands as preface to a translation of Krause's study of the poet and physician) as a corrective; or better still, disregard Miss Seward's altogether.

None the less, if one did that, one would miss some very amusing things, not the least of which is her story of the love affairs of Mr. Day, of which so much was said in the last chapter.

Erasmus Darwin was a physician of much originality and skill. He was blunt in manner, and he had a sarcastic tongue backed by a shrewed intellect and mother wit. His utterance was, however, badly impeded by a stammer. He thought out everything for himself and took no one's word without evidence. He was in fact a born investigator and was greatly in advance of his time, even to the anticipation of some of his grandson's discoveries. He was almost a teetotaller, and a great foe to alcohol. "If you must drink wine," was his inhuman advice, "let it be home-made." "It is well known," says Miss Seward, "that Dr. Darwin's influence and example have sobered the county of Derby."

The adjective most frequently applied to him in those days was benevolent—the benevolent Dr. Darwin. "Professional generosity," says Miss Seward, "distinguished Dr. Darwin's medical practice. While resident in Lichfield, to the priest and lay-vicars of its cathedral, and their families, he always cheerfully gave his advice, but never took fees from any of them. Diligently, also, did he attend to the health of the poor in that city, and afterwards at Derby, and supplied their necessities by food, and all sort of charitable assistance. In each of those towns, his was the cheerful board of almost open-housed hospitality, without extravagance or parade; deeming ever the first unjust, the latter unmanly. Generosity, wit, and science were his household gods."
Miss Seward gives a few examples of Darwin's wit, but only one is really good. This describes one of his encounters with William Robinson, of Lichfield, known as "The Rector," a man of humour and conviviality: "Soon after the subject of common swearing was introduced, Mr. R. made a mock eulogium upon its power to animate dullness, and to season wit.—Dr. Darwin observed, 'Christ says, Swear not at all. St. Paul tells us we may swear occasionally. Mr. Robinson advises us to swear incessantly. Let us compromise between these counsellors and swear by non-en-i-i-tes. I will swear by my im-pu-dence and Mr. Robinson by his mo-de-st-y.'"

Charles Darwin, in his little memoir, is more informing. He records that his grandfather once remarked that common-sense would be improving when men left off wearing enough powder in their heads to make a pudding, women ceased to wear rings in their ears, and fire grates were no longer made of polished steel. He also said that the world is not governed by the clever men but by the active and energetic. It is hardly to be wondered at that a Lichfield potentate gifted with this kind of shrewdness was not a favourite with Dr. Johnson. The two men occasionally met on Johnson's visits to his native city; but they seem to have tacitly agreed that neither was quite the man for the other.

George the Third offered to make Darwin Court physician if he would go to London; but he declined. London, therefore, had to go to him, and on one occasion it did so in the person of Lady Northesk. Miss Seward's account of Lady Northesk's sojourn at Lichfield is too good to omit, while it would not be fair to her to omit it, since it shows her in a kindly light, and perhaps at her very happiest. Lady Northesk, it must be premised, wasting by hæmorrhage, was spending a fortnight at Darwin's house that he might observe her rightly. With her was her daughter Lady
Marianne Carnegie. Miss Seward was asked to come in now and then and contribute to amuse the invalid.

"Miss Seward felt herself extremely interested in this lady, and anxious to see those sufferings relieved which were so patiently sustained. Lady Northesk lay on a couch, through the day, in Dr. Darwin's parlour, drawing with difficulty that breath, which seemed often on the point of final evaporation. She was thin, even to transparency; her cheeks suffused at times with a flush, beautiful, though hectic. Her eyes remarkably lucid and full of intelligence. If the languor of disease frequently overshadowed them, they were always rellumined by every observation to which she listened, on lettered excellence, on the powers of science, or the ingenuity of art. Her language, in the high Scotch accent, had every happiness of perspicuity, and always expressed rectitude of heart and susceptibility of taste.

"Whenever her great and friendly physician perceived his patient's attention engaged by the conversation of the rest of the circle, he sat considering her in meditative silence, with looks that expressed,—You shall not die thus prematurely, if my efforts can prevent it.

"One evening, after a long and intense reverie, he said, —'Lady Northesk, an art was practised in former years, which the medical world has very long disused; that of injecting blood into the veins by a syringe, and thus repairing the waste of diseases like yours. Human blood, and that of calves and sheep, were used promiscuously. Superstition attached impiety to the practice. It was put a stop to in England by a bull of excommunication from some of our Popish Princes, against the practitioners of sanguinary injection.—That it had been practised with success, we may, from this interdiction, fairly conclude; else restraint upon its continuance must have been superfluous. We have a very
ingenious watch-maker here, whom I think I could instruct to form a proper instrument for the purpose, if you chose to submit to the experiment.'

"She replied cheerfully, that she had not the least objection, if he thought it eligible.

"Miss Seward then said—' If the trial should be determined upon, perhaps Lady Northesk would prefer a supply from an healthy human subject, rather than from an animal. My health is perfect, neither am I conscious of any lurking disease, hereditary or accidental. I have no dread of the lancet, and will gladly spare, from time to time, such a portion from my veins to Lady Northesk, as Dr. Darwin shall think proper to inject.'

"He seemed much pleased with the proposal, and his amiable patient expressed gratitude far above the just claim of the circumstance. Dr. Darwin said he would consult his pillow upon it.

"The next day, when Miss S. called upon Lady N. the Doctor took her previously into his study, telling her, that he had resigned all thoughts of trying the experiment upon Lady Northesk; that it had occurred to him as a last resource, to save an excellent woman, whose disorder, he feared, was beyond the reach of medicine; 'but,' added he, 'the construction of a proper machine is so nice an affair, the least failure in its power of acting so hazardous, the chance at last from the experiment so precarious, that I do not choose to stake my reputation upon the risque. If she die, the world will say I killed Lady Northesk, though the London and Bath physicians have pronounced her case hopeless, and sent her home to expire. They have given her a great deal too much medicine. I shall give her very little. Their system of nutritious food, their gravy jellies, and strong wines, I have already changed for milk, vegetables, and fruit. No wines ever; no meat, no strong broth,
at present. If this alteration of diet prove unavailing, her family and friends must lose her.'

"It was not unavailing; she gathered strength under the change from day to day. The disease abated, and in three weeks time she pursued her journey to Scotland, a convalescent, full of hope for herself; of grateful veneration towards her physician, whose rescuing skill had saved her from the grave; and full, also, of overrating thankfulness to Miss S. for the offer she had made. With her, Lady Northesk regularly corresponded from that time till her sudden and deplorable death. All Lady N.'s letters spoke of completely recovered health and strength. She sent Miss Seward a present of some beautiful Scotch pebbles for a necklace, picked up by her own hands, in her Lord's park, and polished at Edinburgh.

"Lady Northesk might have lived to old age, the blessing of her family and friends. Alas! the time had passed by in which Miss Seward was accustomed to expect a letter from her friend! Inquiry taught her that Lady Northesk had perished by the dreadfully-frequent accident of having set fire to her clothes. Lady Marianne Carnegie wrote to Miss S. the year after, and continued to honour her with several letters while her Ladyship lived with her father at Ethie House, on the ocean's edge."

Miss Seward's letter to Lady Marianne Carnegie after the death of Lady Northesk I am tempted to quote. She always wrote well to such people on such occasions.

"Lichfield, March 21, 1785.

"Your Ladyship's kind attention and most welcome letter, highly gratifies, obliges, and honours me. Since I learned the melancholy tidings of dear and honoured Lady Northesk's death, I felt what I believed, an unavailing desire to obtain more particular intelligence than I had the means
of acquiring, concerning the welfare and situation of her 
Lord, and of sweet Lady Marianne, whose virtues and graces 
were in their bud when I had the honour of passing a week 
in Lady Northesk's, Lady Marianne's, and Mrs. Scott's 
society at Lichfield, in the house of Dr. Darwin. Mournful 
was that pleasure, because of the fearful balance in which 
then hung the valuable life of Lady Northesk. Ah! with 
what delight did I learn, from her condescending letters to 
me, of the return of her health, by the prescriptions of Dr. 
Darwin, after those of the London and Bath physicians had 
failed! Sincerely did I deplore the sudden blight upon 
those hopes of her long existence, which were inspired by 
that unexpected, that wonderful recovery.

"To be thus engagingly sought, through motives of 
filial piety, by a daughter of hers, gives me satisfaction, 
which is not the less poignant for being shaded over by a 
sense of mournful gratitude to the eternally absent.

"I am happy to hear you say Lord Northesk is well. 
You do not mention your own health. During that transient 
residence at Lichfield, I observed, with pain, that your Lady-
ship's constitution was very delicate. The years of advancing 
youth have, I trust, brought strength and bloom on their wing.

"For both your sakes I regret that intelligent and ami-
able Mrs. Scott is removed so far from you. She must 
often wish to embrace the lovely daughter of a lost friend; 
a friend so dear and so revered!

"The style of Lady Marianne's letter convinces me that 
she has a mind whose tastes, pursuits and sensibilities pre-
clude the irksome lassitude with which retirement is apt to 
inspire people at her sprightly time of life. Ah! dearest 
Madam, may the consciousness of cheering the declining 
years of a beloved father gild the silent hours, when the 
rocks frown around you with solemn sternness, and the 
winds of winter are howling over the ocean!"
Almost five years are elapsed since Dr. Darwin left Lichfield. A handsome young widow, relict of Colonel Pole, by whom she had three children, drew from us, in the hymeneal chain, our celebrated physician, our poetic and witty friend.

The Doctor was in love like a very Celadon, and a numerous young family are springing up in consequence of a union, which was certainly a little unaccountable; not that there was any wonder that a fine, graceful, and affluent young woman, should fascinate a grave philosopher; but that a sage of no elegant external, and sunk into the vale of years, should, by so gay a lady, be preferred to younger, richer, and handsomer suitors, was the marvel; especially since, though lively, benevolent, and by no means deficient in native wit, she was never suspected of a taste for science, or works of imagination. Yet so it was; and she makes her ponderous spouse a very attached, and indeed devoted wife! The poetic philosopher, in return, transfers the amusement of his leisure hours, from the study of botany and mechanics, and the composition of odes, and heroic verses, to fabricating riddles and charades! Thus employed, his mind is somewhat in the same predicament with Hercules's body, when he sat amongst the women, and handled the distaff.

Dr. Darwin finds himself often summoned to Lichfield; indeed, whenever symptoms of danger arise in the diseases of those whose fortunes are at all competent to the expence of employing a distant physician. When I see him, he shall certainly be informed how kindly your Ladyship enquires after his welfare, and that of his family. His eldest son by his first wife, who was one of the most enlightened and charming of women, died of a putrid fever, while he was studying physic at Edinburgh, with the most sedulous attention, and the most promising ingenuity. His second is an attorney at Derby, of very distinguished merit, both as to
intellect and virtue;—and your play-fellow, Robert, grown to an uncommon height, gay and blooming as a morn of summer, pursues medical studies in Scotland, under happier auspices, I hope, than his poor brother.

"I had the misfortune to lose my mother in the year 1780. My dearest father yet lives, but his existence hangs by a very slender thread; since, however, he suffers no pain, nor depression of spirits, I bless God that he yet lifts up his feeble hands to bless me.

"Lady Marianne Carnegie has no reason to doubt her epistolary talents. The proof of their elegance is before me; but dearer far is their kindness than their grace. Ah! Madam, the affection which that kindness has excited in my heart, creates a tender interest in all you say to me, beyond the reach of literary communication, scenic description, or the most brilliant wit to inspire, unaided by that sentiment which binds me to you!! I am, Madam, &c."

This letter takes us too far into time. We must retrace our steps a little. From the large store of Dr. Darwin's letters that were at Charles Darwin's service in 1879, he selected the following very engaging love-letter from the young doctor, written on Christmas Eve, 1757:

DEAR POLLY,

As I was turning over some old mouldy volumes, that were laid upon a Shelf in a Closet of my Bed-chamber; one I found, after blowing the Dust from it with a Pair of Bellows, to be a Receipt Book, formerly, no doubt, belonging to some good old Lady of the Family. The Title Page (so much of it as the Rats had left) told us it was "a Bouk off very monny muckle valleyed Receipts bouth in Kookery and Physicks". Upon one Page was "To make Pye-Crust,"—in another "To make Wall-Crust".—"To make Tarts,"—and at length "To make Love". "This Receipt," says I, "must be curious, I'll send it to Miss Howard next Post, let the way of making it be what it will,"—Thus it is "To make Love. Take of Sweet-William and of Rose-Mary, of each as much as is sufficient. To the former of these add of Honesty and Herb-of-grace; and to the latter of Eye-bright and Motherwort of each a large handful: mix them separately, and then, chopping them altogether, add one Plumb, two sprigs of Heart's Ease and a little
Tyme. And it makes a most excellent dish, probatum est. Some put in Rue, and Cuckold-Pint, and Heart-Chokes, and Coxcome, and Violets; But these spoil the flavour of it entirely, and I even disapprove of Sallery which some good Cooks order to be mixed with it. I have frequently seen it toss'd up with all these at the Tables of the Great, where no Body would eat of it, the very appearance was so disagreeable."

Then follow'd "Another Receipt to make Love," which began "Take two Sheep's Hearts, pierce them many times through with a Scower to make them Tender, lay them upon a quick Fire, and then taking one handful——-
here Time with his long Teeth had gnawed away the remainder of this Leaf. At the Top of the next Page, begins "To make an honest Man". "This is no new dish to me," says I, "besides it is now quite old Fashioned; I won't read it." Then follow'd "To make a good Wife". "Pshaw," continued I, "an acquaintance of mine, a young Lady of Lichfield, knows how to make this dish better than any other Person in the World, and she has promised to treat me with it sometime," and thus in a Pett threw down the Book, and would not read any more at that Time. If I should open it again to-morrow, whatever curious and useful receipts I shall meet with, my dear Polly, may expect an account of them in another Letter.

I have the Pleasure of your last Letter, am glad to hear thy cold is gone, but do not see why it should keep you from the concert, because it was gone. We drink your Health every day here, by the Name of Dulcinea del Toboso, and I told Mrs. Jervis and Miss Jervis that we were to have been married yesterday, about which they teased me all the Evening. I heard nothing of Miss Fletcher's Fever before. I will certainly be with Thee on Wednesday evening, the Writings are at my House, and may be dispatched that night, and if a License takes up any Time (for I know nothing at all about these Things) I should be glad if Mr. Howard would order one, and by this means, dear Polly, we may have the Ceremony over next morning at eight o'clock, before any Body in Lichfield can know almost of my being come Home. If a License is to be had the Day before, I could wish it may be put off till late in the Evening, as the Voice of Fame makes such quick Dispatch with any News in so small a Place as Lichfield.—I think this is much the best scheme, for to stay a few Days after my Return could serve no Purpose, it would only make us more watch'd and teased by the Eye and Tongue of Impertinence.—I shall by this apprize my Sister to be ready, and have the House clean, and I wish you would give her Instructions about any trivial affairs, that I cannot recollect, such as a cake you mentioned, and tell her the Person of whom, and the Time when it must be made, &c. I'll desire her to wait upon you for this Purpose. Perhaps Miss Nelly White need not know the precise Time till the Night before, but this as you please, as I (illegible). You could rely upon her Secrecy, and it's a Trifle, if any Body should know. Matrimony, my dear Girl, is undoubtedly a serious affair, (if any Thing be such) because it is an affair for Life: But, as we have deliberately determined, do not let us be frightened about this change of Life; or however, not let any breathing Creature perceive that we have either Fears or Pleasures upon
THE FIRST MRS. DARWIN

this Occasion: as I am certainly convinced, that the best of Confidants (th'o' experienced on a thousand other Occasions) could as easily hold a burning cinder in their Mouth as anything the least ridiculous about a new married couple! I have ordered the Writings to be sent to Mr. Howard that he may peruse and fill up the blanks at his Leisure, as it wilt (I foresee) be dark night before I get to Lichfield on Wednesday. Mrs. Jervis and Miss desire their Compl. to you, and often say how glad she shall be to see you for a few Days at any Time. I shall be glad, Polly, if thou hast Time on Sunday night, if thou wilt favour me with a few Lines by the return of the Post, to tell me how Thou dost, &c.—My Compl. wait on Mr. Howard if He be returned.—My Sister will wait upon you, and I hope, Polly, Thou wilt make no Scruple of giving her Orders about whatever you chuse, or think necessary. I told her Nelly White is to be Bride-Maid. Happiness attend Thee! adieu.

From, my dear Girl,
Thy sincere Friend,
E. DARWIN.

P.S.—Nothing about death in this Letter, Polly.

That letter, which is not the least charming thing in a charming memoir, tells us in its few lines more about Dr. Darwin than all Miss Seward's large book can. It was written to Miss Mary Howard, whom the Doctor married at the end of 1757.

According to Edgeworth, Mrs. Darwin and Miss Seward were not the best of friends; but if Miss Seward's book is to be believed they were at any rate at her death-bed united very intimately. I quote Miss Seward's account of her very voluble end:—

"Upon the distinguished happiness of those [her married] years, she spoke with fervour to two intimate female friends in the last week of her existence, which closed at the latter end of the summer, 1770. 'Do not weep for my impending fate,' said the dying angel, with a smile of unaffected cheerfulness. 'In the short term of my life, a great deal of happiness has been comprised. The maladies of my frame were peculiar; the pains in my head and stomach, which no medicine could eradicate, were spasmodic and violent; and required stronger measures to render them supportable while they lasted, than my constitution could sustain without
injury. The periods of exemption from those pains were frequently of several days duration, and in my intermissions I felt no indication of malady. Pain taught me the value of ease, and I enjoyed it with a glow of spirit, seldom, perhaps, felt by the habitually healthy. While Dr. Darwin combated and assuaged my disease from time to time, his indulgence to all my wishes, his active desire to see me amused and happy, proved incessant. His house, as you know, has ever been the resort of people of science and merit. If, from my husband’s great and extensive practice, I had much less of his society than I wished, yet the conversation of his friends, and of my own, was ever ready to enliven the hours of his absence. As occasional malady made me doubly enjoy health, so did those frequent absences give a zest, even to delight, when I could be indulged with his company. My three boys have ever been docile, and affectionate.—Children as they are, I could trust them with important secrets, so sacred do they hold every promise they make. They scorn deceit, and falsehood of every kind, and have less selfishness than generally belongs to childhood.—Married to any other man, I do not suppose I could have lived a third part of those years, which I have passed with Dr. Darwin; he has prolonged my days, and he has blessed them.’

‘Thus died the superior woman, in the bloom of life, sincerely regretted by all, who knew how to value her excellency, and passionately regretted by the selected few, whom she honoured with her personal and confidential friendship.”

For eleven years the Doctor, who had been left with three sons, the youngest of whom was Robert Waring Darwin, father of the naturalist, remained single: not it is said—roundly enough by his grandson—without assaults upon his loneliness by Miss Seward herself, to whose ill success is attributed the tone of certain passages of her book.
THE SECOND MRS. DARWIN

In 1781, however, the Doctor married for the second time, his choice being the widow of Col. Chandos-Pole, whom he had long admired, and to whom he had written some of his infrequent lyrics. Miss Seward thus describes the lady: "Without that native perception and awakened taste for literary excellence, which the first charming Mrs. Darwin possessed, this lady became tenderly sensible of the flattering difference between the attachment of a man of genius, and wide celebrity, and that of young fox-hunting esquires, dashing militarys, and pedantic gowns-men; for she was said to have specimens of all these classes in her train. They could speak their own passion, but could not immortalise her charms. However benevolent, friendly, and sweet-tempered, she was not perhaps exactly the woman to have exclaimed with Akenside:—

Mind, mind alone, bear witness earth and heaven!
The living fountain in itself contains
Of beauteous and sublime!

"Yet did her choice support his axiom when she took Dr. Darwin for her husband. Darwin, never handsome, or personally graceful, with extremely impeded utterance; with hard features on a rough surface; older much in appearance than in reality; lame and clumsy!—and this, when half the wealthy youth of Derbyshire were said to have disputed the prize with him.

"But it was not without some stipulations, apparently hazardous to his pecuniary interest, that Mrs. Pole was persuaded to descend from her Laura-eminence to wifehood, and probably to silence for ever, in the repose of possession, those tender strains, which romantic love and despair, and afterwards the stimulating restlessness of doubtful hope, had occasionally awakened."

The stipulation was that the doctor should leave Lichfield, a city to which Mrs. Chandos-Pole had many objections;
and this he did, settling in Derby, in 1780, and thus passing out of Miss Seward’s life.

Darwin’s poetising was probably not taken very seriously by him, at any rate at first. It was chiefly done in his carriage on his professional rounds. In 1775 he sent some verses to a friend after “twenty years’ neglect of the muses,” and these with the threat that he was giving up poetry. But in 1778, when he was forty-seven, he bought an estate near Lichfield and converted it into a botanic garden, and this, and a fortunate inspiration on the part of Miss Seward herself, turned his thoughts back towards verse. I tell the story in her own eloquent words:

“About the year 1777, Dr. Darwin purchased a little, wild, umbrageous valley, a mile from Lichfield, amongst the only rocks which neighbour that city so nearly. It was irriguous from various springs, and swampy from their plentitude. A mossy fountain, of the purest and coldest water imaginable, had, near a century back, induced the inhabitants of Lichfield to build a cold bath in the bosom of the vale. That, till the doctor took it into his possession, was the only mark of human industry which could be found in the tangled and sequestered scene.

“One of its native features had long excited the attention of the curious; a rock, which, in the central depth of the glen, drops perpetually, about three times in a minute. Aquatic plants border its top and branch from its fissures. No length of summer drought abates, no rains increase its humidity, no frost congeals its droppings. The Doctor cultivated this spot,

And Paradise was open’d in the wild.

“In some parts he widened the brook into small lakes, that mirrored the valley; in others, he taught it to wind between shrubby margins. Not only with trees of various
growth did he adorn the borders of the fountain, the brook, and the lakes, but with various classes of plants, uniting the Linnean science with the charm of landscape.

"For the Naiad of the fountain, he wrote the following inscription:—

SPEECH OF A WATER NYMPH

If the meek flower of bashful dye,
Attract not thy incurious eye;
If the soft, murmuring rill to rest
Encharm not thy tumultuous breast,
Go, where Ambition lures the vain,
Or Avarice harters peace for gain!

"Dr. Darwin restrained his friend Miss Seward's steps to this her always favourite scene till it had assumed its new beauties from cultivation. He purposed accompanying her on her first visit to his botanic garden, but a medical summons into the country deprived her of that pleasure. She took her tablets and pencil, and, seated on a flower-bank, in the midst of that luxuriant retreat, wrote the following lines, while the sun was gilding the glen, and while birds, of every plume, poured their song from the boughs.

O, come not here, ye Proud, whose breasts infold
Th' insatiate wish of glory, or of gold;
O come not ye, whose branded foreheads wear
Th' eternal frown of envy, or of care;
For you no Dryad decks her fragrant bowers,
For you her sparkling urn no Naiad pours;
Unmark'd by you light Graces skim the green,
And hovering Cupids aim their shafts unseen.

But, thou! whose mind the well-temper'd ray
Of Taste, and Virtue, lights with purer day;
Whose finer sense each soft vibration owns,
Mute and unfeeling to discorded tones;
Like the fair flower that spreads its lucid form
To meet the sun, but shuts it to the storm;
For thee my borders nurse the glowing wreath,
My fountains murmur, and my zephyrs breathe;
My painted birds their vivid plumes unfold,
And insect armies wave their wings of gold.
And if with thee some hapless maid should stray,
Disastrous love companion of her way,
O lead her timid step to yonder glade,
Whose weeping rock incumbent alders shade!
There, as meek Evening wakes the temperate breeze,
And moonbeams glimmer through the trembling trees,
The rills, that gurgle round, shall soothe her ear,
The weeping rock shall number tear for tear;
And as sad Philomel, alike forlorn,
Sings to the night, reclining on her thorn,
While, at sweet intervals, each falling note
Sighs in the gale, and whispers round the grot,
The sister-woe shall calm her aching breast,
And softest slumbers steal her cares to rest.

Thus spoke the Genius as he stept along,
And bade these lawns to Peace and Truth belong;
Down the steep slopes he led, with modest skill,
The grassy pathway and the vagrant rill;
Stretch’d o’er the marshy vale the willowy mound,
Where shines the lake amid the culver’d ground;
Rais’d the young woodland, smooth’d the wavy green,
And gave to Beauty all the quiet scene.

O! may no ruder step these bower’s prophane,
No midnight wassailers deface the plain;
And when the tempests of the wintry day
Blow golden Autumn’s varied leaves away,
Winds of the North, restrain your icy gales
Nor chill the bosom of these hallowed vales!

“When Miss Seward gave this little poem to Dr. Darwin, he seemed pleased with it, and said, ‘I shall send it to the periodical publications; but it ought to form the exordium of a great work. The Linnean System is unexplored poetic ground, and an happy subject for the muse. It affords him scope for poetic landscape; it suggests metamorphoses of the Ovidian kind, though reversed. Ovid made men and women into flowers, plants, and trees. You should make flowers, plants, and trees, into men and women. I,’ con-

1 By the Genius of the place is meant its first, cultivator, Dr. Darwin.— (Miss Seward’s note.)
tinued he, 'will write the notes, which must be scientific; and you shall write the verse.'

"Miss S. observed, that, besides her want of botanic knowledge, the plan was not strictly proper for a female pen; that she felt how eminently it was adapted to the efflorescence of his own fancy.

"He objected the professional danger of coming forward an acknowledged poet. It was pleaded, that on his first commencing medical professor, there might have been no danger; but that, beneath the unbounded confidence his experienced skill in medicine had obtained from the public, all risk of injury by reputation flowing in upon him from a new source was precluded; especially since the subject of the poetry, and still more the notes, would be connected with pathology.

"Dr. Darwin took his friend's advice and very soon began his great poetic work."

*The Botanic Garden* resulted, published in two parts: *The Loves of the Plants* in 1789, and *The Economy of Vegetation* in 1792. In the notes to the work Darwin states it as his opinion that poetry consists in the application of the most picturesque epithets. Here Miss Seward and he joined hands cordially.

From Dr. Darwin's great poem I do not quote. But his methods I propose to display by a burlesque. There are some writers who are as well illustrated in parody as in the original, and Dr. Darwin is perhaps one of them. Miss Seward considered *The Botanic Garden* a work of the highest poetic genius, and she devoted half her book on its author to an analysis of the poem's merits. That was in 1803. Four years later she wrote thus of Wordsworth: "Surely Wordsworth must be mad as was ever the poet Lee. Those volumes of his, which you were so good to give me, have excited, by turns, my tenderest and warm admiration, my contemptuous astonishment and disgust."
The two latter rose to their utmost height while I read about his dancing daffodils, ten thousand, as he says, in high dance in the breeze beside the river, whose waves dance with them, and the poet’s heart, we are told, danced too. Then he proceeds to say, that in the hours of pensive or of pained contemplation, these same capering flowers flash on his memory, and his heart, losing its cares, dances with them again. Surely if his worst foe had chosen to caricature this egotistical manufacturer of metaphysic importance upon trivial themes, he could not have done it more effectually!"

Are we wrong a hundred years after in considering Wordsworth’s “Daffodils” among the loveliest of the imperishably lovely things in English literature and preferring the Anti-Jacobin’s fun to Dr. Darwin’s seriousness?

This is the arrow that the Anti-Jacobin let fly at the author of The Botanic Garden, purporting to be the work of the ingenious Mr. Higgins of St. Mary Axe; but really written by Frere, Canning and Ellis, Frere beginning it, Ellis continuing and Canning completing. I omit the prose argument, but certainly not the footnotes:

THE LOVES OF THE TRIANGLES
A Mathematical and Philosophical Poem
Inscribed to Dr. Darwin

Argument of the First Canto

Warning to the profane not to approach—Nymphs and Deities of Mathematical Mythology—Cyclops of a pensive disposition—Pendulums, on the contrary, playful—and why?—Sentimental union of the Naiads and Hydrostatics—Marriage of Euclid and Algebra—Pulley the emblem of Mechanics—Optics of a licentious disposition—distinguished by her Telescope and Green Spectacles—Hyde-Park Gate on a Sunday Morning—Cockneys—Coaches.—Didactic Poetry—Nonsense—Love delights in Angles or Corners—Theory of Fluxions explained—Trochoid, the Nymph of the Wheel—Smoke-Jack described—Personification of elementary or culinary Fire.—Little Jack Horner—Story of Cinderella—
—Rectangle, a Magician, educated by Plato and Menecmus—in love with three Curves at the same time—served by Gims or Genii—transforms himself into a Cone—The Three Curves requite his passion—
DR. ERASMUS DARWIN

FROM THE PICTURE BY WRIGHT OF DERBY IN THE NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY
"LOVES OF THE TRIANGLES"

description of them—Parabola, Hyperbola, and Ellipsis—Asymptotes—
Conjugated Axes—Illustrations—Rowell, Barras, and Lepaux—the
Three Virtuous Directors—Macbeth and the Three Witches—The Three
Fates—The Three Graces—King Lear and his Three Daughters—Cathe-
rine Wheel—Catastrophe of Mr. Gingham, with his Wife and Three
Daughters overturned in a one-horse chaise—Dislocation and Contusion
two kindred Fiends—Mail Coaches—Exhortation to Drivers to be care-
ful—Genius of the Post-Office—Invention of Letters—Digamma—Double
Letters—remarkable Direction of one—Hippona, the Goddess of Hack-
horses—Anecdote of the Derby Diligence—Parameter and Abscissa unite
to overpower the Ordinate, who retreats down the Axis Major, and forms
himself into a Square—Isosceles, a Giant—Dr. Rhomboides—Fifth Pro-
position, or Asses Bridge—Bridge of Lodi—Buonaparte—Raft and
Widnills—Exhortation to the recovery of our Freedom—Conclusion.

Stay your rude steps, or c'er your feet invade;¹
The muses' haunts, ye sons of War and Trade!
Nor you, ye legion fiends of Church and Law,
Pollute these pages with unhallow'd paw!
Debas'd, corrupted, grovelling, and confin'd,
No Definitions touch your senseless mind;²
To you, no Postulates prefer their claim;³
No ardent Axioms your dull souls inflame;⁴
For you no Tangents touch, no Angles meet;⁵
No Circles join in osculation sweet!⁶

For me, ye Cissoids, round my temples bend;⁷
Your wandering curves; ye Conchoïds extend;⁸

¹ (Line 1 to 4.) Imitated from the introductory couplet to the Economy of
Vegetation.

"Stay your rude steps, whose throbbing breasts infold
The legion fiends of glory and of gold."

This sentiment is here expanded into four lines.

² (L. 6.) Definition—A distinct notion explaining the genesis of a thing—
Wolfus.

³ (L. 7.) Postulate—A self-evident proposition.

⁴ (L. 8.) Axiom—An indemonstrable truth.

⁵ (L. 9.) Tangent—So called from touching, because they touch circles,
and never cut them.

⁶ (L. 10.) Circles—See Chambers's Dictionary, article Circle.

(Ditto.) Osculation—For the Os-culation, or kissing of circles and other
curves, see Huygens, who has veiled this delicate and inflammatory subject
in the decent obscurity of a learned language.

⁷ (L. 11.) Cissoid—A curve, supposed to resemble the sprig of Ivy, from
which it has its name, and therefore peculiarly adapted to poetry.

⁸ (L. 12.) Conchoïds, or Conchylis—a most beautiful and picturesque
curve; it bears a fanciful resemblance to a Conch shell. The Conchoïd is
Let playful Pendules quick vibration feel,
While silent Cyclois rests upon her wheel;
Let Hydrostatics, simpering as they go,¹
Lead the light Naiads on fantastic toe;
Let shrill Acoustics tune the tiny lyre;²
With Euclid sage fair Algebra conspire;³
Th' obedient pulley strong Mechanics ply,⁴
And wanton Optics roll the melting eye!

I see the fair fantastic forms appear,
The haunting drapery and the languid leer;
Fair Sylphish forms—who, tall, erect, and slim,⁵
Dart the keen glance, and stretch the length of limb;
To viewless harpings weave the meanless dance,
Wave the gay wreath, and titter as they prance.

Such rich confusion charsms the ravish'd sight,⁶
When vernal Sabbaths to the Park invite;
Mounts the thick dust, the coaches crowd along,
Presses round Grosvenor-gate th' impatient throng;
White-muslin'd misses and mamas are seen
Link'd with gay Cockneys, glittering o'er the green:
The rising breeze unnumber'd charms displays,
And the tight ancle strikes th' astonish'd gaze.

capable of infinite extension, and presents a striking analogy between the
animal and mathematical creation. Every individual of this species, con-
taining within itself a series of young Conchoids for several generations, in
the same manner as the Aphides, and other insect tribes, are observed to do.

¹ (L. 15.) Hydrostatics—Water has been supposed, by several of our
philosophers, to be capable of the passion of love. Some later experiments
appear to favour this idea—water, when prest by a moderate degree of heat,
has been observed to simper, or simmer, (as it is more usually called). The
same does not hold true of any other element.

² (L. 17.) Acoustics—The doctrine or theory of sound.

³ (L. 18.) Euclid and Algebra—The loves and nuptials of these two in-
teresting personages, forming a considerable epis-ode in the third canto, are
purposely omitted here.

⁴ (L. 19.) Pulley—So called from our Saxon word pull, signifying to pull
or draw.

⁵ (L. 23.) Fair Sylphish forms—Vide modern prints of nymphs and
shepherds dancing to nothing at all.

⁶ (L. 27.) Such rich confusion—Imitated from the following genteel and
sprightly lines of the first canto of the Loves of the Plants:

“So bright its folding canopy withdrawn,
Glides the gilt landau o'er the velvet lawn,
Of beaux and belles displays the glittering throng,
And soft airs fan them as they glide along.”
"LOVES OF THE TRIANGLES"

But chief, thou Nurse of the Didactic Muse,
Divine Nonsense, all thy soul infuse;
The charms of secants and of tangents tell
How loves and graces in an angle dwell;¹
How slow progressive points protract the line;²
As pendant spiders spin the filmy twine;

¹ (L. 38.) Angle—Gratus puellæ risus ab Angulo.—Hor.
² (L. 39.) How slow progressive points—The author has reserved the
picturesque imagery which the Theory of Fluxions naturally suggested for
his Algebraic Garden; where the fluxions are described as rolling with an even
current between a margin of curves of the higher order, over a pebbly
channel, inlaid with Differential Calculus.

In the following six lines he has confined himself to a strict explanation
of the theory, according to which Lines are supposed to be generated by the
motion of Points—Planes by the lateral motion of Lines and Solids from Planes,
by a similar process.—Quere—Whether a practical application of this theory
would not enable us to account for the Genesis, or original formation of
Space itself, in the same manner in which Dr. Darwin has traced the whole
of the organized creation to his Six Filaments.—Vide Zoonomia. We may
conceive the whole of our present universe to have been originally con-
centrated in a single point—We may conceive this primeval Point, or
Punctum Saliens of the universe, envolving itself by its own energies, to
have moved forwards in a right line, ad infinitum, till it grew tired—After
which the right line which it had generated would begin to put itself in
motion in a lateral direction, describing an Area of infinite extent. This
Area, as soon as it became conscious of its own existence, would begin to
ascend or descend, according as its specific gravity might determine it, forming
an immense solid space, filled with Vacuum, and capable of containing the
present existing universe.

Space being thus obtained, and presenting a suitable Nidus, or receptacle
for the generation of Chaotic Matter, an immense deposit of it would gradually
be accumulated:—After which, the Filament of fire being produced in the
chaotic mass, by an idiosyncrasy or self-formed habit analogous to fermention,
exlosion would take place; suns would be shot from the central chaos
—planets from suns, and satellites from planets. In this state of things the
Filament of organisation would begin to exert itself, in those independent
masses which, in proportion to their bulk, exposed the greatest surface to the
action of light and heat. This Filament, after an infinite series of ages,
would begin to ramify, and its viviparous offspring would diversify their
forms and habits, so as to accommodate themselves to the various incunabula
which nature had prepared for them. Upon this view of things, it seems
highly probable that the first effort of Nature terminated in the production
of Vegetables, and that these, being abandoned to their own energies, by
degrees detached themselves from the surface of the earth, and supplied
themselves with wings or feet, according as their different propensities
How lengthen'd lines, impetuous sweeping round,
Spread the wide plane, and mark its circling bound:
How planes, their substance with their motion grown,
Form the huge cube, the cylinder, the cone.

Lo! where the chimney's sooty tube ascends,
The fair Trochais from the corner bends;¹
Her coal-black eyes upturn'd, incessant mark
The eddying smoke, quick flame, and volant spark;
Mark with quick ken, where flashing in between
Her much-lov'd Smoke-jack glimmers thro' the scene;
Mark how his various parts together tend,
Point to one purpose—in one object end:
The spiral grooves in smooth meanders flow,
Drags the long chain, the polish'd axles glow,
While slowly circumvolves the piece of beef below:
The conscious fire with bickering radiance burns,²
Eyes the rich joint, and roasts it as it turns.
So youthful Horner roll'd the rogueish eye,
Cull'd the dark plum from out his Christmas pye,
And cried, in self-applause—"How good a boy am I."

So, the sad victim of domestic spite,
Fair Cinderella, past the wintry night,
In the lone chimney's darksome nook immured,
Her form disfigured, and her charms obscured.
Sudden her god-mother appears in sight,
Lifts the charm'd rod, and chants the mystic rite;
determined them, in favour of aerial or terrestrial existence. Others, by an
inherent disposition to society and civilization, and by a stronger effort of
volition, would become Men. These, in time, would restrict themselves
to the use of their hind feet; their tails would gradually rub off, by sitting
in their caves or huts, as soon as they arrived at a domesticated state: they
would invent language, and the use of fire, with our present, and hitherto
imperfect, system of society. In the mean while, the fuci and algae, with the
corallines and madreporas, would transform themselves into fish, and would
gradually populate all the sub-marine portion of the globe.

¹ (L. 46.) Trochais—The Nymph of the Wheel, supposed to be in love
with Smoke-Jack.

² (L. 56.) The conscious fire—The sylphs and genii of the different
elements have a variety of innocent occupations assigned them: those of Fire
are supposed to divert themselves with writing the name of Kunkel in
phosphorus. See Economy of Vegetation.

"Or mark with shining letters Kunkel's name
In the slow phosphor's self-consuming flame."
"LOVES OF THE TRIANGLES"

The chaunted rite the maid attentive hears,
And feels new ear-rings deck her listening ears;¹
While 'midst her towering tresses, aptly set,
Shines bright, with quivering glance, the smart aigrette;
Brocaded silks the splendid dress complete,
And the glass slipper grasps her fairy feet.
Six cock-tail'd mice transport her to the ball,²
And liveried lizards wait upon her call.

Alas! that partial Science should approve
The sly Rectangle's too licentious love!²

¹ (L. 68.) Listening ears—Listening, and therefore, peculiarly suited to
a pair of diamond ear-rings. See the description of Nebuchadnezzar, in his
transformed state.

Nor flattery's self can pierce his pendant ears.

In poetical diction, a person is said to "breathe the blue air," and to "drink
the hoarse wave!"—not that the colour of the sky, or the noise of the water,
has any reference to drinking or breathing, but because the poet obtains the
advantage of thus describing his subject under a double relation, in the same
manner in which material objects present themselves to our different senses
at the same time.

² (L. 73.) Cock-tail'd mice—Cockilibus Muris. Ovid. There is reason to
believe, that the murine, or mouse species, were anciently much more numer-
ous than at the present day. It appears, from the sequel of the line, that
Semiramis surrounded the city of Babylon with a number of these animals.

Dictum altam

Cocilibus Muris cinsisse Semiramis Urban.

It is not easy at present to form any conjecture with respect to the end,
whether of ornament or of defence, which they could be supposed to answer.
I should be inclined to believe that, in this instance, the mice were dead, and
that so vast a collection of them must have been furnished by way of tribute,
to free the country from these destructive animals. The superabundance of the
murine race must have been owing to their immense fecundity, and to the
comparatively tardy reproduction of the feline species. The traces of this
disproportion are to be found in the early history of every country. The
ancient laws of Wales estimate a Cat at the price of as much corn as would
be sufficient to cover her, if she were suspended by the tail, with her fore feet
touching the ground.—See Howel Dha.—In Germany it is recorded that an
army of rats, a larger animal of the mus tribe, were employed as the ministers
of divine vengeance against a feudal tyrant; and the commercial legend of
our own Whittington might probably be traced to an equally authentic origin.

² (L. 76.) Rectangle—"A figure which has one angle, or more, of ninety
degrees."—Johnson's Dictionary. It here means a right-angled triangle,
which is therefore incapable of having more than one angle of ninety degrees,
but which may, according to our author's Prospoforia, be supposed to be in
love with three, or any greater number of Nymphs.
For three bright nymphs the wily wizard burns;—
Three bright-eyed nymphs requite his flame by turns,
Strange force of magic skill! combin'd of yore
With Plato's science, and Menecmus' lore.¹
In Africk's schools, amid those sultry sands,
High on its base where Pompey's Pillar stands,
This learnt the Seer; and learnt, alas! too well,
Each scribbled Talisman, and smoky spell:
What mutter'd charms, what soul-subduing arts
Fell Zatanai to his sons imparts.²

Gins—a black and huge! who on Dom-Daniel's cave²
Writhe your scorched limbs on sulphur's azure wave;³
Or, shivering yell, amidst eternal snows,
Where cloud-cap'd Caf protrudes his granite toes:⁶
(Bound by his will, Judea's fabled King,⁷
Lord of Aladdin's lamp and mystic ring.)
Gins! ye remember, for your toil convey'd.
Whate'er of drugs the powerful charm could aid;

¹ (L. 80.) Plato's and Menecmus' lore—Proclus attributes the discovery of the Conic Sections to Plato, but obscurely. Eratosthenes seems to adjudge it to Menecmus. "Neque Menecmus necesse erit in cono secare ternarios."—Vide Montucla. From Greece they were carried to Alexandria, where (according to our author's beautiful fiction) Rectangle either did or might learn magic.
² (L. 86.) Zatanai—Supposed to be the same with Satan.—Vide the New Arabian Nights, translated by Casotte, author of "Le Diable amoureux".
³ (L. 87.) Gins—the Eastern name for Genii.—Vide Tales of ditto.
⁴ (Ditto.) Dom-Daniel—a sub-marine palace near Tunis, where Zatanai usually held his court.—Vide New Arabian Nights.
⁵ (L. 88.) Sulphur—a substance which, when cold, reflects the yellow rays, and is therefore said to be yellow. When raised to a temperature at which it attracts oxygen, (a process usually called burning), it emits a blue flame. This may be beautifully exemplified, and at a moderate expense, by igniting those fasciculi of brimstone matches, frequently sold (so frequently, indeed, as to form one of the London cries,) by women of an advanced age in this metropolis. They will be found to yield an azure, or blue light.
⁶ (L. 90.) Caf—The Indian caucasus.—Vide Bailly's Lettres sur l'Atlantide, in which he proves that this was the native country of Gog and Magog, (now resident in Guildhall), as well as of the Peris, or fairies, of the Asiatic romances.
⁷ (L. 91.) Judea's fabled King—Mr. Higgins does not mean to deny that Solomon was really King of Judæa. The epithet fabled applies to that empire over the Genii, which the retrospective generosity of the Arabian fabulists has bestowed upon this Monarch.
"LOVES OF THE TRIANGLES"

Air, earth and sea ye search'd, and where below
Flame embryo lavas, young volcanoes glow—
Gins! ye beheld appall'd, th' enchant'rs hand
Wave in dark air th' hypothenus' wand;
Saw him the mystic circle trace, and wheel
With head erect, and far extended heel; 2
Saw him, with speed that mock'd the dazzled eye,
Self-whirl'd, in quick gyrations eddying fly:
Till done the potent spell—behold him grown
Fair Venus' emblem—the Phoenician Cone. 3

Triumphs the Seer, and now secure observes
The kindling passions of the rival Curves.

And first, the fair Parabola behold, 4
Her timid arms, with virgin blush, unfold!
Though, on one focus fix'd, her eyes betray
A heart that glows with love's restless sway ; 5

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1 (L. 96.) Young volcanos—The genesis of burning mountains was never, till lately, well explained. Those with which we are best acquainted are certainly not vivaparous; it is therefore probable that there exists, in the centre of the earth, a considerable reservoir of their eggs, which, during the obstetrical convulsions of general earthquakes, produce new volcanos.

2 (L. 100.) For extended heel—The personification of the Triangle, besides answering a poetical purpose, was necessary to illustrate Mr. Higgins's philosophical opinions. The ancient mathematicians conceived that a Cone was generated by the revolution of a Triangle; but this, as our author justly observes, would be impossible, without supposing in the Triangle that expansive nisus, discovered by Blumenbach, and improved by Darwin, which is peculiar to animated matter, and which alone explains the whole mystery of organization. Our enhancer sits on the ground, with his heels stretched out, his head erect, his wand (or hypothenuse) resting on the extremities of his feet and the tip of his nose (as is finely expressed in the engraving in the original work), and revolves upon his bottom with great velocity. His skin, by magical means, has acquired an indefinite power of expansion, as well as that of assimilating to itself all the aste of the air which he decomposes by expiration from his lungs—an immense quantity, and which, in our present unimproved and un-economical mode of breathing, is quite thrown away—by this simple process the transformation is very naturally accounted for.

3 (L. 104.) Phoenician Cone—It was under this shape that Venus was worshipped in Phoenicia. Mr. Higgins thinks it was the Venus Urania, or Celestial Venus; in allusion to which, he supposes that the Phoenician grocers first introduced the practice of preserving sugar loaves in blue or sky-coloured paper—He also believes that the comical form of the original grenadiers' caps was typical of the loves of Mars and Venus.

4 (L. 107.) Parabola—The curve described by projectiles of all sorts, as bombs, shuttle-cocas, &c.
Though, climbing oft, she strive with bolder grace
Round his tall neck to clasp her fond embrace,
Still e'er she reach it, from his polish'd side
Her trembling hands in devious tangents glide.

Not thus Hyperbola—with subtler art
The blue-eyed wanton plays her changeful part;
Quick as her conjugated axes move
Through every posture of luxurious love,
Her sportive limbs with easiest grace expand;
Her charms unveil'd, provoke the lover’s hand:—
Unveil’d, except in many a flimsy ray
Where light Asymptotes o'er her bosom play,²
Nor touch her glowing skin, nor intercept the day.

Yet why, Ellipsis, at thy fate repine?³
More lasting bias, secure joys are thine.
Though to each fair his treach’rous wish may stray,
Though each, in turn, may seize a transient sway,
’Tis thine, with mild coercion, to restrain,
Twine round his struggling heart, and bind with endless chain.

Thus, happy France! in thy regenerate land,
Where Taste with Rapine saunters hand in hand;
Where, nursed in seats of innocence and bliss,
Reform greets Terror with fraternal kiss;
Where mild Philosophy first taught to scan
The wrongs of Providence and rights of Man;
Where Memory broods o'er Freedom’s earlier scene,
The laudern bright, and brighter guillotine:—
Three gentle swains evolve their longing arms,
And woo the young Republic’s virgin charms,
And though proud Barras with the fair succeed,
Though not in vain th’ attorney Rewbell plead,
Oft doth th’ impartial nymph their love forego,
To clasp thy crooked shoulders, blest Lepaux!

So, with dark dirge athwart the blasted heath,
Three Sister Witches hail’d th’ appall’d Macbeth.

¹(L. 115.) Hyperbola—Not figuratively speaking, as in rhetoric, but mathematically; and therefore blue-eyed.
²(L. 122.) Asymptotes—“Lines which, though they may approach still nearer together, till they are nearer than the least assignable distance, yet, being still produced infinitely, will never meet.”—Johnson’s Dictionary.
³(L. 124.) Ellipsis—A curve, the revolution of which on its axis produced an ellipsoid, or solid, resembling the eggs of birds, particularly those of the gallinaceous tribe. Ellipsis is the only curve that embraces the cone.
“LOVES OF THE TRIANGLES”

So, the three Fates beneath grim Pluto’s roof,
Strain the dun warp, and weave the murky woof;
’Till deadly Atropos with fatal sheers
Slits the thin promise of th’ expected years,
While ’midst the dungeon’s gloom or battle’s din,
Ambition’s victims perish, as they spin.

Thus, the three Graces on th’ Idalian green,
Bow with deft homage to Cythera’s Queen;
Her polish’d arms with pearly bracelets deck,
Part her light locks, and bare her ivory neck;
Round her fair form ethereal odours throw,
And teach th’ unconscious zephyrs where to blow;
Floats the thin gauze, and glittering as they play,
The bright folds flutter in philogistic day.

So, with his Daughters three, th’ unscepter’d Lear
Heav’d the loud sigh, and pour’d the glistering tear;¹
His Daughters three, save one alone, conspire
(Rich in his gifts) to spurn their generous sire;
Bid the rude storm his hoary tresses drench,
Stint the spare meal, the hundred knights retrench;
Mock his mad sorrow, and with alter’d mien
Renounce the Daughter and assert the Queen.
A father’s griefs his feeble frame convulse,
Rack his white head, and fire his feverous pulse;
Till kind Cordelia sooths his soul to rest,
And folds the Parent-Monarch to her breast.

Thus some fair spinster grieves in wild affright,
Vexed with dull megrim, or vertigo light;
Pleas’d round the fair Three dawdling doctors stand,
Wave the white wig, and stretch the asking hand,
State the grave doubt, the nauseous draught decree;
And all receive, though none deserve, a fee.

So down thy hill, romantic Ashbourne, glides
The Derby ditty, carrying Three Insides.
One in each corner sits, and lolls at ease,
With folded arms, propt back, and outstretched knees;
While the press’d Bodkin, punch’d and squeeze’d to death,
Sweats in the midmost place, and scolds and pants for breath.

¹(L. 161.) Glistering tear—This is not a’medicall metaphor. The word glistering is here used as the participle of the verb to glister, and is not in any way connected with the substantive of the same name. “All that glitters is not gold”—are the words of our old, but immortal, bard.
The frequent solicitations which we have received for a continuation of the Loves of the Triangles, have induced us to lay before the public (with Mr. Higgins's permission) the concluding lines of the canto. The catastrophe of Mr. and Mrs. Gingham, and the episode of Hippona, contained, in our apprehension, several reflections of too free a nature. The conspiracy of Paramater and Abscissa, against the Ordinate, is written in a strain of poetry so very splendid and dazzling, as not to suit the more tranquil majesty of diction, which our readers admire in Mr. Higgins. We have therefore begun our extract with the Loves of the Giant Isosceles, and the picture of the Asses' Bridge, and its several illustrations.

Extract.

'Twas thine alone, O youth of giant frame,
Isosceles!¹ that rebel heart to tame!
In vain coy Mathesis² thy presence flies;
Still turn her fond hallucinating³ eyes;
Thrills with Galvanic fires⁴ each tortuous nerve,
Throb her blue veins, and dies her cold reserve.
Yet strives the Fair, till in the giant's breast
She sees the mutual passion flame confess'd:
Where'er he moves, she sees his tall limbs trace
Internal angles equal at the base;⁵

¹ "Isosceles"—An equi-ruarl triangle—it is represented as a giant; because Mr. Higgins says he has observed that procerity is much promoted by the equal length of the legs, more especially when they are long legs.

² "Mathesis"—The doctrine of mathematics—Pope calls her mad Mathesis.

—Vide Johnson's Dictionary.

³ "Hallucinating"—The disorder with which Mathesis is affected is a disease of increased volition, called erotomania, or sentimental love. It is the fourth species of the second genus of the first order and third class; in consequence of which Mr. Hackman shot Miss Ray in the lobby of the playhouse.—Vide Zoonomia, Vol. II. pages 363, 365.

⁴ "Galvanic fires"—Dr. Galvani is a celebrated philosopher at Turin. He has proved that the electric fluid is the proximate cause of nervous sensibility; and Mr. Higgins is of opinion, that, by means of this discovery, the sphere of our disagreeable sensations may be, in future, considerably enlarged. "Since dead frogs (says he) are awakened by this fluid, to such a degree of posthumous sensibility, as to jump out of the glass in which they are placed, why not men, who are sometimes so much more sensible when alive? And if so, why not employ this new stimulus to deter mankind from dying (which they so pertinaciously continue to do) of various old-fashioned diseases, notwithstanding all the brilliant discoveries of modern philosophy, and the example of Count Cagliostro?"

⁵ "Internal angles," &c.—This is an exact versification of Euclid's fifth Theorem.—Vide Euclid in loco.
“LOVES OF THE TRIANGLES”

Again she doubts him: but produced at will,
She sees th’ external angels equal still.

Say, blest Isosceles! what favouring pow’r,
Or love or chance, at night’s auspicious hour,
While to the asses’-bridge1 enthranced you stray’d,
Led to the asses’-bridge th’ enamour’d maid?
The asses’-bridge, for ages doom’d to bear
The deaf’ning surge assault his wooden ear,
With joy repeats sweet sounds of mutual bliss,
The soft susurrant sigh, and gently murmuring kiss.

So thy dark arches, London Bridge, bestride
Indignant Thames, and part his angry tide.
There oft,—returning from those green retreats,
Where fair Vanbrugh decks her sylvan seats;
Where each spruce nymph, from city compters free,
Sips the froth’d syllabub, or fragrant tea;
While with sliced ham, scraped beef, and burnt champagne,
Her ’prentice lover soothes his amorous pain;—
There oft, in well-trimm’d wherry, glide along
Smart beaux and giggling belles, a glittering throng;
Smells the tarr’d rope—with undulation fine.
Flaps the loose sail—the silken awnings shine;
“Shoot we the Bridge!”—the vent’rous boatmen cry—
“Shoot we the Bridge!”—th’ exulting fare2 reply.
—Down the steep fall the headlong waters go,
Curls the white foam, the breakers roar below;
The veering helm the dext’rous steersman stops,
Shifts the thin oar, the fluttering canvas drops;
Then, with clos’d eyes, clenched’ds hands, and quick-drawn breath,
Darts at the central arch, nor heeds the gulph beneath.
—Full ‘gainst the pier the unsteady timbers knock,
The loose planks starting own the impetuous shock;
The shifted oar, dropt sail, and steadied helm,
With angry surge the closing waters whelm—
—Laughs the glad Thames, and clasps each fair one’s charms
That screams and scrambles in his oosy arms.

1“Asses’-bridge”—Pons Asinorum—The name usually given to the before-
mentioned theorem—though, as Mr. Higgins thinks, absurdly. He says,
that having frequently watched companies of asses during their passage ot
a bridge, he never discovered in them any symptoms of geometrical instinct
upon the occasion. But he thinks that with Spanish asses, which are much
larger (vide Townsend’s Travels through Spain) the case may possibly be
different.

2“Fare”—A person, or any number of persons, conveyed in a hired
vehicle by land or water.
DR. DARWIN

—Drench’d each smart garb, and clogg’d each struggling limb,
Far o’er the stream the cocknies sink or swim;
While each badg’d boatman, clinging to his oar,
Bounds o’er the buoyant wave, and climbs the applauding shore.

So, towering Alp 15 from thy majestic ridge
Young Freedom gaz’d on Lodi’s blood-stain’d bridge;
Saw, in thick throongs, conflicting armies rush,
Ranks close on ranks, and squadrons squadrons crush;
Burst in bright radiance through the battle’s storm,
Wav’d her broad hands, display’d her awful form;
Bade at her feet regenerate nations bow,
And twin’d the wreath round Buonaparte’s brow.
—Quick with new lights, fresh hopes, and alter’d zeal,
The slaves of despot’s dropp’d the soften’d steel;
Exulting Victory crown’d her favourite child,
And freed Liguria clapp’d her hands and smil’d.

Nor long the time, e’er Britain’s shore shall greet
The warrior-sage, with gratulation sweet:
Eager to grasp the wreath of naval fame,
The Great Republic plans the floating frame!
—O’er the huge plain gigantic Terror stalks,
And counts with joy the close cumpacted balks:
Of young-e’y’d Massacres, the cherub crew,
Round their grim chief the mimic task pursue;
Turn the stiff screw, 3 apply the strengthening clamp,
Drive the long bolt, or fix the stubborn cramp,
Lash the reluctant beam, the cable splice,

1 "Badg’d Boatmen"—Boatmen sometimes wear a badge, to distinguish them; especially those who belong to the Watermen’s Company.

2 "Alp or Alps"—A ridge of mountains which separate the North of Italy from the South of Germany. They are evidently primeval and volcanic, consisting of granite, toadstone, and basalt, and several other substances, containing animal and vegetable recrementes, and affording numberless undoubted proofs of the infinite antiquity of the earth, and of the consequent falsehood of the Mosaic Chronology.

3 "Turn the stiff screw," &c.—The harmony and imagery of these lines are imperfectly imitated from the following exquisite passage in the Geography of Vegetation:

"Gnomes, as you now dissect, with hammers fine,
The Granite rock, the nodal’d flint calcine;
Grind with strong arm, the circling chertz betwixt,
Your pure Ka—o—in’s and Pe—tunt—ses mixt."

Canto 2d. l. 297.
“LOVES OF THE TRIANGLES” 135

Join the firm dove-tail with adjustment nice,
Thro’ yawning fissures urge the willing wedge,
Or give the smoothing adze a sharper edge,
—Or grouped in fairy’s bands, with playful care,
The unconscious bullet to the furnace bear,
Or gaily tittering, tip the match with fire,
Prime the big mortar, bid the shell aspire;
Applaud, with tiny hands, and laughing eyes,
And watch the bright destruction as it flies.

Now the fierce forges gleam with angry glare—
The wind-mill 1 waves his woven wings in air;
Swells the proud sail, the exulting streamers fly,
Their nimble fins unnumber’d paddles ply:
—Ye soft airs breathe, ye gentle billows waft,
And, fraught with Freedom, bear th’ expected Raft!
—Perch’d on her back, behold the patriot train,
Muir, Ashley, Barlow, Tone, O’Connor, Paine;
While Tandy’s hand directs the blood-empurpled rein.
}

Ye Imps of Murder, guard her angel form,
Check the rude surge, and chase the hovering storm;
Shield from contusive rocks her timber limbs,
And guide the sweet Enthusiast 2 as she swims;
—And now, with web-foot oars, she gains the land,
And foreign footsteps press the yielding sand:
—The communes spread, the gay departments smile,
Fair freedom’s plant o’ershades the laughing isle:
Fir’d with new hopes, th’ exulting peasant sees
The Gallic streamer woo the British breeze;
While, pleas’d to watch its undulating charms,
The smiling infant 3 spreads his little arms.

Ye Sylphs of Death, on demon pinions flit
Where the tall guillotine is rais’d for Pitt:

1 "The Windmill,” &c.—This line affords a striking instance of the sound conveying an echo to the sense. I would defy the most unfeeling reader to repeat it over, without accompanying it by some correspondent gesture imitative of the action described.

2 "Sweet enthusiast,” &c.—A term usually applied in allegoric and technical poetry, to any person or object to which no other qualification can be assigned.—Chambers’s Dictionary.

3 "The Smiling Infant”—Infancy is particularly interested in the diffusion of the new principles.—See the Bloody Buoy—see also the following description and prediction :—
DR. DARWIN

To the pois’d plank tie fast the monster’s back,¹
Close the nice slider, ope th’ expectant sack;
Then twitch, with fairy hands, the frolic pin—
Down falls the impatient axe with deafening din;
The liberated head rolls off below,
And simpering Freedom hails the happy blow!

By The Loves of the Triangles Miss Seward was directly
hit too, for the Doctor’s poetical convention was also hers.
She tells us that Dr. Darwin was annoyed by the parody,
but Edgeworth’s story is the reverse of that. Miss Seward
herself claims to have admired the satire.

Miss Seward herself seems to have escaped the parodists.
In so far as she had come before Anna Matilda and the
Della Crusans, who had not, however, a tithe of her strength
of mind, she was, I suppose, aimed at by Gifford in the
Baviad and Meriadiad; but not directly. Her life being done
before Drury Lane required an ode for its reopening after
the fire, she has alas! no place in the Rejected Addresses.

In spite of Darwin’s own peccancy, and in spite of the
Anti-Jacobin, Miss Seward remained true to her belief in the
Doctor’s genius, even although she was sore about his treat-
ment of her, not only as a woman but as a poet. Writing in
1801 to defend him against a detractor, she says: “I disavow
all partiality to Darwin. His conduct to me has not been
calculated to inspire it. He has taken pleasure, from the
time he commenced author himself, to depreciate my writings,

“Here Time’s huge fingers grasp his giant mace,
And dash proud superstition from her base;
Rend her strong towers and gorgeous fanes, &c.
&c. &c. &c. &c.
While each light moment, as it passes by,
With feathery foot and pleasure-twinkling eye,
Peeds from its baby-hand with many a kiss
The callow nestlings of domestic bliss.” Botanic Garden.

¹“`The monster’s back’” — Le Monstre Pitt, l’ennemi du genre humain.—
See Debates of the Legislators of the Great Nation passim.
MAGNANIMITY

which, till then, he had warmly praised. His taking my landscape of the valley he cultivated near Lichfield, written and published in my name, in the *Gentleman’s Magazine* and *Annual Register*, before one line of his noble poem was written, and years before it came out; taking it, I say, and publishing it as the exordium of his work, without the least acknowledgment, could have no tendency to produce in me an exaggerating spirit concerning his talents. But treatment, thus unhandsome, shall not induce me to suppress the fervour of my testimony in their favour, when they appear to me unjustly arraigned.”
CHAPTER VIII

THE BATH-EASTON VASE

Lady Miller—Walpole’s banter—Fanny Burney takes notes—The Vase—The elegy on Lady Miller—Bath-Easton Immortals—Miss Seward disclaims flattery—Burns and the milk-woman—Miss Seward as a patron—Newton the carpenter—Miss Seward’s opinions on poetry—George Dyer and the Swan—A lapse into discretion—Helen Maria Williams—Jane Bull—The pursuit of Charlotte Smith—The defence of Bath-Easton—The “Elegy on Captain Cook”—Dr. Darwin’s complicity—Dr. Johnson’s praise—Hayley’s “Impromptu”—The Rev. Richard Polwhele—Reciprocity.

Dr. Darwin, as we have seen, was the discoverer of Miss Seward’s muse; but its first real encouragement from the outside world came from Lady Miller of Bath-Easton, herself a wealthy writer of verse and some travels in Italy, who cut a notable figure during the Bath season, and whose fame might easily have suggested to Dickens the character of Mrs. Leo Hunter.

Lady Miller née Riggs was a good-humoured, vain woman with pretensions to control taste. Her husband was a soldier who, having retired, was made an Irish baronet, and was willing to join her in spending her money on harmless literary vanities. They lived near Bath; but Walpole shall tell the story: “You must know, Madam, [Mrs. Conway] that near Bath is erected 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. Ten years ago there lived a Madam Riggs, an old rough humourist who passed for a wit; her daughter, who passed for nothing,
married to a Captain Miller, full of good-natured officiousness. These good folks were friends of Miss Rich, who carried me to dine with them at Bath-Easton, now Pindus. They caught a little of what was then called taste, built and planted, and begot children, till the whole caravan were forced to go abroad to retrieve.

"Alas! Mrs. Miller is returned a beauty, a genius, a Sappho, a tenth Muse, as romantic as Mademoiselle Scudéri, and as sophisticated as Mrs. Vesey. The Captain's fingers are loaded with cameos, his tongue runs over with virtù, and that both may contribute to the improvement of their own country, they have introduced bouts-rimes as a new discovery. They hold a Parnassus fair every Thursday, give out rhymes and themes, and all the flux of quality at Bath contend for the prizes. A Roman vase dressed with pink ribbons and myrtles 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 acknowledgment, kneel to Mrs. Calliope Miller, kiss her fair hand, and are crowned by it with myrtle, with—I don't know what.

"You may think this is fiction, or exaggeration. Be dumb, unbelievers! The collection is printed, published.—Yes, on my faith, there are bouts-rimes on a buttered muffin, made by her Grace the Duchess of Northumberland;¹ receipts to make them by Corydon the venerable, alias George

¹This is her Grace's effort:—

<table>
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<tr>
<th>The pen which I now take and</th>
<th>brandish</th>
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<tr>
<td>Has long lain useless in my</td>
<td>standish</td>
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<tr>
<td>Know, every maid, from her own</td>
<td>patten</td>
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<tr>
<td>To her who shines in glossy</td>
<td>sattin</td>
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<tr>
<td>That could they now prepare an</td>
<td>oglio</td>
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<tr>
<td>From best receipt of book in</td>
<td>folio</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ever so fine, for all their</td>
<td>puffing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I should prefer a butter'd</td>
<td>muffin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A muffin Jove himself might</td>
<td>feast on</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If eat with Miller at</td>
<td>Bath Easton.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Pitt; others very pretty, by Lord Palmerston; some by Lord Carlisle: many by Mrs. Miller herself, that have no fault but wanting metre; an Immortality promised to her without end or measure. In short, since folly, which never ripens to madness but in this hot climate, ran distracted, there never was anything so entertaining or so dull—for you cannot read so long as I have been telling."

Miss Seward, who wrote as a friend, corroborates, in a footnote to one of her poems, Walpole's story. "The verses were deposited in an antique Etruscan vase, and were drawn out by gentlemen appointed to read them aloud, and to judge of their rival merits. These gentlemen, ignorant of the authors, selected three poems from the collection which they thought most worthy of the three myrtle wreaths, decreed as the rewards and honours of the day. The names of the persons who had obtained the prizes were then announced by Lady Miller."

One of Miss Seward's prize poems, by the way, was an "Invocation to the Comic Muse"; but there is no evidence that that abstraction ever heard the call. Fortunately, perhaps, for Bath-Easton's peace of mind.

Walpole later described Lady Miller as a "jovial heap of contradictions, familiar with the mob while stifled with diamonds; attentive to the most minute privileges of her rank while almost shaking hands with a cobbler". We see her also together with certain other of Miss Seward's closer friends, of whom we are to know more—Mr. Whalley and Miss Weston—in a passage in Fanny Burney's Diary in 1780, which I am disposed to quote in full for the cultured Bath atmosphere of it: "Miss Weston instantly made up to me, to express her 'delight' at my return to Bath, and to beg she might sit by me. Mrs. Whalley, however, placed me upon a sofa between herself and Mrs. Aubrey; which, however, I did not repine at, for the extreme delicacy of
ANNA SEWARD

AFTER THE PAINTING BY OPIE
Miss Weston makes it prodigiously fatiguing to converse with her, as it is no little difficulty to keep pace with her refinement, in order to avoid shocking her by too obvious an inferiority in daintiness and *ton*.

"Mr. Whalley, to my great astonishment, so far broke through his delicacy as to call to me across the room, to ask me divers questions concerning my London journey; during all which, Mr. Anstey, who sat next to him, earnestly fixed his eyes in my face, and both then and for the rest of the evening, examined me with a look of most keen penetration.

"As soon as my discourse was over with Mr. Whalley (during which, as he called me by my name, everybody turned towards me, which was not very agreeable), Lady Miller arose, and went to Mrs. Thrale, and whispered something to her. Mrs. Thrale then rose, too, and said, ‘If your ladyship will give me leave, I will first introduce my daughter to you’—making Miss Thrale, who was next her mother, make her reverences.

"‘And now,’ she continued, ‘Miss Burney, Lady Miller desires to be introduced to you.’

"Up I jumped and walked forward; Lady Miller, very civilly more than met me half-way, and said very polite things, of her wish to know me, and regret that she had not sooner met me, and then we both returned to our seats.

"Do you know now that, notwithstanding Bath Easton is so much laughed at in London, nothing here is more tonish than to visit Lady Miller, who is extremely curious in her company, admitting few people who are not of rank or of fame, and excluding of those all who are not people of character very unblemished.

"Some time after, Lady Miller took a seat next mine on the sofa, to play at cards, and was exceedingly civil indeed—scolded Mrs. Thrale for not sooner making us

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1 Author of the *New Bath Guide*. 
acquainted, and had the politeness to offer to take me to
the balls herself, as she heard Mr. and Mrs. Thrale did not
choose to go.

"After all this, it is hardly fair to tell you what I think
of her. However, the truth is, I always, to the best of my
intentions, speak honestly what I think of the folks I see,
without being biassed either by their civilities or neglect;
and that you will allow is being a very faithful historian.

"Well, then, Lady Miller is a round, plump, coarse-look-
ing dame of about forty, and while all her aim is to appear
an elegant woman of fashion, all her success is to seem an
ordinary woman in very common life, with fine clothes on.
Her manners are bustling, her air is mock-important, and
her manners very inelegant.

"So much for the lady of Bath Easton; who, however,
seems extremely good-natured, and who is I am sure ex-
tremely civil."

How Miss Seward came to know Lady Miller I have
not discovered, but probably through the Whalleys. At
any rate she quickly took her place as the best of the Bath-
Easton poetesses, and to the vase was due, in addition to
much rubbish, two of her most serious and worthy effusions
—the "Elegy on Captain Cook," and the "Monody on
André". Lady Miller, however, preferred poems in praise
of Lady Miller.

Many of the results were published in four deplorably
silly volumes called Poetical Amusements in a Villa near
Bath, which Lady Miller edited and which was bought very
eagerly. Garrick was another Lichfieldian among the poets,
but not Johnson, who indeed was very caustic upon the
whole choir of Bath-Easton songsters, including the Duchess.

When Lady Miller came to die in 1781, it was Miss
Seward who wrote the most ambitious of the memorial
poems upon her, as well as an epitaph cut on her monument
in the Abbey Church at Bath. The memorial poem suggests that by the death of Lady Miller (here called, by a kind of law compelling the poets of that day to be dissatisfied with real names, Laura) the nine muses were bereaved beyond repair. After stating that she owed to Laura's kind bidding the first public recognition of the pipings of her own artless reed, Miss Seward enumerates the other Bath-Easton poets. The footnotes, I may remark, are all hers:—

Clad in the fine Asbestos light attire,
   By elegance invove with nicest care,
Of pow'r to pass unhurt the public fire,
   Where critic Wit bids all his beacons glare,
The sprightly Winford,¹ at her Laura's lance,
   Pass'd through its milder flames, amid th' applauding train.

The Nymph of Dronfield² there with snowy hand,
   To gay Thalia swept the silver wires;
The frolic Muse attends her soft command,
   And the free strain with many a charm inspires;
Long be it hers in lettered scenes to please,
   By quick Invention's fire, and Nature's graceful ease.

Dear to the parent-source from whence I drew
   The spark of life, and all that life endears,
Time-honour'd Graves!³ with duteous joy I view
   Thy hollies blushing through the snow of years;
Their wintry colours the chaste shrine adorn,
   Vivid as Genius blends in life's exulting morn.

Triumphant youth fann'd the poetic flame
   Of noble Fielding, whose energetic soul
So early wing'd him up the steeps of Fame,
   And gain'd, e'er manhood's dawn, the distant goal;
Still in his lays the wounded breast shall find
   A charm, that soothes to rest each Vulture of the mind.⁴

¹ Sprightly Winford—See Miss Winford's elegant poem, the Hobby Horse, printed in the fourth volume of Poetical Amusements at Bath Easton.
² Nymph of Dronfield—See Miss Roger's Invocation to the Comic Muse, fourth volume of Poetical Amusements.
³ Time-honour'd Graves—Rev. Mr. Graves, of Claverton, author of the Spiritual Quixote, &c.
⁴ Vulture of the mind—Alluding to the Chorus Ex Prometheo, presented to the vase by the Hon. Charles Fielding, then of Harrow School. See fourth volume of Poetical Amusements.
THE BATH-EASTON VASE

From woodland scenes, in Stamford's flow'ry vale,¹
With Learning, Peace, and Virtue, fond to dwell,
And ring his wild harp to the passing gale,
While Dryden's spirit hover'd o'er the shell,
Invention led her musing son among
Sweet Laura's Delphic shades, that crown'd his mystic song.

And graceful Jerningham benignly brought
His gentle Muse, of bigot rage² the foe;
And skill'd to blend the force of reasoning thought
With Sensibility's enamour'd glow;
Skill'd o'er frail love³ to draw the sacred veil,
Whose mournful texture floats on Fancy's buoyant gale.

There tender Whalley⁴ struck his silver lyre
To Love and Nature strung,—as mingled flows
With elegiac sweetness epic fire,
In the soft story of his Edwy's woes;
Its beauteous page shall prompt, through distant years,
The thrill of generous joy, the tide of pitying tears.

Fix'd with the lofty strain of Grecian love,
Whose light shone radiant on the morn of time,
The bard of Æschylus,⁵ in leisure hour,
Breathe'd through the grove the lyric song sublime,
And see! poetic Sympathy ordains
Health to the kindling soul from his inspiring strains.

Anstey himself would join the sportive band,
Anstey, enliven'er of the serious earth!
At the light waving of whose magic wand,
New fountains rose, and flow with endless mirth;
Pouring on Fancy's soul a glow as warm,
As Bath's rich springs impart to Health's reviving form.

Immortal Truth, for his salubrious song,
Pluck'd the unfading laurel from her face;

¹ Stamford's flow'ry vale—Rev. Mr. Butt, rector of Stamford, in Worcestershire. His verses on the Pythagorean System had the wreath. See fourth volume of Poetical Amusements.
² Bigot rage—Mr. Jerningham, though a Roman catholic, has ably combated monastic enthusiasm, in his ingenious poem, the Nun.
³ Frail love—See Mr. Jerningham's Funeral of Aribert.
⁴ There tender Whalley—Rev. Mr. Whalley, of Langford Court, near Bristol, author of that interesting love poem, Edwy and Edilda.
⁵ Bard of Æschylus—The learned and Rev. Mr. Potter, translator of Æschylus.
THE CALL OF THE MEDIocre

Since oft, amid the laugh of Momus' throng,
Wisdom has gravely smil'd, and prais'd the strain;
Pleas'd to behold the Fools of Fashion hit
By new, unrival'd shafts of ridicule and wit.

Bright glows the list with many an honour'd name,
Whom Taste in Laura's votive throng surveys;
But Havilah flashes in a type of flame,
Trac'd by a sun-beam the broad letters blaze!
Rapt Britain reads the long-recording fire,
Claps her triumphant hands, and bids her realms admire!

As to Lady Miller herself, this is perhaps the most
descriptive stanza:—

When Fashion o'er her threw the shining vest,
When Pleasure round her trill'd the Syren song,
The sighs of Pity swell'd her polish'd breast,
The tones of Mercy warbled from her tongue;
She bade the fires of classic lore pervade
With charity's kind warmth, misfortune's barren shade.

In these verses we see Miss Seward in a very characteristic
attitude, for never throughout her life could she resist a bad
poet. It was indeed a matter almost of religion with the
Swan and her friends to praise what was inferior, and very
courageously to use adjectives about it. They felt it their
duty not only to like the mediocre but to say why they
liked it; not only to dislike the good but to say why they
disliked it. They had all the epithets ready, and they all
disclaimed flattery.

Miss Seward herself disclaimed it continually. Her
praises were criticisms. Perhaps the best passage in which
she expresses this view is to be found in a letter to Mr.
Repton, the landscape-gardener; but not a landscape-gardener
only: "a gentleman not less distinguished by private worth
and polished manners". As a specimen of Mr. Repton's
own epistolary style (for all her friends had rhetoric), let me
quote his excuse for not going to see a famous performer.
After observing that the little he had to bestow must be
confined to merit in distress, he added that "it is only for the greatly affluent to reward Genius in affluence; since, though a watering-pot may refresh a bed of drooping flowers, nothing less than the liberal showers of the wide horizon can nourish the woods and lawns, or ripen to perfection the abundant harvest." "No metaphor," said Miss Seward, "can be more complete than that,—no allusion more happy.

"By reflecting back upon your recollection," she continues, "this admirable sentence, I justify myself against your charge of partial praise on the theme of your epistolary talents; like the lover who, when his mistress tells him he flatters her, leads the nymph to the looking-glass."

And then comes her avowal as to flattery: "My pen, let me tell you, never troubles itself to manufacture unmeaning compliments, and scorns the task of disingenuous flattery—but, as I love commendation myself, where my heart tells me I deserve it, and where I have any confidence in the judgment of the commendor, so I also love to indulge my spirit in the luxury of encomium where I can honestly bestow it. That I have an eye quick to discern the emanations of genius, and of just and generous sentiments; and a mind which delights to contemplate their graces, and to applaud their cultivation; is at least my happiness, if it is not allowed to be my praise. Your making these propensities of mine an insuperable bar to a communication of my letters to any of your friends, is surely a needless scruple. If this is not false modesty, the frank permission I often give my companions of perusing ingenious letters addressed to myself, though sprinkled over with the hyperboles of partiality, must strike them as a proof of vanity."

In a letter to Mr. Court Dewes, "a refined gentleman and an excellent scholar," whose villa at Wellstown was "the abode of belles-lettres and the arts," Miss Seward returns to this congenial theme: "How erroneously do the undiscern-
ing many judge of character! My enemies say, 'Miss Seward flatters'. That is the construction which their spleen and coldness of heart puts upon a warm desire to please and oblige those I think estimable; upon the vivid glow of that praise which my heart delights to pour, when it can sincerely pour it. Truth can never be flattery. Alas! to the utter incapacity of flattering, even those I esteem and admire, I have, through life, owed the loss of much favour that was, in itself, most desirable to my affections—but sincerity is the first duty of friendship; I should blush to commend, if I had not courage to confess my disapprobation."

Mr. Dewes, I may say, was an ideal host for Miss Seward. He held in his house a regular morning concert, for two hours, he and his two brothers performing on different instruments and the clergyman on the bass viol; while the wintry hours of day and night were speeded "on smooth and rapid pinions" by reading aloud from "the poetic stores". Mr. Dewes often thought Miss Seward's approbation too glowing, and she his too coy, but they were perfectly in unison as to the strength and fertility of imagination in the letters of her friend Mrs. Knowles, and in the belief that Hayley was better than Dryden.

Poetry in this circle was chiefly a matter of adjectives: a poet who called a river "gulphy" had done his work. They could not discriminate. Even when they were sound about a writer they were unsound too, to adjust the balance and maintain their credit for astigmatism. Take for example Miss Seward's dealings with Burns. She recognised, in 1787, his genius, but with whom does she bracket him? With whom? With the milk-woman of Bristol, Hannah More's ungrateful protegée, Ann Yearsley! Thus: "I feel very much, as you do, about the Yearsley and the Burns. They are both miracles. His imagination is more luxuriant; and if it has more weeds, it has also more flowers, and some of
them are most beautifully and originally tinted. Perhaps she has more depth and strength of thought; but I much oftener, and shall continue much oftener to look into his works than to her’s, for they have sweeter poetic witchery. His Vision; the descriptive part of The Winter’s Night, for the sentimental part is trite; the dear Briggs of Ayr; the Cottager’s Saturday Night; the Mouse; and the Mountain Daisy, enchant me.

“It would here be injustice to Lactilla not to observe, that her poem On the Sudden Death of an Amiable Lady, is original and finely imagined. Her Address to Friendship is spirited and new, upon a very hackneyed theme, and it strongly paints the jealous and gloomy energy of her mind.”

And so forth. And then with a sigh of relief the critic gets back to her own ground again: “Ere I quit the subject of new-risen genius in our art, let me speak to you of the most amiable poem I have read this many a day. I should like much to converse with the youthful author. It is the junior Mr. Hoole’s poem, The Curate, that I mean.”

And here I might perhaps interpolate an account of Miss Seward’s own adventures as a patron of poetry, for she, too, like Lady Miller, encouraged the young, among her protégés being H. F. Cary, the translator of Dante; and she, too, like Hannah More, nourished genius in the lowly.

In one of her letters she quotes Hayley’s criticism of Burns: “I admire the Scotch peasant but do not think him superior to your poetical carpenter”. Miss Seward’s poetical carpenter was William Newton. The poem entitled “Independent Industry true Virtue,” printed in her works and addressed to Newton, is accompanied by a lengthy footnote telling Newton’s story, which I quote entire; for it is a curious document even among such curious documents as the condescension of the powerful to the humble has often produced:—
“William Newton's father was a carpenter in the Peak of Derbyshire, with a large family. He was too ignorant to give his son any literary advantages, and too indigent to procure them for him. A dame-school, where a little writing was taught, formed the boundary of our minstrel's education. He worked at his father's trade, and early became so ingenious, skilful, and industrious, as to be employed by a few families of consequence in the neighbourhood. On those occasions, it has been said, he used to examine books, accidentally left in the apartments where he worked. They awakened into sensibility and expansion the internal fires of his spirit. Every species of fine writing engaged his attention, but poetry enchanted him. From that period all the earnings of his mechanic industry, which he could prudently spare, were expended in purchasing books.

“Mr. Cunningham, an ingenious and lettered clergyman in the Peak, accidentally discovered this flower of the desert. A reserved disposition, modest and unobtrusive, had over his talents cast a veil, which few had capacity to pierce. Newton was employed, not only to execute, but to construct machines for the Derbyshire cotton-mills, and he had been previously retained as one of the master-workmen in the Duke of Devonshire's splendid buildings at Buxton. Early in life he married a woman of his own rank, and is known to be a kind husband, a tender father, and, in all respects, a worthy man.

“When the author was with her father at his living in the Peak, in the summer 1783, Mr. Cunningham told her, that Newton had a considerable number of well-chosen books, religious, philosophic, historic, and poetic. It was then that Mr. C---- first introduced him to her, as the minstrel of her native mountains. Mr. Newton is not ill looking, but has nothing in his appearance beyond the decent and the clean, till conversation on ingenious subjects lights up his
countenance. When the first embarrassments were past, which arose from a modest consciousness that he had not the manners of polished life, he conversed, though in the accent of his country, on various themes, with perspicuity and taste, and in perfectly good language; upon the books he had read, the striking scenery of the few countries he had seen, and the nature of his own destiny, perceptions, and acquirements. The ease and elegance of his epistolary style are most extraordinary, his birth and uneducated youth considered.—The following are extracts from a letter of thanks, which the author received from him on being presented with the compositions she had sent into the world.

"All that your pensive, your lonely friend can return for this unmerited kindness, are the warm effusions of a grateful heart. My walk along the vale of life, has not been through a wilderness of sweets. Your having scattered in my path flowers of so agreeable an odour, culled from the bowers of the muses, will lighten, in many an irksome hour, the weight of manual labour. Since I received this testimony of your regard, hope and joy have aided the hands of the mechanic. Sublime and beautiful objects, which I used to view with melancholy languor, have now acquired the most animating charms in my sight. As a warm sun-beam dispels the heavy dews, and raises the head of the drooping field-flower, so has your kind attention dispersed the clouds, which were cast about me by adverse fortune. I have lately added to my little collection of poetry, the works of that sublime bard, and learned and ingenious critic, Mr. Hayley; and I now live in the midst of charming Monsaldale, whose graces you have so faithfully described in the poem, which you have been so good to address to me. Last week Mr. Cunningham found me in this lovely valley, surrounded by wheels, springs, and other mechanical implements. To his imagination they appeared as the effect of magic, and he called me Prospero.

"To have found, in the compositions of a laborious villager, some bright sparks of native genius, amid the dross of prosaic vulgarity, had been pleasing, though perhaps not wonderful; but the elegance and harmony of Newton’s writings, both in prose and verse, are miraculous, when it is remembered that till Mr. Cunningham distinguished him, he had associated only with the unlettered vulgar.

"Monsaldale is the loveliest of the Derbyshire vallies.
If its features are less sublime than those of Dovedale, they are more soft and smiling, and not less picturesque. Strange that Monsaldale should seldom be included in the chart traced out for the curious, who mean to explore the wonders, and the beauties of Derbyshire!

"The following stanzas are extracted from a poem, written by Newton, and addressed to the author of this miscellany. They were composed during the dangerous walk, which his business obliged him to take through the severe winter 1785, between the little town of Tideswell, where his family resided, and Monsaldale, where he was employed in the cotton-mills. He took this walk every morning, before the day broke, and every evening after it had closed, over the bleak and mountainous tracts of Tideswell Moor, always covered with snow when the winters are rigid.

Scarce through the sod my cot aspires,
Scarce shelter'd from the weltering storm,
Yet here the muses ring their lyres,
When pealing rains the night deform.

Far from that cot, each social friend,
And every dear, domestic tie,
My pensive hours I'm doom'd to spend,
And oft to heave the bitter sigh.

For me pale Slander taints the gale,
Suspicion spreads her murky snares,
Disease's dreaded shafts assail,
And her dark chalice Hate prepares.

Lurking beneath a fair disguise,
Her zone with daggers planted round,
Ingratitude, with changing eyes,
Strives Sensibility to wound.

Ye Sister Nine, again inspire
The joys my better moments knew,
When fairy Hope, and young Desire,
On light wing, round my temples flew.
THE BATH-EASTON VASE

Yet here, on Tideswell's wintry moor,
   While drifted snows my steps ensnare,
And through the night the tempests roar,
   And fiercely whirl my frozen hair;
As, straggling, towards my home I wend,
   Sweet fancy cheers the dreary way,
On my chill'd heart her fires descend,
   Bright as the star that leads the day;
And, basking in her cordial beams,
   The foster'd JULIA's form appears;
The Goddess deck'd her tuneful themes,
   Soft warbling through revolving years.
Me JULIA's friendship cheers each morn;
   Truth whispers it shall ever last;
Then let me present evils scorn,
   And bravely triumph o'er the past!"

This was he whom Hayley thought not inferior to Burns.
Miss Seward's, or JULIA's, patronage extended to a corres-
pondence with Newton, extracts from which I give here.
Although his name was William she called him Edwin.

ON FALSE MODESTY

"You must get above idle scruples about shewing, or
   sending to your friends verses written in your own praise.
The bard, like the warrior, is privileged to display the
   trophies he has won."

AIDS TO CONTENTMENT

"It gives me pleasure to hear you acknowledge, that the
   reflections I made in my last upon your destiny, its pains
and its consolations, have softened the first, and added force
 to the latter. I rejoice that you succeed in the cotton busi-
 ness, to which your talents for inventive mechanism first
 introduced you. Heaven, who gave you ingenuity of so
 many species, will, I trust, prosper the industrious effort that
 virtue inspired, and that wisdom has directed. Successful
 labour braces the nerves, and is favourable to health and to
 cheerfulness, even more, perhaps, than Independence herself,
in whose train luxury, lassitude, and apathy, are too often found; and they canker all her roses."

**A Sea Piece**

"On Friday evening [at Scarborough] I beheld a scene, whose maritime beauty, of the placid kind, was consummate. After the long duration of our warm and glowing sky, it that night prognosticated a change of weather. The gloomy clouds that floated through a part of the horizon, darkened the surface of the vast ocean, while the sun was setting gorgeously in the clearer west, and sinking behind the hill to the right-hand of the sea, over which the rays, glancing obliquely, ambered the rocks, tipt with fire the roofs and chimneys of the ascending town, the turrets of the castle, the masts and sails of the ships, scattered profusely, and at various distances, over the deep. This contrast, formed by its dark surface, and illumined accompaniments, had a novel and striking effect."

In addition to writing him letters Miss Seward was instrumental in starting Newton as a cotton-spinner, at first with success. She writes to Hayley in 1788: "That ingenious Being, whom the muses condescended to visit in a saw-pit, the sometime carpenter, now joint-master of a cotton-mill, passed a week here lately; the mornings of which we devoted to poetic studies, and the evenings to the sublime music of Handel, through the energetic tones of Giovanni, and the melting notes of his daughter."

"The mechanical genius and industry of this hard of the Peak mountain, have procured him more of life's solid good than he was likely to have obtained from the nymphs who gilded his day-dreams."

"He lately wrote the inclosed verses (printed in the Sheffield newspapers) to promote the interest of a brother genius, now stricken in years, and whose ardent pursuit of
the sciences cost him his eye-sight. An intention so benevolent, adorned with so pleasing an effluence of Aonian inspiration, will, I dare believe, make them acceptable to you."

Miss Seward also entertained Newton to dinner among her grand acquaintances at Buxton in 1793: "That being of true integrity—that prodigy of self-cultivated genius, Newton, the minstrel of my native mountains, walks over them from Tideswell, his humble home, to pass the day with me to-morrow. To preclude wonder and comments upon my attentions to such an apparent rustic at the public table, I have shewn two charming little poems of his, which are deservedly admired by every body here."

The poet came, and the company seem to have behaved themselves: "The wintry storms of Sunday morning detained my minstrel at home, in deceived hopes of the fairer hour, so that he did not arrive till one. Nothing could be more flattering to me and to him, than the reception he met with from the company at St. Anne's. They were generous enough not to suffer his plain appearance, his unpowdered and drenched locks, and provincial accent, to chill the civilities and respect which they shewed him. When I took him to the public table at the hotel, I particularly presented him to Sir John and Lady Clerk, the Baron, &c. They conversed with him; they praised his verses."

But enough of this!

Since we are considering Miss Seward as an appraiser of poets, I here bring together from her letters a variety of criticisms on the literature of her time.

**Contemporaries**

1

"Surely Mr. Hayley's verse breathes a more creative and original genius, than even the brilliant Pope, who excels him in nothing but in the high and laboured polish
of his enchanting numbers; while Mr. H.'s prose has the ease and wit of Addison, with much more strength and spirit. Amidst all Johnson's faults, the greatness of his abilities has amazed and dazzled the whole literary world. Then, what a mine of original wit are the writings of Sterne? How brilliant in that property the comedies of Hayley and Sheridan! To the names of all these eminent men, that have adorned the last half century, we may add those of Akenside, Lyttleton, Beattie, Langhorne, Dr. Warton, Holme, Jephson, Jerningham, Owen, Cambridge, Whalley, and our new star, Mr. Crowe, to say nothing of our many Sapphos to the single one of Pope's time.—Surely, surely you are prejudiced against our day a little."

"No, indeed, my conviction of the high poetic merit of Mr. Sargent's dramatic poem, the 'Mine,' has lost none of its ardour. Mr. Hayley says it is the worthy rival of Milton's Comus. Perhaps I do not rate its claim quite so high; but I place it on a level with Mason's Caractacus."

Miss Seward was a little like Lamb's friend, George Dyer, in that all poets to her were fine geniuses. G. D. had the same interest in second-rate and third-rate versifiers. It is temperamenta. In Lamb's eyes nothing existed or was worth considering but the best, the oddest or the most genuine; in the eyes of Miss Seward and George Dyer the highest excellence, oddity or genuineness had no independent merit: to be worth considering it had to produce some very indifferent couplets. It is true that Miss Seward was second to none in her championship of Shakespeare and Milton, but one has a suspicion that she admired both of them for the wrong things.
"Arrowy"

"You tell me that you dislike in my poem, Louisa, the first adjective of the ensuing couplet,

Lighted with arrowy beams the ocean caves,
And sunk with splendour in th' illumin'd waves.

It has always been my endeavour to paint from nature, rather than to copy from books, in my poetical landscapes; and I have often observed, that, when caves are penetrated with light, it is shot into them in pointed rays, for which arrowy is a picturesque epithet. I confess it is of my own coinage; but I flatter myself it was not coined unhappily. Its original appearance in English verse will, I believe, be found in my Elegy on Captain Cook, published first in the year 1780. It has met with very flattering adoption in the subsequent works of superior poets."

Dryden

"Have you reflected, that the most brilliant and celebrated of Dryden's works (his noble Ode excepted) are paraphrastic translations from Chaucer, &c. Neither he nor Pope have one original poem so rich in poetic invention, that first gift of the muses, as Hayley's Triumphs of Temper. Then, what stuff has Dryden left amidst his excellencies, what bombast?—What tame did and do prosing!—What wretched conceits!"

Cowper

"The Task certainly contains not only dazzling irradiations of fancy, but many noble sentiments. Alas! it is not always, that either one or the other afford indubitable proof of an author's virtue! The depraved and selfish often wear these splendid veils of light, when all is darkness at the centre."
THE LYRICAL BALLADISTS

THE ANCIENT MARINER

"Supernatural horrors are the taste of the times. Have you seen the Ancient Mariner. It is the greatest quis of a composition I ever met with—but it has very fine strokes of genius. The style of obsolete simplicity suits the unmeaning wildness of its plan, and of its terrific features. The moral of this oddity is not less defective in rationality than the plan. Enormous punishments are decreed to a trifling crime; and, besides that, two hundred people, innocent of even that trifling crime, are its victims, while the person who committed it escapes death. Of the softer beauties of writing, rare are the instances in the Ancient Mariner; yet, in one verse, they shed their mild light. My recollection of that verse is probably not accurate, but it is to this effect:

The sails kept on a gentle noise,
Like a little huddling rill,
All in the leafy month of June,
That to the sleeping woods at night,
Singeth a quiet tune.

The rhymes have nothing like regularity, neither has the measure, as to quantity; and old words are used, which have so long been discarded, that they cannot, but by the context, be understood;—such as, 'they nold,' for they did not; and 'the eldrich deck,' whose meaning none of us can guess.

"I adjure you to publish your Sunday Morn in some of the public prints."

WORDSWORTH (1798)

"Wordsworth has genius—but his poetry is harsh, turgid, and obscure. He is chiefly a poetic landscape painter—but his pictures want distinctness. It is strange that Mr. C. should, in that note, attribute originality to Wordsworth's expression, green radiance, for the light of the glow-worm. That light is perfectly stellar, and Ossian calls the stars
green in twenty parts of his poetry, translated and published, before Wordsworth, who is a very young man, was in existence.

"I who had always, since I first in childhood began to observe the characteristic appearances of the objects of nature, seen the stars and the glow-worm effusing greenish beams, wondered, on my introduction to the muses, to find none of their votaries pointing out that tinge in the lustre of some of the largest and brightest, and in the light of the glow-worm. When Ossian came out, in my early youth, I was charmed to find him confirming, by his epithet green for the stars, the accuracy of my visual perception. The following lines are in my Langollen Vale:—

While glow-worm lamps effuse a pale green light,
Such as in mossy lanes illumine the starless night."

MOLES

"I never knew a man or woman of letters, however, ingenious, ingenuous, and judicious, as to their general taste, but there was some one fine writer, at least, to which their 'Lynx's beam became the mole's dim curtain'. Mason, Hayley, and Boothby, are moles to Ossian. Gray was a mole to Rousseau.—Darwin is a mole to Milton, and that you will say is indeed a molism. Envy made Johnson a mole to all our best poets, except Dryden and Pope. You are a mole to Sterne;—and I—for why should not my portly self run in amongst you intellectually greater folk?—I am a mole to Spencer, so far at least, that, though I perceive the power of his genius in the mass, and infinitely admire particular passages, I could never read a book of the Fairy-Queen through, without being ennuied past bearing by the Hydra-headed allegories.

"But molism of this kind always existed. Plato was a mole to Homer.—You [the Rev. Dr. Gregory] are no mole
to me, however, for, in truth, you have looked at the little stars of my imagination, through Mr. Herschel's last optic-glass."

Now and then Miss Seward does an unexpected thing, as in her appreciation of Tristram Shandy, which one might have imagined her to care nothing for. But her praise is quite good: "It is impossible that I should ever, even after the slightest perusal, have forgotten the warm-hearted, honest, generous Toby Shandy, by whose absurdities, so happily mingled with his kindness, and with his virtues, we are betrayed at once into the tears of admiration, and into the convulsions of laughter.

"Then the Corporal!—how finely are the traits of his disposition and manners, though of the same complexion, kept apart from those of his master!—What mutual and beautiful light do they throw upon each other! besides affording an admirable moral lesson, concerning the duty of that indulgent kindness, which lightens and sweetens servitude, and of that reverence to which a good master has a claim from his dependents!

"Then Slop!—you must allow me to say inimitable Slop! Where will you shew me his prototype?—and O! the acute angle of the garden-wall! Obadiah! the coach horse! the mud! the doctor! and his poney! That story alone, so originally conceived, so happily told, outweighs, in my opinion, all the writings of Smollett, in the scale of genius."

Although Miss Seward was for the most part ready to welcome every writer of bad verse, Charlotte Smith, the Swan of Bignor (in Sussex), never succeeded in entering her heart. Miss Seward's ample bosom had not room for quite all. Perhaps Mrs. Smith's name stood too high, for, as the following extract from a letter to Miss Weston shows, it was not her sex alone that was at fault, and she was certainly bad
enough to have satisfied: "Yes, truly, dear Sophia, our public critics are curious deciders upon poetic claims. Smiled you not to see the reviewer of verse, in a late Gentleman's Magazine, gravely pronouncing, 'that it is trifling praise for Mrs. Smith's sonnets to pronounce them superior to Shakespeare's and Milton's'? O! rare panegyrist! Such praise may vie, as an offering at the shrine of dulness, with the censure which the Monthly Review passed on Jephson's noble tragedy, the Count of Narbonne, and with that fulminated in the Critical one against the first fair blooms of Mr. Steven's poetic talents, his charming poem, Retirement. Thus it is that the extremes of unfeeling censure, and of hyperbolic encomium, meet in one sickening point of absurdity.

'Tis such the goddess hears with special grace,
While veils of fogs dilate her awful face.

You say Mrs. Smith's sonnets are pretty;—so say I;—pretty is the proper word; pretty tuneful centos from our various poets, without any thing original. All the lines that are not the lines of others are weak and unimpressive; and these hedge-flowers to be preferred, by a critical dictator, to the roses and amaranths of the two first poets the world has produced!!—It makes one sick.

"The allegory in this lady's Origin of Flattery, is to me wholly incomprehensible:—Why Venus should take the helmet of Mars, for a vessel in which to make the oil of flattery, I cannot understand. You will find all that is tolerable in this poem taken from Hesiod's rise of Woman, translated by Parnell.

"Much, indeed very much, above every thing Mrs. Smith has published, are the poems of Helen Williams. We trace in them true sensibility of heart, and the genuine fires of an exalted imagination. Who would not forgive to their sparkling effervescence the occasional want of metaphoric accuracy,
with all the other juvenile errors of a judgment as yet unripened by time?"

Helen was Helen Maria Williams, a friend of Miss Seward, who visited her in London, and the author of an "Ode on the Peace," a novel called *Julia*, and other works. Walpole ranked her with the Swan in his contempt: "Misses Seward and Williams," he wrote to the Countess of Derby, "and half a dozen more of those harmonious virgins, have no imagination, no novelty. Their thoughts and phrases are like their gowns, old remnants cut and turned." Johnson, however, liked this lady, and the two occasions on which she met him he paid her compliments, once repeating to her the finest stanza of her "Ode on the Peace," and at the other time remarking that he was very ill: "I am very ill, Madam, even when you are near me; what should I be were you at a distance?"

Samuel Rogers, who knew her in later life, found Miss Williams a very fascinating person. She had an interesting career, having been for a time the mistress of Imlay, Mary Wollstonecraft's lover, and a friend of Madame Roland. She was imprisoned by Robespierre and only narrowly escaped the guillotine. Wolfe Tone, meeting her in Paris, found her so typically English that he nicknamed her Jane Bull.

Miss Seward returned to the attack on Charlotte Smith in a letter to the Rev. Mr. Berwick: "You inquire after my poetical sister, Mrs. C. Smith. I never saw her, and know only the mere outline of her history as the wife of a profligate spendthrift, who lived near Mr. Hayley in Sussex, and there dissipated his fortune. A fine woman in her person, and the mother of many children. Popular as have been her sonnets, they always appeared to me as a mere flow of melancholy and harmonious numbers, full of notorious plagiarisms, barren of original ideas and poetical imagery."
In this extract, and a letter to Mrs. Hayley, we get an inkling of Mrs. Smith's chief offence: she knew the Hayleys, and was esteemed by them or in danger of being so: "I fancy this lady has been so fortunate to engage yours and Mr. Hayley's benevolent amity; that it draws a veil over all the defects, and magnifies every grace of her compositions; but you will remember, that I have not the pleasure of knowing Mrs. Smith, and, therefore, read her works with the same indifference I do those whose authors died before I was in existence.

"My very foes acquit me of harbouring one grain of envy in my bosom; yet it is surely by no means inconsistent with that exemption, surely it belongs to a native love of justice, to feel a little indignant, and to enter one's protest, when compositions of mere mediocrity, such as I own I think Mrs. Smith's Sonnets, are extolled far above those of real genius. These same sonnets have been more extolled than the classic elegance and refined grace of Mrs. Barbauld's poems; than the correct and perspicuous good sense of Miss More's, often animated by original, striking, and graceful imagery; than the wit and attic spirit of Mrs. Piozzi's writings; and greatly more than the sublime and beautiful creations of our Helen Williams' imagination.

"My poor father, who was all honesty in his literary opinions, and who warmly delighted in the genius of his contemporaries, used to feel just in this manner over the undue celebration of Glover's Leonidas, when the whole national taste seemed under the fascination of investing it with the highest honours. However, my father's existence has more than thirty years survived the fame of Leonidas: 'a new blown bubble of the day,' which burst almost as suddenly as it was formed." Again, we have this to Theophillus Swift, Esq.: "You and I agree perfectly about the genius and grace of Helen's compositions. I forget if I ever
spoke to you about Mrs. C. Smith's everlasting lamentables, which she calls sonnets, made up of hackneyed scraps of dismality, with which her memory furnished her from our various poets. Never were poetical whipt syllabubs, in black glasses, so eagerly swallowed by the odd taste of the public."

Here is Miss Seward's last shot: "I have called Mrs. C. Smith's sonnets the everlasting duns on pity; and one of my literary friends has, by a quotation, too severely, perhaps, styled her, 'a puny poet, puling to the moon'. That she pules with the pertinacity of a pea-hen, is certain, but we must not allow that she is puny." It is hard when swans call swans pea-hens.

To return to Bath-Easton. Miss Seward remained loyal to Lady Miller, nor would she ever see that any absurdity—any Leco-Hunterism—had mingled with her ceremonies. (Yet, O to have seen the victorious ladies and gentlemen parading the terrace in their wreaths!) When in 1788 her friend Mr. Repton published a book called *Variety*, to which she contributed two essays (Nos. 25 and 26), Miss Seward wrote: "I am sorry to find any thing like satire and sarcasm in this volume, upon the late elegant and amiable institution at Bath-Easton; and I trust my regret has a worthier source than in the wounded vanity of a myrtle-wreathed poet. There was a classic grace and spirit in the institution itself, which the frequent stupidity of its candidates could not do away. It should have been remembered, that Hayley, Anstey, Jermingham, Whalley, and Potter deigned to contend for its verdant prize. It deserved the praise, not the ridicule, of men of genius, who ought to wish respectability to its memory, that other people of fortune might catch the enthusiasm, and invite our rising youth to fairer ambition than that of the fox-chace, the turf, and the gaming-table."

We have seen something of the "Monody on André";
but we might here look at the Swan's other considerable Bath-Easton poem, the "Elegy on Captain Cook," which was highly praised at the time, and in which even Dr. Johnson found merit. According to an informant of Bishop Percy, all the best lines in it were by Dr. Darwin; but that may be scandal. At any rate I find no lines that the unassisted brain of Miss Seward might not have devised, although they often have a conciseness of form and exactitude of epithet that are more like the author of *The Botanic Garden*.

The poem describes various well-known incidents in Cook's voyages, ending with a lyric passage on his tomb and an address of sympathy to his widow. I quote their conclusion:

Gay Eden of the south, thy tribute pay,
And raise, in pomp of woe, thy Cook's Morai! 1
Bid mild Omiah bring his choicest store,
The juicy fruits, and the luxuriant flow'res;
Bring the bright plumes, that drink the torrid ray,
And strew the lavish spoil on Cook's Morai!
Come, Oberea, hapless fair-one! come,
With piercing shrieks bewail thy Hero's doom!—
She comes!—she gazes round with dire survey!—
Oh! fly the mourner on her frantic way.
See! see! the pointed ivory wounds that head,
Where late the Loves impurpled roses spread;
Now stain'd with gore, her raven tresses flow,
In ruthless negligence of maddening woe;
Loud she laments!—and long the Nymph shall stray
With wild unequal step round Cook's Morai!

But ah!—aloft on Albion's rocky steep,
That frowns incumbent o'er the boiling deep,
Solicitous, and sad, a softer form
Eyes the lone flood, and deprecats the storm.—

1 The Morai is a kind of funeral altar, which the people of Otaheite raise to the memory of their deceased friends. They bring to it a daily tribute of fruits, flowers, and the plumage of birds. The chief mourner wanders around it in a state of apparent distraction, shrieking furiously, and striking at intervals a shark's tooth into her head. All people fly her, as she aims at wounding not only herself, but others.—(Miss Seward's footnote.)
Reproof to Mrs. Cook

Ill-fated Matron!—far, alas! in vain
Thy eager glances wander o'er the main!—
'Tis the vex'd billows, that insurgent rave,
Their white foam silvers yonder distant wave,
'Tis not his sails!—thy Husband comes no more!
His bones now whiten an accursed shore!—
Retire,—for hark! the sea-gull shrieking soars,
The lurid atmosphere portentous lowrs;
Night's sullen spirit groans in ev'ry gale,
And o'er the waters draws the darkling veil,
Sighs in thy hair, and chills thy throbbing breast—
Go, wretched Mourners!—Weep thy griefs to rest!
Yet, though through life is lost each fond delight,
Though set thy earthly sun in dreary night,
Oh! raise thy thoughts to yonder starry plain,
And own thy sorrow selfish, weak, and vain;
Since, while Britannia, to his virtues just,
Twines the bright wreath, and rears th'immortal bust;
While on each wind of heav'n his fame shall rise,
In endless incense to the smiling skies;
The Attendant Power, that bade his sails expand,
And waft her blessings to each barren land,
Now raptur'd bears him to the immortal plains,
Where Mercy hails him with congenial strains;
Where soars, on Joy's white plume, his spirit free,
And angels choir him, while he waits for Thee.

Miss Seward having one day said to Dr. Johnson something in praise of Madame du Bocage's Colombiade, he remarked, "Madam, there is not anything equal to your description of the sea around the North Pole in your ode on the death of Captain Cook". These are the lines to which he referred:—

While o'er the deep, in many a dreadful form,
The giant Danger howls along the storm,
Furling the iron sails with numbed hands,
Firm on the deck the great Adventurer stands,
Round glittering mountains hears the billows rave,
And the vast ruin thunder on the wave.—

To-day there are not many critics to echo Johnson's eulogy. To-day we want poetry to have poetry's spirit; but at that date, just before the great awakening, it was enough if it had the letter.
THE BATH-EASTON VASE

It was after the publication of the "Monody on André" and the "Elegy on Cook" that Hayley addressed to their author the following "Impromptu," which she included among her Poetical Works. The lines are typical: they are exactly what a score of poetasters at that time considered the thing to write whenever a new work appeared by some one likely to repay them in kind. Hayley did so, I imagine, because he desired reciprocity; for he was a man of some intellect, and of independence too, and would hardly have written like this without a reason. Whatever his motive, he used the trowel to some purpose, as the "Impromptu" shows:—

As Britain mourn'd, with all a mother's pain,
Two Sons, two gallant Sons, ignobly slain;
Mild Cook, by savage fury rob'd of breath,
And martial André doom'd to baser death!
The Goddess, plung'd in grief too vast to speak,
Hid in her robe her tear-disfigur'd cheek.

The sacred Nine, with sympathetic care,
Survey'd the noble mourner's dumb despair;
While from their choir the sighs of pity broke,
The Muse of Elegy thus warmly spoke:
"'Take, injured Parent, all we can bestow,
To soothe thy heart, and mitigate thy woe!"

Speaking, to earth the kind enthusiast came,
And veil'd her heavenly power with Seward's name;
And that no vulgar eye might pierce the truth,
Proclaim'd herself the friend of André's youth.
In that fair semblance, with such plaintive fire,
She struck the chords of her pathetic lyre,
The weeping Goddess owns the blest relief,
And fondly listens, with subsiding grief;
Her loveliest daughters lend a willing ear,
Honouring the latent Muse with many a tear.
Her bravest sons, who in their every vein
Feel the strong pathos of the magic strain,
Bless the enchanting lyre, by glory strung,
Envying the dead, who are so sweetly sung.

To a fellow-versifier whose discerning eye detected the possibilities of advertisement latent in the object of his
flattery, such praises (in the seventeen-eighties) are understandable; but what of a critic in prose writing in 1800, two years after _Lyrical Ballads_? Yet this is a note to the Rev. Richard Polwhele’s satire _The Unsex’d Females_, which exalts Miss Seward chiefly at the expense of Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin: “‘Poetry’ (says an excellent writer) ‘is passion.’ Miss Seward’s Poems are ‘thoughts that breathe, and words that burn’. And he, who hesitates to allow this lady the very first place among the female Poets of this country, must be grossly deficient in taste. Her ‘Cook,’ her ‘André,’ her ‘Louisa,’ are, all, first rate performances; either of these enchanting Poems would be sufficient to immortalise the name of Seward.”

It is hardly necessary to state that Mr. Polwhele was repaying civilities in kind. Miss Seward extracted her pound of flattery from all whom she had obliged; as they who had obliged her, in their turn, extracted their pound of flattery from her. Reciprocity governed the lower slopes of Parnassus with an iron hand—reciprocity either in blame or censure. I find that in 1788 Mr. Polwhele having sent Miss Seward his poem on Eloquence, in manuscript, she returned it with a tribute of just praise that drew from the reverend gentleman a poem.

But if reciprocity is our theme it is time to come to Mr. Hayley himself; for it was he and Miss Seward who carried the art of mutual admiration to its highest point in English literature.
CHAPTER IX
THE BARD OF SUSSEX

Dean Mansel’s jeu d’esprit—Mr. Hayley as a poet—Mr. Hayley as a critic—Miss Seward realises her greatness—Mr. Hayley’s flatteries—Mr. Hayley visits Lichfield—Another impromptu—A serious interlude—Miss Seward and Mr. Saville—Lichfield’s disapproval—Mrs. Sherwood’s recollections—Mr. Saville’s death—Mr. Hayley leaves Lichfield—Miss Seward’s farewell poem—Miss Seward visits Mr. Hayley—More impromptus—Miss Seward’s farewell poem—Romney—Another impromptu—The friendship cools—Mr. Hayley’s marriages and separations.

It is perhaps a pity that the fiercest ardours of Miss Seward’s friendship with Hayley were burnt out before she began to keep copies of her letters; but we have from the witty and wicked pen of Dr. Mansel a memorial of the alliance that will not fade. This was the immortelle he laid on the tomb of their literary passion:—

Miss Seward—“Pride of Sussex, England’s glory,
Mr. Hayley, that is you.”

Mr. Hayley—“Ma’am, you carry all before ye,
Trust me, Lichfield Swan, you do.”

Miss Seward—“Ode dramatic, epic, sonnet,
Mr. Hayley, you’re divine.”

Mr. Hayley—“Ma’am, I’ll give my word upon it,
You yourself are—all the Nine.”

Mr. Hayley was a year older than Mr. Whalley, his rival in the Swan’s intellectual affections, being born in 1745, and was therefore by three years Miss Seward’s junior. He commenced poetry early, having indited an ode on the birth

1 “Dear Nine” was a common beginning of another Lichfieldian, Garrick, in his letters to Hannah More.
of the Prince of Wales while he was at Cambridge in 1763. By 1771 he had succeeded in getting a tragedy rejected by the great Lichfield actor at Drury Lane, and by this time he was also married. In 1774 he settled at Earitham, and began his career as a prosperous dilettante and the Bard of Sussex.

By 1781, when he first met Miss Seward in person, Hayley had written all his best-known poems, of which *The Triumphs of Temper, 1781*, was the most successful. His work, with the exception of the *Life of Cowper, 1803*, seems to me unreadable now; but at that time, when there was a fashion for reading couplets, no matter what they were like, it was popular, and *The Triumphs of Temper* ran through more than a dozen editions. To revive it to-day would be impossible.

As a critic, at any rate in these comparatively early days, Hayley was all at sea, if we may judge by the extravagant praises of second and third rate artificers that abound in his *Poetical Epistles on Epic Poetry*, which were addressed to Mason, and by those of his judgments that have been preserved by Miss Seward, not omitting his praises of herself. But later he acquired a clearer vision; for not only did he see the genius of Cowper and do all in his power to foster it, but he detected (a more difficult task) the greatness of William Blake, whom he housed at Felpham in Sussex, near Earitham, and employed steadily for some months; and though he ended by incurring the splendid scorn of that rare spirit, it must be accounted to Hayley for righteousness that—no matter with what motives of egotism or conceit—he made the effort at all.

But landrails can never associate for long with eagles. The Swan of Lichfield was a more suitable bird for William Hayley, for she was prepared to return praise for praise, and roundly did so as long as he asked for it.
A reason for the cooling that is perceptible in her correspondence both with Hayley and Whalley may be that with increasing reputation Miss Seward came to think more of her own gifts and, by comparison, less of those of her friends. When she began to write to both these poetical and rather splendid gentlemen she was unknown. Then came the “Elegy on Cook” and the “Monody on André,” two poems which, whatever their own merits, had the inestimable advantage of being concerned with popular figures, one of whom had such additional fascination for the public as is conferred by youth, romance and tragedy; and suddenly the contributor to the Bath-Easton vase found herself a pillar of English poetry. Hence, we may perhaps conjecture, that change from adoring dependence to a colder suggestion of equality which is to be observed taking place in the early eighties.

As to who first conferred upon Miss Seward the title of Swan of Lichfield I have not been able to discover, but her Cygnitude must have begun now.

It was as it happens Hayley who opened the chorus of praise that was doomed to acclaim every new effort of the Lichfield poetess's footrule; or if he did not begin it, it was he who, by the weight of his voice, first gave the chorus its arresting note. We have seen his “Impromptu” on her verses on Cook and André, and in his Poetical Epistles he returned to the charge, in an address to Prejudice, glorying in the circumstance (here carrying on the Rev. Thomas Seward's own work) that the Fair had at last overcome that

voice with brutal fire
Forbidding female hands to touch the lyre.

But, said the poet, all was now changed:—

Blest be this smiling hour, when Britain sees
Her Fair-ones cancel such absurd decrees,
WILLIAM HAYLEY

"I am glad you like Hayley's countenance. How have I seen those fine eyes of his sparkle, and melt, and glow, as wit, compassion, or imagination had the ascendance in his mind!"—

Miss Seward
BARD VISITS SWAN

In one harmonious group, with graceful scorn,
Spring o'er the Pendent's fence of wither'd thorn,
And reach Parnassian heights, where, laurel-crown'd,
This softer Choir the notes of triumph sound;
Where Seward, leader of the lovely train,
Pours o'er heroic tombs her potent strain;
Potent to soothe the honor'd dead, and dart
Congenial virtue thro' each panting heart;
Potent thro' spirits masculine to spread
Poetic jealousy and envious dread.

Meanwhile Miss Seward was working references to Hayley's genius into every Aonian effusion.

Such ardent admirers of each other were bound to meet—such is human frailty—and they did so in December, 1781, when the Bard of Sussex paid the Swan of Lichfield a state visit. In his letters to his wife—his "Carissima"—describing his adventures, he keeps his head with more success than in his adulatory poems. He writes from the Episcopal Palace of Lichfield, on Tuesday, 18th December, 1781: "Behold me seated, my dear Eliza, in a very noble and comfortable house of the church, where divinity and poetry form a very uncommon and agreeable alliance! I bade adieu to our good friends at Derby yesterday morn, and arrived here soon after twelve. The fair Muse perceived my chaise as she was sitting in a neighbour's window, and hastened home to receive me. That my reception was gracious in the highest degree I need not inform you, and as to the person of this female genius, I cannot give you a better idea of it, than by saying she is a handsome likeness of those full-length pictures which you have seen of your namesake, Queen Elizabeth, where the painters gave her Majesty all the beauty they could consistent with the character of her face. The Muse laughs at herself as fat and lame; yet the connoisseurs in woman would still pronounce her handsome. For my own part, I say to myself, like Louis XV., when a celebrated lady was first shewn to him, 'The Queen
is infinitely more beautiful'. The Muse is famous, you
know, for elocution, as well as composition; and certainly
she reads with peculiar force and propriety: but the sweet
melody of your voice has ruined my ears for more ordinary
tones, and while she recited part of the Ode to Howard,
I felt that although the execution was fine, the instrument
was imperfect; she seemed to want what you say is wanting
in the admired actress of Bath. Do not think me grown
fastidious, and ungrateful; for indeed I have every reason
to be pleased with my fair hostess, and her venerable father,
who is a worthy, polite, and pleasing old man. He brings
to my remembrance the joyous vivacity of the good old
Dean. The Muse very obligingly entertained me with a
sight of a letter from Bath, where Mr. Whalley speaks of
you in very pleasing terms.

"I am now scribbling in a very elegant room, with a
bed-chamber adjoining, in a detached part of the house,
which are very politely consigned to my private use. The
situation must be more healthy than the miserable damps
of Derby, and the prospect is peculiarly fine for a city
residence. My hostess returns you many thanks for the
song of Myra, which has the grace of novelty, as well as the
charm of coming from your hand. I have not yet seen
Mr. Saville; but as I understand he sings finely, and with
great feeling, I will beg you to send us all my songs,
that your friends Harrington or Rauzzini may happen to
embellish with music.

"Adio, Carissima!"

Five days later: "A country town is a scene so very
unfit for poetical studies that I am amazed the Muse can
write here at all; for, notwithstanding the reports you heard
at Bath, she has a multitude of female visitors, and a host
of divines. Her pleasant and hospitable father brings the
lively and facetious old Dean perpetually to my remembrance. This excellent house I think I described to you in my last; the scene is endeared to poetical imagination by having been the nursery of Garrick and Johnson, who both passed their younger days under this roof, when it was the residence of Mr. Walmsley, a man of fortune, who generously assumed the care of their education. This circumstance gave birth to the following little impromptu to the Muse, which I transcribe for your amusement:—

Hail, happy walls! within your ample space
May no rude sounds the pleasing calm destroy!
May peace and friendship on this spot embrace!
And Echo only sound the notes of joy.

Hail, happy mansion! not that pathos here
First deigned in Garrick's infant eye to roll,
While Science, proud to train his young conpeer,
Gave Steele's bright powers to Johnson's iron soul:

But that fair Seward, whom the Nine inspire,
Gay as the lark, and gentle as the dove,
Makes the sweet scene, responsive to her lyre,
A little heaven of harmony and love!

"No words can tell you how eagerly we wish for the power of transporting you hither on a cloud, to hear some of Mr. Saville's delightful songs. He is equally astonishing in the grand and pathetic, the humorous and the tender. He is much pleased with the music of Myra, and I will beg you to send me copies of the songs that Rauzzini has promised you the moment you get them; though I fear that will hardly be while I remain at Lichfield, for I must endeavour to reach home again soon. I have not heard of Alphonso since I left home; and I grow uneasy about him. Though the kindness and the manners of the Muse and her father delight me, I yet often feel oppressed by the civility of their visitors, and in the midst of honours and flattery I even sigh for the silence and solitude of Eartham,"

There are some words at the beginning of this letter which require comment—"notwithstanding the reports you heard at Bath, she has a multitude of female visitors and a host of divines". The words referred to Miss Seward’s affection for Mr. Saville, the principal singer in the Cathedral, concerning which gossip, if not scandal, had much to say. As to the depth of her feeling for him, no one who reads her letters, especially those to Whalley, can be in any doubt; but the matter does not concern us here, nor, even if it did, have I any knowledge on which to base a faithful story. Strong-minded spinsters who fall in love late can be very foolish, and there is no reason to believe that Miss Seward was less foolish than her sisters in her pursuit of Mr. Saville, even to the extent of purchasing a house for him, and defying that “aged nurseling” her father; but no evidence has come under my notice that she went beyond the fond kindness of a very assiduous and protective friend.

Mr. Saville was a man married but separated from his wife, the fault lying rather on her side than his; and of course men who are separated from their wives must be handled with great care, especially in Cathedral towns where no one has enough to do. This care Miss Seward, being as she had come to think, not only by native conceit but also by force of much flattery, a law unto herself, did not exercise. Hence a certain aloofness which was maintained by those ladies of the neighbourhood who had no inclination towards blue hose. But those who wished to be known as the intimates of the first poetess in England seem to have swallowed Mr. Saville quite cheerfully.

A passage in the autobiography of Mrs. Sherwood, the author of *The Fairchild Family*, who was brought up at Lichfield, bears upon the attitude of a section of the town to its Swan: “Miss Seward was at that period, when my father was a very young man, between twenty and thirty,
for I know not her precise age. She had that peculiar sort of beauty which consists in the most brilliant eyes, glowing complexion, and rich dark hair. She was tall and majestic, and was unrivalled in the power of expressing herself. She was, in a word, such a woman as we read of in romances, and, had she lived in some dark age of the past, might have been charged with sorcery, for, even in advanced age, she often bore away the palm of admiration from the young and beautiful, and many even were fascinated who wholly condemned her conduct."

My feeling is that had Miss Seward been the kind of sinner that those who ostracised her affected to think, she would not have been so free with the praises of her "Giovanni" as she is in all her letters, no matter to whom they were written. That she loved him is certain; but it was a love that was largely maternal, and it was tender and poetical rather than ardent and dangerous. Miss Seward had a large heart for her friends, and Mr. Saville held first place there. Her allusions to him in the letters are always tender and admiring, and when he died, in 1803, she in part died too.

Here is a description of him in a letter to Whalley:
"Introducing Mr. Saville and you to each other I knew I should open to both a new source of delight. Each speaks to me of the other's powers of pleasing with equal enthusiasm. Mr. Saville is all he appears to be, only much more ingenious. To his chaste and classic taste in poetic composition I am indebted for many an ingenious idea, and for the happy alteration and higher polish of many a couplet. His temper, so impetuous, yet kind and gentle—

As zephyrs blowing underneath the violet,
Scarce wagging its sweet head; yet being chaf'd,
Rough as the wind, that takes the mountain pine,
And stoops it to the vale.
But this indignation always subsides in a few minutes, and leaves no trace upon his mind. His truth is sacred. His honour was never doubted, even by those who abuse him for not living with an ignorant, shrewish wife. No vice ever tainted his youth or riper years. He denies himself every luxury, yet knows not how to deny others. He has a bleeding sensibility of every want and every woe, and it is too much for his peace. He pours, as you know, all the spirit of his virtues and his talents into song. How then should such singing fail to charm every noble-minded listener?"

One does not get a very vivid picture of the singer from this sketch: Miss Seward's pen indeed rarely trips into vividness; but from the mass of evidence I take him to have been a very weak and dependent man, with much of the childishness that so often accompanies the artistic temperament, particularly that of musicians, and rather too much humility in the presence of the rich and those in authority. However, Mr. Saville's character has nothing to do with us: women will love any kind of man, and see merits wherever they wish. The interesting thing is that Miss Seward took him under her protection and did not let him go, in spite of all opposition. However mistaken, that, I think, was fine of her: much better than her writings. It was good for her too, for it produced checks in her otherwise too successful career; brought out her real tenderness, through the integument of conventional wistfulness that Swans had to wear at that time; and in fact helped her towards genuineness.

I quote from her first letter—and she wrote many—after Mr. Saville's death: "Thus in that short, unwarned period, was a friendship of thirty-seven years' duration struck from my soul, and with it all that soothed, all that gladdened its perceptions,
"O! he was the last-left friend of my youth! Remembrance of all I had previously loved, and lost, leaned on his mutual recollection and tender sympathy. His intelligent smile was the sunshine of my temperate board; the emanations of his naturally-endowed mind, cultured and illuminated by a just taste for literature, and all the fine arts, threw their useful and cheering light on my intellectual pursuits; the fervors of his pure, ingenuous, and pious heart, were my encouragement in the practice of whatever rendered my character in any degree estimable; they were my stay, my consolation under each assailing misfortune;

Ah now for comfort whither shall I go?
No more his soothing voice my sorrow cheers!
Those placid eyes with smiles no longer glow,
My hopes to cherish and allay my fears!
'Tis meet that I should mourn; flow, flow, ye bitter tears!

"My friends assure me no death has, in any person's memory here, been so generally, so deeply lamented. Every member of his cathedral, of which more than forty years he had been the most constant attendant, and brightest ornament, both in the reading-desk and in the musical service, followed his funeral with choral honours and with deluged eyes. Scarcely were any eyes dry amongst that large concourse of people which flocked around in solemn silence.

"Dear Saville was a test character;—no one ever conversed with him freely without esteem and love, except from some dark defect of head or heart in themselves, to repel the influence of that else irresistible goodness, which shone out in his open, his expressive countenance, and breathed in the varied, melodious, and interesting cadences of his voice, both in speaking and when he sung."

In a later letter she says: "The Dean and Chapter have given me leave to erect a monument for him in the transit aisle of this cathedral. The design is simply elegant. It will be placed in a Gothic niche, constituting its frame. That
nich is an oblong square, with an elliptic arch above. The whole of the niche is filled up with dark grey marble. Upon that a tablet of white marble contains the name, and date, and the verses. The square is separated from the arch above, by broken fragments of white marble, as pieces of a rock.

"Upon those fragments, and as carved from them, stands a beautiful antique urn, of the same spotless material. It stands in the arch, and a column of smoke ascends from it, emblematic of exhaling life. It will cost me an hundred pounds, and never never could I part with money so willingly, as for this last last tribute to the memory of my dearest friend.

SACRED TO THE MEMORY

OF

JOHN SAVILLE,

Forty-eight years Vicar-choral of this church.
He died August the 2d, 1803, aged sixty-seven.

Once in the heart, cold in yon narrow cell,
Did each mild grace, each ardent virtue dwell;
Kind aid, kind tears for others' want and woe,
For others' joy the gratulating glow;
And skill to mark, and eloquence to claim
For genius in each art the palm of fame.
Ye choral walls, you lost the matchless song,
When the last silence stiffen'd on that tongue!
Ah! who may now your pealing anthems raise,
In soul-pour'd tones of fervent prayer and praise?
Saville, thy lips, twice on thy final day,
Here breath'd, in health and hope, the sacred lay.
Short pangs, ere night, the fatal signal gave,
Quench'd the bright sun for thee,—and op'd the grave!
Now from that graceful form and beaming face,
Insatiate worms the lingering likeness chase;
But thy pure spirit fled, from pains and fears,
To sinless,—changeless,—everlasting spheres.
Sleep, then, pale mortal frame, in yon low shrine,
"Till angels wake thee with a note like thine!"  

1 This line, Miss Seward says, is Johnson's. She could not think of one "equally applicable". To have taken for the praise of her Giovanni any words written by Dr. Johnson, whom she so intensely disliked, is a sign that her heart was softening.
HAYLEY LEAVES LICHFIELD

I do not see how any one can read these two letters and still believe that the ladies of Lichfield had a right to give Miss Seward the cold shoulder.

And now we return to Hayley. He spent a fortnight at Lichfield, every evening walking in the side aisles of the Cathedral during choir service. When the time came for him to go he was accompanied as far as Coleshill by his hostess, who during her solitary return journey composed for her late guest an epistle eminently characteristic of her head and heart:—

'Tis past!—the shades of deprivation lour,
Numbing, with influence cold, the heavy hour.
Thy joys, O Friendship! flies ere well begun,
Like the mild shining of yon liquid sun
Through this short winter's day:—and yet I hear
HayLEAN accents vibrate on my ear;
Still on that countenance I seem to gaze,
Whence mingled stream the intellectual rays.
But ah! the sweet ideal mockery flies,
Silence and vacancy around me rise!

That was the beginning. As she drew nearer Lichfield and observed the Cathedral spires they reminded her of Hayley's evening custom:—

And late ye saw, at evening's solemn hours,
As sigh'd the winter-blast amid your towers,
Britain's distinguish'd Bard beneath you stray,
And bend through your long aisles his musing way;
Observe the gleams, from your half-lighted choir,
Throw the long-Level'd line of paly fire
High o'er the darksome arch, and awful spread
Ambiguous glimmer round his pensive head;
While the faint rays o'er distant objects wave,
That seem the sombre spectres of the grave.

Then, on reaching home, she added these lines:—

And now the clamorous bell's unwelcome peal
Calls me, reluctant, to the cheerless meal;
No bounding step along the hall I hear,
But turn my head, and hide the starting tear.
The whole thing is rather ridiculous—to print, that is; not to write—but it need not make one laugh too gaily. This poor lady, who could entertain these tearful feelings for a coxcomb like Hayley, was doomed to some very bitter hours. To have such tender susceptibilities, to be so eager for affection, is not the royal road to happiness. One sometimes seems to discern quite enough pathos beneath the Swan's feathers.

Mr. Savile was the first of Hayley's new Lichfield friends to pay a visit to Earitham. They were, says Hayley's biographer, "charmed with his powerful style of singing, and his extreme sensibility, with the ease and modesty of his deportment. The grateful account that he gave of his reception, when he returned to his fair friend at Lichfield, Miss Seward, induced that lady, notwithstanding the advanced age of her father, to venture on the same distant excursion, and she gratified her friends of Sussex with a visit of several weeks; during which the pen of Hayley, and the pencil of his friend Romney, were most cheerfully employed in delineating her various endowments, or in trying to entertain her in a manner congenial to her own sprightly and cultivated mind. Many little occasional jeux d'esprit arose in the course of this interesting visit. Here it will be sufficient to insert the poet's welcome to this accomplished visitant, and the farewell which he composed on her departure:—

IMPROMPTU,

To Miss Seward, on her arrival at Earitham, early in August, 1782

Thou gathering host of churlish clouds!
Whose gloom the shrinking landscape shrouds,
Disperse to distant skies!
With lustre radiant and serene,
To Seward's eye, thou lovely scene!
Let all thy beauties rise!
THE SWAN LEAVES EARTHAM

With smiling, yet majestic, grace,
Old Ocean, show thy awful face,
Enrich'd with orient rays!
To meet her eye, whose soul benign
Has given thy naval chief to shine
In fame's eternal blaze!

Ye Dryads of these happy groves,
Thro' which the welcome Seward roves,
Our present joy attest!
Ye ne'er, since Nature form'd your shade,
A brighter visitant surveyed,
Or hailed a dearer guest.

"The kindness and the high colloquial as well as professional talents of Romney," I still quote from Hayley's biographer, "formed no inconsiderable part of Miss Seward's entertainment at Earatham, which she noticed with propriety and gratitude in her farewell:—

To-morrow's dawn must bring th' unwelcome hour,
When my reluctant spirit's fond farewell,
Shall mourn in sighs, thro' Earatham's beauteous bower,
The vanished pleasures of the sylvan cell. . . .

Groves half as fair as these may meet my eye;
Thy bowers, O Lichfield! lovely scenes afford;
But, ah! what keen regrets shall wake the sigh,
To miss the pleasures of th' Hayleyan board:

Where, as his pencil, Romney's soul sublime
Glows with bold lines, original and strong;
While fancy's lays, and kindred spirits chime
With fair Eliza's wit and melting song.

To thee, dear Bard! our master-spring of joy,
How shall I grateful breathe the soft farewell!
Yet long thy generous kindness shall employ
The heart it gladdened, in thy sylvan cell."

Miss Seward wrote these lines on the eve of her departure. True to her habit she composed another poem as she was riding away from Earatham to London, to the house of her friend, Mrs. Knowles. It took the form of an
THE BARD OF SUSSEX

"Address to the Sun, written in a chaise, returning out of Sussex, Sept. 15, after a six weeks' residence at Mr. Hayley's seat, in that county, 1782."

The weather, it seems, was bad:—

Not with such transient fires, and slack'ning pace,
May thy own Hayley run his mortal race!
Be life for him one lengthen'd summer day,
With fame, health, friendship, love, and pleasure gay;
O! be it long ere wintry powers assail,
Spread the dull cloud, or wake the stormy gale!
Intrusive Sun!—more dazzling splendours play
On these moist eyes, with uncongenial ray;
Unwished, unwelcome, in these vacant hours,
Through which affection droops, and fancy lours;
Send, as they seek a less inspiring sky,
The gaze reverted, and the straining eye
To wood-crown'd Sussex, in whose bright domain,
The Muses on their new Parnassus reign.

Hayley's patronage of Blake (patronage of Blake!) had not yet begun in 1782, at that time Romney being his chief painting friend. As we have seen, Romney was staying at Earitham with Miss Seward, and he there painted the portrait of her which stands as frontispiece to this book. This picture Hayley designed to be flanked in his house by busts of Prior and Pope, but instead of Pope the sculptor sent Newton. The result was the following "Impromptu"—

Yg gods, cried a bard, with a classical oath,
Who had order'd the bustos of Pope and of Prior;
That on each side of Seward, who rivals them both,
They might properly honour that queen of the lyre:

O Jove, he exclaim'd, if I wielded thy thunder,
I would frighten the sculptor who ruins my hope,
Sure never did artist commit such a blunder,
He has sent me a Newton instead of a Pope.

In the wonders of nature Sir Isaac was vers'd,
But, alas! with the Nine he had little alliance,
And tho' to the bottom of comets he pierc'd,
He ne'er sounded woman, that much deeper science.
"A GALAXY OF POETIC GEMS"

But away, old astronomer! 'tis not thy post!
Here, exclaim'd the vex'd poet, take Newton away;
When, O wonderful speech! in the tone of a ghost,
The meek modest sage thus petition'd to stay:

"Dear irascible bard, be a little more just,
Nor thy sculptor accuse of a careless transaction,
In the shape of a cold and insensible bust,
I am drawn to thy house by the laws of attraction.

"Tho' sages and bards judge but ill of a brother,
While matter incubers the spirit of each,
All the children of science are just to each other,
When they soar out of human infirmity's reach.

"E'en on canvas thy Seward has virtue to draw
A philosopher's soul from the regions of bliss,
To contemplate her genius may charm him who saw
All the secret sublime of the starry abyss.

"Then on me, I beseech you, this charge to confer;
Of Seward's attendants I justly am one:
The rapt student of light may well wait upon her,
Whose fancy has all the rich hues of the sun."

Such poems as these, inscribed to herself by such a Bard, gave Miss Seward the keenest pleasure. Writing to George Hardinge, she says: "Hayley is indeed a true poet; he has the fire and the invention of Dryden, without any of his absurdity; and he has the wit and ease of Prior. If his versification is a degree less polished than Pope's, it is more various. We find the numbers sweet and flowing, and, I think, sufficiently abundant in the graces of harmony. Our four years' correspondence has been enriched with a galaxy of little poetic gems, of the first water. Were I to be honoured with their insertion all together in his miscellany, I should rival, in his brilliant celebration, the Chloe of Prior, and the Stella of Swift."

And again, to Court Dewes, she writes: "It flatters me that you wish to see a miscellany of mine on the same shelf with that of the Bard of Sussex. If health and leisure are lent me, I may one day present you with my poetic florets,
collected in one garland; but faint will be their bloom and
odour, compared with the magnolias, roses, and amaranths
of the Hayleyan wreath.—Adieu!"

It was very hard that a woman entertaining such feelings
as these should have to see her idol diminish. But so it
was. From what cause I know not, Hayley began to cool.
Perhaps the six weeks in Sussex had been too long a visit.
Whatever the reason the letters grew few and fewer.

In 1786, writing to another friend, Miss Seward says:
"You inquire after my correspondence with the illustri-
sous H——. It is not what it was; but the deficiency, or
cause of deficiency, proceeds not from me. I honour and
love him as well as ever; yet I feel that the silver cord of
our amity is loosening at more links than one."

And again, in 1788: "Sure I am, that I never deserved
to lose one atom of that fervent friendship which Mr. Hayley's
letters, during the first years of our correspondence, pledged
to me should be eternal. The letters with which he has
honoured me, during the past few years, have had intervals
of several months between their dates, are shorter and less
affectionate than those which blest me in the years that are
flown. Never will he find a being more devoted to his
genius, more interested in his happiness, more attached to
his virtues."

On 1st June, 1788, however, Miss Seward commiserates
with Hayley on the loss of his friend Howel by drowning:
"What a similarity in your fate to Milton's—the visual powers
pained and impeded, though, thank God, not quenched; and
now you mourn a Lycidas, sunk beneath the waters!" and
goes on to report the arrival of her picture, a gift from Romney,
Hayley having presumably been prepared to part with it:
"I scarce know how to quit this mournful subject, even to
express our gratitude for your having persuaded Romney to
gratify my father, by his possessing, ere he dies, the promised
"THE OLD FULL OF DAYS"

It arrived late last night; rich, adorned, and invaluable, by the Romneyan powers. My poor invalid was fast asleep in his bed—Lister and Cary, our young bards, were supping with me. They were on fire with curiosity, while the nails were drawing, and highly gratified with contemplating the most masterly portrait their young eyes had ever beheld. I placed it by my father's bed-side at seven this morn.—He wept with joy when I undrew the curtain—wanted to kiss it, and has talked and looked at it all day. I send some verses to Romney by this post, which but ill express my gratitude." I cannot refrain from quoting a little of this epistle:

"O, my Belov'd!" how often would he [Mr. Seward] say,
"Fast as my worn existence fleets away,
Life's prov'd uncertainty to sprightly health,
May rob my soul of all its earthly wealth;
Childless I yet to my late grave may go,
Where only tears for thee would cease to flow:
'Twere comfort still to think, should Heaven ordain
My hopeless years to prove so sharp a pain,
Something might yet to these dim eyes appear,
That should that look, that smile of kindness wear,
With which thou com'st to bless each lingering day,
Of feeble age, in its perceiv'd decay."

The shades of yesternight were softly drawn
Wide o'er these blooming fields, and circling lawn,
And the dear Full of Days his pillow prest
In the soft slumber of an infant's rest;
Two wondrous Youths, who strike the Muses lyre,
Ere manhood's dawn, with all a poet's fire,
Sat by thy friend, to speed the evening hours
By culling florets from Aonian bowers;
When gladly, through the swift-unfolding door,
The promis'd gift a smiling servant bore,
With curious eyes the youthful Lyrist's hail,
The heav'd dismissal of each tardy nail,

1 Two wondrous Youths—Mr. Henry Cary, and Mr. Thomas Lister, who each, at the age of fifteen, published verses of much beauty and classic elegance.—(Miss Seward's footnote.)
Till to their sight the speaking canvass shone,
And made the magic of thy pencil known.
At early day to the lov'd couch I creep,
Chasing with lenient voice a Father's sleep,
Then near its pillow draw his heart's desire,
Mark his wan cheek faint tinged with pleasure's fire,
Enjoy his warm apostrophe to thee,
And his now seldom tear of extacy.

O! generous Romney! whose expansive heart
Glovs the blest rival of thy perfect art,
Thy genius is a Sun, that now serene
Shines on the surface of a watery scene;
Pale waning Life smiles in its glad'ning rays,
And to their light a Bramin's homage pays.

Bit by bit, however, Hayley's coldness wore down Miss Seward's admiration, and at the end she had become one of his most exacting critics, not only of his Aonian efforts but of his conduct. The story of broken friendships being almost the saddest of all reading, we will let the matter rest there.

Before closing the chapter, I may, however, complete the story of Hayley's life. In 1786 his wife, with whom he had never been really happy, went out of her mind, and they were separated in 1789. They had no children, but Mrs. Hayley had consented to act as a mother to a natural son of her husband's, born in 1780, of whom the Bard was excessively fond, and for whom he may be said almost to have lived. This boy, who had been placed in Flaxman's studio, died in 1800, the year that saw also the death of the poet's new friend, Cowper. Miss Sward's remarks at this time, in a letter to another friend, indicate unusual acuteness: "You say you fear, from the style of his Epistles on Oratory, and that egotism of melancholy, which so often occurs on their progress, that Mr. Hayley is likely to become, like Cowper, the victim of morbid despondency. His sensibilities have certainly sustained a severe trial, in the long-protracted sufferings, and untimely death of that fondly beloved youth, in whom he had concentrated his whole sum
of affectionate connection. The very recluse life he has led, and will continue to lead, has an unquestionable tendency to deepen the gloom of this heart-rending disappointment. Yet, I think, he will not sink under it. No!—his literary ardour will bear him up. You see, in the course of his last work, and its notes, that he was planning new poetic compositions, even while his griefs were all bleeding fresh. Time does everything for minds of that cast. He who can bewail his sorrows to the world, will not become their victim. There is a mournful luxury in such pains, which has nothing in it of the severity of despair. Mr. Hayley will always love to deplore, and to allude to his lost darling in future compositions. Affliction never overturns the sanity of a spirit which it does not first render indolent. Never will he, like poor Cowper, become the victim of religious despondency: the darkest and most incurable of all irrational feeling."

Miss Seward was right. Mr. Hayley did not sink under his blows. He worked away busily at the Life of Cowper, various plays, and a Life of Romney; and in 1809 he married again, only however again to separate. He died in 1820. Southey said of him that everything about him was good except his poetry; but it is difficult to acquit him of profound selfishness, and, in so far as we may gather from his correspondence with Miss Seward, much little mindedness and petty jealousy.
CHAPTER X

MR. WHALLEY

“Beloved Edwy”—A reading party in the “blue region”—Sophia Weston—Fanny Burney describes Sophia Weston—An apt pupil—Julia describes herself—Whalley’s Journals and Correspondence—A clergyman in ease and luxury—A fortunate marriage—Fanny Burney on Mr. Whalley—Lady Miller’s appeal—Mr. Whalley’s country seat—A poet’s properties—Miss Seward meets Hannah More—A “Salvatorial sketch”—Farewell verses to Mr. Whalley—“Whalleyan magic”—Extracts from letters—Giovanni’s epistolary style—Miss Seward meets Mrs. Siddons.

MISS SEWARD had many correspondents, as the printed letters prove: to say nothing of the letters which still repose in the MS. volumes in which she copied them, and of the hundreds of letters which she did not copy. Of most of these friends I do not propose to say anything; but at this point I think it would be amusing to know something of one of her early poetical intimates—the Rev. Thomas Sedgwick Whalley, because he was so very much to her mind, was a friend of Lady Miller, and during the Bath-Easton period and a little after must have been more in her thoughts than any one save Mr. Saville. At least he is the only friend to whom she begins a letter “My beloved Edwy”—Edwy and Eliduda, 1779, being the story in verse which entitled its author to masquerade as a poet, and Miss Seward having, as we have seen, an objection as strong as that of the most sentimental school-girl (which indeed she never quite ceased to be) to call her nearest friends by their true names and among them to be called
A PARTY OF DEVOTEES

by her own. Mr. Whalley remained Edwy for a considerable time; Miss Seward was still Julia.

The beginning of all Miss Seward's friendships is indistinct, but I imagine that for the most part it was a letter of praise either from her or to her. Whalley's *Edwy and Edilda* is so exactly the kind of high-falutin she would like, that it is very probable that in 1777, when it appeared, the poet received a flattering epistle. This he would answer, having nothing else to do but flatter and be flattered; and Miss Seward would write again, and the mischief would be done. Or possibly they met on the terrace at Bath-Easton, both wearing wreaths of laurel, or Miss Weston may have brought them together at Bath. Be this as it may, Miss Seward and the Whalleys were as friendly as they could be by 1780.

From a later letter of flattery I may quote a little: "Yesterday evening I found three such within my dressing-room circle, 'the blue region,' of which Mr. André talks in his letters with so much partial enthusiasm. We were nine of us in all, and met for the express purpose of reading *Edwy and Edilda*; not that any of the chosen three were ignorant of its beauties; but some of the colder souls had expressed a wish to hear that poem, of which we had often given such warm descriptions. Four of us took it by turns to read aloud—of three of these readers, it may be said, that 'poetry is poetry indeed from their lips!' This is the fifth time I have heard it read regularly through to different companies. No repetition can weaken its powers over my soul. I long to speak of some of my eminently favourite passages, but must not trust myself, lest I write a volume, and time presses on, my hours are besieged."

Here, since chronological sequence is of small moment in Miss Seward's life or in that of her friends, I may say a little of this Miss Weston, who after a burning enthusiasm.
for the Swan in the eighties, cooled and retreated. Among 
even such practised sentimentalists as Miss Seward's chosen 
correspondents she took a high place, quivering to every 
breath that blew. Fanny Burney's quick eye detected her 
instantly. On her visit to Bath in 1780, as we have seen, 
she met all the Bath-Easton amateurs, Miss Weston among 
them. Miss Weston, she says, would talk of nothing "but 
'dear nature,' and nothing abuse but 'odious affectation!'
She really would be too bad for the stage, for she is never 
so content as when drawing her own character for other 
people's as if on purpose to make one sick of it. She begged, 
however, for my town direction, and talked in high strains 
of the pleasure she should have in visiting me. But in 
London we can manage these matters better."

I take from the correspondence of Mr. Whalley an ex-
tract or two from Miss Weston's letters, which serve to show 
how many persons at that date could grow the Lichfield 
flower. "The encomiums my dear cousin Thomas has so 
agreeably bestowed on my last letter, by flattering my 
vanity, would alone have been sufficient to have secured 
him a speedy reply; but, alas! that was written under the 
happy influence of health and spirits; and the present 
clouds of severe indisposition, while they exclude every 
idea of this sort, give me good reason to fear it will be very 
long ere my pen will again entitle me to the same incense, 
or afford either amusement or pleasure to my friends.

"Far more powerful motives, however, induce me to 
take the first opportunity that leisure and a little mitigation 
of corporeal suffering allows, to thank you for the most enter-
taining packet that ever was written, and while friendship 
and gratitude dictate this plain and simple return, I know 
it will be as acceptable to your worthy heart, as if the genius 
of a Seward was exerted, in all the pomp of glory, to pay 
the tribute."
LIKE ATTRACTING LIKE

“That name reminds me of the Monody on Major André with which I am greatly charmed, as I am also with his letters annexed to it. I cannot, however, greatly honour his fair mistress, Honora, who, I think, discovered unpardonable levity, or only weak compliance, with the wishes of her family by entering into any other engagements; for if parental authority ‘frowned on the maid and bid the youth despair,’ in my opinion eternal constancy was the least tribute due to the merits of such a lover. If her feelings were at all what one must suppose them, from the enthusiastic attachment expressed both by Miss Seward and the unfortunate André, happy was it for her that she was removed from all sense of mortal pain before the news of his fate arrived—a fate that instability most certainly precipitated him into.”

That like attracts like, even if it does not retain its affection for it for ever, is unmistakable; hence it was impossible that Miss Seward, Mr. Whalley and Miss Weston, given any opportunity of meeting, should keep apart, for they were, so far at any rate as epistolary style and habits of mind go, absurdly alike and alike absurd.

Before meeting her Edwy in person, his Julia thus prepared him for the worst: “You will easily believe me when I assure you, that my luxuries are of another nature than those which are supplied by what is called polished life. Even my ingenious friends laugh at me for my awkward simplicity.

“I wear no powder in my hair, and mind nothing of dress beyond the clean and decent; and I could live for ever upon mutton broth, thickened with oatmeal, fried pork and potatoes. Prepare yourself, therefore, my dear, dear friend, that you may not be disgusted with the utter absence of elegance in me and about me.

“Dr. Darwin left Lichfield only about 8 months since,
When he lived here, we two were the poets of the place. If Darwin chose to appear under that character, he would be one of the first of our time.

"He looks like a butcher, I 'like a fat cook maid'. . . .

Mr. Hayley travels out of Sussex on purpose to visit our amity by personal consciousness."

A number of letters to Mr. Whalley are to be found in the six volumes of the correspondence; but there are still more in *The Journals and Correspondence of Thomas Sedgwick Whalley, D.D.*, 1867—a work edited, with a memoir, by the Rev. Hill Wickham, who seems to have objected very strongly to Miss Seward and all her ways, but none the less prints a quantity of her outpourings.

Mr. Whalley was a curious, luxurious man, with a sensitive, florid mind, and the habits of an aristocrat, capable of much kindness and much foolishness. Born in 1746, he was four years younger than the Swan. Like her he was hedged about by the church, his father being rector of St. Peter's, Cambridge, and regius professor of Divinity in that University, and his mother a daughter of a canon of Wells. Whalley took orders as a matter of course, and was quickly presented to the rectory of Hagworthingham by the Bishop of Ely, on the humane condition that since his health was not robust and Hagworthingham lay low, he should never reside there. Whalley brought himself to comply with this stipulation, and for more than fifty years paid a curate to discharge his duties, he himself residing either at the Crescent, Bath, or at Langford Court, Somersetshire, in voluptuous ease, on the fortune of his wife. That he was not, however, a fortune-hunter, but merely one who, when a fortune came his way, enjoyed it, Miss Seward tells us; for on the death of the first Mrs. Whalley in 1801, she wrote:

"Then I grieve for dear Mr. Whalley's irreparable loss, not only in a wife, so justly dear to him, but in the means of
obtaining a continuance of those expensive elegancies in his style of living, which long habit has rendered necessary to his comforts. I fear his wane of life will severely feel the inconvenience and deprivation resulting from the Quixotic generosity of his youth, when, as I have been informed, lest the world should think and say, and lest his beloved Mrs. Sherwood should suspect, that his attachment was mercenary, he would not marry her till she had settled upon her own relations, after her death, all her maiden fortune, except an annuity of £200. Her considerable jointure must drop with her. The worst of it is, that the few people capable of heroic disdain of the auri sacra fames are exactly those who can the least dispense with those gratifications, of which gold is the source."

In both his homes Mr. Whalley established salons. Few men can have had more of the machinery of the amateur poet. He aimed at being a Lorenzo di Medici, but with the best intentions fell short of his successor, Beckford, who some years later ruled Bath too. None the less, Whalley did well. Every one who went to Bath hoped to be invited to his house; he was a friend of Mrs. Siddons, Mrs. Piozzi and Miss Seward; and he gave Barker of Bath, the landscape-painter, very real encouragement, while he himself was painted by Reynolds.

Fanny Burney’s description of Mr. Whalley is again the best we have: “One of the clergymen was Mr. W——, a young man who has a house on the Crescent, and is one of the best supporters of Lady Miller’s vase at Bath Easton. He is immensely tall, thin, and handsome, but affected, delicate, and sentimentally pathetic; and his conversation about his own ‘feelings,’ about ‘amiable motives,’ and about the wind, which, at the Crescent, he said in a tone of dying horror, ‘blew in a manner really frightful!’ diverted me the whole evening. But Miss Thrale, not content with private
diversion, laughed out at his expressions, till I am sure he perceived and understood her merriment."

One of Lady Miller's letters to Mr. Whalley runs thus:—

BATH-EASTON VILLA,
November 3, 1780.

A continuance of your elegant poetical favours is earnestly entreated against the 21st of next month (December); the subject—"Delays are Dangerous". I give you the earliest notice possible, and beg you will not refuse the assistance of your charming muse, on the first day of opening the Vase for the winter season. We had hoped we should have seen you and Mrs. Whalley before now at Bath, but suppose you are planting clumps, etc., at that elegant retreat, Langford Court. Excuse the hurry I write in, for this is the fifteenth letter I have written this day, and dinner waits.

I am, etc.
A. MILLER.

Some idea of the comforts and poetical graces of the home brought to Edwy by the first Mrs. Whalley may be gathered from Miss Seward's description, after an exultant visit there, in a letter to Lady Gresley: "Dear and revered Lady Gresley expressed a wish of hearing from me. I pay glad obedience to a request so flattering. . . . At ten o'clock, Mr. Whalley arrived in his chaise, to conduct me to his Eden, among the Mendip mountains. Singularly, and beyond my high-raised expectations, beautiful I did indeed find it; situated, built, furnished, and adorned in the very spirit of poetic enthusiasm, and polished simplicity. It is about twelve years since Mr. Whalley began to cover, with a profusion of trees and shrubs, one of these vast hills, then barren like its brethren. The plantations seem already to have attained their full size, strength, and exuberance of foliage.

"By the addition of another horse, to help the chaise-horses, we ascended the sylvan steep. At about two-thirds of its height, on a narrow terrace, stands the dear white cottage, whose polished graces seem smilingly to deride its name, though breathing nothing heterogeneous to cottage
simplicity. The first floor consists of a small hall, with a butler's pantry to the right, and good kitchen to the left; housekeeper's room beyond that; scullery behind the kitchen; the offices at a little distance, detached from the house, many steps below this bank, and screened from sight by trees. The second floor contains, in front, to the north-west three lightsome, lovely, though not large, apartments, whose spacious sashes are of the Gothic form. These are the dining-room, drawing-room, and elegant boudoir beyond, all opening through each other. My apartment, from which I now write, is behind the boudoir; its window, at the end of the house, looking to the east, and upon a steep lawn, sprinkled over with larches, poplars, and woodbines, excluded, by a circular plantation from all prospect of that magnificent vale, upon which the front rooms look down, in instant and almost perpendicular descent. A gravel-walk winds up this secluded lawn to the mountain top. Mr. and Mrs. Whalley, and their other guests, sleep in the attics. The wide-extended vale beneath us has every possible scenic beauty, excepting only the meanders of a river. Scarce two hundred yards from the villa, on the left hand, a bare brown mountain intersects this its woody neighbour, and towers equal heights. The protection it extends from the north-west winds has been every thing to Mr. Whalley, as to the growth and health of his plantations. Sloping its giant's foot to the valley, it finely contrasts, with barren sterility, the rich cultivation of the scenery below, and the lavish umbrage that curtains these steeps.

"With the sort of sensation that a beauteous country girl, in the first glow of youth and health, surveys an antiquated dowager of rank and riches, seems this little villa to look down on the large stone mansion of Langford Court, the property of Mr. and Mrs. Whalley, and their former residence. It stands in the valley, about half a mile from
us, encircled by its fine lawn of two hundred acres, planted and adorned with great taste. Yet more immediately below us nestles, in a wood, the village of Langford. The smoke of its farms and cottages, curling amongst the trees at early morn, imparts the glow of vitality and cheerfulness to our romantic retirement. I climb, by seven o'clock in a morning the highest terrace, and ‘drink the spirit of the mountain gale,’ which seems to invigorate my whole frame, and give my lungs the freest respiration. Never before did I breathe, for any continuance, an atmosphere so sublimated. The extensive vale finely breaks into inequalities by knolls and dingles. The beautiful fields wearing, from the late rains, the brightest verdure, have waved outlines of plenteous hedge-moss, and appear, by their depth from the eye, shining and smooth as the lawns of our nobility. They are interspersed with thick and dark, though not large, woods. The whole wide expanse is dotted over by white rough-cast cottages, and here and there a village-spire and squirrel chateau.

"Fifteen miles in width, and about seven distant from this elevation, the Bristol channel lies, a sheet of silver, stretched longitudinally over the vale. Beyond, we plainly discern the Welsh coast, whose mountains bound the horizon.

"Mr. Whalley’s walks and bowers are finely diversified,

Shade above shade, a woody theatre.

The several terraces ascending over each other are connected by steep winding paths for the active, and by grassy steps for the feeble. These terraces are so variously planted and disposed, as to avoid all that sameness to which, from their situation, they were liable; now secluded and gloomy; now admitting the rich world below to burst upon the eye. Hermitages and caves, cut in the rocky steeps, contain rustic seats, dedicated to favourite friends, by poetic inscriptions.—
One to Mrs. Siddons; another to Miss Hannah More; another to the accomplished Mrs. Jackson of Bath; one to Mr. Whalley's venerable mother; another to Mr. Inman, the excellent clergyman of this parish; one to Sophia Weston; and one to myself. These grottos relieve us perpetually by their seats amidst ascents so nearly perpendicular.

"On the summit of this pendant garden we find a concave lawn, with a large root-house in the centre of that semicircular bank, whose thick curtains of firs, larches, poplars, &c. form a darkly verdant fringe, that, rising above the root-house, crowns the mountain-top. This rustic pavilion, supported by pillars made of the boles of old trees, and twined round by woodbines and sweet-peas, is open in front, and commands the whole splendour of the vale below. It contains a large table, on which we lay our work, our writing, or our book, which we carry thither in a morning, whenever the weather will permit. Hitherto the skies have not shone upon us with much summer warmth and brightness.

"I had the pleasure to find dear Mrs. Whalley tolerably well, though feeling, at frequent intervals, severe memorials of her dreadful accident. She, Mr. W., and myself, talk of your Ladyship and Miss Gresleys frequently, and always with a most lively interest.

"Mr. Whalley's mother is here, a miracle at eighty-five, of clear intellects, upright activity, and graceful manners; also Miss Davy, a fine young woman, related to Mrs. Whalley; but charming Sophia is not here; the scanty number of these pretty bed-chambers forbids the accommodation of more than two or three friends at the utmost. I have some hopes of seeing her at Bath on Wednesday, whither we have been invited by Mrs. Jackson, in a letter of never-excelled spirit, elegance, and kindness. She daily expects Miss Weston's arrival.

"My curiosity is on fire to view the drawing-room of
Europe, as your Ladyship calls it, and to admire, with my actual sight, those graces which you have so often placed before my mind’s-eye by very animated description.

"Late Miss Caroline Ansley, married to a Mr. Bosanquet, inhabits the Hall-house, Langford Court, and makes Mrs. Whalley a social and pleasant neighbour. Her manners are obliging and ingenuous. She inquired much after Lady and Miss Gresleys, whom she said she had the pleasure of knowing very well; and yesterday the celebrated Miss Hannah More favoured me with a visit. I like her infinitely. Her conversation has all the strength and brilliance which her charming writings teach us to expect. Though it was our first interview, and no previous connection, correspondence, or even message, had passed between us, she met me with an extended hand, and all the kindness of old acquaintance."

Hannah More was a friend of Mr. Whalley, who was the author of a pamphlet supporting her action over the school at Blagdon in 1802. Miss Seward returned this visit a few days later, and made it the subject of a copy of verses "Written after having visited Miss More, and her sisters at Cowslip Green, near Bristol, in August, 1791 ''. "

FAIR, silent scene, soft rising in the vale,
By mountains guarded from each stormy gale,
Long, 'mid thy sloping lawn, and winding glade,
And mossy cell, for contemplation made,
Be seen, in health and peace, the virgin train,
Led by the boast of Britain's tuneful plain,
Where Genius oft has fed its kindling fires,
Roll'd the rapt eye, and struck the golden wires,
Bristol; that hears her More's distinguish'd name
Wafted, by echoes, round the Shrine of Fame.
On whose mild brow she sees bright laurels twine,
Cull'd from their choicest bowers by all the nine,
Enwreath'd with charity's assuasive balm,
And faith, and virtue's never-dying palm.

And ye, sweet satellites, that gently bear
Your lesser radiance round this beamy star,
Aiding her pious efforts to impart
Religion’s lustre to the youthful heart,
That else in lightless ignorance must stray,
Where guilt’s fell snare’s the indigent betray,
Ye fair examples of an heedless age,
Ye glowing votaries of the sacred page,
O! may your virtues wake the just desire,
“To live like you, and be what we admire!”

One of Mr. Whalley’s own descriptions of his villa I am enabled to quote, since the diligent and apparently untiring hand of Miss Seward has preserved it for us. She calls it, as indeed she called most descriptions of scenery, a “Salvatorial sketch”: “Our beloved cottage has still charms for us. Use cannot pall, nor custom stale its infinite variety. Elevated as we are, the south-west hurricanes pass innocuous over our heads, because we have plantations of evergreens, as you know, and terraces that rise above us to nearly the mountain’s summit; and because the more lofty mountain, which intersects ours on the left, forms our sheltering screen. But those hurricanes rush with tenfold violence through the vale beneath us, while our comforts within are undamped by the rain and unchilled by the frost. A thousand cottages, undescribed in the leafy summer, now shew their white cheerful faces. The brook, which you called a nothing, and which, during the softer seasons, is, in truth, most shallow and simple, runs now expanded, and foams with turbulent pride at our feet; while the more distant moors, covered with water, perfectly resemble a majestic river, rolling between us and the sea.”

Before returning to Mr. Whalley’s career, I wish to add one more description of Langford Cottage, or, as it was later called, Mendip Lodge, from Miss Seward’s pen in 1804. This visit occurred after the death of the first Mrs. Whalley, to whom the house originally belonged, but Mr. Whalley had, in 1803, married again; his second wife being also a lady of

1 Religions lustre—Mrs. H. More established Sunday schools in her neighbourhood. (Miss Seward’s footnote.)
property. I may mention here that after the death of the second Mrs. Whalley he married yet once more, but on discovering that his new consort was heavily in debt (I quote the brusque words of the Dictionary of National Biography), they agreed to separate, and he went abroad and she settled in Bath on her alimony and gave large parties. But with her we have nothing to do.

Here is Miss Seward's Salvatorial sketch of Mendip Lodge in 1804: "I went thither on the 29th of September. Thirteen years ago I passed six weeks in that Alpine habitation. Increasing wealth and fine taste have since transformed and enlarged an elegant cottage on the brow of Mendip to an Italian villa, superbly furnished; extended every way his steep and lawny walks; and placed before his house, and to its whole length, a Tuscan veranda. It is the loveliest architectural luxury I ever traversed, peculiarly calculated for the almost dizzy elevation on which the mansion stands, and for the extreme of light which it chastises, and which was given by large sashes, the whole height of the apartments, from every one of which, on the second floor, we step out into the gay veranda. Those consist of two drawing-rooms and a boudoir. The arches of the veranda are light iron-work, painted green. Its breadth allows three to walk abreast. The shelving roof is also painted green, the floor a mosaic sale-cloth; the circular seats at the end have each a large pier-glass, reflecting a part of the beautiful vale below; the coved-sides are fine painted glass. Twenty-four large china jars were filled with autumnal flowers, and one of them placed under every arch. All the sitting-rooms are on the second floor; servants' apartments on the ground floor; but no culinary operations are carried on there. To this villa urbana there is a villa rustica, which is the cook's region. It is placed sixty steps lower, and hid amongst trees, a covered-way leading from it to the Arcadian palace
above. That is seen from the vale below for two miles on
the great western road from Bristol, and it looks as if it had
dropt from the clouds; and indeed when we stand in the
veranda, or look from the bed-room windows on the third
floor, we seem suspended between earth and heaven, and
inhale an atmosphere peculiarly sublimated.

"The vale below is of twelve miles extent, ere the amber
waves of the Bristol Channel divide England from the
Cambrian shores. Lesser hills, rich woods, lawns, and
fields, a profusion of gentlemen's seats, with villages, 'half
hid in tufted trees,' with their steeples or towers, vouch for
the enjoyment of social pleasures, and for the national
advantage of great population. There is a noble dining-
room backwards, on the second storey, adorned by fine
pictures; the glory of which is a full-length portrait of Mrs.
Siddons, by Hamilton. It is a speaking, a beautiful, an
exquisite likeness, by which her charming face and figure,
drawn in the prime of her life and beauty, should go down
to posterity. She is in the character of Hill's Zara, at the
moment in which she exclaims, with extended hands,

Can it be Osmyn speaks—and speaks to Zara?

but I have not time to proceed in my description of this
grand saloon, nor of the result of that poetic imagination
which formed the wood-wild walks, ascending and descend-
ing the sylvan steeps; or of the green terrace which zones
the whole mountain to an extent of three-quarters of a
mile, commanding a perpetual change of the scenery be-
neath.

"I staid at Mendip Lodge ten days. Its new mistress is
gentle, kind, and good and sensible, though reserved; three
other ladies were of our party.

"I gazed around, wherever I went, whatever I saw, with
tearful, though admiring eyes, for O! to those charming
scenes, dear lost Saville had been often invited by Mr. Whalley;—always proposed going—and now!—alas! the consciousness that his eyes can never behold them, weighed about my heart and shrouded their beauties.

"At Mrs. Hannah More's, who lives in that valley, I passed one morning, and she was once at Mendip while I staid there. Her friend, the Countess of Waldgrave, came with her.

"After a twelve years' estrangement from Sophia Weston that was, Mrs. Pennington that is, Mr. Whalley undertook to reconcile us, divided as we had been by an ingenuousness on my part, which I thought necessary to her welfare, but which her spirit was too high to brook. She lives at the Hot Wells, Bristol, and is a woman of admirable talents, and graceful manners. She received me with tears of returning love, and our reconciliation was perfect. She made me promise to stay with her a few days on my way back to Winterbourn."

It is hardly necessary to say that verses were composed at the end of this visit. From a poem "Addressed to the Rev. Thomas Sedgwick Whalley, on leaving his seat, Mendip Lodge, in Somersetshire, Oct. 10th, 1804," I quote some stanzas:—

While yonder, stretching far its amber line,  
Dividing England from the Cambrian strand,  
Wide in the blush of morning glows the brine,¹  
That bears our commerce to each distant land.

These, seen from the full shades that crown thy hill,  
Or from thy gay Veranda's light arcade,  
With poignant transport must the bosom fill,  
If peace and joy its secret sense pervade.

¹ The brine—Bristol Channel. Milton uses the word brine for the sea,  
"The air was calm, and on the level brine  
Sleek Panope and all her sisters play'd."

Lycidas.—(Miss Seward's footnote.)
FAREWELL STANZAS

On me the various landscape shines in vain,
Since the grave’s iron slumber seals those eyes,1
Now, that must never view thy bright domain,
Or meet thy rays of genius as they rise;

Long be thy gentle consort the mild light,
Shedding content o’er all thy waning days!
And may they stretch with long protracted flight,
And bear to Heaven thy grateful pious praise!

And may Distemper’s mist from thee and thine,
Thy lovely Frances, and thy faithful wife,
Fly, like the rain when Summer mornings shine,
Nor stain with one pale cloud thy eve of life!

Edwy, farewell! to Lichfield’s darkened grove,
With aching heart, and rising sighs, I go,
Yet bear a grateful message as I rove
For all of thine which balm’d a cureless woe.

Even the resources of the first Mrs. Whalley were not inexhaustible, and it was found necessary in 1783 for this expensive gentleman to close or break up his English establishments and travel. But there is no sign that he displayed much economy on his journey. In Paris his appearance impressed Marie Antoinette, who called him “le bel Anglais”; he passed on to Switzerland and Provence, keeping copious journals, which are not uninteresting although vitiated by fine writing. Swift’s searching economic pen had taught nothing by example to the Bath and Lichfield literati. Here is an extract from a letter from Mr. Whalley to Miss Weston, copied by Miss Weston for Miss Seward and then again by Miss Seward for Mr. Hayley—probably an act of superfluity. She calls such things “Whalleyan magic”; the “brilliant Bard of Sussex” may have had another opinion.

“I have this month visited the celebrated fountain of Vaucluse. It is the fullest, purest, and most beautiful source imaginable. So serenely does it sleep in a vast cavern, at the foot of a lofty rock, that not one intruding
breath ruffles its azure surface, even while it is sending out an hundred limpid streams from its secret and immeasurable depth. These streams gush out from beneath a shelving bed of huge mossy stones, in various directions, and unite themselves at once in a little river. But this is its state only when the waters are low. As soon as the first ardent beams of the sun penetrate into the store-houses of the mountain-snows, and send them dissolving through the rocky crevices to replenish the springs, the Fountain of Vaucluse swells, and fills completely the ample cavern in which it now slumbers; and then, scorning even that mound, its waters rush out with impetuous fury at the mouth of the cave, and foam over the rough crags, which now seem to tower far above their reach. Then it is that this overflowing fountain increases the now gentle Sorgue into a wide and rapid torrent, that often deluges the vale.—

"While I sat and leaned on a rock, what a soft melancholy did the striking scene of tender poetic consecration breathe over my soul! mine, which was so much less affected than that of Petrarch by relative objects and concatenated ideas; but you must not talk of the laurels around this fountain, for there are none, or rather it is abundant in poetic, because imaginary bowers. There can be little doubt, however, that such laurel bowers were contemporary with the poet, planted probably in lavish plenty by his hand, from their similarity to the name of his mistress, and of his consciousness of the future fame of his verse; but they were not natives of the scene, and time has withered and destroyed every vestige of the aliens. The scenery in reality is that of bare and broken rocks; broken into a thousand fantastic angles, and offering picturesque figures more grand than beautiful. A few straggling olive-trees, notched here and there among the cliffs, seem to strive, with their niggard and insignificant foliage, against the general image of awful
barrenness; as a partial ray of light serves only to render more sensible the general blackness of the surrounding clouds. A fig-tree, however, had much interest for me. It grows wild out of the crevice of the principal rock, and immediately over the cavern. The fountain never rises above its roots, which seem planted there as a boundary to its ambition, and as an olive of peace to the affrighted valley when it shrinks beneath the overwhelming waters."

The Whalleys, as I have said, inevitably attracted their own affinities. "Many English families of rank, residing for a time at Avignon," writes Miss Seward, "followed our friend's example, and formed a sort of colony in the muse-hallowed scene; pleased with the idea of passing a summer in the vicinity of that immortal fountain and valley, which had witnessed the beauty of Laura, and heard the songs of Petrarch,

That spread the fame of his disastrous love.

Adieu!"

Mr. Whalley thereafter divided his life between Bath, London, Mendip Lodge and the Continent—alternately living extravagantly and retrenching. He died in 1828 at Le Flèche, in France, where he is buried. His biographer wrote thus of his lavishness: "Though all extravagance proceeds from a selfish principle, yet Mr. Whalley was uniformly kind and generous towards his relations and friends, and liberal to all. His largesses were excessive: Miss Seward complains of the amount of those to her servants; and at Bath the post-boys fought for the honour of driving him. He paid his tradesmen's bills with so much grace, that it appeared as if they were conferring rather than receiving a favour. When his executor, on his way to settle Mr. Whalley's affairs, mentioned his death at the well-known Bothams' Hotel, near Hungerford, where he was in the habit of sleeping on his journeys to the metropolis, the
landlady burst into tears and appeared really affected. It was not difficult to impose upon him once, for he readily believed a person's character to be what he wished it and thus he was often deceived."

I conclude this chapter by quoting a few passages from Miss Seward's letters to her friend, with whom she remained on a cordial footing nearly to the end, although their first warmth had cooled. I am inclined to believe that the defective correspondent in the following passage, in a letter to another friend in 1797, was Mr. Whalley, but it may have been Hayley: "It is at length given me to thank you for one of the most beautiful letters that ever flowed from the pen of genius, entended by affection, and dictating truth. Sweetly does it moralise on our ever-pleasing, ever-benevolent, yet altered Mr. —— whose native warmth of heart seems, by a strange dereliction of feeling, absorbed in an inferior order of being. That a dog is a noble, grateful, faithful animal, we must all be conscious, and deserves a portion of our tenderness and care; — yet, from its utter incapacity of more than glimpses of rationality, there is a degree of insanity, as well as of impoliteness to his acquaintance, and of unkindness to his friends, in lavishing so much more of his attention in the first instance, and of affection in the latter, upon it than upon them. Justly do you observe, that this is the more to be regretted, because the heart fancies its sensibilities just the while, though, in fact, they are all perverted; — nor is your remark less true, 'that we never lose much on the side of manners, till we have lost something on the side of feeling; that the politeness of the heart will act impulsively, while the prime emotions of that heart continue to operate in their purity.'

"Ah! yes, it is too true that imagination is often substituted for feeling. Never was their difference more finely illustrated than by your simile for that substitution,—"the
double-blossom-cherry, wasting itself in promise.' Mr. ——'s cold silence to me is not yet broken. Five minutes a-day, one month out of three, subtracted from the time every day passed in caressing his dog, would have preserved our correspondence, and spared my heart the conviction, that all his former protestations of eternal interest in me and mine, have melted from his remembrance, beneath the strong sunshine of his late prosperity."

Here are various extracts: "Ah, Edwy, your presents, your too elegant, too costly presents! Indeed dearest friend, I must chide you. The ribbon for myself I would have accepted gladly, but the bracelet; ah! I wanted no token of my Edwy's love. You are too generous even to be rich, and, like Mr. Hayley, you are swelling to a countless number the obligations I owe you. Your visit, however, your exquisitely kind visits, that was indeed an obligation, compared to which the gift of gems would be poor. It is perhaps well, that the amount of business I have upon my hands, indispensable, though perhaps immaterial, leaves me so little leisure to indulge the regrets of deprivation.

"Else, my dear Edwy, could I sit listening to the winds that howl over the lawn, and through many a pensive hour pay the tribute of a frequent sigh and tear to the distance which already divides us, and to the idea that, yet a little while and we shall no longer be in the same kingdom,

"But let me not cloud, with the present vapourish tendency of my spirits, that gaiety of your heart, in the light of which I have so loved to bask; rather will I try to assimilate my feelings to your happiness, than hold out the magnet of melancholy. Last night, I trust, restored you to the faithful and now happy arms of the dear and excellent Amelia. My mind's eye perceives her at this moment sitting by you, and looking unutterable things of tenderness and delight, while the squirrel frisks over your shoulder,
and the faithful Sappho is fawning upon your hand. I see also your venerable parent complete the interesting group, her eye beaming with complacent sweetness and tender sympathy.”

**Cri de Cœur**

“Edwy, my dear Edwy, teach thy Amelia and thy Siddons to love me! Sophia’s heart, that mine of mental wealth, is affianced to me already, if my horrid figure and embarrassed dialect do not blot out the fair compact.”

**Fidelity to Mr. Saville**

“At length, some nine years ago, the malice of our ceremonial beings, co-operating with the machinations of a shrewish, vulgar, and many ways memorable wife, gained upon the easy nature of my father to estrange his heart from our friend, whose gentle disposition experienced the ‘altered eye of hard unkindness’ from him, and bled under the sense of it. No prospect of worldly disadvantage—and I was threatened with the highest—could induce me to renounce the blessings of a tried and faithful friend; but, by ill-advised and mistaken authority, most of its sweetest comforts were mercilessly lopt away. You will love and esteem an injured man, of whom this frivolous world is not worthy. Were he prosperous, his virtues would ensure him your esteem; and half of them, when you shall come to know him, under the pressure of domestic sorrow, and of the neglect of the proud, would consecrate his claim to the amity of a heart like yours, and that within its dearest recesses.”

**Death of Sappho**

“Ah! my dear friend, though my health has been considerably better within these three weeks, I now take up my pen with a heavy heart, for I have lost your and my darling
little dog. Our dear Sappho died suddenly this morning, without a shadow of previous illness. Mr. Green, an apothecary, thinks the enlargement of her throat, where we have observed the artery so incessantly throbbing with uncommon violence, was an aneurism, which, suddenly bursting, produced her instantaneous death. She had eaten a good breakfast, had been frisking and bounding with her accustomed elasticity, ten minutes before. She lay asleep at my feet. I rose to search for a paper in the adjoining closet; turning back at the door to look whether she followed, I saw her gazing at me with that arch, dubious look whether she should follow or not, which she often wore when I went out of the room and she thought it likely I should soon return. Just as I was opening the box which contained the paper I wanted, I heard her scream with a weirdful cry. I rushed back, and saw her stretched out in a seeming fit. I screamed, and a maid servant, who was in the passage, instantly came in, who rubbed and chafed her in vain. I sent for Giovanni, whose grief equalled my own, and whose tears flowed in streams over the dear lifeless animal, whose gay and grateful affection, you, as well as ourselves, have witnessed. I shall miss and lament her long. She was, as you know, one of the most amiable of that generous species; and the consciousness how often she has played about the knees of my dear old father; how she loved you and Giovanni, and, at last Mrs. Whalley, and everybody dear to me; what a sweet companion she was in all my journeys;—these recollections will make her long bewailed—you and Mrs. Whalley will both lament her; so will good Mr. Amons, who was so kind to her. Giovanni, who has been far from well lately, will, I am afraid, hurt himself with grieving. I prevailed upon him to go over to Derby, to consult Dr. Darwin, whose medicines he is now taking. His symptoms alarm and distress me exceedingly.”
MR. WHALLEY

GIOVANNI'S THANKS

"Giovanni thanks you a thousand times for your kind remembrance of him. He says the friendship of minds like yours, is a sweet compensation for all he may suffer through the malice of beings, who have nothing but their outward form in common with Mr. Whalley's nature. He says your last letter is one of the first pieces of fine writing in our language. We both long to be seated by you on one of those magnificent Alps, to contemplate with you the aerial solitude and all its great and varied sublimities; and we all rejoice that you and your Amelia's constitution shrink not beneath the Alpine blasts."

MR. SAVILLE WRITES A LETTER

A letter from Mr. Saville himself, concerning a musical triumph, shows us that he also had acquired the art of writing: "I have only a moment in which to tell you that I received such applause for your charming song, as I believe never before rang the Senate House. Its effect was sublime, from the glorious accompaniments, the full chorus and the thunder of the kettle-drums. It was encored twice. Having put forth all my powers, I believe I should have dropt down in a third effort. Therefore, to the second encore I bowed with my head upon my breast, as entreating to be spared, upon which the words 'no, no!' and 'cruel,' were heard on all sides, and after them another thunder of applause, as evincing a cheerful acquiescence in my involuntary incapacity of going through it a third time. My voice was never, I think, so loud and clear: the subject inspired me, and if you had heard the compliments I received from people of the highest rank crowding around me after the song was over, you would have been induced to fancy me almost as great as the glorious fellow you have so nobly celebrated.

"The intoxication of the amor patriæ seemed to dispose
the folk to deify me instead of the Admiral; but well do I
know I am indebted to the beauty of the composition that
my vocal powers were thus empowered to awaken one of the
most generous feelings which can delight the human soul.”

MRS. SIDDONS

Lastly we have a sketch of Mrs. Siddons from Miss
Seward’s pen:—“Your matchless friend has been perform-
ing most of her celebrated characters at Birmingham. The
dejecning nature of my bodily sensations counteracted the
longings of my spirit after those sublime representations
of high-strung feelings and conflicting passions, till I saw
Mrs. Siddons announced for Hermione, and Catherine the
Shrew. I could then resist no longer; much as I feared the
exertion. She was, if possible, greater than ever, and I was
very glad to observe her plumpness and healthier looks since
I saw her in Lady Macbeth this time three years. She sent
me a thrice kind billet after the first act; a more welcome
one I have seldom received, for I love as well as admire
her infinitely. I called at her door next morning, but it was
the day of her leaving Birmingham, which made it impos-
sible she should have leisure to see every person: so I left
my billet of acknowledgment for her gratifying notice.
On leaving the stage, after her general curtsey, she made
one to me with a smile of benignity, which is engraved on
my heart. O, Mr. Whalley, what an enchanting Beatrice
she is!”
CHAPTER XI

THE LETTERS

Miss Seward's dealings with her correspondence—The fateful year 1784—The bequest to Constable—George Hardinge and the Swan's slipper—A broken friendship—"Seducer!"—A live lord—A reading party at Buxton—Miss Seward among the aristocracy—Various extracts from the letters—The Swan in a menagerie—The Swan and the nightingale—Tansy tea—Ludlow's syrens—The Swan's sermons—A flood—Charlotte Corday—The weather—Howard the philanthropist—Dr. Parr—The Lichfield Chapter—The death of Pitt—A conclusion.

After the year 1784 there is very little that we do not know about Miss Seward, for from that time forward she kept a copy of every letter, either in whole or part, that she wrote. But previous to that year we have no regular information.

Why Miss Seward fixed upon 1784 I cannot say. But a time comes for everything, and I suppose it was not until then that one morning she woke up to the conviction that her opinions were of such value that she had better make certain of their preservation by preserving them herself. It was from her copies that the six-volume edition was prepared in 1811: from a selection of those copies; but whether the differences between their text as it appears in print and their text as Miss Seward originally wrote it to her friends, were her work in transcribing, or her editor's, I cannot say, having had no opportunity of comparing them. But I understand that such differences do exist, and the only original letter that I have seen proves it. The matter is unimportant.

The letters were bequeathed to Archibald Constable, the
publisher, in Miss Seward’s will, after she had made arrangements for Sir Walter Scott to undertake the complete edition of her poems. The instructions to both gentlemen were minute, and were made twice, once by letter and once in the will. To Sir Walter Scott’s share we shall come later; but here I may mention the lines laid down in the legal instrument for the guidance of Mr. Constable. The italics, I may say, are Miss Seward’s. “In the before mentioned blue hair trunk will be found twelve half-bound quarto volumes; they contain such letters, or parts of letters, to numerous correspondents, from the year 1784 to the present day, as appeared to me worth the future attention of the public. Voluminous as is the collection, it does not include a twentieth part of my epistolary writing from the period at which those twelve books commenced. I give and bequeath these twelve volumes to Mr. A. Constable, bookseller, in Edinburgh, the gentleman who publishes Mr. Walter Scott’s poetic compositions. I bequeath them to him rather than to Mr. Walter Scott, since the abhorrence in which, both in a moral and religious point of view, from the close of the campaign in 1793, I have held the destructive system in this country which has ruined the Continent, endangered the independence of Great Britain, obstinately pursued against remonstrances of wisdom, and the warnings of successive discomfort, is too fervently avowed in the course of these letters, and is too hostile to Mr. Scott’s political attachments and connexions, for the possibility of its being eligible for him to become their editor. I wish Mr. Constable to publish two volumes of the said letters annually, not classing them to separate correspondents, but suffering them to succeed each other in the order of time, as he finds them in the volumes.

“To my hereafter mentioned executors and trustees, I commit the inspection of all my letters from my different
correspondents, and of all my papers, those excepted, which are designed for the press; and I trust in their discretion to destroy all useless papers and letters."

Sir Walter, as we shall see, did his work like the gallant gentleman he was, but it is not too cheering to think of how otherwise he might have been filling the time thus occupied. Mr. Constable was also a worthy executor, although he departed from his instructions to the extent of issuing all the volumes at once instead of drawing out their linked sweetness over a term of years. Thus 1810 and 1811 saw the completion of the publication of both works.

Two years after the letters appeared a Mr. W. C. Oulton issued a selection from them under the title The Beauties of Anna Seward carefully selected and alphabetically arranged under appropriate heads. It was a dull compilation and was evidently undertaken against the editor’s better judgment, for his preface is hostile.

That all the twelve volumes to which Miss Seward refers are in existence I happen to know, for they were sold at Sotheby’s for a few shillings only two or three years ago; but where they are now I have not been able to discover.

A passage to Mrs. Stokes in June, 1791, tells us a little more about these letters and the estimation in which Miss Seward held them: “You had not seen White’s anecdotes of me in the Monthly Mirror last winter, when you adjured me to write my life. I do not wish to say more of myself than is there said, and I am sure I do not know how to say it better. My long habit of transcribing into a book every letter of my own which appears to me worth the attention of the public, omitting the passages which are totally without interest for any one but those to whom they are addressed, has already filled several volumes. After my death, at least, if not in my lifetime, it is my design that they shall be published. They will faithfully reflect the unimportant
LICHFIELD CATHEDRAL

(WEST FRONT)

"Never shall I forget the joy that danced in Honora's eyes, when she first showed them [the spires of Lichfield Cathedral] to me. . . . I remember she called them the ladies of the valley—their lightness and elegance deserve the title."—_André to the Swan_
events of my life, rendered in some degree interesting from being animated by the present-time sentiments and feelings of my heart—at least more interesting than a narrative of past occurrences could possibly prove. To sit formally down to such a task of egotism, would extremely revolt my sensations—and, were I inclined to undertake it, I have absolutely no time.”

It was in the *Monthly Mirror* for January and February, 1791, that Miss Seward was extolled by her cousin, with—we can feel very sure after reading the article—assistance from the lady herself. Thus: “Respecting the temper and manners of the subject of this memoir, however partial may be the attachment of its author, the testimonies of Miss Seward’s enemies may be quoted for all of praise which friendship shall here bestow. Enemies she has, both personal and literary, though lasting resentment, except towards experienced _treachery_, she is not capable of feeling; but her sense of injury is too quick and keen, her frankness too unguarded, her attachments too zealous, not to have created enemies. That her friendships have ever been disinterested and steady, those who love her least will not deny; neither will they assert, that pride, ostentation, or avarice, mark her character; or that satire or envy embitter her conversation. Though too sincere to flatter, she loves to praise; assumes no superiority over those with whom she converses; never aiming to dazzle the unlettered by any display of knowledge, or to repress their frank communications to _her_, by the mute arrogance of reserve. If impolitely treated, she takes no revenge by retaliated impoliteness, contented with ceasing to seek the society of those whose latent ill-will towards her thus discovers itself. On these occasions she seeks to emulate the love-recorded conduct of Lord Lyttleton’s Lucy,

Who injur’d, or offended, never tried
Her dignity by vengeance to maintain,

*But by magnanimous disdain.*
“When any attempt is made by people of talent, either in small or large companies, to lead conversation upon the higher ground of moral disquisition, or the works of genius, or the now universally momentous theme of the national welfare, she follows that lead with glad alacrity, pleased to assist in tracing the meanders of the human mind, the sources of exalted, or of mean actions, and in discriminating the difference and degrees of genius. It is then that she is always found ardent and ingenious, but impartial. Does her friend publish feebly, and is his work the theme, she tries rather to change the subject than to endeavour to support defect or mediocrity by encomium. Has her foe produced a fine composition, she feels every charm of the page, and brings forward to the observation of the ingenious, every obvious and latent beauty: superior to literary jealousy, the frequent misery of authors, and always distinguishing between the merits of the heart and the head.”

Yet when there was divergence in views there was no prosperity for Miss Seward’s correspondence. It languished and died. She had not Carlyle and John Sterling’s gift of “differing only in opinion”; she wanted her friends to go with her all the way. Indeed, her friends were chosen for that aptitude. Birds of her feather flocked together.

For the most part her letters do not display the progress of her coolnesses; but in one case there is an exception, and we are enabled to follow the course of the waxing and waning of the moon of Mr. George Hardinge. This gentleman was an alleged wit and a real lawyer, who dabbled in literature. I find in Notes and Queries in 1862 an amusing story of his first meeting with the Swan, contributed by a nameless writer: “My father, who died in 1815, a septuagenarian, told me a pleasant anecdote wherein they figured, as related to him by the lady herself; and, having now outlived his date by fourteen years, I begin to think it should no longer
be trusted to so frail a tradition. Let me premise that he knew both its actors, as he did most of the literati and are of his time; that he was an accomplished scholar, and no mean poet. But to his story:—

"One afternoon Miss Seward received a card, to the effect that Mr. Hardinge, in passing through Lichfield, desired to pay his respects to a lady so distinguished, &c. &c., which was as complimentarily acknowledged by an invitation to 'a dish of tea'. Mr. Hardinge presented himself accordingly; and, the souchong being removed, abruptly, and à propos de rien, asked her had she ever heard Milton read? The Paradise Lost was produced, and opened at a venture; the judge jumped upon the table, and read some pages, not to her astonishment only, but to her profound admiration. 'Never,' said Miss Seward to my father, 'never before did I hear Milton read, and never since.' As abruptly her visitant closed the volume, descended from the table, made his bow, and without a word disappeared.

"But the story did not end here. The next morning a pacquet was transmitted to Miss Seward, enclosing an elaborate critique on the English Homer, and with it a most delicate (life-size) pattern of a lady's shoe, with a note attached—that Mr. Hardinge had imagined this to be the faithful model of Miss Seward's foot, and begged her to satisfy him of the correctness of his fancy. 'Of mine!' exclaimed the poetess, disclosing to my father an inch or so of ankle, not exactly Cinderellian in its proportions."

Correspondence followed, one of Miss Seward's letters to her new friend beginning thus: "Seducer!" Here is the first letter, dated 10th September, 1786: "'If Miss Seward remembers Mr. Hardinge!' Ah! dull of spirit, if the traces of those few hours, in which she was honoured with his conversation, had faded in her memory!

"On their first meeting, he was so good, at Mr. Boothby's
request, to read a few passages from the Paradise Lost, as he sat on the window of her dressing-room. 'Poetry was then poetry indeed.' The ear of her imagination has often brought back his cadences. Born an enthusiast, time has but little abated that propensity, in despite of her consciousness, that, in this marble age, nothing is more unfashionable.

"Yes, Sir, from the retired situation in which my life has passed away, I have followed you through your brighter and more elevated track, with distinct but earnest gaze, and rejoiced in your expanding fame.

"Two of your sonnets were given me, to the Fountain, and to the Lyre of Petrarch. With them, amongst others, have I often combated the unmeaning assertion of pedants, that the legitimate sonnet suits not the genius of our language, producing those Avignon little gems as its perfect refutation.

"While these arise to the honour of Mr. Hardinge's genius, his generous exertions to promote the amiable and highly ingenious Miss Helen Williams' interest, in the subscription to her poems, do equal honour to his benevolence.

"My mother's death, and my father's incapacity for every kind of business, have involved me in much of that employment which seems the contradiction of my fate; so that, together with an inconveniently extensive correspondence, and the social pleasures, by which I am very seducible, little time is left for versifying; yet several thousand lines, of former composition, in the heroic, lyric, and sonnet measure, have long slumbered in my writing-desk, vainly waiting the always receding hour of transcript and revision.

"The terms in which you mention my poetical novel, 'Louisa,' gratify me extremely. I know it is the best and ablest of my publications. There may certainly be a best, even where nothing is very good.

"Flattered that you preserve an agreeable remembrance of our long past and transient interviews, and that you think
the employments of my muse worth this inquiry, I remain,
Sir, &c.

An exchange of views followed as to the merits of Milton
which led in time to trouble. Mr. Hardinge not only was
not disposed to agree with his Cinderella, but he even dared
to criticise her own poetry; and she resented his independ-
ence and his incapacity. In three months' time she was
writing thus: “You observe to me that you correspond with
many whose hearts are as ingenuous as mine, and whose
abilities are as brilliant. Respecting the latter, instead of
as, you might doubtless have used the word more. These,
you say, think entirely with you upon the insufficiency of
Mason and Hayley to be styled fine poets, and upon that of
Johnson’s claim to eloquence.

“With such, a literary correspondence must be as mutu-
ally pleasant, as it proves the reverse between you and me;
since however impossible that any two people should see
every object in the same light, yet a great degree of parity
in taste, and in ideas of every kind, is necessary to make
such an intercourse desirable. It was vain to hope for this
parity between a fastidious Wit, and a glowing Enthusiast.

“I know you do me honour in giving yourself the
trouble to reform what strikes you as defective in my own
writings, and as erroneous judgment on the composition of
others;—but, differing so materially about the component
parts of a receipt for making beautiful style, I am not likely
to improve by your corrections. You are in high life, I am
in obscurity, from which I do not wish to emerge, since
peace is dearer to me than distinction. Our acquaintance
is not in common, therefore anecdote can seldom be inter-
esting. Why therefore should we pursue our correspond-
ence? I shall be happier in giving my epistolary leisure to
friends whose more congenial tastes ensure a warm welcome
to all my communications, than to you, who are so often
disgusted with my style both in prose and verse, especially since I cannot wish to slacken its nerves, because it is naturally energetic; and to become light, it must be light by affectation.

"Suffer me, then, to bid you a long adieu, with a grateful sense of your desire to have instructed, and of the great amusement your wit afforded me, ere my relish of frolic humour was lost in the gloom of a Parent's death-bed.—He yet lives—but I must lose him soon if I live myself. Think of me as a friend, who will always sincerely, and warmly wish your happiness, and pursue, with a distant, but gladdened eye, your bright track of public fame and emolument. My peace requires that I should not be of your correspondence. When you took me up, the measure of mine was so full, that I should neglect all those who have prior claims upon my attention, ere I could answer your letters with any sort of precision. Pain would be attached to the consciousness that beneath your astonishing facility, or plenitude of leisure, my replies must prove

But as the morn-dew on the myrtle leaf
To your large sea."

This did not, however, end it; for Hardinge seems to have apologised profusely, and he was forgiven immediately: "You entreat me to relieve your solitude in Ormond Street. It must certainly be very profound!—Heavens! with the bar, the senate, the opera, the Siddons, the lords, and the ladies, how is it that you procure leisure for such copiousness of epistolary intercourse? I fancy, like poor Chatterton, that child of genius, you never sleep. I wish I could be superior to the necessity of such vulgar renovation!"

None the less, the original rapture was never recovered; and in volume ii. of the letters Hardinge disappears.

Later in life he wrote of Miss Seward very ungallantly. Quarrels even of the great never make very good reading;
but the quarrels of the second rate, especially when wounded vanity plays its part, can be very paltry, only exceeded in paltriness by their revenges. In Hardinge’s poetical works, a collection of jaunty mediocrities, which on the face of them suggest entertainment but turn out to have none of the qualities of the epigram but brevity and italics, is an adulatory poem, “To Miss Seward,” beginning:—

Thou, whose bright genius

and so forth, with the usual reference to Sappho. Twice, however, in other parts of the work is it stated that the inscription is a mistake, the verses being really addressed to Miss Helen Maria Williams.

It was probably nothing against Hardinge, at first, that he was a peer’s nephew, for Miss Seward respected the aristocracy root and branch. Indeed, perhaps the most amusing portions of all the six volumes are the references to High Society, with which Miss Seward mixed annually at Buxton and Hoylake. I quote a few here:—

THE SWAN READS ALOUD

“You ask if I have seen Spencer’s Leonora, with engravings by Lady D. Beauclerk? Lord Bagot sent me that charming work, so beyond all comparison superior to all the other translations. I have not read aloud less than fifty times this violent story, adorned by the pencil of kindred genius. I took it with me to Buxton; and, mentioning it to Mrs. Powys of Berwick, she engaged me to read it to a party at her house, Lady Scarborough, Colonel Lumley and his sisters, Lady Louisa, and Lady Sophia. Then Lady Lawley desired I would bring it to her rooms, where I was to drink tea next day. There I found Lady Harewood, her intelligent friend Mrs. Wood of York, and engaging Miss Garth of the Carleton household, with Lady and Miss Lawley.
THE LETTERS

"These parties talked much of this poem, and partially represented its reader's powers as Siddonian. Then one party after another petitioned to hear it, till there was scarce a morning in which a knot of eight or ten did not flock to my apartments, to be poetically frightened: Mr. Erskine, Mr. Wilberforce—everything that was anything and every thing that was nothing, flocked to Leonora; and here, since my return, the fame of this business having travelled from Buxton hither, the same curiosity has prevailed. Its terrible graces grapple minds and tastes of every complexion. Creatures that love not verses for their beauty, like these verses for their horrors. That universal passion for the horrible, must proceed from the mind advert- ing to its own situation of comparative security, ease, and happiness, and feeling the sense of comfort strongly resulting from the contrast.

"Charming Lady Donegall, and her engaging daughter-in-law, Lady Harriot Chichester, Lord Spencer, and Miss Godfrey, were desirous of hearing me read Leonora, and of seeing me exhibit the equestrian ghost, though, from their intimacy with Mr. Spencer, they were familiar with it, as mentioned by him. That party, and also the Swinfen family, met me and the ghost at Freeford. Nothing can exceed the blended dignity and sweetness of the Marchioness."

A PARTY AT HOYLE LAKE

"Our party was very pleasant. Being only one house at High Lake, we all lived together with the social cheerfulness of a large family. Lord Bagot's sister, Mrs. Wingfield of Shrewsbury, I had, in my juvenile years, very slightly known. Last year, at Scarborough, we renewed our acquaintance. She and her amiable daughters formed an interesting part of our society at High Lake. They all
expressed the most flattering pleasure in our meeting again. They arrived a few days after us, and left the place on the same morning that we turned our faces towards Staffordshire. Several other Shropshire families were also there. The situation pleased us all, and the apartments are light and spacious as those of the hotels at Buxton; the provisions equally good.

"Expressing my esteem for the public spirit of Sir John Stanley, in building upon this oceanic spot, the company prevailed upon me to write its description in verse, which they fancied would please him, and contribute to the rising celebrity of the scene. Whatever other merit the little poem may want, its descriptions are strictly appropriate. Standing on the edge of the cliffs, from which we descend to our bathing-machines, and, with our faces to the sea, we discern every object my verse describes. Miss Wingfield was so good to transcribe this poem thrice, in pity to the many claims upon my pen. Mrs. Wingfield pressed me to send her brother, Lord Bagot, a copy. However warmly I may approve the existence of the aristocratic link in that chain of subordination, so necessary to the good of every country, I yet feel the extremest reluctance to push myself upon the notice of the great, and somewhat reluctantly consented to her proposal; but I have had no reason to repent my acquiescence. Lord Bagot has written to me twice on the occasion, with the most gratifying praise of this rhyming trifle, and with even friendly cordiality, though personally unknown to him. After warmer commendations than I can, in any modesty, repeat, he taught me to believe him rather partial than flattering, by confessing that he thought one line obscure, and not strictly grammatical. I altered it instantly; and transmitting my alteration to him, he wrote again, to say that I had made it all he wished."
BUXTON SOCIETY

"Certainly my acquaintance here seem to set a far higher value on my talents and conversation, such as they are, than the Lichfieldians;—but it is more than probable, that novelty is the cause of this so much more appreciating attention. In an intercourse so transient, that to-day is, and will next week perhaps cease for ever, the passions of jealousy, envy, and ill-will, have not time to arise, or if arisen, to gather strength by habit and daily nurture. The homage of this attention, therefore, neither beguiles my reason, or counteracts my experience. I know human nature is everywhere, in a great degree at least, the same; that by frequent intercourse the value of talents, somewhat above the common level, is first lessened in the estimation of every-day minds, who can so readily attain that intercourse; and that, when lessened, such minds become jealous and indignant from seeing others pay the tribute of respect, which is ever largely paid to abilities that are at all distinguished, on an early introduction to them, before repetition has blunted the appetite for intellectual emanations, or the hourly recurrence of conscious inferiority has created and nursed latent dislike. But amongst this motley group, I have been honoured with the notice of many people of rank, and of others whose talents have the widest celebrity. I am in a society which makes me vexedly feel the rapid flight of those weeks, whose period must close an intellectual intercourse very gratifying. I converse with Mr. Wilberforce, who disappoints no expectation his imputed eloquence has excited; with the luminous and resistless Erskine, whose every sentence is oratory, whose form is graceful, whose voice is music, and whose eye lightens as he speaks.

"That resemblance to Mrs. Fitzherbert, with which I have been so variously, so repeatedly flattered, was observed
THE PARTRIDGE RUN

by the polite, obliging, and agreeable Lady Harewood, last night, who has taken me to each assembly since I had first the honour of her notice.”

MISS MILDRED LAWLEY

“Miss Mildred Lawley was the pride of the ball-room. Except on the opera stage, I never saw any woman dance half so well. Her steps, skilful and curiously varied, are free, bounding, and exactly responsive to the music. She seems to tread in air—and shames the silly compliance of some of her fair competitors with a late absurd edict of that fool Fashion, who bids them, perhaps irrecoverably, sacrifice all the grace of their dancing to what is called the partridge run. It gives one the idea of their legs being tied together, and fighting in vain under their petticoats, to escape from the awkward bondage, beneath which the whole frame shakes as in an ague-fit. We may observe to such, as we are gazing delighted on Miss Lawley,

Learn the grace with which she strays
Thro' the light fantastic maze!

while on her open and joyous countenance, we see no trace of solicitude for the éclat of her steps.”

THE MARGRAVINA OF ANSPACH

“On the 6th arrived the fair frail Margravina of Anspach, attended only by domestics. The pride of virtue seemed prodigiously to alarm our ladies about the manner in which it would be proper to treat her; or whether they were to receive or decline her civilities, should they be offered; but the consultations proved needless,—she has lived wholly in private. I have seen her only once—it was on the stairs. On my stopping to give her way, a radiant smile of conciliation beamed from her eye and lip. I sighed to think that
the heart, whose effluence that engaging smile seemed to be, could ever have been libertine.”

MRS. B.

"Your last arrived in my absence, and followed me to Colton, about ten miles from Lichfield, the lately purchased seat of Mr. and Mrs. B., a young couple from the West Indies. He seems quite a West Indian, gay, thoughtless, impetuous, good-natured, and of a princely spirit; but uxorious, and with the most jealous tenacity, attached to his very beautiful wife. Mrs. B. is indeed the most perfect beauty I ever beheld. Her height, her symmetry, her lovely features, her dark hair and eyes, her complexion, delicate, but without bloom, and the pensive dignity of her air, rather foreign than English, entirely realize Richardson's description of Clementina. I look at her, and fancy myself in the palace of Poretta."

BUXTON AGAIN

"Lovely engaging Mrs. Sedley, of whose attractions and virtues I had heard so much, is beneath this roof, with her blooming friend, our old acquaintance, Miss Greaves. Instantly on my arrival, I received from them the most polite and kind attentions. Mrs. Sedley's very indifferent state of health obliges her to live in private. Her apartments are very spacious and elegant. She invited me to drink tea and sup with her the first evening. Thus was I 'a stranger, and she took me in'. We are perpetually together. She has introduced me to all her acquaintance. We visit together, and I accompany her on her morning airings upon these wild hills. Necessary to her health, they are taken in defiance of the frequent storms. Short emanations of sunshine often pierce through the floating and gloomy clouds, which shroud the mountain-tops, and produce upon their vast and swelling
bosoms those gleaming lights and sweeping shadows, which are infinitely picturesque, and unknown, in any thing like the same degree, to flatter and more cultivated scenes."

**Lady Lifford**

“Lady Lifford is a charming woman, very tall, finely shaped, and graceful. Her eyes are beautiful, her countenance modest, yet noble, with a smile of interesting promise as to mind, which promise, the gradual disclosures of growing acquaintance more than fulfil. Of manners easy, obliging, unassuming, she neither exacts respect, nor seeks admiration, while her virtues and her talents inspire both. My Lord seems a worthy and friendly character. It is not to you that I need describe Mrs. Granville, whose personal graces are of a softer kind—‘woman, her pretty self’; while the soundest good sense, serene sweetness, and amiable sensibility, engage the love and respect of all who know her, and form the happiness of his life, whose intelligent mind, generous, hospitable temper, and manly openness of heart and manners, deserve the possession of a woman, whose price, as Solomon justly says, ‘is far above rubies’.”

**A Visit**

“I am just returned from paying a delightful visit, of three weeks, to my friends, Mr. and Mrs. Granville. Accomplished and excellent Mr. Dewes was of our party. The situation of their villa, Calwich, near Ashbourn, is as singular as it is beautiful; standing on the extremest verge of a large and very lucid sheet of water, through which runs the river Dove. It comes winding down from Dovedale to Ileham, and from thence to Calwich. Gentle hills, the nurseries of the peak mountains, form a semi-circle round the lake, opposite the house, at about a mile’s distance. It is quite fairy-land, so verdant are its lawns, so crystal its
streams. The minds of its owners are cultivated as the valley, and clear as the lake.

"The lady of that lake is young, pretty, graceful, and admired, but loves her home and domestic duties, as well as it is natural for those to do, who bear about them no such magnetism, either of person or manners, to attract attention, or stimulate flattery. Yet is not Mrs. Granville coldly unsocial; she mixes with the large neighbourhood around her, with cheerful pleasure; but her most enjoyed days are those in which books, needle-work, and the conversation of her more intimate friends, give wings to the hours.

"The weather was not propitious to the outdoor pleasures of this interesting visit. In days which should have been those of autumnal prime, storms often infesting the wane of that season howled over the lawns and lake, and through the bowers of Calwich. No morning was unsullied by rainy clouds, till that of my departure, which arose in spiteful beauty. I left Aurora shaking her amber tresses on the rocks, and hills, and waters. On returning home, the placid health of my dear enfeebled father completed the pleasures of a period, in which the light of mind recompenced the watery gloom of a long-sullen atmosphere."

HAREWOOD

"As Harewood's glassy waters shone through tangled brakes in the glens, or, expanded into lake, slept on the lawn, I repeated to myself the lovely passages that paint the landscape, or allude to its beauties, in that fine dramatic poem. [Mason's Elfrida.]

"You will conceive with what comparative sobriety of spirit I surveyed the artificial splendours of the seventeen state-rooms in Harewood House. Fine apartments have little charm for me, if genius has not storied the walls. One pleasing sensation rose above the placid level of that survey,
THE MONUMENT TO DR. JOHNSON OPPOSITE HIS HOUSE AT LICHFIELD
when the graceful portrait of the Dowager Lady Harewood caught my eye, who had been so kindly obliging to me on my recent abode at Buxton. It resembles her strongly, amidst all the flattery of its lineaments and colouring. Her form it scarcely could flatter, though it has veiled on her face the depredations of time."

THE MENAGERIE

"It gratifies me that your Ladyship shares my passion for surveying the living terrors of the desert. I wonder the sight of savage animals should not be as generally, and as much the delight of cultivated as of uncultivated minds. Last November, I hazarded breaking my limbs in ascending a booth in which they were exhibited. Mr. Saville, who always hastens to such spectacles, tempted me by his description of the laughing Hyæna. Its expression of rage is a horrid laugh, exactly that of human insanity, only much louder than any human lungs are competent to produce. Never did I hear a sound so violent and appalling.

"While I gaze upon these formidable creatures, my imagination always presents the danger of wandering in the scenes they haunt:

What if the lion in his rage I meet;
Oft in the dust I view his printed feet!

My consciousness of safety luxuriates beneath the secure view of these sublimely terrible animals, in the sound of their howl and of their roar; while devout thankfulness for our climate's blessed exemptions, exalts and sanctifies the gratulation of egotism."

I quote other passages more or less at random:—

THE NIGHTINGALE

"We passed the two last weeks of the last month together in Warwickshire, at the house of our mutual and excellent
friend Mr. Mitchel; the abode of hospitality, the bowers of pleasantness. My journey thither had a double motive, the society of our friend Mr. Mitchel and his amiable niece, and her friend, the sprightly and pleasing Mrs. Ironmonger; and the desire of not quitting existence unconscious of the song of Philomel. Lichfield and its environs are too far north for her visitation, and it had never been my lot to find myself in her haunts, when she and her feathered sisters

—beat the ear of night
With their contentious throats.

Mr. Wordsworth having, in his Lyrical Ballads, so boldly given Virgil, Ovid, Shakespeare, Milton, and Akenside, the lie, as to the melancholy sweetness of her song, yet farther stimulated my curiosity.

"The nearest haunt of those syrens is a mile and a half from Mr. Mitchel's house. During five successive nights after our arrival, cold, blustering, sunless winds forbade all hope of this music.

"I grew impatient, and began to think it the interdiction of my destiny. A glowing and balmy evening at length arrived. Mr. Mitchel took me in his chair, Mr. Saville rode, and the rest of the party, three ladies and a gentleman, walked to the edge of a wild and lonely copse, through which a clear brook meandered.

"We found the concert loud and various. Blackbirds, thrrostles, ring-doves, linnets, larks, &c. &c. united with the, till then, unheard queen of the woods. So fully accompanied, I could judge but imperfectly of her single powers. We staid, however, by the copse till her rivals, of other plume, had sunk to their nests, her 'amorous descant' continuing, and answered by a second nightingale.

"I confess I do not think the notes pensive in the degree which her eulogists, of mighty name, had taught me to expect; not so pensive as the woodlark's, and not sweeter,
though much more various. Thrice did we visit this harmonious coppice, and always found the melody we sought. If I do not say with Milton, 'most melancholy,' at least I abjure Mr. Wordsworth's heterodox epithet, *merry*, for the strains of the nightingale."

**TANSY TEA**

"I congratulate you upon the effects of your tansy tea; and hope it will continue its Lucinian powers. Perhaps you are not enough an heathen to understand the epithet—to know that Lucina is the goddess of child-bearing, whose protection it was usual to invoke in the days of Paganism.

"Your caro sposo, who brought me this fruitful intelligence, looked very well, though his step was not perfectly militaire. Seeing him since you have seen him, and leaving you, as he did, in a but recovering gout, you will be glad to hear of his good looks."

**LUDLOW'S SYRENS**

* (To the Rev. Dr. Warner)*

"There is a knot of ingenious and charming females at Ludlow, in Shropshire. My friend, Miss Weston, is its leading spirit. Do not chide me, that I ventured to send a few of your delightful letters for the amusement of this little society of intelligent friends. It has been a mental repast, for which they are infinitely grateful. The sister nymphs meditate a plan to draw you into their circle, if you should realise your idea of an expedition to the classic environs of Ludlow. It is a very formidable ambush, believe me. With plenteous resources of wit and imagination, Miss Weston's form is graceful, and her countenance interesting. Her friends are celebrated beauties, with minds much above the common female level. I see no chance of your escape. . . ."
THE LETTERS

THE SWAN'S SERMONS

"Some fifteen years ago I wrote six sermons. Most of them have been preached. Without the congregation knowing that they were not his by whom they were delivered, I had the satisfaction of witnessing their attention and their tears."

A FLOOD

"A flooded valley, beneath the cloudy lour of a wintry moon, is one of those terrible graces in scenery, which the survey of danger, and the consciousness of protection, always form to people of strong imagination. I gaze with pleasing awe on the swoln, the extravagant, and usurping waters as they roll over the fields, and, white with turbid foam, beat against the bushes.

"This solemn luxury I can seldom taste, not having corporal power to seek abroad such scenes in the inclement nights which produce them; for of even the vernal and summer flood, miry ways are concomitant, and to feeble steps they are formidable;—but I have been in situations like yours, when my mind could thus luxuriate in the prospect of scenic desolation, unpurchased by fatigue, difficulty, or danger."

CHARLOTTE CORDAY

"Do you not admire this second Judith, the young fair one of Normandy, who has slain the bloody dictator at Paris, without waiting for his intoxication, or his slumber, to give her courage for the blow?"

THE WEATHER

"You have doubtless luxuriated in the late vernal mildness of our noons; but we must except hybernal relapses; that, ere he takes his final flight,
A HERO

Winter will oft at eve resume the breeze,
Chill the pale morn, and bid his driving sleet
Deform the day delightless.

But small is their power to depress, where the Lares are
found on the hearth, the Muses breathe inspiration, and the
affections diffuse comfort.”

Howard the Philanthropist

I

“Last Friday morning brought me a visitor, whom I
received, and to whom I listened with that awe-mixed
delight, which Milton has assigned to Adam,

When Raphael, the celestial visitant, deign’d
As man with man, as friend with friend, to sit
Indulgent in the bower.

Yes, my dear Mr. Whalley, the Christian hero, Mr. Howard,
sat with me great part of Friday morning, leading me
through the scenes of infinite interest to the heart, and which
I should like to retrace with you.”

II

“Oh the 27th of last month I was honoured and blest by
a two hours’ personal conversation with the most distinguished
excellence that ever walked the earth, since saints and angels
left off paying us morning visits. To say that his name is
Howard would be superfluous. This is the third time he
has favoured me with his conversation on his way through
this town. I am truly glad of our king’s recovery, but yet
I should not walk half so tall upon a visit from him. Mr.
Howard presented me with his new publication, and had
previously given me the former. This is enriched with
beautiful engravings of the foreign Lazarettos. He sets out
next spring, to encounter again the shafts that speed through
the darkness, and ‘the pestilence that worketh at noon-day,’
stimulated by the hope of being enabled to avert, in future,
some of their mischiefs from the human race.”
THE LETTERS

III

"What a beautiful idea is yours [Hayley's] of a lamp, which should shed around the statue of Howard a splendid and perpetual light! I should like to have the office of guarding it from extinction.—Priestess to the lamp of benevolence! Such an appointment might exalt, to some degree of dignity, the derided state of stale maidenhood."

DR. PARR

I

"When I had the honour of a visit from Dr. Parr, he staid two days and nights at Wellsburn. I was prepared to expect extraordinary colloquial powers, but they exceeded every description I had received of them. He is styled the Johnson of the present day. In strength of thought, in promptness and plenteousness of allusion; in wit and humour, in that high-coloured eloquence which results from poetic imagination—there is a very striking similarity to the departed despot. That, when irritated, he can chastise with the same overwhelming force, I can believe; but unprovoked, Dr. Parr is wholly free from the caustic acrimony of that splanetic being. Benign rays of ingenious urbanity dart in his smile, and from beneath the sable shade of his large and masking eyebrows, and from the fine orbs they overhang. The characters he draws of distinguished people, and of such of his friends, whose talents, though not yet emerged, are considerable, are given with a free, discriminating, and masterly power, and with general independence of party prejudices. If he throws into deepest shade the vices of those, whose hearts he thinks corrupt, his spirit luxuriates in placing the virtues and abilities of those he esteems in the fairest and fullest lights; a gratification which the gloomy Johnson seldom, if ever, knew.

"Dr. Parr is accused of egotism; but if he often talks of
himself, all he says on that, as on every other theme, interests the attention, and charms the fancy. It is surely the dull and the envious only who deem his frankness vanity. Great minds must feel, and have a right to avow their sense of the high ground on which they stand. . . .

"I saw him depart, with much regret, though his morning, noon, and evening pipe involved us in clouds of tobacco while he staid, but they were gilded by perpetual volleys of genius and wit."

II

"Dr. Parr, the wise and eloquent, called upon me after we had dined, on Tuesday last, staid an hour, and afterwards joined our party at Mr. Muckleston’s for the remainder of the evening. He was accompanied by his intelligent fellow-traveller, Mr. Green. Dr. Parr’s articulation, always thick and hurried, is now, by the loss of his teeth, become almost wholly unintelligible to my time-dulled ear. The intense attention with which I bent my head to listen while he talked, and the fumes of his pipe of tobacco, proved so injurious to my disorder, that the next day I had three slight paroxysms of my alarming dizziness; just such as you saw brought on at your house, when Miss——’s tide of loquacity about nothing, deluged our quadrille table.

"Our friend, the Doctor, has a habit of striking his clenched hand on the table while he declaims, which contributes to drown his confluent utterance. He talks of coming to me on his return from Manchester. Ah! if I was in health, what pleasure should I have in receiving him!—but in my present state of malady, should he stay many days, I shall be the martyr of my anxiety to hear him, and of an atmosphere so injurious to my perilous disorder. Indeed, dear friend, I am in a state to which the utmost quiet is necessary, and I am now trying to repair the mischiefs of that evening by a large blister on my head; that evening,
in which I sat like Tantalus in the river, trying to catch
the stream of oratory which perpetually eluded my efforts."

Now and then Miss Seward says a shrewd and even witty
thing. Thus:—

THE LICHFIELD CHAPTER

"The rulers of our cathedral are a little be-demoned, or
much be-deaned, which is nearly the same thing."

Hitherto we have seen little of Miss Seward's politics,
which occupy a large portion of her letters. This extract will
perhaps suffice:—

PITT'S DEATH

"At last
The extravagant and erring spirit hath bled
To his dark confines,
covered with the lavished blood of slaughtered millions, and
answerable for the anguish of millions surviving to mourn
the slain."

A CONCLUSION (TO MR. HAVLEY)

"Doubtless I have wearied you by the length of my
epistle, though I sat down resolved to follow your laconic
example; but, fascinated by the consciousness of addressing
you, I knew not how or when to take my hand from the
paper; yet you, amid the exhaustless riches of your imagina-
tion, plead poverty of subject. But be still, thou repining
heart of mine; stifle thy selfish regrets; and, with a sincere
benediction on thy favourite bard, that health, peace, and
fame may long be his! arrest the pen thou art so prone to
lead through thy mazes, governing it, as thou dost, with re-
sistless despotism!"
CHAPTER XII

THE SWAN AND THE BEAR

Dr. Johnson and Lichfield—Miss Seward describes his last days—The learned pig—Dr. Johnson's death—Miss Seward and Boswell—Mrs. Aston—Mrs. Lucy Porter—Dr. Johnson’s "infant numbers"—A hostile critic—Boswell’s Tour in the Hebrides—"Benvolio’s" attack—Lucy Porter's death—Mrs. Thrale—Moll Cobb—Dr. Johnson’s statue and house.

JOHNSON is of course Lichfield's greatest figure, coming some way before Garrick and immeasurably before the Swan—a fact which she perceived quite clearly, and could not, I fancy, forgive. For although she never wavered in her admiration of Johnson's prose, Miss Seward systematically did her best to discount the enthusiasm of the world and Boswell for the great man. We have seen that his schoolmaster was her grandfather, Dr. John Hunter, and that first her sister and then herself were in danger of having to own Johnson as a stepfather-in-law. We have seen Johnson's opinion of her father. Miss Seward's own first-hand impressions of the Bear she did not set down until 1784, the year in which she began to preserve her letters, and the year unhappily in which he died; for long before this, however, she had known him, although never intimately, and his Lichfield circle, which, however, was not hers. The Porters and the Cobbs to her were objects of satirical interest rather than friendship.

Let me bring together from the letters the most interesting of Miss Seward's passages concerning the Doctor.
This is the first, in a letter to a girl friend belonging to 1763, and printed by Scott at the beginning of the *Poetical Works*: "Some few people, besides yourself, have fancied that I had genius. Whether they are, or are not mistaken, it cannot be for me to determine; but certainly Lichfield is now an inauspicious soil for nourishing to maturity that sensitive plant.

"It is true I dwell on classic ground. Within the walls which my father's family inhabits, in this very dining-room, the munificent Mr. Walmesley, with the taste, the learning, and the liberality of Mæcenas, administered to rising genius the kind nutriment of attention and praise. Often to his hospitable board were the school-boys, David Garrick and Samuel Johnson, summoned. The parents of the former were of Mr. Walmesley's acquaintance; but those of the latter did not move in his sphere.

"It was rumoured that my mother's father, Mr. Hunter, had a boy of marked ability upon his forms. The huge, over-grown, mis-shapen, and probably dirty stripling was brought before the most able scholar and the finest gentleman in Lichfield, or its environs, who, perceiving far more ability than even rumour had promised, placed him at his table, not merely to gratify a transient curiosity, but to assure him of a constant welcome.

"Two or three evenings every week, Mr. Walmesley called the stupendous stripling, and his livelier companion, David Garrick, who was a few years younger, to his own plentiful board. There, in the hours of convivial gaiety, did he delight to waive every restraint of superiority formed by rank, affluence, polished manners, and the dignity of advanced life; and there, 'as man to man, as friend to friend,' he drew forth the different powers of each expanding spirit, by the vivid interchange of sentiment and opinion, and by the cheering influence of generous applause."
JOHNSON AS A BOY

"Another circumstance combined to heighten the merit of this patronage. Mr. Walmsley was a zealous Whig. My grandfather, then master of the free school, perceiving Johnson's abilities, had, to his own honour, taken as much pains with him as with the young gentlemen whose parents paid an high price for their pupilage; but my grandfather was a Jacobite, and Sam. Johnson had imbibed his master's absurd zeal for the forfeit rights of the house of Stuart; and this, though his father had very loyal principles; but the anxiety attendant on penurious circumstances, probably left old Johnson little leisure or inclination to talk on political subjects.

"His son, I am told, even at that early period of life, maintained his opinions, on every subject, with the same sturdy, dogmatical, and arrogant fierceness with which he now overbears all opposition to them in company.

"At present, we can well conceive the probability of his dogmatism being patiently supported by attending admirers, awed by the literary eminence on which he stands. But how great must have been Mr. Walmsley's love of genius, how great his generous respect for its dependent situation, that could so far restrain a naturally impetuous temper, as to induce him to suffer insolent sallies from the son of an indigent bookseller, and on a subject which, so handled by people of his own rank, he would have dashed back in their faces with no small degree of asperity!"

In 1763 Miss Seward was twenty and Johnson fifty-four. It was in that year that he met Boswell. He had been to Lichfield in the winter of 1761-62, and it was probably then that Miss Seward had first seen him. His later visits to the city were numerous; but we have no record by Miss Seward of any until his last. To this we come in her second letter, 29th October, 1784: "I have lately been in the almost daily habit of contemplating a very melancholy spectacle. The
great Johnson is here, labouring under the paroxysms of a
disease, which must speedily be fatal. He shrinks from the
consciousness with the extremest horror. It is by his re-
peatedly expressed desire that I visit him often: yet I am
sure he neither does, nor ever did, feel much regard for me;
but he would fain escape, for a time, in any society, from
the terrible idea of his approaching dissolution. I never
would be awed by his sarcasms, or his frowns, into ac-
quiescence with his general injustice to the merits of other
writers; with his national, or party aversions; but I feel
the truest compassion for his present sufferings, and fervently
wish I had power to relieve them.

"A few days since I was to drink tea with him, by his
request, at Mrs. Porter's. When I went into the room, he
was in deep but agitated slumber, in an arm-chair. Opening
the door with that caution due to the sick, he did not awaken
at my entrance. I stood by him several minutes, mournfully
contemplating the temporary suspension of those vast intell-
lectual powers, which must, so soon, as to this world, be
eternally quenched.

"Upon the servant entering to announce the arrival of a
gentleman of the university, introduced by Mr. White, he
awoke with convulsive starts,—but rising, with more alacrity
than could have been expected, he said, 'Come, my dear
lady, let you and I attend these gentlemen in the study'.
He received them with more than usual complacence; but
whimsically chose to get astride upon his chair-seat, with
his face to its back, keeping a trotting motion as if on horse-
back; but, in this odd position, he poured forth streams
of eloquence, illumined by frequent flashes of wit and
humour, without any tincture of malignity. That amusing
part of this conversation, which alluded to the learned Pig,
and his demi-rational exhibitions, I shall transmit to you
hereafter."
DR. JOHNSON
FROM THE PORTRAIT BY SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS
THE LEARNED PIG

For the learned pig we must go to Boswell, who prints a communication from Miss Seward on the subject: “I told him of a wonderful learned pig, which I had seen at Nottingham; and which did all that we have observed exhibited by dogs and horses. The subject amused him. ‘Then (said he) the pigs are a race unjustly calumniated. Pig has, it seems, not been wanting to man, but man to pig. We do not allow time for his education, we kill him at a year old.’ Mr. Henry White, who was present, observed that if this instance had happened in or before Pope’s time, he would not have been justified in instancing the swine as the lowest degree of grovelling instinct. Dr. Johnson seemed pleased with the observation, while the person who made it proceeded to remark, that great torture must have been employed, ere the indolency of the animal could have been subdued. Certainly (said the Doctor;) but (turning to me,) how old is your pig? I told him, three years old. ‘Then (said he), the pig has no cause to complain; he would have been killed the first year if he had not been educated, and protracted existence is a good recompence for very considerable degrees of torture.’”

In Miss Seward’s next letter to Mr. Whalley, she writes thus: “The old literary Colossus has been some time in Lichfield. The extinction, in our sphere, of that mighty spirit approaches fast. A confirmed dropsey deluges the vital source. It is melancholy to observe with what terror he contemplates his approaching fate. The religion of Johnson was always deeply tinctured with that gloomy and servile superstition which marks his political opinions. He expresses these terrors, and justly calls them miserable, which thus shrink from the exchange of a diseased and painful existence, which gentler human beings consider as the all-recompensing reward of a well-spent life. Yet have not these humiliating terrors by any means subdued that male-
violent and envious pride, and literary jealousy, which were ever the vices of his heart, and to which he perpetually sacrificed, and continues to sacrifice, the fidelity of representation, and the veracity of decision. His memory is considerably impaired, but his eloquence rolls on in its customary majestic torrent, when he speaks at all. My heart aches to see him labour for his breath, which he draws with great effort indeed. It is not improbable that this literary comet may set where it rose, and Lichfield receive his pale and stern remains."

In the next letter, 23rd December, 1784, Johnson is dead. She tells Hayley the news: "At last, my dear bard, extinct is that mighty spirit, in which so much good and evil, so much large expansion and illiberal narrowness of mind, were blended;—that enlightened the whole literary world with the splendours of his imagination, and, at times, with the steadiest fires of judgment; and, yet more frequently, darkened it with spleen and envy; potent, through the resistless powers of his understanding, to shroud the fairest claims of rival excellency. Indiscriminate praise is pouring, in full tides, around his tomb, and characteristic reality is overwhelmed in the torrent."

Hayley and Miss Seward, by the way, were firmly united in antipathy to the Doctor. In 1792 were printed in the Gentleman's Magazine passages from a correspondence between them, all to Johnson's discredit, which led to a reply from Boswell and much dust.

Boswell, who we know to have been kindly disposed to Miss Seward, applied to her for anecdotes of his hero for the biography, and received this letter written on 25th March, 1785: "I regret that it is not in my power to collect more anecdotes of Dr. Johnson's infancy. My mother passed her days of girlhood with an uncle at Warwick, consequently was absent from home in the school-boy days of the great man;
neither did I ever hear her mention any of the promissory sparkles which doubtless burst forth, though no records of them are within my knowledge. I cannot meet with any contemporary of those his very youthful days. They are all, I fear, like my poor mother, gone to their eternal home, and thus are our fountains of juvenile intelligence dried up. Mrs. Lucy Porter, who, were she in health, could communicate more than she would take the trouble of doing, is following apace her illustrious father-in-law [step-father]. She is now too ill to be accessible to any of her friends, except Mr. Pearson; and were it otherwise, I do not believe that a kneeling world would obtain from her the letters you wish for.

"On inquiring after Dr. Johnson, she has often read one of his recent epistles. As she read, I secretly wondered to perceive that they contained no traces of genius. They might have been any person's composition. When this is the case, it is injudicious to publish such inconclusive testimonies. Several letters of his have appeared in the Gentleman's Magazine, that could interest no one by their intrinsic vigour. They will be eagerly read because they are Johnson's; but I have often thought, that we never rise from any composition by the pen of the illustrious, with exactly the same degree of respect for the talents of the author with which we sat down to peruse it; our mass of admiration is either increased or diminished. If it is but by a single grain, that grain is something.

"His letter to the Chancellor is a very stiff, indifferent performance, tinctured with a sort of covert resentment to the King, that looks ungrateful for past obligations. I wonder how he could bear the thoughts of such a request being made to his Majesty, since he had a capital of three thousand pounds, out of which he might have drawn to support the expence of continental travelling.

"You request the conversation that passed between
Johnson and myself in company, on the subject of Mrs. Elizabeth Aston of Stowe Hill, then living, with whom he always passed so much time when he was in Lichfield, and for whom he professed so great a friendship.

"I have often heard my mother say, Doctor, that Mrs. Elizabeth Aston was, in her youth, a very beautiful woman; and that, with all the censoriousness and spiteful spleen of a very bad temper, she had great powers of pleasing; that she was lively, insinuating, and intelligent.

"I knew her not till the vivacity of her youth had long been extinguished, and I confess I looked in vain for the traces of former ability. I wish to have your opinion, Sir, of what she was, you who knew her so well in her best days."

"My dear, when thy mother told thee Aston was handsome, thy mother told thee truth: She was very handsome. When thy mother told thee that Aston loved to abuse her neighbours, she told thee truth; but when thy mother told thee that Aston had any marked ability in that same abusive business, that wit gave it zest, or imagination colour, thy mother did not tell thee truth. No, no, Madam, Aston's understanding was not of any strength, either native or acquired."

"But, Sir, I have heard you say, that her sister's husband, Mr. Walmsley, was a man of bright parts, and extensive knowledge; that he was also a man of strong passions, and, though benevolent in a thousand instances, yet irascible in as many. It is well known, that Mr. Walmsley was considerably governed by this lady; as witness Mr. Hinton's constant visits, and presence at his table, in despite of its master's avowed aversion. Could it be, that, without some marked intellectual powers, she could obtain absolute dominion over such a man?"

"Madam, I have said, and truly, that Walmsley had bright and extensive powers of mind; that they had been
cultivated by familiarity with the best authors, and by con-
nections with the learned and polite. It is a fact, that
Aston obtained nearly absolute dominion over his will; it is
no less a fact, that his disposition was irritable and violent.
But Walmsley was a man; and there is no man who can
resist the repeated attacks of a furious woman. Walmsley
had no alternative but to submit, or turn her out of doors.

"The genuine lovers of the poetic science look with
anxious eyes to Mr. Boswell, desiring that every merit of
the stupendous mortal may be shown in its fairest light; but
expecting also, that impartial justice, so worthy of a gen-
erous mind, which the popular cry cannot influence to flatter the
object of discrimination, nor yet the yearnings of remembered
amity induce, to invest that object with unreal perfection, in-
jurious, from the severity of his censures, to the rights of others.

"There can be no doubt of the authenticity of that little
anecdote of Johnson's infancy; the verses he made at three
years old, on having killed, by treading upon it, his eleventh
duck. Mrs. Lucy Porter is a woman of the strictest
veracity; and a more conscientious creature could not live
than old Mrs. Johnson, who, I have heard Mrs. Porter say,
has often mentioned the circumstance to her. It is curious
to remark, in these little verses, the poetic seed which after-
wards bore plenteous fruits, of so rich a lustre and flavour.
Every thing Johnson wrote was poetry; for the poetic
essence consists not in rhyme and measure, which are only
its trappings, but in that strength, and glow of the fancy,
to which all the works of art and nature stand in prompt
administration; in that rich harmony of period,

More tunable than needs the metric powers
To add more sweetness.

"We observe, also, in those infant verses, the seeds of
that superstition which grew with his growth, and operated
so strongly through his future life."
For Boswell’s great work Miss Seward thus amplified this criticism: “These infant numbers contain the seeds of those propensities which through his life so strongly marked his character, of that poetic talent which afterwards bore such rich and plentiful fruits; for, excepting his orthographick works, every thing which Dr. Johnson wrote was poetry, whose essence consists not in numbers, or in jingle, but in the strength and glow of a fancy, to which all the stores of nature and of art stand in prompt administration; and in an eloquence which conveys their blended illustrations in a language ‘more tunable than needs or rhyme or verse to add more harmony’.

“The above little verses also show that superstitious bias which ‘grew with his growth, and strengthened with his strength,’ and, of late years particularly, injured his happiness, by presenting to him the gloomy side of religion, rather than that bright and cheering one which gilds the period of closing life with the light of pious hope.”

The juvenile verses that led to the foregoing remarks run thus:—

Here lies good master duck,
Whom Samuel Johnson trod on;
If it had liv’d, it had been good luck,
For then we’d had an odd one.

I resume the letter to Boswell: “I have often heard my mother say she perfectly remembered his wife. He has recorded of her that beauty which existed only in his imagination. She had a very red face, and very indifferent features; and her manners in advanced life, for her children were all grown up when Johnson first saw her, had an unbecoming excess of girlish levity, and disgusting affectation. The rustic prettiness, and artless manners of her daughter, the present Mrs. Lucy Porter, had won Johnson’s youthful heart, when she was upon a visit at my grandfather’s in Johnson’s school-days. Disgusted by his unsightly form, she had a
JOHNSON'S COURTSHIP

personal aversion to him, nor could the beautiful verses he addressed to her, teach her to endure him. The nymph, at length, returned to her parents at Birmingham, and was soon forgotten. Business taking Johnson to Birmingham, on the death of his own father, and calling upon his coy mistress there, he found her father dying. He passed all his leisure hours at Mr. Porter's, attending his sick-bed, and, in a few months after his death, asked Mrs. Johnson's consent to marry the old widow. After expressing her surprise at a request so extraordinary—'No, Sam, my willing consent you will never have to so preposterous a union. You are not twenty-five, and she is turned fifty. If she had any prudence, this request had never been made to me. Where are your means of subsistence? Porter has died poor, in consequence of his wife's expensive habits. You have great talents, but, as yet, have turned them into no profitable channel.'—'Mother, I have not deceived Mrs. Porter: I have told her the worst of me; that I am of mean extraction; that I have no money; and that I have had an uncle hanged. She replied that she valued no one more or less for his descent; that she had no more money than myself; and that, though she had not had a relation hanged, she had fifty who deserved hanging.'

"And thus became accomplished this very curious amour. Adieu, Sir, go on and prosper in your arduous task of presenting to the world the portrait of Johnson's mind and manners. If faithful, brilliant will be its lights, but deep its shades."

Boswell made some use of the materials offered, but he came to the belief that Miss Seward's memory was not too trustworthy. In April, 1785, he visited Lichfield to make researches in person, and called at the Palace. Miss Seward tells Hayley: "Mr. Boswell lately passed a few days in Lichfield. I did not find him quite so candid and ingenious on the
subject of Johnson, as I had hoped from the style of his letters. He affected to distinguish, in the despot’s favour, between envy and literary jealousy. I maintained, that it was a sophistic distinction, without a real difference. Mr. Boswell urged the unlikelihood that he, who had established his own fame on other ground than that of poetry, should envy poetic reputation, especially where it was posthumous; and seemed to believe that his injustice to Milton, Prior, Gray, Collins, &c. proceeded from real want of taste for the higher orders of verse, his judgment being too rigidly severe to relish the enthusiasms of imagination.

“Affection is apt to start from the impartiality of calling faults by their proper names. Mr. Boswell soon after, unawares, observed that Johnson had been galled by David Garrick’s instant success, and long éclat, who had set sail with himself on the sea of public life; that he took an aversion to him on that account; that it was a little cruel in the great man not once to name David Garrick in his preface to Shakespeare! ‘And base,’ said I, ‘as well as unkind. Garrick! who had restored that transcendent author to the taste of the public, after it had recreantly and long receded from him; especially as this restorer had been the companion of his youth.’ ‘He was galled by Garrick’s prosperity,’ rejoined Mr. Boswell. ‘Ah!’ said I, ‘you now, unawares, cede to my position. If the author of the Rambler could stoop to envy a player, for the hasty splendour of a reputation, which, compared to his own, however that might, for some time, be hid in the night of obscurity, must, in the end, prove as the meteor of an hour to the permanent light of the sun, it cannot be doubted, but his injustice to Milton, Gray, Collins, Prior, &c. proceeding from the same cause, produced that levelling system of criticism, “which lifts the mean, and lays the mighty low”’. Mr. Boswell’s comment upon this observation was, that dissenting shake of the head, to which
folk are reduced, when they will not be convinced, yet find their stores of defence exhausted.

"Mr. B. confessed his idea that Johnson was a Roman Catholic in his heart.—'I have heard him,' said he, 'uniformly defend the cruel executions of that dark bigot, Queen Mary.'"

To Mrs. Brooke, 21st April, 1785: "Johnson told me once, 'he would hang a dog that read Lycidas twice'. 'What, then,' replied I, 'must become of me, who can say it by heart; and who often repeat it to myself, with a delight 'which grows by what it feeds upon'? 'Die,' returned the growler, 'in a surfeit of bad taste.' Thus it was, that the wit and awless impoliteness of the stupendous creature bore down, by storm, every barrier which reason attempted to rear against his injustice. The injury that injustice has done to the claims of genius, and the taste for its effusions, is irreparable. You, my dear Madam, I am assured, have sense to perceive, and generosity to deplore its consequences."

Again: "After Johnson rose himself into fame, it is well known that he read no other man's writings, living or dead, with that attention without which public criticism can have no honour, or, indeed, common honesty. If genius flashed upon his maturer eyes, they ached at its splendour, and he cast the book indignantly from him. All his familiarity with poetic compositions, was the result of juvenile avidity of perusal; and their various beauties were stampt upon his mind, by a miraculous strength and retention of memory. The wealth of poetic quotation in his admirable Dictionary, was supplied from the hoards of his early years. They were very little augmented afterwards.

"In subsequent periods, he read verse, not to appreciate, but to depreciate its excellence. His first ambition, early in life, was poetic fame; his first avowed publication was in
verse. Disappointed in that darling wish, indignant of less than first-rate eminence, he hated the authors, preceding or contemporary, whose fame, as poets, eclipsed his own. In writing their lives, he gratified that dark passion, even to luxury. The illiberal propensity of mankind in general, to be gratified by the degradation of eminent talents, favoured his purpose. Wit and eloquence gilded injustice, and it was eagerly swallowed."

Of the famous conversation at Dilly’s—about the apostasy of young Harry, who turned Quaker—in 1775, Miss Seward gives ten years after a report; but it is probably better to read this in Boswell. Her prejudice was too strong.

Writing to Mr. Repton on 23rd February, 1786, she refers to the Tour in the Hebrides, just published: "Mr. Boswell’s entertaining Tour with the growling philosopher, over the desert Hebrides, which, through the fidelity of the describer, enables us to discern most distinctly the colloquial brightness of that luminary, and also its dark and turbid spots;—those pharisaic meditations, with their popish prayers for old Tetty’s soul; their contrite parade about lying in bed on a morning; drinking creamed tea on a fast-day; snoring at sermons, and having omitted to ponder well Bel and the Dragon, and Tobit and his Dog."

A month later she thanks Boswell for the book, in a good strong letter: "No, Sir, there are not any lees—the spirit of your Tour with Johnson runs clear to the last syllable. Those who are not interested in its anecdotes, can have little intellectual curiosity and no imagination. Those who are not entertained with the perpetual triumph of sarcastic wit over fair ingenious argument, must be sturdier moralists than even Johnson himself affected to have been; and those who do not love the biographer, as they read, whatever imperfection they may find in the massive Being whom he so strongly characterizes, can have no hearts.
THE SWAN AND BOZZY

“I confess, however, that it was not without some surprise that I perceived so much exultation avowed concerning the noble blood which flows in your veins; since it is more honourable for a man of distinguished ingenuity to have been obscurely than splendidly descended; because then his distinctions are more exclusively his own. Often, as well you are aware, have nobles, princes, perhaps kings, stood awed in the presence of the son of a Lichfield bookseller. Can the recorder of his life and actions think birth of consequence? Mr. Boswell is too humble in fancying he can derive honour from noble ancestry. It is for the line of Bruce to be proud of the historian of Corsica—it is for the House of Auchinlec to boast of him who, with the most fervent personal attachment to an illustrious literary character, has yet been sufficiently faithful to the just claims of the public upon biographic fidelity, to represent him, not as his weak or prejudiced idolaters might wish to behold him; not in the light in which they desire to contemplate Johnson, who pronounce his writings to be an obscure jargon of pompous pedantry, and his imputed virtues a superstitious farrago of pharisaic ostentation; but as he was the most wonderful composition of great and absurd, of misanthropy and benevolence, of luminous intellect and prejudiced darkness, that was ever produced in the human breast.”

So far we have seen Miss Seward offering her opinions on Johnson only in private; but in 1786 she sent to the Gentleman’s Magazine some letters signed “Benvolio” which attempted to stem the tide of praise. The substance of these letters, which she had better have put her name to, we have already seen.

In 1791 Boswell’s great book was published, and no doubt was very eagerly scanned at the Palace for allusions to Miss Seward; which were, however, few and far between and not too oleaginous.
It is to Miss Seward's letters that we must go, however inaccurate and prejudiced she may have been, for the liveliest description of Dr. Johnson's Lichfield ladies. In the following letters we see Lucy Porter, Moll Cobb and Mrs. Aston very clearly. On 30th January, 1786, Miss Seward records the death of Lucy Porter: "Apropos of old maids, after a gradual decline of a few months, we have lost dear Mrs. Porter, the earliest object of Dr. Johnson's love. This was some years before he married her mother. In youth, her fair, clean complexion, bloom, and rustic prettiness, pleased the men. More than once she might have married advantageously; but as to the enamoured affections,

High Taurus' snow, fan'd by the eastern wind,
Was not more cold.

"Spite of the accustomed petulance of her temper, and odd perverseness, since she had no malignance I regret her as a friendly creature, of intrinsic worth, with whom, from childhood, I had been intimate. She was one of those few beings who, from a sturdy singularity of temper, and some prominent good qualities of head and heart, was enabled, even in her days of scanty maintenance, to make society glad to receive and pet the grown spoiled child. Affluence was not hers till it came to her in her fortieth year, by the death of her eldest brother. From the age of twenty till that period, she had boarded in Lichfield with Dr. Johnson's mother, who still kept that little bookseller's shop, by which her husband had supplied the scanty means of existence. Meanwhile, Lucy Porter kept the best company of our little city, but would make no engagement on market-days, lest Granny, as she called Mrs. Johnson, should catch cold by serving in the shop. There Lucy Porter took her place, standing behind the counter, nor thought it a disgrace to thank a poor person who purchased from her a penny battledore."
“With a marked vulgarity of address and language, and but little intellectual cultivation, she had a certain shrewdness of understanding, and piquant humour, with the most perfect truth and integrity. By these good traits in her character, were the most respectable inhabitants of this place induced to bear, with kind smiles, her mulish obstinacy, and perverse contradictions. Johnson himself, often her guest, set the example, and extended to her that compliant indulgence which he shewed not to any other person. I have heard her scold him like a school-boy, for soiling her floor with his shoes, for she was clean as a Dutchwoman in her house, and exactly neat in her person. Dress too she loved in her odd way; but we will not assert that the Graces were her handmaids. Friendly, cordial, and cheerful to those she loved, she was more esteemed, more amusing, and more regretted, than many a polished character, over whose smooth but insipid surface the attention of those who have mind passes listless and uninterested.”

To Mrs. Piozzi (formerly Mrs. Thrale) Miss Seward wrote on 7th March, 1788, on the publication of her collection of Johnson’s letters: “Nothing is less to be trusted than the fidelity of Doctor Johnson’s pen, when he aims to be characteristic. How different from what she really was must posterity conceive of his daughter-in-law, Lucy Porter, from the following sentence in these letters: ‘Miss Lucy has raised my esteem by many excellencies, very noble and resplendent, though a little discoloured by hoary virginity’.

“Ill did those elevated appellations suit her downright honesty, seldom if ever expanding into generosity;—her illiterate shrewdness, and cherished vulgarism. Hoary virginity may justly be said to discolour personal graces; but those she never possessed beyond the result of a round face, with tolerably pretty features, though in the shadeless blankness of flaxen hair and eye-brows,—and a clean fair skin. These,
I am told, were the sum total of her charms in the years of bloom, and that her figure had never any elegance. If beauty of face, and grace of form, had ever been hers, they are not properties to raise esteem, while, over the splendour and nobleness of intellectual qualities, the hoary virginity of fifty-two could not well have cast any dimness.

"I have a consciousness of obligation to you, my dear Madam, on the ground of this publication, besides the kindness, which makes it a token of your amity. I always visited, and received visits from, Doctor Johnson, on every residence of his in our town, excepting only the few days in which you were here with him. A shyness between Mrs. Lucy Porter and myself, the only estrangement that ever happened between us, and which had no continuance, unfortunately for me existed at that period, depriving me of the desired pleasure of waiting upon you.

"Greatly as I admired Johnson's talents, and revered his knowledge, and formidable as I felt the powers to be of his witty sophistry, yet did a certain quickness of spirit, and zeal for the reputation of my favourite authors, irresistibly urge me to defend them against his spleenful injustice:—a temerity which I was well aware made him dislike me, notwithstanding the coaxing regard he always expressed for me on his first salutations on returning to Lichfield. The breath of opposition soon used to collect the dark clouds on his horizon,

Who sat to give his little senate laws.

"Since I see so many Lichfield people mentioned in these letters, whose visits were not much more frequent than mine, and whose talents had no sort of claim to lettered attention, there can be no great vanity in believing that he would not pass me over in total silence. Therefore is it that I thank you for your suppressions. I must have been pained by the consciousness of going down to posterity with
the envenomed arrows of Johnson’s malevolence sticking about me; though I am well aware, from the recording spirit of his less benevolent biographers, that it is the fate of numbers to bear them, whose virtues and abilities are superior to mine.

“[...] cannot imagine what anonymous poem it could be, which it appears, from these letters, that he was solicited to read on one of his visits to Lichfield in 1781. Not a creature among the number of his visitors, whom he mentions, are capable of being enough interested about any poetic effort to have requested his attention to it. I never shewed him, or asked his opinion about, a single line of mine, either in print or manuscript, nor of any unpublished work of others. To me he almost invariably spoke with strong dislike of all our celebrated female writers, except yourself. As I so carefully avoided all conversation that could lead to the subject of my compositions, it was the only way he had of imparting that mortification to my literary self-love, which it was the first joy of his gloomy spirit to impart to every person, at times.

“[...] That any human being, male or female, could endeavour to draw Johnson’s attention to their own writings, is to me astonishing. How little insight into character must they, who made the rash, the vain attempt, have possessed!

“[...] Once, however—perhaps as a reward for the unobtrusive disposition of my muse, he paid an high compliment, in my presence, to my Elegy on Cook. He was speaking favourably of the Columbia of Madame Bocage, and added, ‘She describes many things well, but nothing so well as you have described the seas, and shores, round the South Pole.’ I blushed, curtsied, and instantly turned the conversation into a different channel.

“[...] Another time, when I was not present, he spoke very handsomely indeed of my writings, in a large company at Mrs. Porter’s—but that was because his opinion about them
was asked with an air and manner which unmasked to his penetration the motive of the inquiry; and he scorned to become subservient to other people's malice. I could have taught my enemies how to have obtained from Johnson that contempt of my compositions, which, for the power of repeating, their ill-will was on fire;—but it must have been effected by shrewder management than they were up to."

In another letter we find this: "In years long past I heard Lucy Porter tell Dr. Johnson that she should like sometimes to purchase new publications, and ask him if she might trust the reviewers. 'Infallibly, dear Lucy,' he replied, 'provided you buy what they abuse, and never anything they praise.'"

We meet other Lichfield friends in a letter in 1790 also about Mrs. Piozzi's book: "It is very true, as you observe, Johnson appears much more amiable as a domestic man, in his letters to Mrs. Thrale, than in any other memorial which has been given us of his life and manners; but that was owing to the care with which Mrs. Piozzi weed them of the prejudiced and malevolent passages on characters, perhaps much more essentially worthy than himself, were they to be tried by the rules of Christian charity. I do not think with you, that his ungrateful virulence against Mrs. Thrale, in her marrying Piozzi, arose from his indignation against her on his deceased friend's account. Mr. Boswell told me Johnson wished, and expected, to have married her himself. You ask who the Molly Aston was, whom those letters mention with such passionate tenderness? Mr. Walmsley, my father's predecessor in this house, was, as you have heard, Johnson's Mecenas, and this lady, his wife's sister, a daughter of Sir Thomas Aston, a wit, a beauty, and a toast. Johnson was always fancying himself in love with some princess or other. His wife's daughter, Lucy Porter, so often mentioned in those letters, was his first love, when
he was a school-boy. It was here, [at the Palace] that Miss Molly Aston was frequently a visitor in the family of her brother-in-law, and probably amused herself with the uncooth adorations of the learned, though dirty stripling, whose mean appearance was overlooked, because of the genius and knowledge that blazed through him, though with 'umbered flames,' from constitutional melancholy and spleen. Lucy Porter, whose visit to Lichfield had been but for a few weeks, was then gone back to her parents at Birmingham, and the brighter Molly Aston became the Laura of our Petrarch. Fired, however, at length, with ideal love, and incapable of inspiring mutual inclinations in the young and lively, he married, at twenty-three, the mother of his Lucy, and went to seek his fortune in London. . . .

"During her life, the fair and learned devotee, Miss H. Boothby, in the wane of her youth, a woman of family and genteel fortune, encouraged him to resume his Platonisms. After the death of this wife, and this spiritualized mistress, Mrs. Thrale took him up. He loved her for her wit, her beauty, her luxurious table, her coach, and her library; and she loved him for the literary consequence his residence at Streatham threw around her. The rich, the proud, and titled literati, would not have sought Johnson in his dirty garret, nor the wealthy brewer's then uncelebrated wife, without the actual presence, in her salon d'Apollon, of a votary known to be of the number of the inspired."

Another Lichfield friend died in 1793. Says Miss Seward: "You would be sorryish to hear, that poor Moll Cobb, as Dr. Johnson used to call her, is gone to her long home. If you saw the ridiculous, puffing, hyperbolic character of her in the public papers, it would make you stare and smile at the credence due to newspaper portraits. Those, however, who draw them in colours so false and glaring, are very reprehensible. This was the disgrace of a pen capable of far
better things than such a tribute of gross and mean flattery to the vanity of the surviving relation. Its author well knew the uniform contempt with which Johnson spoke both of the head and heart of this personage, well as he liked the convenience of her chaise, the 'taste of her sweet-meats and strawberries,' and the idolatry of her homage.

"Nauseous, therefore, was the public and solemn mention of Johnson's friendship for Mrs. Cobb, of whose declaration respecting her, in a room full of company here, the panegyrist had so often heard—'How should,'—exclaimed Johnson, 'how should Moll Cobb be a wit! Cobb has read nothing, Cobb knows nothing; and where nothing has been put into the brain, nothing can come out of it to any purpose of rational entertainment.' Somebody replied,—'Then why is Dr. Johnson so often her visitor? '—'O! I love Cobb—I love Moll Cobb for her impudence.'

"The despot was right in his premises, but his conclusion was erroneous. Little as had been put into Mrs. Cobb's brain, much of shrewd biting and humorous satire was native in the soil, and has often amused very superior minds to her own. Of that superiority, however, Dr. Johnson excepted, she had no consciousness; her ignorance and self-sufficiency concealed it effectually. She was a very selfish character, nor knew the warmth of friendship, nor the luxury of bestowing. Thus has her monumental wall been daubed by very untampered mortar indeed. Yet, to her we may apply what Henry V. says of Falstaff,—

\[
\text{We could have better spared a better man;}
\text{O! we should have a heavy miss of thee,}
\text{If we were much in love with vanity.}
\]

Adio!"

Miss Seward's home is in the ordinary way not shown, nor is there any demand to see it; but Johnson's house in the market-place—the house in which he was born and which
is now faced by his statue—has become public property, like Carlyle's at Chelsea and Wordsworth's at Grasmere, and is much visited. It is a poor little tenement, containing a small collection of shabby relics that, however interesting they may be to the pious Johnsonian, do little to raise the spirits. A number of books are there under lock and key, and I cannot guess at what laborious process would be needed to set in motion the machinery that should make it possible to consult them. Such shrines have their value, and I do not deny that this has also; but I will confess to a feeling of intense depression while I was in it. Perhaps that is well; Johnson's riches were his brain, and it is not un instructive (he might say) to contemplate the contrast between the stored mind of a philosopher and the meagreness of his material apparatus.
CHAPTER XIII

THE LADIES OF LLANGOLLEN

Another real live lord—The fascination of the Ladies—Llangollen to-day—More blue blood—The two fugitives—Mary Caryll—Lord Castlereagh's story—Female friends—A typical Plas Newydd day—Three months' reading—Miss Seward's chief description—The Æolian harp—The Gothic library—The Ladies—Other visitors—Madame de Genlis describes the Ladies—A German prince—Charles Mathews and the "Old Clergymen"—Wordsworth's failure—Arthur Penrhyn Stanley's fright—The household at Plas Newydd—A local poet—The Ladies' finances—The Ladies' accounts—Turkeys for the Swan—"Llangollen Vale," with footnotes—Correspondence with Miss Seward—Later visits and descriptions—Mr. Whalley is baffled—The Ladies' high way—Old age and death—A singular occurrence—The mysterious dog—Plas Newydd to-day—A paradise of old oak—Many curiosities—A romantic house.

In the summer of 1795 Miss Seward paid a visit to her friends Mr. and Mrs. Roberts, of Dinbren, in Wales. We may consider their choice of country a fortunate one, since the house at Dinbren commanded a view of Llangollen Vale, and in this Vale was the home of two fastidious female ermites, Lady Eleanor Butler and Miss Sarah Ponsonby, of whom too little still is known, but of whom far less would be known were it not for this visit; for to bring together the Swan of Lichfield and the Ladies of Llangollen Vale was naturally the first duty of Mr. and Mrs. Roberts.

According to her custom Miss Seward, as soon after her arrival at Dinbren as might be, sat down to fit the scenery with epithets, the first result being despatched on
14th August to Miss Wingfield, in whose family at Shrewsbury she had just spent a few days. But before I borrow her pen to bring Llangollen Vale before the reader, there is an episode of the Shrewsbury visit to relate. Another nobleman gilds our history—Lord Warwick. To the Rev. Henry White of Lichfield is the news sent: “One circumstance, however, I must not omit, in grateful devotion to the remembrance of that period when Lichfield to me was Eden. In the year 1770, Lord Warwick, then Lord Greville, at our races, saw and admired my transcendent Honora Sneyd. When their bustle was over, he passed a quiet day and evening at my father’s. It was to us, and it seemed to him, an interesting day; loitering on the terrace with myself and the Armida of its bowers, we conversed as the hours of our new-born amity had been years. He was very amiable, and seemed to quit us, the next morning, with a regret that breathed something more tender than the name he gave it—friendship. She, however, never beheld him afterwards—nor I, till, walking in the Quarry with Mrs. and Miss Wingfield, the tenth evening of this month, we met his Lordship with Lady Warwick, their son and daughter. I knew him instantly. Time has passed over Lord Warwick with almost printless feet. They were acquainted with my friends, and joined us; but it is the rule of my life never to force myself on the attention of the great, so I made the stranger-courtesy, scarce perceptible.

“Lord W. looked at me earnestly, and whispered Mrs. Wingfield. On her answer, he sprung forward to meet me with the warmth and cordiality of a long-absent friend, and introduced me to his lady, who said the most polite and obliging things. Then he spoke of Honora, declared that he had always inquired after her with interest, and often lamented her early death;—did glowing justice to all her
graces, and enchanted my spirit with the pensive luxury of sympathetic retrospection."

At the time that Miss Seward first called upon Lady Eleanor Butler and Miss Ponsonby they were aged respectively fifty-six and forty, and had been living together at Llangollen for about twenty years, in a fantastic Gothic cottage that had already become a shrine which all intellectual travellers in or through North Wales felt it a duty to visit.

What there was about these two ladies that was so fascinating has never been clearly established; but that they had some magnetic quality is undoubted. Perhaps it was the mere suggestion of mystery and romance that attached to their curious home, or the strangeness of their "Davidean friendship" (as Miss Seward naturally called it), or their self-sufficiency, unusual in a dependent sex. Whatever it was, they dominated their neighbourhood, as indeed their memory dominates it still. For every visitor to Llangollen to-day—and, since it has become a recognised place of resort for excursionists, these are myriad—feels it a duty to return home with some souvenir on which the broad-brimmed tall hats and ample riding-skirts of Lady Eleanor Butler and Miss Ponsonby have a place, although, so far as my own experience goes, there is not a shopkeeper in Llangollen, whether a dealer in picture post-cards, or silver ware, or china ornaments, who can give any kind of accurate information as to who and what these celebrated ladies were.

"Those—are the Ladies of Llangollen."

"But who were they?"

"Two ladies who lived together."

"Are they alive still?"

"Oh no, they are dead now, their grave's in the churchyard. Just down the road there—I'll show you how to go."

"But what did they do; why were they so famous?"
Lichfield Market Square: showing the back of Dr. Johnson's statue which faces his house.
“They lived together for a very long time. You see—
they—they—well one thing about them is, that they never
slept away from home. You can see the house still; it’s
quite close. I’ll show you how to go.”

That is a typical conversation, and I have no doubt that
its conclusion is unvarying, for in the season the stream of
inquisitive visitors who would see Plas Newydd just because
the Ladies lived there is almost continuous.

But it is time to lay before the reader an account of the
Ladies of Llangollen.

Eleanor Butler, the elder, was the daughter of Walter
Butler, only lineal descendant of James Butler, second Duke
of Ormonde, who had been attainted in 1715, and Ellen
Morres, of Tipperary. Four years before Miss Seward’s visit
to the Vale, Eleanor Butler’s brother, John, had been ac-
knowledged seventh Earl of Ormonde, and the rank of an
earl’s daughter was bestowed upon his sister: hence a prefix
to her name which cannot have left all her visitors cold. In
Sarah Ponsonby’s veins was also to be detected a not un-
welcome tinge of blue, for she was the daughter of Chambre
Brabazon Ponsonby, a cousin, let it not be whispered, of the
Earl of Bessborough.

Historians differ as to the precise year, but it was about
1772 that Eleanor Butler, then aged about thirty-three, a
high-spirited, rather masculine and very independent young
woman, living with her aunt, Lady Kavanagh, in County
Carlow, discovered not only that she could not bear the idea
of marriage, as her relations wished her to, but also that she
could not bear the restraint and dulness of her present life
any longer, or indeed of any life apart from her friend and
neighbour, Sarah Ponsonby, a girl of about seventeen. They
therefore eloped together. But they were brought back, and
fresh plans for finding husbands for them were devised by
their kin. The next time, however, they laid their own plans
better. Eleanor Butler, after depositing some clothes by the side of her aunt's pond, to suggest suicide, fled to Dublin alone, and there she was joined later by Sarah Ponsonby, and the two together, Eleanor Butler travelling as a lady, and Sarah Ponsonby, in boy’s clothes, as her footman, found their way to Denbigh, where (so far as I can ascertain, but these early adventures are wrapt in mystery) they were joined by Mary Carryl, an Irish retainer, known locally, at Inistioge, as Molly the Bruiser; and after a while they all moved on to Llangollen and became the tenants of Plas Newydd, where they were destined to remain more than fifty years.¹

How soon they were discovered by their relations, and how long it was before these relations decided that the struggle was useless, is unknown to me; but that they were forgiven in time one must suppose from the circumstance that they always had enough to live on, although their finances remain, like much else about them, very obscure.

The spectacle of two cultured women living long lives in perfect amity together, unregretting male society, is not a new one. Most towns in England know such couples; but rarely can two female friends have been so independent of the world and so satisfied with each other’s society as these Irish inseparables. They lived apparently in unbroken concord to the end, every year becoming more and more famous and more and more secure in their position as the principal sight of Llangollen Vale.

To call them recluses is to force the word a little, for they welcomed the attentions of visitors. They made it,

¹ That is one version of the story. Lord Castlereagh’s narrative, however, as reported by Madame de Genlis in her Souvenirs de Félicie L——, is slightly different and less lawless. He says that the two ladies, having dedicated their lives to each other, after one fruitless elopement, which took them direct to Llangollen, waited patiently till Miss Ponsonby was twenty-one and her own mistress.
however, a fixed rule never to sleep away from home, and thus their own excursions were naturally limited to short distances. But they maintained a correspondence with many friends, and were conversant with all that was happening in the political and intellectual life, not only of England and Ireland, but the Continent. Their reclusion consisted chiefly in making their cottage their castle, or, more properly perhaps, their convent: for their life was rather that of a pair of liberal lady abbesses than of hermits or anti-social humorists. To the peculiarity of dwelling in perfect amity and never travelling they added a form of attire which, if not completely masculine, was very nearly so, but they were not otherwise unsexed, and their capacity for those refinements of sentiment which at that time were demanded of accomplished females cannot have been less than Miss Seward's own—as indeed her description of the two ladies indicates clearly enough.

Here, for example, is an extract from the Plas Newydd diary for 1788, under the date 1st January, seven years before Miss Seward's visit. It is written by Miss Ponsonby:

Rose at eight. Soft damp air, soaking rain. Two fine white corded dimity petticoats, Mary's New Year's gift. Nine, breakfast; soaking rain. Half-past nine till three, soaking rain, gloomy, heavy day. Arranged our books and papers; locked up last year's accounts. Writing, drawing. Poor Mary Green sent us a present of twelve eggs, her New Year's gift. Little John Jones, of Chirk, came to see how things went on in the garden. Rain over; still, soft, damp day. Writing, drawing. Three, dinner, roast beef, plum pudding. Half-past three till nine, still, soft, bright; reading, making an account book; then reading Sterne to my beloved while she worked at her purse. Nine till twelve, in the dressing-room, reading, writing to Mrs. Goddard, Bath.

A day of sweet and silent retirement.

The same diary shows to what extent the ladies passed their time in reading; for between 1st January and 1st April of this year, 1788, the perusal of the following books
is recorded: *Histoire de Francois I.*; *Histoire de la Guerre Civile des Provinciaux*; *Histoire Politique des Troubles en France*; *Portraits des Rois de France*; *Memoires of the Duc de Sully*, Cardinal de Retz, Anne of Austria, Mlle. Montpensier and Mdm. Maintenon; *Orlando Innamorato*; Petrarch; Metastasio; Tasso; *The Tatler*; *The Life of Swift* and the *Letters of Sherlock*.

Although many of their visitors described them with care and spirit, Miss Seward’s letter of 7th September, 1795, to the Rev. Henry White of Lichfield, takes first place among the literature which they inspired; not that it is intrinsically best but that it is most fitting. There was a pensive artifice about the hermitage and its occupants to which only the Swan of Lichfield could do justice. It might almost be said that all her life she had been preparing to eulogise this home and its occupants. They needed a historian in love with rank and affectation, to whom an Æolian harp was meat and drink, and in Miss Seward they found one.

Here is her letter: “I resume my pen, to speak to you of that enchanting unique, in conduct and situation, of which you have heard so much, though, as yet, without distinct description. You will guess that I mean the celebrated ladies of Llangollen Vale, their mansion, and their bowers.

“By their own invitation, I drank tea with them thrice during the nine days of my visit to Dinbren; and, by their kind introduction, partook of a rural dinner, given by their friend, Mrs. Ormsby, amid the ruins of Valle-Crucis, an ancient abbey, distant a mile and a half from their villa. Our party was large enough to fill three chaises and two phaetons.

“We find the scenery of Valle-Crucis grand, silent, impressive, awful. The deep repose, resulting from the high umbrageous mountains which rise immediately around these ruins, solemnly harmonizes with their ivied arches and
THE LADIES OF LLANGOLLEN

MISS S. PONSONBY    LADY ELEANOR BUTLER

From a drawing by J. H. Lynch
broken columns. Our drive to it from the lovely villa leads through one of the most picturesque parts of the peerless vale, and along the banks of the classic river.

"After dinner, our whole party returned to drink tea and coffee in that retreat, which breathes all the witchery of genius, taste, and sentiment. You remember Mr. Hayley's poetic compliment to the sweet miniature painter, Miers:

His magic pencil, in its narrow space,
Pours the full portion of uninjur'd grace.

So may it be said of the talents and exertion which converted a cottage, in two acres and a half of turnip ground, to a fairy-palace, amid the bowers of Calypso.

"It consists of four small apartments; the exquisite cleanliness of the kitchen, its utensils, and its auxiliary offices, vieing with the finished elegance of the gay, the lightsome little dining-room, as that contrasts the gloomy, yet superior grace of the library, into which it opens.

"This room is fitted up in the Gothic style, the door and large sash windows of that form, and the latter of painted glass, 'shedding the dim religious light'. Candles are seldom admitted into this apartment.—The ingenious friends have invented a kind of prismatic lantern, which occupies the whole elliptic arch of the Gothic door. This lantern is of cut glass, variously coloured, enclosing two lamps with their reflectors. The light it imparts resembles that of a volcano, sanguine and solemn. It is assisted by two glow-worm lamps, that, in little marble reservoirs, stand on the opposite chimney-piece, and these supply the place of the here always chastized daylight, when the dusk of evening sables, or when night wholly involves, the thrice-lovely solitude."

This volcanic lantern, I may say, is still exactly as it was. But in the course of succeeding tenancies the disposition of the rooms has been changed, one or two sometimes being merged in one, and so forth. Miss Seward under-
estimates the extent of the grounds; which cover thirteen acres, although of course they may have added to it later.

"A large Eolian harp is fixed in one of the windows, and, when the weather permits them to be opened, it breathes its deep tones to the gale, swelling and softening as that rises and falls.

Ah me! what hand can touch the strings so fine,
Who up the lofty diapason roll
Such sweet, such sad, such solemn airs divine,
And let them down again into the soul!"

I interrupt the letter again to say that this harp was the means of giving Madame de Genlis, when she stayed with the Ladies, a very interesting night. She wrote afterwards: "This evening was a scene of enchantment for me. My thoughts kept me awake, but just as I was falling asleep I was aroused by the most melodious sounds. It was not music, but an indistinct and celestial harmony which penetrated my soul. I discovered that it was produced by a violent wind which had arisen, but the winds changed their nature as they approached this asylum of peace and friendship. I was determined to investigate the nature of this, but durst not rise for fear of waking Mme. D'Orleans, who slept in a bed close to mine.

"I listened with transport.

"Next morning the mystery was explained: I found in
the balcony an Eolian Harp."

Miss Seward was so much impressed by the Llangollen harp that she had one made like it. "You heard me speak of my purpose to have an Eolian harp, made upon the construction of Miss Ponsonby's, mentioned in my poem, Llangollen Vale. She was so good to give me an exact drawing of hers; which, being three times the size they are usually made, and with twenty-two strings, instead of the usual number, six, far transcends, both in the quantity
and quality of the tone, the general order of these airy instruments. Mine is at length finished and strung; but, being made to fit my only eastern sash-windows, no gale has yet blown from that point, strong enough to wake the sullen slumber of its many chords. This line, from Il Penseroso, is to be its motto:

Most musical, most melancholy.

Doubtless the airy hand of Eurus will soon awaken those rich harmonies, which so divinely stole upon my ear amid the Vale of Llangollen."

Miss Seward’s letter continues: “This saloon of the Minervas contains the finest editions, superbly bound, of the best authors, in prose and verse, which the English, Italian, and French languages boast, contained in neat wire cases: over them the portraits, in miniature, and some in larger ovals, of the favoured friends of these celebrated votaries to that sentiment which exalted the characters of Theseus and Perithous, of David and Jonathan.

“Between the picture of Lady Bradford and the chimney-piece hangs a beautiful entablature, presented to the ladies of Llangollen Vale by Madam Sillery, late Madam Genlis. It has convex miniatures of herself and of her pupil, Pamela;¹ between them, pyramidally placed, a garland of flowers, copied from a nosegay, gathered by Lady Eleanor in her bowers, and presented to Madam Sillery.

“The kitchen-garden is neatness itself. Neither there, nor in the whole precincts, can a single weed be discovered. The fruit-trees are of the rarest and finest sort, and luxuriant in their produce; the garden-house, and its implements, arranged in the exactest order.

“Nor is the dairy-house, for one cow, the least curiously elegant object of this magic domain. A short steep declivity,

¹Madame de Genlis used to call Pamela her pupil. But there is now little if any doubt that Pamela was her daughter by the Duc d’Orleans.
shadowed over with tall shrubs, conducts us to the cool and clean repository. The white and shining utensils that contain the milk, and cream, and butter, are pure ‘as snows thrice bolted in the northern blast’. In the midst, a little machine, answering the purpose of a churn, enables the ladies to manufacture half a pound of butter for their own breakfast, with an apparatus which finishes the whole process without manual operation.

“The wavy and shaded gravel-walk which encircles this Elysium, is enriched with curious shrubs and flowers. It is nothing in extent, and everything in grace and beauty, and in variety of foliage; its gravel smooth as marble. In one part of it we turn upon a small knoll, which overhangs a deep hollow glen. In its tangled bottom, a frothing brook leaps and clamours over the rough stones in its channel. A large spreading beech canopies the knoll, and a semilunar seat, beneath its boughs, admits four people. A board, nailed to the elm, has this inscription,

O cara Selva! e Fiumicello amato!

“It has a fine effect to enter the little Gothic library, as I first entered it, at the dusk hour. The prismatic lantern diffused a light gloomily glaring. It was assisted by the paler flames of the petit lamps on the chimney-piece, while, through the open windows, we had a darkling view of the lawn on which they look, the concave shrubbery of tall cypresses, yews, laurels, and lilacs; of the woody amphitheatre on the opposite hill, that seems to rise immediately behind the shrubbery; and of the grey barren mountain which, then just visible, forms the background. The evening-star had risen above the mountain; the airy harp loudly rung to the breeze, and completed the magic of the scene.

“You will expect that I say something of the enchantresses themselves, beneath whose plastic wand these
peculiar graces arose. Lady Eleanor is of middle height, and somewhat beyond the *embonpoint* as to plumpness; her face round and fair, with the glow of luxuriant health. She has not fine features, but they are agreeable;—enthusiasm in her eye, hilarity and benevolence in her smile. Exhaustless is her fund of historic and traditionary knowledge, and of every thing passing in the present eventful period. She has uncommon strength and fidelity of memory; and her taste for works of imagination, particularly for poetry, is very awakened, and she expresses all she feels with an ingenuous ardour, at which the cold-spirited beings stare. I am informed that both these ladies read and speak most of the modern languages. Of the Italian poets, especially of Dante, they are warm admirers.

“Miss Ponsonby, somewhat taller than her friend, is neither slender nor otherwise, but very graceful. Easy, elegant, yet pensive, is her address and manner:

Her voice, like lovers watch’d, is kind and low.

A face rather long than round, a complexion clear, but without bloom, with a countenance which, from its soft melancholy, has peculiar interest. If her features are not beautiful, they are very sweet and feminine. Though the pensive spirit within permits not her lovely dimples to give mirth to her smile, they increase its sweetness, and, consequently, her power of engaging the affections. We see, through their veil of shading reserve, that all the talents and accomplishments which enrich the mind of Lady Eleanor, exist, with equal powers, in this her charming friend.

“Such are these extraordinary women, who, in the bosom of their deep retirement, are sought by the first characters of the age, both as to rank and talents. To preserve that retirement from too frequent invasion, they are obliged to be somewhat coy as to accessibility.
"When we consider their intellectual resources, their energy and industry, we are not surprised to hear them asserting that, though they have not once forsaken their vale, for thirty hours successively, since they entered it seventeen years ago; yet neither the long summer's day, nor winter's night, nor weeks of imprisoning snows, ever inspired one weary sensation, one wish of returning to that world first abandoned in the bloom of youth, and which they are yet so perfectly qualified to adorn."

General Yorke, who bought Plas Newydd in 1876, wrote a pamphlet about his predecessors, in which he says: "People of rank and all ages felt awe in their presence. They were royalty, as it were, in Llangollen, and their word was law. Yet they were kind to all, if not provoked. A formal letter had to be written to them, prior to the reception of any visitor. The letter had, likewise, to be addressed from the hotel which was in favour with them at the time. This ceremony gave time for perfuming the rooms at Plas Newydd, and pastilles in bronze censers were plentifully used for this purpose. The Duke of Wellington visited the ladies in 1814, a few weeks after being created a Duke; he lunched with them in what is now called the Wellington Garden, and they have recorded this gracious visit by placing their initials 'E. B. and S. P., 1814,' over the fireplace in the Oak Room." Some years earlier, I might add, the Ladies gave Wellington a Spanish prayer-book, from which, with a grammar, he learnt the language while waiting for favourable winds to land on his first voyage to Spain—and victory.

Among others who visited them were the Duke of York, who brought an oak desk, and the Duchess of St. Albans, once Harriett Mellon, who also did not come empty handed. The carved cups over Lady Eleanor Butler's mantelpiece were Lord Edward Fitzgerald's offering.

Among the visitors who left descriptions of their hostesses
the most entertaining is certainly Madame de Genlis, whose account of the Æolian harp we have already read. I quote further from her Souvenirs: "The interior of the house is delightful on account of the just proportion and distribution of the apartments, the elegance of the ornaments and furniture, and the admirable view which you enjoy from all the windows; the drawing-room is adorned with charming landscapes, drawn and coloured from nature by Miss Ponsonby. Lady Eleanor is a great proficient in music; and their solitary habitation is filled with embroidery, by them both, of wonderful execution. Miss Ponsonby, who writes the finest hand I ever saw, has copied a number of select pieces in verse and prose, which she has ornamented with vignettes and arabesques, in the best taste, and which form a most valuable collection. Thus the arts are cultivated there with equal modesty and success, and their productions are admired with a feeling that is not experienced elsewhere; the spectator observes with delight that so much merit is secure in this peaceable retreat from the shafts of satire and envy."

Another foreign visitor, Prince Pückler-Muskau, wandered to the Vale some years later, and paid his respects to the ladies, who were still hale although full of years. He printed an account of his visit in his Briefe eines Verstorbenen, and I reproduce portions of it which were in a translation made for Notes and Queries by Mr. Hermann Kindt in 1869: "I have to tell you many things, and to describe an interesting day. Well then, at the right moment, before leaving Llangollen, I remembered the two celebrated virgins (certainly the most celebrated in Europe) who now for more than half a century are at home among these mountains, of whom I heard speak when a child, and again much when I was in London. . . .

"Nobody (who is presentable, of course) travels in Wales
without asking for a letter or for an introduction; and it is asserted that 'scandal' has just as much interest for them as formerly when they were still living in 'the world,' and that their curiosity to hear of all that is going on in it is said to be just as fresh too.

"I had, it is true, kind remembrances for them from several ladies, but no letter, for which I had forgotten to ask, and on that account only sent in my card, resolved, in case they should refuse my call, to take the cottage by storm, as I was made to understand it might be refused. Rank, however, here opened easily the door and I received immediately a graceful invitation for luncheon. In a quarter of an hour, I arrived amidst the most charming neighbourhood, driving through a very nice pleasure-ground, at a small, tasteful Gothic house, just opposite Castle Dinas Brun, to view which apertures had been cut through the foliage of lofty trees. I got out of the carriage and was received by the two ladies at the foot of the stairs.

"Fortunately I was quite prepared as regards their singularities, otherwise I might scarcely have kept countenance. Imagine, then, two ladies, of whom the elder, Lady Eleanor, a small brisk girl, now somewhat begins to feel her age, having just entered upon her eighty-third year; the other, a tall and imposing figure, thinks herself quite youthful still, as the dear child is only seventy-four. Both wore the hair, which is quite full yet, combed down straight and powdered, a gentleman's round hat, a gentleman's cravat and waistcoat; instead of the 'inexpressibles,' however, a short _jupon_, and gentleman's boots. The whole was covered by an overdress of blue cloth of a quite peculiar cut, keeping the middle between a gentleman's overcoat and a lady's riding habit."

"I cannot help thinking," here interjects Mr. Kindt, "of Mr. Kinglake's lively description of the dress of his friend
THE LADIES IN OLD AGE

John Keate, whom the Cairo magician was going to let appear before the genial author of Eöthen: 'He wore a fancy dress, partly resembling the costume of Napoleon and partly that of a widow-woman.'

"Over all this 'toggery' Lady Eleanor wore, 1, the grand cordon of the order of the collar of Saint Louis round her waist; 2, the same order round her neck; 3, the small cross of the same order in the button-hole; et pour comble de gloire, a silver lily of almost natural size as a star on her breast—all these being, as she told me, presents of the Bourbon family.

"So far, the whole was indeed ridiculous; but now imagine these two ladies full of the most plaisante aïsance, and the tone of great people of the ancien régime; obliging and entertaining without any affectation, speaking French at least as well as any noble Englishman of my acquaintance, and at the same time of those essentially polite sans gêne, and I might say naïf and cheerful manners of the good society of that time, which it will almost appear have been carried to the grave in our earnest and industrial century of business-life, and which really touched me in these good-natured old ladies. I could not help but remarking at the same time, the uninterrupted and nevertheless apparently so natural and tender consideration with which the younger of the two was treating her somewhat infirm elder friend, and how she anticipated every one of her little wants. Such things reveal themselves more in the way they are done, in little insignificant traits, perhaps, but do not escape the sympathetic mind.

"I made my début by saying that I felt happy to be the bearer of compliments which my grandfather, who had had the honour of waiting on them fifty years ago, had charged me with for the fair recluses. The latter had since that time lost their beauty, but not their good memory; they
remembered, therefore, G—— C—— very well, showed me even an old souvenir of him, and only wondered that such a young man should already be dead! Not only the venerable spinsters, but their cottage was full of interest; nay, the latter often contains real treasures. Scarcely any remarkable person of the last half century who has not sent them a portrait, some curiosities or antiquity, as a souvenir. This collection, a well-furnished library, a charming neighbourhood, an even-tempered life without material cares, a most intimate friendship and community amongst themselves—these are their treasures; but, to judge by their vigorous age and their cheerful mind, they must have chosen not quite badly.

And here let me quote the livelier description of Charles Mathews, the actor, to his wife, in 1820—the Ladies of Llangollen having been for once tempted so far away from home as to the Oswestry Theatre to see this wonderful comedian: "The dear inseparable inimitables, Lady Butler and Miss Ponsonby, were in the boxes here on Friday. They came twelve miles from Llangollen, and returned, as they never sleep from home. Oh, such curiosities! I was nearly convulsed. I could scarcely get on for the first ten minutes after my eye caught them. Though I had never seen them, I instantaneously knew them. As they are seated, there is not one point to distinguish them from men: the dressing and powdering of the hair; their well-starched neckcloths; the upper part of their habits, which they always wear, even at a dinner-party, made precisely like men's coats; and regular black beaver men's hats. They looked exactly like two respectable superannuated old clergymen; one the picture of Borulawski. I was highly flattered, as they were never in the theatre before. . . .

"I have to-day received an invitation to call, if I have time as I pass, at Llangollen, to receive in due form, from
the dear old gentlemen called Lady Butler and Miss Ponsonby, their thanks for the entertainment I afforded them at the theatre."

Happily Mathews did have time, and this is his account of the visit: "Well I have seen them, heard them, touched them. The pets, the Ladies as they are called, dined here yesterday, Lady E. Butler and Miss Ponsonby. I mentioned to you in a former letter the effect they produced on me in public, but never shall I forget the first burst yesterday upon entering the drawing-room to find the antediluvian darlings attired for dinner in the same manifed dress with the Croix de S. Louis and other orders, with myriads of large brooches with stones large enough for snuff-boxes stuck in their starched neckcloths. They returned home fourteen miles after twelve o'clock. They have not slept from home for more than forty years."

De Quincey, Scott and Wordsworth were also among the Ladies’ visitors—Wordsworth in 1824, by their special invitation. They asked him further to write a poem upon their home; which he did, but with unfortunate result. The poem ran thus:—

TO THE LADY E. B. AND THE HON. MISS P.

Composed in the Grounds of Plass Newidd, near Llangollen, 1824.

A stream, to mingle with your favourite Dee,
Along the Vale of Meditation flows;
So styled by those fierce Britons, pleased to see
In Nature’s face the expression of repose;
Or haply there some pious hermit chose
To live and die, the peace of heaven his aim;
To whom the wild sequestered region owes,
At this late day, its sanctifying name.
Glyn Capaillgaroch, in the Cambrian tongue,
In ours, the Vale of Friendship, let this spot
Be named; where faithful to a low-roofed cot,
On Devac’s banks, ye have abode so long;
Sisters in love, a love allowed to climb,
Even on this earth, above the reach of Time!

1Glyn Myrdr.
That is not a bad sonnet, but it displeased the Ladies intensely, one of its offences being the phrase a "low-roofed cot," and the other the suggestion, as they took it (in the last line), that they were too old. Their criticism was that they could write better poetry themselves.

Another visitor at about the same time whose intercourse with the Ladies was not successful, although from different reasons, was a small boy of twelve who in 1827 was taken to Plas Newydd. Visiting Llangollen in 1879 he recalled his early experience of it, and said that nothing in his life had so frightened him. This was Dean Stanley.

In a little pamphlet on the Ladies by the Rev. J. Prichard, D.D., published locally in the eighteen-seventies, I find some interesting particulars of their life in their later years, at a time when he was acquainted with them. They kept, he says, a carpenter, a cowman, and a man of all work outdoors, and indoors two ladies' maids and three female servants. Dr. Prichard quotes a rhymed account of the Ladies, which if not so eloquent as Miss Seward's poem is at least as informative:

Once two young girls of rank and beauty rare,
Of features more than ordinary fair,
Who in the heyday of their youthful charms
Refused the proffer of all suitors' arms,
Lived in a cottage here rich carved in oak,
Though now long passed from life by death's grim stroke.
Plas Newydd's gardens then displayed much taste,
And nought about them e'er allowed to waste.
The umbrageous foliage of surrounding trees
Gave them a shelter from the stormy breeze,
Whilst in a snug retreat about south-west,
Was bird-cote placed as shelter for redbreast,
For sparrow, chaffinch, blackbird, or for thrush,
These ladies did not wish the cold to touch.
Then did all species of ferns abound
In every nook and corner of their ground,
Then none were known to come unto their door
That were not welcomed with kind words, or more.
MYSTERIOUS FINANCES

These ladies to each other kind and true,
Around Llangollen's vale like them were few.
E'en now I see them seated in yon chair,
In well starched neckcloths, and with powdered hair,
Their upper habits just like men's they wore,
With tall black beaver hats outside their door;
To crown it all my muse would whisper low,
With hair cropped short, rough, bushy, white as snow.
They at death's summons God's commands obeyed,
And were in fair Llangollen's churchyard laid,
As they through life together did abide,
E'en now in death they both lie side by side;
Of them remains nought save dank mould and sod,
Who loved their neighbours second to their God;
Sweet peace be theirs—by death to dust allied,
Through him who near a century was their Guide;
Beloved, respected by the world were they,
By all regretted when they passed away.

The 'Ladies' account book for the years 1791 to 1800 lies before me, kept in Miss Ponsonby's neat hand, and from it one learns more of their life than from any of the descriptions. Their annual expenditure averaged between £500 and £600 a year, their income being derived from the interest of their respective fortunes, both very small; loans from members of both their families—Lord Bessborough, Mr. Ponsonby, Mr. Chambre and Lord Ormonde—which I image often automatically became gifts; and gifts absolute from the same gentlemen and others, including at one time of great stress £200 attributed to a "miraculous intervention of Providence". The Ladies were not above receiving presents of this kind, and it was generally understood by visitors that in some way their footing was to be paid, although the only toll that was actually exacted was old oak. When Mary Carryl died she made the Ladies her heirs of some £500, amassed, it is most probable, in tips from visitors, and after Lady Eleanor Butler's death Miss Ponsonby was placed on the Civil List for a pension of £200, but under what heading her claims came I have not ascertained.

But if the Ladies were the recipients of the charities of
the rich, they were equally the dispensers of their own charity to the poor. It is on record by one who knew them that they gave away sixpences every Sunday on their way to church; but if so, the habit was contracted after the account book which I have seen, for it is not mentioned there. The pages, however, are filled with small generosities, and it seems that they could never resist the appeal of any poor Irishwoman, with a natural result that poor Irish women infested their door.

The following extracts are interesting:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>£</th>
<th>s</th>
<th>d</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A travelling boy for the kindness with which he gave us some pinks</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0 1 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Market, including our haymaking supper to fourteen persons this evening</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0 19 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lodowick’s unfortunate daughter</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0 1 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor woman, 4d.; Irish woman, 6d.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0 10 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Rogers, for bad work</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0 2 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tinker, for spoiling tea-kettle</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0 1 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ale from “Hand,” not fit to be drank</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0 0 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David the taylor, for doing nothing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0 2 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Our precious and never-to-be-forgotten little Scips¹ last expenses</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0 4 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weaver, for weaving table-linen and towels</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 16 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Powdered Hair Tax</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3 3 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harp woman, for Lord and Lady Mansfield</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0 3 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four little boys at chimney fire</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0 0 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Little Molly, encouragement for going well-dressed to church</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0 1 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomas Jones, for Mary’s neck</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0 2 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Earnest to Molly, re-hired for Mary</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0 1 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sandford the Shrewsbury bookseller, in full for ever</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 2 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lottery ticket</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 1 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Halston gardener, with horrid melon</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0 2 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Salmon, for cleaning our teeth</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 1 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contribution of flannel for the troops</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 1 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muffins for kitchen quality</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0 0 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old, dirty, ungrateful Lloyd</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0 0 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carlíne’s man with cart full of disappointment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0 2 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spinning wheel</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 1 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brandy for our landlord’s cough</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0 0 3</td>
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</tbody>
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¹ Favourite dog.
MRS. TIGHE’S LUNAR BEAUTY

Mary Carry’s wages I do not find, but Anne Jones, the kitchenmaid, received £2 10s. a year, and Moses Jones, the handy man, 10s. a week. That the Ladies had soft hearts is otherwise clear from the three entries that follow:

Feb. 21, 1791. Moses Jones discharged . . . . . 5 0
April 9, 1791. Moses Jones, 4 days wages again . . . . . 7 0
April 16, 1791. Moses Jones, week’s wages . . . . . 10 0

Moses (whose fault was, I gather, alcohol) thereafter went on steadily for some years, to be succeeded by Simon at a shilling a week less. For the rent of the cottage and its own ground the Ladies paid £4 10s. a year; for adjoining ground, £5. They subsequently acquired the cottage.

Among other extracts are these: “Eels and trout for Mrs. Piozzi,” and “Pair of Turkies, expectation of Miss Seward.”

Returning to Miss Seward’s letter in 1795, she remarks at the close: “I must not conclude without observing, that, on my second visit to the fairy palace, a lovely Being cast around its apartments the soft lunar rays of her congenial beauty.—Mrs. Tighe, the wife of one of my friend’s nephews, an elegant and intelligent young gentleman, whom I should have observed more had his wife’s beauty been less. I used the word lunar as characteristic of that beauty, for it is not resplendent and sunny, like Mrs. Plummer’s, but, as it were, shaded, though exquisite. She is scarce two-and-twenty. Is it not too much that Aonian inspiration should be added to the cestus of Venus? She left an elegant and accurate sonnet, addressed to Lady E. Butler and her friend, on leaving their enchanting bowers.”

Even without this example it is hardly in reason that a poet so warm-hearted and appreciative as Miss Seward, and withal so rich in the emotion of gratitude, would herself omit to address the Ladies of Llangollen in the medium of the higher compliment, and she must have set to work almost at once upon the poem “Llangollen Vale.”
The Ladies of Llangollen

Her first expression of her feelings was, however, in prose in a letter to "the Right Hon. Lady Eleanor Butler" on 27th September: "The distance between Llangollen and Emeral is longer than I supposed. I had a degree of pain during the journey, that sunk my spirits extremely, inspiring a fear that it might be the last I should find strength or cheerfulness to undertake. Alas! dearest ladies, much did that despondence deepen the regret, that my ear no longer drank the sweet sounds of condescending kindness and confidential friendship, with which I had been honoured beneath the Arcadian bowers!"

The poem, "Llangollen Vale," which was written and despatched in the autumn of 1795, is too long to quote in full, nor is it, in its descriptive and historical stanzas, too entertaining. But with the entry of the Ladies it acquires interest:

Now with a vestal lustre glows the vale,
Thine, sacred friendship, permanent as pure;
In vain the stern authorities assail,
In vain persuasion spreads her silken lure,
High-born and high-endow'd, the peerless twain
Pant for coy nature's charms 'mid silent dales and plain.

Thro' Eleanor, and her Zara's mind,
Early tho' genius, taste, and fancy flow'd,
Tho' all the graceful arts their powers combin'd,
And her last polish brilliant life bestow'd,
The lavish promiser in youth's soft morn,
Pride, pomp, and love, her friends, the sweet enthusiasts scorn.

Then rose the fairy palace of the vale,
Then bloom'd around at the Arcadian bowers;
Screen'd from the storms of winter, cold and pale,
Screen'd from the fervours of the sultry hours,
Circling the lawny crescent, soon they rose,
To letter'd ease devote, and friendship's blest repose.

Peerless twain.—Right Hon. Lady Eleanor Butler and Miss Ponsonby, now seventeen years resident in Llangollen Vale, and whose guest the author had the honour to be during several delightful days of summer.—(Miss Seward's footnote.)
THE LADIES OF LLANGOLLEN

MISS S. FOSSEY   LADY ELEANOR BUTLER

After a drawing by Lady Leighton
"POETIC STAMINA"

Smiling they rose beneath the plastic hand
Of energy and taste; nor only they,
Obedient science hears the mild command,
Brings every gift that speeds the tardy day,
Whate'er the pencil sheds in vivid hues
Th' historic tome reveals, or sings the raptured Muse.

How sweet to enter, at the twilight grey
The dear, minute Lyceum
When, thro' the colour'd crystal glares the ray,
Sanguine and solemn 'mid the gathering gloom,
While glow-worm lamps diffuse a pale, green light,
Such as in mossy lanes illumine the starless night.

Then the coy scene, by deep'ning veils o'erdrawn,
In shadowy elegance seems lovelier still;
Tall shrubs, that skirt the semi-lunar lawn,
Dark woods that curtain the opposing hill;
While o'er their brows the bare cliff faintly gleams,
And from its paly edge the evening-diamond streams.

What strains Aeolian thrill the dusky expanse,
As rising gales with gentle murmurs play,
Wake the loud chords or every sense intrance,
While in subsiding winds they sink away!
Like distant choirs, "when pealing organs blow,"
And melting voices blend majestically slow.

There is more, but this is all that I quote here. The Ladies were naturally pleased with the compliment, and said so. Miss Seward, in replying in December, remarks: "I rejoice that my poem, on Llangollen Vale, meets a reception of such partial warmth from the bright spirits it celebrates, and whose praise I more desire for it than fame; yet am I conscious how largely that praise transcends its merit. I believe its poetic stamina are not weaker than those of the

1 Minute Lyceum.—The library, fitted up in the Gothic taste, the painted windows of that form. In the elliptic arch of the door, there is a prismatic lantern of variously-tinted glass, containing two large lamps with their reflection. The light they shed resembles that of a volcano, gloomily glaring. Opposite, on the chimney-piece, a couple of small lamps, in marble reservoirs, assist the prismatic lantern to supply the place of candles, by a light more consonant to the style of the apartment, the pictures it contains of absent friends, and to its aerial music.—(Miss Seward's footnote.)

2 "Evening-diamond," evening star.—(Miss Seward's footnote.)
THE LADIES OF LLANGOLLEN

best of my writings; my utmost hope, as to its essential 
merit, 'has that extent—no more:'—but indeed, indeed, 
one of my compositions have any pretense to vie with 
the Darwinian muse, in the splendours of imagination."

"Llangollen Vale," although Miss Seward's most ambitious 
poem to the Ladies, was not alone. I find in her 
poetical works a "sonnet laid in the drawer of the thatched 
shed by the brook at Plas Newydd," and also among the 
poems "Each written on a card inclosed in a letter-case 
ettled by the Author and presented to her Friends," one 
addressed to both. Finally, under the date September, 1802, 
is a blank verse poem entitled "A Farewell to the Seat of 
Lady Eleanor Butler and Miss Ponsonby," but this also I 
do not quote.

There is every indication to believe that Lady Eleanor 
Butler and Miss Ponsonby cultivated an epistolary style 
similar to Miss Seward's. Her replies at least lead to this 
conviction. Miss Ponsonby on one occasion copied for her 
the whole of the article on the Sonnet from the Encyclo-
pedia, a dangerous thing to do to a correspondent with so 
much time on her hands and so many "sonnetical" theories 
as Miss Seward. On another occasion they discuss Southey's 
Joan of Arc, on which the Ladies had requested the Swan's 
"sentiments in full." They agree as to politics, Miss 
Seward, by some vague line of reasoning, seeming to attrib-
ute England's martial success to the Llangollen Ladies' own 
efforts. At least she writes thus, on 23rd January, 1797: 
"Suffer me to congratulate your ladyship and Miss Pon-
sonby, on the dispersion of the hostile fleet, whose invading 
design is, for the present—would to God it might be for 
ever—baffled by the elements;" and again, "I congratulate 
you upon the victory our fleet has obtained over the 'slow-
ey'd sons of the marshy cline'—the glum and treacherous 
Dutch."
THE ABYSSINIAN VALLEY

In February, Mary Caryl was ill. Miss Seward heard the news from Mr. Roberts of Dinhren: "His account of the health and cheerfulness of my charming friends, apparent in an interview with which they recently honoured him, charmed me. I was, however, concerned to hear him say you had lately been distressed by the illness, and alarmed for the life of your good Euryclea. That she is recovering I rejoice. The loss of a domestic, faithful and affectionate as Orlando's Adam, must have cast more than a transient gloom over the Cambrian Arden. The Rosalind and Celia of real life give Langollen valley a right to that title." Miss Seward was here stealing Hayley's thunder, for it was he who first hit upon this Shakespearian analogy.

In 1797 Miss Seward visited Llangollen again: "Ah! dearest Ladies, with what mixed sensations did I leave the Abyssinian valley! It was regret, gilded by a thousand charming recollections, the reflex of those three recorded days I passed, last month, beneath your roof—of talents glowing on my understanding, of kindness engraven on my heart."

Writing to another friend—for these triumphs were never kept under a bushel—she says: "The ladies of the Vale, the, in all but the voluptuous sense, Armidas of its bowers, received me with every energy of regard and affection. So rich was the scenic and intellectual banquet of their mansion, as to make me half-inclined to regret as intrusive, the several visitors who paid homage at that Arcadian court while I was resident there; though all were distinguished either by elevation of talent, or by elevation of rank, and several by both."

In return perhaps for many Aonian gifts, the Ladies, in 1799, sent Miss Seward a token of their amity. She replied: "I have to thank you, dearest ladies, for a very beautiful but too costly present. This ring and seal in one, this
Apollo's head and lyre, makes an admirable impression. It is a fine gem, and rich and elegant is the circlet for the finger. As your gift, it possesses value,

——Gold says, 'is not in me,'
And, 'not in me,' the diamond.

Mr. S[aville] desires me to make his grateful acknowledgment for the elegant testimony he has received of Lady E. Butler and Miss Ponsonby's regard, who increase the happiness of all on whom they smile, and confer distinction wherever they esteem."

In the same letter Miss Seward refers to Sir Walter Scott: "Yourself and Lady Eleanor are no strangers to the new poetic star of the Caledonian sphere; but, nourishing, as I do, the pleasing hope of being enabled to pass a few days beneath your roof, in the autumn of this yet wintry year, I almost hope his last and yet unpublished poems, Glenfinlas and the Eve of St. John, may not previously meet your eye; that I may have the delight of reading them to you, and observing the lively interest they will excite, and the glowing praise with which they will be honoured. It is my great happiness to be exempt from the frequent torment of authors, literary envy, though perhaps there is little virtue in exemption so constitutional; but it renders my poetic pleasures wholly unembittered from that source."

The promised visit was paid. A letter to Mr. Whalley in October, 1799, carries the original description of the Ladies a little further: "I am recently returned from my summer's tour. Its Cambrian interests were very lively, as they were wont to be, during my week's residence on Mr. Roberts' sublime mountain, and my four days visit to the ladies falsely called the Recluses of Langollen Vale.

"What a little court is the mansion of these ladies in that wondrous vale! Lords and ladies, gentlemen and ladies, poets, historians, painters, and musicians, introduced
by the letters of their established friends, received, entertained, and retiring, to make way for other sets of company.

They passed before my eyes like figures in a magic- lantern.

"This, with little interruption, is the habit of the whole year, from Langollen being the high road between Holyhead and London, and its vale the first classic and scenic ground of Wales. The evenings were the only time in which, from these eternal demands upon their attention, I could enjoy that confidential conversation with them that is most delightful, from an higher degree of congeniality in our sentiments and tastes, than I almost ever met. Numbers have considered themselves as affronted from being refused admittance. I have witnessed how distressingly their time is engrossed by the immense and daily accumulating influx of their acquaintance, and by the endless requests to see their curious and beautiful place, and not seldom for admittance into their company. Beneath indiscriminate admission, they never could have a day-light hour for the society of their select friends. They have made an established rule not to admit visits to themselves from any persons, however high their rank, who do not bring letters of introduction from some of their own intimate friends.

"I have several times seen them reject the offered visits of such who either did not know this their rule, or, knowing, had neglected to observe it; and I always perceived such attempts at self-introduction pique that pride of birth and consequence, of which they have and acknowledge a great deal, eminently gracious as their manners are to those whom they do receive. When the sight of their house and gardens only is requested, they do not refuse, if they are alone, and can either walk abroad or retire up stairs; or, even if they have company, provided they can walk out with that company, and are not at meals; but it is certain those impediments to general curiosity often occur—nor has any person
a right to think their existence, and the disappointment it occasions, an incivility."

Mr. Whalley, however, does not seem to have been quite fortunate in his own efforts to see the Ladies. Or so I gather from this letter from Miss Seward to him in 1800:

"My dear Friend,—Oh, no! no! It was indeed not the answer which Lady E. Butler and her friend ought to have sent. I am sorry. I am ashamed for them. In a much greater degree I am surprised. I am sure, however, that neither Miss Ponsonby's will nor heart were in that message; but Lady E., who, when pleased, is one of the most gracious of God's creatures, under a contrary impression is extremely haughty and imperious. Her sweet amiable friend, who, when she has time, can bend or soften that impetuous temper, knows she cannot, and therefore does not attempt to, assuage its extempore sallies.

"On occasions, in some degree similar, I have seen Miss Ponsonby sigh, shrug her shoulders and acquiesce. On those occasions Lady E. always involves her by the words of we and us. Accustomed to incessant homage and compliance, a broken promise, and not even apologised for, would, I know, be a sin in the eyes of both, which scarcely any acknowledged repentance could atone. That sin was your brother's; but I think Miss Ponsonby would not have sought to avenge it by unjust rudeness to you.

"They were, you know, unconscious of the family misfortune and mental gloom which now produced his breach of promise and apparent cold neglect of them, Lady Eleanor regrets, as she often does on other occasions, her rude injustice to you, and unites with Miss Ponsonby in unavailing hopes for an opportunity of repairing it. Could they obtain that opportunity, I know their reparation would be as ample as it might be in their power to make it; and I am sure, should you ever again travel through their dale,
A LAST VISIT

and receive an invitation from them, which I am sure they would send you, you are the man of all others to say, 'Re-
pentance which is enough for heaven, is enough for me'.
Adieu!'"

And here I may quote from General Yorke again, who says, "Nothing provoked the Ladies more than the ostent-
tatious manner of visitors, which some put on with the view of passing themselves off as very learned, though they were actually in leading strings, when conversing with Miss Ponsonby. The ladies generally brought such interviews to a speedy termination. Lady Eleanor was relating a case of this kind to an intimate friend; but, as her memory was falling at the time, she appealed to Miss Ponsonby, 'Did we like him, Sarah Ponsonby?' 'We hated him, Eleanor,' was the reply; and she continued her tale by repeating 'We hated him'!"

Miss Seward's last visit to Llangollen Vale was paid in 1802. She thus refers to it: "My return home took its wonted circuit through the peerless Vale of Denbighshire, where I divided an interesting fortnight between the hospitality of my friend Mr. Roberts' mansion, amid the sub-
limities of that scenery which, in unequalled variety, its elevation commands, and the softer graces of Lady Eleanor Butler and Miss Ponsonby's enchanted bowers in the vale below, round which the warmth of their kindness, the light of their talents, and the blessings of their benevolence, stream."

The Ladies not only lived to a great age but lived robustly. Lady Eleanor, says General Yorke, was "couch" for imperfect vision in her 85th year, by Alexander, the celebrated oculist of that day, and she bore the operation with the utmost fortitude, and, instead of retiring to bed on the occasion, she sat in the library dressed with her hat and orders on, and scorned a blue shade which had been provided
by Mr. T. T. Griffith, of Wrexham, the late eminent surgeon and benefactor of that town and neighbourhood. Deafness the Ladies warded off by a simple remedy, which they recommended to all their friends; viz., to place wads of London brown paper lightly in the orifice of the ear, instead of cotton wool, the slight amount of pitch contained in brown paper (of the best quality) being the secret of this remedy."

Miss Seward's poem "Llangollen Vale" ends with this stanza:—

May one kind ice-bolt from the mortal stores,
   Arrest each vital current as it flows,
    That no sad course of desolated hours
   Here vainly nurse the subsiding woes!
While all who honour Virtue, gently mourn
Llangollen's vanish'd Pair, and wreath their sacred urn.

Heaven, however, ordered otherwise. Lady Eleanor Butler died on 2nd June, 1829, Miss Ponsonby on 8th December, 1831. Mary Caryll had preceded them by some years, and her friends and mistresses had had the present avenue planted to keep her memory green. All three now rest together in Llangollen churchyard beneath a tomb which is assiduously visited.

General Yorke tells us that "a singular circumstance occurred at the funeral of Lady Eleanor Butler. Miss Ponsonby attended, and, as her prayer through life had been to outlive Lady Eleanor, she was able to bear up on this most trying occasion. She was seventeen years younger, and feared if she were taken first Lady Eleanor would have been more than desolate without her. A shepherd's dog followed her from the grave, and took up a position in front of a window at Plas Newydd; and, as he was not inclined to leave, she asked him in and called him Chance. This dog was faithful to her during the remainder of her life, but disappeared at her funeral,
"This circumstance gave rise to much superstition at the time; but it may be thus accounted for. A considerable number of people attended Lady Eleanor's funeral, and, no doubt, many came from the mountains and distant parts for curiosity. The dog may have lost his master in the crowd, and found him again (probably) at Miss Ponsonby's funeral when there was a similar gathering.

"This dog followed Miss Ponsonby at every turn, and on one occasion howled in the Bower when she gave a book to a friend which had belonged to Lady Eleanor. This event caused Miss Ponsonby to write to her friend for the return of the book, stating she had not been happy since parting with it, as it was Lady Eleanor's book, and that she wished to replace it with some other present. The dog, being a stranger to her friend, might have expected a stone to be thrown into the brook, or mistaken the movement for a shepherd's signal, and howled, which affected Miss Ponsonby deeply. The bookcase still remains in Eleanor's Bower, over which is painted in red letters, 'Where the dog Chance howled'."

Apart altogether from its connection with Lady Eleanor Butler and Miss Ponsonby, Plas Newydd is a very interesting and curious and beautiful abode. Pious hands having carried on what the Ladies began, the house has lost none of its original spirit even although it has been enlarged in all directions, while in addition to still possessing many of the same books and pictures and pieces of furniture, such as have been added are all in the tradition, so to speak: there is nothing to-day that the Ladies, could they return to their old home, would be likely to evict, at any rate with any passion. Mary Carryl might, it is true, be some time in accustoming her ear to the telephones that now unite every room: but that should be almost her only difficulty. Everything else would seem proper enough,
THE LADIES OF LLANGOLLEN

The principal preserver of the old relics and the collector of new was General Yorke, who falling off his pony close to the house, when a boy, and being restored by the old Ladies with oranges, held ever afterwards a tender feeling for them and was glad to be able to buy Plas Newydd and cherish its spirit.

The present owner, who acquired the house and all within it, has added portraits of the Ladies and such personal relics as from time to time have come his way: but there are still many elsewhere, including most of their very interesting correspondence, their diaries and so forth, which now, I believe, are in the possession of the Ormonde family, and Lady Eleanor Butler's walking stick. This, by the way, went to America, from which land a visitor recently brought it, to use it again on its native floors.

The house is something more than a house: it is a museum, without, however, losing homeliness. This is a great triumph for a museum, which usually looks less livable in even than a workhouse or a model sitting-room in a furniture shop window. Plas Newydd is also a kind of paradise of old oak. It is as though the best carved panels in the world, after long careers of good works, had found eternal rest and happiness on this Welsh hillside. Much of it belonged to the Ladies, who had a fine aristocratic flair for such treasures, and much was added by General Yorke. It is the blackest oak I ever saw and it confronts you at every turn.

From a catalogue of the treasures preserved at Plas Newydd, which General Yorke added to his little account of the Ladies, I quote an entry here and there:—

THE OAK ROOM

The Window Recess is panelled with the Oak Fittings from the Pew in Llangollen Church in which the Ladies sat for 30 years.
TWO MISPRINTS

ANTE-ROOM

An Oil Painting from the Vienna Exhibition, "Feminine Affection" (suggestive of the Ladies, and much admired).

Glass case containing Coins dating from 550 before the Christian Era, and many relics including Lady Eleanor's Cairngorm Brooch.

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(Called in the Ladies' time "The Saloon of the Minervas").

Tinted Print of an "Archery Club held at Gwersyllt in 1790," Warden Newcome, of Ruthin, scoring for the Ladies, who are shooting for the Royal Prize of 25 Guineas, given by George IV., when Prince of Wales.

Collar of Miss Ponsonby's dog "Chance."

LADY ELEANOR'S BEDROOM

Two Angels holding the Armorial Bearings of the Ladies of Llangollen, carved and presented by Mr. John Ellis, of Llangollen.

This little pamphlet, by the way, contains some very pleasant errata:

Page 22.—For large Oil Painting, on Copper, "The Death of the Caledonian Boar," read Calydonian Boar.
Page 38.—For Acorn-pattern Gilt Spurs, worn at the Ascension, read worn at the Accession.

The Plas Newydd house architecturally is lawless. It has been built as bees build honey-comb—cell on cell. It is difficult to believe that the present hospitable owner has yet found his way into every room, for he has been there only twenty years or so. For in addition to the rooms that lead naturally out of each other, there are others the existence of which one never suspects. You can trust nothing at Plas Newydd. In any ordinary house a china cupboard full of Delft or Nankin ware is a china cupboard: at Plas Newydd it may be a door leading to another suite of rooms. There are hiding-places in the walls too; and in the room which I occupied is a clothes cupboard in the wainscot that has a false back which opens upon an inner cupboard, used in the mysterious past for I know not what secret purpose, but containing to-day only the famous hats and riding habits of the
two friends, against, I suppose, such time as Llangollen also holds its Pageant and requires their presence. As to what need of hiding-places the Ladies had, I know nothing; but it is common history that among their visitors was Lord Edward Fitzgerald (husband of Pamela, the daughter of their friend Madame de Genlis), and that once, after his rebellion, he left the house in such a hurry that he took one of the windows with him.
CHAPTER XIV

THE LAST GREAT WORD-PAINTER

George Robins the auctioneer—The prose Polyolbion—The merits of Stoke Hall—The merits of Prior Park—Byron and Sheridan at Robins's table—Never a false representation—Lamb's appreciation—The merits of a castle at Dumbarton—George on Scouland—Robins on the rostrum—A sonnet on an auctioneer—Grant's description of George Robins—The merits of the Llangollen Vale estate.

WHEN the time came, in 1832, for the sale of the home of the Ladies of the Vale it was only fitting that to George Robins should fall the melancholy yet congenial task. Why fitting? the perplexed reader may inquire. Fitting, because so far as my researches go, George Robins was Miss Seward's aptest pupil. His style, like hers, was curled and oiled: adjectives waited upon him like slaves: he too word-painted. In short, he practised Sewardese.

It is customary to think of George Robins only as an auctioneer—a wielder of the hammer. But before he mounts the rostrum an auctioneer has had weeks of hard work: the actual sale is the crown of his labours, not the labour itself. For one thing, he must prepare his catalogue and his advertisements. This task most auctioneers may delegate; but George attended to it personally. He was great in the rostrum; but I am not sure he was not greater in his office, descriptive pen in hand. I doubt if any representative collection of English prose could afford to omit George Robins. He was at once his country's best and worst writer: best because his pen was wholly and enthusiastically

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devoted to eulogies of her parks and gardens and estates; worst for other reasons. The complete works of George Robins might be called the prose *Polyolbion*. At any rate they are an auctioneer's *Polyolbion*.

I wish I had all George's catalogues and advertisements. Behold him commending the merits of Stoke Hall in Derbyshire: "The river Derwent, whose beauteous stream is so justly renowned, appears in all its glory at Stoke—nature (always kind) has been bountiful beyond measure, having so disposed the river that it encircles nearly the whole of this large domain—Stoke almost appears to claim it as its own.

"The natural loveliness of Derbyshire appears concentrated into one focus. The wildness of the thick, ample foliage of the pet place under our own especial review, within whose shades the Derwent for awhile retires, only to burst again upon the sight with increased force and beauty; and the stupendous hills, which form an amphitheatre of prodigious extent, give a splendid picture, as contrasted with the peace and quietude of the fertile valley below. The softer allurement of this beauteous scene, contrasted with the murmuring of the rapid stream, at once indicates that the hand of something more than mortal has lent its powerful aid.

"The reader may imagine, although it would not be an easy task to describe, the beauties of a walk of two miles in extent, parallel with the famed Derwent, varying at every turn,

Lost for a space through thickets veering,
But broader when again appearing,

passing through its rugged course, beneath luxuriant grown plantations, where vistas are planted with consummate judgment, so as to catch ever and anon the splendid diversity of this Claude-like picture, relieved by undulation in these grounds, which have been so aptly assimilated to the garden
of Eden. The river traversing over unseen beds of stone, the gracefully waving fern scattered over the foreground, impart just such an air of tempered wildness as must gladden the correct eye of the lover of scenic beauty, without offence of those who are inclined to look rather for the superintending hand of care and cultivation. Lingering here awhile, and surveying the vastness of Nature’s beauties, how humiliating does the littleness of human work appear!"

So much for the Park. Now for the house: that is, the “mansions,” for I doubt if “house” were in George’s vocabulary. “It does not pretend to the magnificence or splendour of Chatsworth; but it claims, and with good grace, to be selected as the fit and happy home for those in the pursuit of the comforts and elegancies of life. It is neither poor for want of ornament, nor gaudy with profusion. Standing alone on a graceful and commanding eminence, it looks without envy upon anything created, and on the Derwent its own noble stream, occasionally black with shadow, rolling majestically along, while the rippling is distinctly heard, and its dark surface is perpetually relieved by the transparent reflection from the foliage which overhangs its peaceful banks.”

Here is George again as he paints the glories of Prior Park near Bath: “It would be in vain to attempt more than a very faint description of the first impression that is awakened in approaching the ‘ambrosial grounds,’ it is something electric; the mansion stands, or rather nestles, under the shadow of the hill; the church is its nearest neighbour, covered with ivy, which in its gamesome luxuriance entwines itself around this sacred edifice. Nature is here arrayed in her most romantic garb; and it were impossible to increase the charms of a spot so rich in her own ‘beauties.’ The whole extent is laid out with that perfect taste which knows how to wed nature to art without sacrificing its simplicity to
the alliance. There is a general harmony pervading the picture; it is, however, from the delightful terrace walk that the scenic effect is rendered one of surpassing beauty. It extends throughout the gardens, where the parterres, enriched by flowers, are fragrant beyond measure, and lead to the distant lawns, enamelled with shrubs. In perambulating the luxuriant plantations, the murmuring sounds of the waterfall and cascade in the park meadow become almost a constant and welcome companion. The majestic hanging woods, while they add grace to the landscape, screen the domicile from the wintry winds. The hermitage in the one direction—the orangery and depository for gold and silver fish, and its limpid fountain in the opposite, form a picture that may be likened unto fairyland—it should be seen or it will never be appreciated. Within the little park Neptune is seen presiding over the waters, in a splendid colossal figure. The undulation throughout the demesne is incessant, and the views from the celebrated mount are most extensive and varied; looking down upon the splendid city (which it may be well to remark is not quite one mile off), to Mr. Beckford's celebrated tower. The umbrageous walks are of considerable extent; with a capital cold bath, and a room and fire-place connected.

"The gardens are prolific beyond measure, and embrace everything in the shape of fruit and vegetation that those learned in the new School of Art can desire. Close by is a park meadow of considerable extent, and only separated by a road, with so much of delightful irregularity, so much hill and dale in perpetual review, with cascade and waterfall, that it almost appears in the attitude of imploring good taste to take it under its special keeping, and erect thereon a minor contemporary to Prior Park.

"In conclusion, it may with great truth be affirmed, that nature has achieved almost a miracle in so small a space;
and left the powerless efforts of art to bewail its own infirmities.

"The next (and a very indispensable duty) will be to call attention to the stone edifice, and its internal accommodation. First observing that the writer has now entered upon classic ground. It is a matter of notoriety, that the prototype of Squire Western, in Fielding's *Tom Jones*, is to be traced to Windcomb. It is a delightful reminiscence, that the admired author produced his remarkable novel within this hospitable roof; the surrounding neighbourhood is hallowed as it were by the association of poetry and romance; Prior Park, the seat of Squire Allen, will be remembered by that charming distick so happily expressed by one of England's sweetest bards, which was called forth not alone by the inspiration of the muse, but as a trifling tribute of gratitude towards a never-tiring patron. 'Twas thus the poet sang his patron's praise:——

Let humble Allen, with an awkward shame,
Do good by stealth, and blush to find it fame."

All his advertisements show that, like Miss Seward again, Robins had read the poets to some purpose. And he knew poets, too. Byron records a pathetic incident at his table, when Sheridan wept. "Sir," said Sheridan, to one of the company, "it is easy for my Lord G., or Earl G., or Marquis B., or Lord H., with thousands upon thousands a year, some of it either *presently* derived, or *inherited* in sinecure, or acquisitions from the public money, to boast of their patriotism and keep aloof from temptation; but they do not know from what temptation those have kept aloof who had equal pride, at least equal talents, and not unequal passions, and nevertheless knew not in the course of their lives what it was to have a shilling of their own." And in saying this he wept. I wish his host had described the scene.

No matter where the "property" was, George Robins's
eye could find beauties and allurements in it: that is, pro-
vided that the commission to sell it had been entrusted to
him. Of what he thought of other demesnes we can only
conjecture; but his feelings were, I suppose, something of
those of Messrs. Chapman & Hall towards Thackeray.
Yet once the sale was in his hands his inflammable eye kindled,
his brain set to work, and all was well—although not too
well, for it is on record that never in the whole course of his
grandiloquent career was it brought against him that he had
made a false representation.

Possibly the fact that no purchaser ever asked to be
released from his bargain because George had laid the
colours on too thick was due to a subconscious discounting
of the orator's periods. For he had no half tones. If an
estate harboured nightingales, there was no sleeping for the
torrents of song; if a garden grew roses, the fragrance of them
tinturred the circumambient air to the very boundaries of the
property, where it abruptly and discreetly ceased—unless, of
course, George had instructions to sell the adjoining land too.

One at any rate of George Robins's prose-writing con-
temporaries—a far less successful one—was not unmindful
of his greatness; for in Charles Lamb's principal Common-
place Book I find the advertisement of the sale of Baynard's
Castle in Sussex, in George's best manner, including an
allusion to himself as "the humble individual who has so
moderately portrayed a few only of its very many qualifica-
tions." "Oh!" adds Lamb, "that I had preserved one
advertisement] in which the advertiser engages to pen
letters for people of all sorts, but especially for illiterate
lovers, ending with (literally) 'the advertiser flatters himself
He could use a strain....'" Were it not for that emphatic
statement concerning George's innocence by false representa-
tion I should suggest that Lamb partly described George
Robins in his passage in praise of Captain Jackson's en-
chanted tongue: "He was a juggler, who threw mists before
THE LADIES OF LLANGOLLEN

MRS R. PONSONBY  LADY ELEANOR BUTLER

From a water-colour drawing by Lady Delamere in 1818
your eyes—you had no time to detect his fallacies. He would say ‘Hand me the silver sugar-tongs; and before you could discover it was a single spoon, and that plated, he would disturb and captivate your imagination by a misnomer of ‘the urn’ for a tea-kettle; or by calling a homely bench a sofa.”

I have suggested that Miss Seward was George’s exemplar. But there is no doubt that he had read his Johnson too, and I rather fancy that a Chinese diplomat must once have crossed his path and kindled his imagination. For he has many Celestian turns of speech. Take, for example, the following preamble to a description of a Scottish property, a castle at Dumbarton: “The surpassing beauty of the splendid scenery, embracing the lovely Loch and lofty Ben Lomond (the greatest features amid Scotland’s never-ending splendour and variety) is an undertaking to which the humble individual entrusted with the conduct of this sale feels most acutely how inadequate he is to the duty that has been imposed upon him; his chief relief, nay, ‘his main stay’ (if he may be permitted the observation), arises out of a reminiscence that Scotia’s own bard found himself in the same dilemma.”

I had meant to quote no more; but George in Scotland is as precious as Miss Seward in Wales: “All those who have not partaken of the good fortune to sojourn amid the beauteous scenery before alluded to, or to behold Loch Lomond sleeping in the arms of her hundred hills by the light of a September moon, or from the lofty towers of the castle, on a fine evening behold the setting sun reflecting in the distance upon the Grampian hills, will be enchanted by a spectacle that must awaken the most delightful sensations, and to the contemplative mind, fill him with awe and reverence to the great Master and Creator of all things perfect; to those in such a mood he would invoke, with all humility,
yee earnestness, to search for what the greatest novelist of bygone days has said of the most beautiful of all the Caledonian lakes.

"The magic touch of his never-erring muse must awaken a sensation first to see, and then to possess, the greatest feature of this vicinity,

So wondrous wild, the whole might seem
The scenery of a fairy dream.

"Next in our kind remembrance is Ben Lomond, which will necessarily partake of its due meed of praise. This mountain, like Saul amidst his companions, o’er tops all contemporaries. The valley, teeming in wild fertility, relieved by pastures and corn-land, and varied by all the softer beauties of nature, completes a scene which can only be appreciated by ocular demonstration.

"The constituency of the borough of Dumbarton will hail with delight the possessor of this castle and demesne; and, if his principles be worthy of their suffrages, he will probably walk over the course."

So far we have seen George Robins only at his desk—only using one of his weapons, his pen. But his tongue and his personality really did the work. He could wring money from a stone. Again and again when every one thought they had reached the limit and finished the bidding, he would extract another fifty or hundred pounds. All men whose business it is to get round men have recourse to tricks: next to his golden tongue George's most useful ally was an armchair. With these he could do almost as much as Orpheus with his lute. The armchair was placed on the rostrum, and into it George would occasionally fling himself in satisfaction or despair, and from its security he would study his audience, mark down the more pregnant faces, mature fresh campaigns, conjoin new and more potent adjectives,
A SONNET UPON AN AUCTIONEER

I have no statistics, but my guess is that George Robins is the only auctioneer who was ever the subject of a sonnet. The sonnet on George, written in the Auction Mart in Bartholomew Lane, some eighty years ago, runs thus:—

High in the hall, by curious listeners filled,
Sat one whose soul seem’d steeped in poetry;
So bland his diction, it was plain he will’d
His hearers all should prize as high as he
The gorgeous works of art there plac’d around.
The statues by the Phidian chisel wrought:
Endymion, whom Dian lov’d distraught;
Dian herself, Laocoon serpent bound;
The picture touch’d by Titan and Vandyke
With rainbow pencils, in the which did vie
Fair form and colour for the mastery;
Warn’d his discourse till ear ne’er heard the like.
"Who is that eloquent man?" I asked one near.
"That, sir? that’s Mr. Robins, the auctioneer."

Here, through the rolling eye of the sonneteer, we see Mr. Robins knocking down works of art; but his fame was made by his handling not of such gauds but real estate. He goes down to posterity as the greatest salesman of “property.” Like Antæus, whenever he touched upon land his strength was renewed.

There must be a few persons living who can faintly remember Robins, for he died (at Brighton) only sixty years ago; but since I have never met any one that could describe him I resort to Grant’s *Portraits of Public Characters, 1841*, for a likeness. “His favourite dress is a surtout of a brownish hue, a coloured waistcoat, and light cassimere small clothes. He can boast of a very high, well-developed, arched forehead; with a rather full face. His eyebrows are prominent and protruding; but his eyes are small, though quick in their motions: they have a shrewd, if not sly expression. His complexion is as rough and ruddy as if he were the bailiff on one of those estates: which he describes with such graphic effect. He has all the appearance of one who, notwithstand-
ing the extent and importance of his business, enjoys the pleasures of life." Grant describes him also as tall and athletic, and remarks that even at sixty years of age his face had not a wrinkle. Why should it? Wrinkles are not for salesmen, but for buyers.

And so, having cleared the way by introducing the Heaven-sent auctioneer who was to sell the home of the famous Ladies, we come to his description of that abode. And here again I say that it was fitting that a house praised and described during its owners' lifetime by Miss Seward should have been praised and described after their death by George Robins.

The date of the sale was 28th June, 1832—at the auction mart, London. In the following words the announcement was made: "Mr. Robins is not a little proud that it hath been his good fortune to be selected by the Executors of the Lady Eleanor Butler and Miss Ponsonby to direct the sale of their far-famed Domicile. He feels that an apology will be due to all those who are familiar with its beauties and peculiarities, for the very imperfect recital which follows, while those who are yet to be gratified with the sight of it, may imagine he has drawn some little upon 'Fancy's sketch'.

"There is nothing of pretension in its outward form, it indicates but moderately the comfort that presides within, inasmuch as will be found congregated all the agremens pertaining to more consequential habitations, considerable tact is conspicuous everywhere; but none more unequivocally displayed than in the lightsome little Dining Room, contrasted with the gloomy, yet superior grace of the Library, into which it opens. This room is fitted up in the Gothic style, the windows are of ancient painted glass 'shedding their dim religious light'. The Saloon of the Minervas is the repository of the choice Library.
"The auxiliary offices are very commensurate, the grounds are disposed in such good order as is the natural consequence of pure taste, the Kitchen Garden is neatness itself, and the Fruit trees are of the rarest and finest sort, and luxuriant in their produce. Many and shaded GRAVEL WALKS EN-CIRCLE THIS ELYSIUM, which is adorned with curious and rare Shrubs and Flowers. It is nothing in extent but EVERYTHING IN GRACE AND BEAUTY, united with a great variety of foliage.

"Upon the Freehold is a considerable quantity of valuable Timber which overhangs a DEEP AND HOLLOW GLEN. In its entangled bottom, a frothing brook leaps and clamours o'er the rough stones in its channel towards the VALE OF LLANGOLLEN.

"To speak of the latter would be quite superfluous, few, if any, are unacquainted with the wildness and surpassing beauty of the most admired spot in North Wales. Its contiguity to the little romantic village giving opportunity either to indulge in the gaiety of this place, or recreate in retirement (as shall seem best suited to varied inclination), there are fortunately both auxiliaries to this scene (it had almost been said of enchantment). The verdant Lawns, dotted with rare plants, the scenic beauties, and the woodland scenery combined, plead in extenuation of this lofty one. The whole is encompassed by rich meadows, wearing a park-like appearance; held with the freehold, which is limited to less than Five Acres. A truly beautiful Portico of carved Oak leads to this DOMICILE OF COMFORT."
CHAPTER XV

THE SWAN AND THE WIZARD

Mr. Walter Scott's new critic—The three Scotts—The Border Minstrelsy—A Wardour Street effort—Trowellwork—"You Salvator! You Claude!"—The meaning of "Virtue"—The Swan longs for Scotland—Walter Scott at Lichfield—Miss Seward described by the author of Waverley—The embarrassing legacy—Last will and testament—Scott's complaisance—Gentle and benignant duplicity—Miss Seward's character—The old times and the new—Ambitious single women—Provincial dangers—A good woman—Miss Seward's death—Her last will and testament again—Thoughtful bequests—The Seward monument—Scott's epitaph.

THE Swan of Lichfield's last conquest was the Wizard of the North. It was in February, 1799, that Miss Seward first came to know anything of Sir Walter (then Mr.) Scott. Mr. Colin Mackenzie had sent her "William and Helen" and other paraphrases from Burger, "The Triumph of Constancy," and "Glenfinlas" in manuscript. In acknowledging the gift she dropped naturally into criticism: "The grand poetic excellencies of Glenfinlas shake verbal objections to air, or I would observe, that, in the tenth verse, Glenfinlas Glen grates the ear by inharmonious alliteration, and fatigues it by the too near repetition of the same syllable. It might be altered easily. There are a few other little neglects of the same sort; but, to the readers of sensibility, they are lost in the poetic blaze of the poem."

The crown of the letter was the end, where her passionate interest in minor poets led her to this felicity of memory: "Three times has the name of Scott adorned the poetic
annals of England, since the year 1757. At that period, a
Mr. Scott of Amwell published four beautiful elegies on the
four seasons;—of moral elegies they stand next in merit to
Gray's Country Churchyard. Another Scott published a
poem, much admired on its first appearance, entitled, The
Day of Judgment; and also a monody on the death of his
wife, that passed not away without its fame. I confess,
however, that neither of them impressed or became dear to
me like the writings of his namesake; they enrich the sup-
plementary volumes to Dodsley's Collection. This verse is
from the earlier Scott's poetry:—

O, human life, how mutable, how vain!
How thy wide sorrows circumscribe thy joy!
A sunny island in a stormy main!
A speck of azure in a cloudy sky!"

In April, 1802, the third and best Scott sent his encomiast
his Border Minstrelsy and received a lengthy letter in reply,
from which, I am afraid, if we are to extract profit, the
decisions must be reversed, and Mr. Brown, to whose
memory Scott was indebted for so many traditional ballads,
commended, and Prior's "Henry and Emma" considered
anything but "one of the loveliest poetic edifices in our
language". The inferiority of "Lord Maxwell's Goodnight"
led Miss Seward to write a Scotch ballad of her own, entitled
"Rich auld Willie's Farewell," which Scott's great heart
made him include among the imitations in his third volume,
although if Edinburgh has a Wardour Street that surely is
the poem's home. Here are four stanzas:—

Fareweel my ingle, bleewing bright
When the snell storm's begun;
My bouris casements aw sae light,
When glints the bonnie sun!

Fareweel my deep glen, speck'd wi' sloe,
O' tangled hazels full;
Green leas and heathery hills, where low
My kine and glorin bull.
Fareweel my red deer, jutting proud,
My rooks, o' murky wing!
Fareweel my wee birds, lilting loud,
Aw in the merry Spring!

Fareweel my sheep, that sprattle on,
In a lang line, sae braw,
Or lie on cliffs, the rocks aboon,
Like late-left patch o' snaw.

Scott, as I say, not only found room for this effort, but in a letter to Miss Seward said that "the stoutest antiquarian in Scotland could not, after perusing 'Auld Willie's Farewell,' suspect that the writer had the misfortune to have been born south of the Tweed"—a compliment which he she hastened to prepare for the press.

In the volume itself the editor introduced it as an example of "theoretical Scotch," a phrase which delighted Miss Seward (and not Miss Seward alone, I hope). In the course of an ecstatic reply she said, as characteristically as usual (she was always characteristic): "You call yourself a ballad-monger; names are little. Beauty and sublimity are not excluded from any order of verse, and where they are, high claim is established. Petrarck is, on the merit of his sonnets, an immortal classic. Had Milton written nothing else but such sonnets as are the best of those he has given us, and they had been numerous, his fame would not have died. Your poetry is amongst ballads, what Clarissa and Grandison are amongst novels."

How much more Miss Seward said in praise we do not know, for Scott admits to having been allowed by Constable to make excisions before the letters were published. But now and then her eulogy hits the nail on the head, as when, in July, 1803, she says: "Description from your pen is the ring of Fortunatus, and instantly places us in the midst of the scene it so vividly delineates". To have said that eleven years before Waverley was not bad.
TROWEL-WORK

One specimen of what I might call the Swan's trowel-work may be given—passed by Scott with, I imagine, one of his best smiles: "Your epic ballad, 'Cadzow Castle,' is all over excellence, nothing but excellence, and every species of excellence, harmonic, picturesque, characteristic. It satisfies to luxury the whole soul of my imagination. The gay festivity of modern life, with which it opens, and the quiet graces of a cultivated landscape, in the blessedness of national peace, which forms the close, have the finest possible effect, as preceding and succeeding the spirited and sublime story of Regent Murray's assassination. The, lifted pall of oblivion discloses that scene in all the interesting customs and manners of the feudal times. Then the interspersed landscapes! You Salvator! you Claude!—what a night scene!—what an animated description of the onset of the morning chase! Your bull!—what a sublime creature!—and O! the soft, sweet picture of Margaret; pale, yet beauteous convalescent from her maternal throes!—it rivals the Alcmena of Pindar in his first Nemean ode.

"The Homeric pages have nothing grander than your Bothwellhaugh returning to the chase from the deed of revenge he had committed on the regent. . . . I read this poem last week to a young soldier of genius, Captain Oliver, nephew to the Duchess of Ancaster. His kindling countenance always, and often his exclaiming voice, marked every beauty as I proceeded. Above all was he impressed with the picture of the regent and his train, and every striking feature there given of a crowded march.

"To observe the first effect of noble poetry upon a mind alive to its graces, has ever been to me a gratification on which my whole soul luxuriates.—Adieu!"

With one exception Scott punctiliously returned replies to Miss Seward's letters; but she did not inspire him to anything very felicitous. All his letters are indeed a little dis-
appointing, no matter to whom. I suppose his mind was too largely creative for him to be a good letter-writer. Here is a passage in answer to one of the Swan's, containing the copy of a foolish magazine criticism on the Border Minstrelsy, the kind of criticism for which she had an unerring eye: "I am infinitely amused with your sagacious critic. God wot, I have often admired the vulgar subtlety of such minds as can with a depraved ingenuity attach a mean or disgusting sense to an epithet capable of being otherwise understood, and more frequently, perhaps, used to express an elevated idea. In many parts of Scotland the word virtue is limited entirely to industry; and a young divine who preached upon the moral beauties of virtue was considerably surprised at learning that the whole discourse was supposed to be a panegyric upon a particular damsel who could spin fourteen spindles of yarn in the course of a week. This was natural; but your literary critic has the merit of going very far a-field to fetch home his degrading association."

In March, 1805, Miss Seward thanked Mr. Scott for The Lay of the Last Minstrel. The letter was dictated, such was the feeble state of her health following upon the death of Mr. Saville, which had torn from the poor lady "every earthly hope". The Lay therefore received but little attention, more being said about her epitaph upon Giovanni, the kindred merits of Paradise Lost, and the Botanic Garden, and the genius she had detected in a poet named Leyden, author of Scenes of Infancy. At the end she says: "If there is room in the frank, without making it over-weight, I shall inclose the last verses I probably shall ever write, since I feel that my days will be few, and that Aonian inspiration, if ever it was mine, will return to me no more. With you may its spirit be permanent as it is bright!" This, I imagine, is the letter to which Scott refers in a passage quoted later.

A year later, in June, 1806, Miss Seward was more her-
self again, and hopeful of accepting Mr. Scott's invitation to Scotland. "From my earliest youth, Scotland has been to me classic ground, which I could at no time have trodden without the liveliest enthusiasm. You have extremely increased all that inspires it. Sacred to my love and veneration is the Caledonian scenery, Lowland and Highland. From Ramsay to Walter Scott, the sublime and the tender emanations of genius have consecrated the former, while, as the poet Gray observed, imagination, in all her pomp, resided many centuries ago on the bleak and barren mountains of the Hebrides. If then by the harp of Ossian, now by the lyre of Scott, resounding to us from the brink of the sullen Moneira."

Towards the close she remarked: "I thank you for the portraits of Southey and Wordsworth. The genius of the former is beyond comparison the superior."

Miss Seward did not go to Scotland; but Mr. Scott came to Lichfield. A possibility of this visit was discussed in her letter of 29th January, 1807, when she thus painted her city to allure him, calling it "classic ground, by many more claims than that of having given birth to the greatest and most eloquent moralist this nation boasts, seated on the tribunal of its language;—by its being the nursery of David Garrick's youth,—and by the thirty-three years' residence of the celebrated Darwin, together with that of several other distinguished, though perhaps less distinguished, inhabitants. That you mention me with Johnson, as having given lettered distinction to Lichfield, is infinitely gratifying to my self-love. When I think of him, and of those others, who with him, shall, in future times, be mentioned to the honour of this town, Pope's beautiful lines rise in my memory, and express the fond ambition of my spirit:—

O, while along the stream of time their name
Expanded flies, and gathers all its fame,
Say shall my little bark attendant sail,
Pursue the triumph, and partake the gale?"
In May, 1807, the visit was paid, Scott turning out of his course on his homeward journey from London in order to visit his admirer. To Cary Miss Seward sent the great news, in a letter which may have suffered much at Scott’s modesty. The date is 10th May: “More immediately should I have noticed the kind contents of your letter, had it arrived at a less interesting juncture. At two that day, Friday last, the poetically great Walter Scott came ‘like a sun-beam to my dwelling’. I found him sturdily maintaining the necessity of limiting his inexpressibly welcome visit to the next day’s noon. You will not wonder that I could spare no minutes from hours so precious and so few.”

There follows this interesting description of the Wizard, who was then thirty-six: “This proudest boast of the Caledonian muse is tall, and rather robust than slender; but lame in the same manner as Mr. Hayley, and in a greater measure. Neither the contour of his face, nor yet his features, are elegant; his complexion healthy, and somewhat fair, without bloom. We find the singularity of brown hair and eye-lashes, with flaxen eyebrows, and a countenance open, ingenuous and benevolent. When seriously conversing, or earnestly attentive, though his eyes are rather of a lightish grey, deep thought is on their lids; he contracts his brow, and the rays of genius gleam aslant from the orbs beneath them. An upper-lip, too long, prevents his mouth from being decidedly handsome, but the sweetest emanations of temper and of heart play about it when he talks cheerfully, or smiles; and, in company, he is much oftener gay than contemplative. His conversation, an overflowing fountain of brilliant wit, apposite allusion, and playful archness, while, on serious themes, it is nervous and eloquent. The accent decidedly Scotch, yet by do means broad. On the whole, no expectation is disappointed, which his poetry
must excite in all who feel the powers and the graces of Aonian inspiration.

"Not less astonishing than was Johnson's memory is that of Mr. Scott; like Johnson also, his recitation is too monotonous and violent to do justice, either to his own writings, or that of others. You are almost the only poet I know, whose reading is entirely just to his muse.

"Mr. White and Mr. Simpson breakfasted with us on Saturday morning. One hour only before that which he fixed for his departure, our northern luminary, by repeated and vehement solicitation, was persuaded to shine upon us till ten the next day. Mr. Simpson would have no nay to his request, that the party should dine and sup with him and Mrs. Simpson. The stranger guest, Scott, delighted us all by the unaffected charms of his mind and manners. He had diverged many miles from his intended track of return from our capital, to visit me ere he repassed the Tweed. Such visits are the most high-prized honours which my writings have procured for me."

In the memoir of Miss Seward which he prefaced to her collected Poetical Works, Scott in his turn described the Swan of Lichfield: "In summer, 1807, the editor, upon his return from London, visited Miss Seward, with whom he had corresponded occasionally for some years. Robertson observes, that, in a female reign, the queen's personal charms are a subject of importance; and, as the same rule may apply to the case of a female author, this may be no improper place to mention the impression which her appearance and conversation were calculated to make upon a stranger.—They were, indeed, well worth a longer pilgrimage. Miss Seward, when young, must have been exquisitely beautiful; for, in advanced age, the regularity of her features, the fire and expression of her countenance, gave her the appearance of beauty, and almost of youth. Her eyes were auburn, of the
precise shade and hue of her hair, and possessed great expression. In reciting, or in speaking with animation, they appeared to become darker; and, as it were, to flash fire. I should have hesitated to state the impression which this peculiarity made upon me at the time, had not my observation been confirmed by that of the first actress of this or any other age, with whom I lately happened to converse on our deceased friend's expressive powers of countenance.—Miss Seward's tone of voice was melodious, guided by excellent taste, and well suited to reading and recitation, in which she willingly exercised it. She did not sing, nor was she a great proficient in music, though very fond of it, having studied it later in life than is now usual. Her stature was tall, and her form was originally elegant; but having broken the patella of the knee by a fall in the year 1768, she walked with pain and difficulty, which increased with the pressure of years.

"The great command of literary anecdote which Miss Seward possessed, her ready perception both of the serious and ludicrous, and her just observation and original taste, rendered her society delightful. She entered into every topic with the keenness and vivacity of youth, and it was difficult to associate the idea of advanced years either with her countenance or conversation." Earlier in the same memoir Scott refers to Miss Seward's anecdotes of Dr. Johnson, which she told with "great humour, and with a very striking imitation of the sage's peculiar voice, gesture, and manner of delivery".

Scott's sweetness and charm when at Lichfield were to cost him dear, for Miss Seward, with perfect judgment of his character and that profound belief in her own genius and importance which was her most remarkable possession, marked him down to perform for her the greatest service possible. She made him her literary executor. But she
did not tell him; she made it a surprise, the intimation coming to him in a letter received after her death.

This document I do not quote, preferring rather the phraseology of the will, which is very similar. The italics are the testator's: "If I should die before I have committed for publication such of my writings in verse and prose as I mean shall constitute a miscellaneous edition of my works, as hereafter mentioned, I give and bequeath them to my friend and correspondent Walter Scott, Esq. of Edinburgh, author of the Lay of the Last Minstrel, &c. The said compositions of mine will be found in a blue hair trunk, tied up together, with a coloured silk braid, to which trunk my maid will direct my executors. This bequest to Mr. Scott consists of all my writings in verse, which have passed the press, together with those which yet remain unpublished; also a collection of my juvenile letters, from the year 1762 to June, 1768; also four sermons, and a critical dissertation. The verse consists of two half-bound quarto volumes of manuscript compositions; also at this time of six manuscript books, in quarto sheets, and only sewed together.

"With these I desire may be blended—my poems which already have been regularly and separately published; printed copies of which will be found, with the manuscript verses; and from those printed copies I desire the press for this collective edition may be struck: some slight alterations, inserted in my own hand writing, will be found in those printed copies, and I hope attended to.

"With the aforesaid poetry will be found, and with which I desire may be published, the three first books of an epic poem, entitled Telemachus. It is raised on the basis of Fenelon's work, so entitled, but my poem is a widely excursive paraphrase. Its completion was long my wish, but I could never find leisure for the task. With the above mentioned verse will be found a small collection of my late beloved
father's poetry, which I desire may be admitted into the
said miscellany, and succeed to my own.

"To these metrical compositions from his pen and from
mine, I desire my Juvenile Letters may in succession be
added. The critical dissertation of defending Pope's Odyssey
against the absurd criticisms of Spence, I refer to Mr. Scott's
judgment to publish or suppress, as he may think best. If
its publication be his choice, I could wish that tract might
follow the Juvenile Letters in the course of the edition; last
the four sermons, unless Mr. Scott should conclude it better
to publish them separately from the edition, and perhaps at
a different period: at all events, I would have the letters
succeed the poetry, as in Warburton's Edition of Pope's
Works. It appears to me that it would be eligible to print
the said edition of my works in pocket volumes octavo, with
an engraving prefixed, taken by one of our best London
artists, from Romney's picture of me, bequeathed to my
friend and hereafter named executor, Charles Simpson, which
I know he will have the goodness to lend for that purpose."

In a letter to Lockhart, Scott describes his feelings: "The
despair which I used to feel on receiving poor Miss Seward's
letters, whom I really liked, gave me a most unsentimental
horror for sentimental letters. The crossest thing I ever did
in my life was to poor dear Miss Seward; she wrote me in
an evil hour (I had never seen her, mark that!) a long and
most passionate epistle upon the death of a dear friend, whom
I had never seen neither, concluding with a charge not to
attempt answering the said letter, for she was dead to the
world, &c. &c. &c. Never were commands more literally
obeyed. I remained as silent as the grave, till the lady made
so many inquiries after me, that I was afraid of my death
being prematurely announced by a sonnet or an elegy.
When I did see her, however, she interested me very much,
and I am now doing penance for my ill-breeding, by sub-
mitting to edit her posthumous poetry, most of which is absolutely execrable.

"This, however, is the least of my evils, for when she proposed this bequest to me, which I could not in decency refuse, she combined it with a request that I would publish her whole literary correspondence. This I declined on principle, having a particular aversion at perpetuating that sort of gossip; but what availed it? Lo! to ensure the publication, she left it to an Edinburgh bookseller; and I anticipate the horror of seeing myself advertised for a live poet like a wild beast on a painted streamer, for I understand all her friends are depicted there-in in body, mind and manners. So much for the risks of sentimental correspondence."

Scott wrote thus in 1809. But having decided that the obligation was one that he ought not to evade, like a wise man he set to work at once, and in 1810 the work was done. Lockhart thus records the event: "In the course of this autumn appeared the Poetical Works of Miss Seward, in three volumes, with a Prefatory Memoir of her Life by Scott. This edition had, as we have seen, been enjoined by her last will—but his part in it was an ungrateful one, and the book was among the most unfortunate that James Ballantyne printed, and his brother published, in deference to the personal feelings of their partner. He had been, as was natural, pleased and flattered by the attentions of the Lichfield poetess in the days of his early aspirations after literary distinction; but her verses, which he had with his usual readiness praised to herself beyond their worth, appeared when collected a formidable monument of mediocrity.

"Her correspondence, published at the same time by Constable, was considered by him with still greater aversion. He requested the bookseller to allow him to look over the MS., and draw his pen through passages in which her allu-
sions to letters of his own might compromise him as a critic on his poetical contemporaries. To this request Constable handsomely acceded, although it was evident that he thus deprived the collection of its best chance of popularity. I see, on comparing her letters as they originally reached Scott, with the printed copies, that he had also struck out many of her most extravagant rhapsodies about himself and his works. No collection of this kind, after all, can be wholly without value; I have already drawn from it some sufficiently interesting fragments, as the biographers of other eminent authors of this time will probably do hereafter under the like circumstances: and however affected and absurd, Miss Seward's prose is certainly far better than her verse."

The memoir of Miss Seward prefixed by Scott to the work naturally has, I fear, little value: the writer knew her so little and was so much a gentleman; but there is great charm in the kindly way in which he makes the best of certain of her idiosyncrasies. Read by a total stranger the following passage would seem to be in the key of ordinary literary appraisement; but read with knowledge not only of Miss Seward's excesses in praise and blame but also of Scott's true feelings as to her critical gifts, it becomes a fine exercise in gentle and benignant duplicity: "Miss Seward was in practice trained and attached to that school of picturesque and florid description, of lofty metaphor and bold personification, of a diction which inversion and the use of compound epithets rendered as remote as possible from the tone of ordinary language, which was introduced, or at least rendered fashionable, by Darwin, but which was too remote from common life, and natural expression, to retain its popularity. Yet her taste, though perhaps over-dazzled by the splendour which she adopted in her own compositions, readily admitted the claims of Pope, Collins, Gray, Mason, and of all those bards who
have condescended to add the graces of style and expression to poetical thought and imagery. But she particularly demanded beauty, elegance, or splendour of language; and was unwilling to allow that sublimity or truth of conception could atone for poverty, rudeness, or even simplicity, of expression. To Spenser, and the poets of his school, she lent a very unwilling ear; and what will, perhaps, best explain my meaning, she greatly preferred the flowing numbers and expanded descriptions of Pope's Iliad to Cowper's translation, which approaches nearer to the simple dignity of Homer. These peculiarities of taste, Miss Seward was always ready to defend; nor was it easy for the professors of an opposite faith to sustain either the art of her arguments, or the authorities which her extensive acquaintance with the best British classics readily supplied. She has left, among other manuscripts, a Defence of Pope's Odyssey against Spence, in which she displays much critical acumen, and has decidedly the better of the Professor.

"I ought, however, to add, that two circumstances qualified Miss Seward's taste for the picturesque. When she wrote upon subjects in which her feelings were deeply interested, she forgot the 'tiara and glittering zone' of the priestess of Apollo, in the more natural effusions of real passion. The song which begins,

'To thy rocks, stormy Lannow, adieu,'

seems to have been composed under such influence. The partiality with which Miss Seward regarded the poetical attempts of her friends, formed another class of exceptions to her peculiar taste for the magnificent in poetry. She found, with an ingenuity which the subject sometimes rendered wonderful, reasons for liking what her prejudices in favour of the author had previously determined her to admire. Her literary enthusiasm, ardent as it was, became in such cases tempered and qualified by the yet keener interest she felt in
those friends whom she valued; and, if this caused an occasional anomaly in her critical system, those who have experienced its benefit, may be pardoned for quoting it as an illustration of the kindly warmth of her heart.

"That warmth was not alone displayed in regard for friends in the same rank of life, and cultivating similar studies. Her benevolence was universally felt among those to whom it afforded active and important support, as well as those whose pursuits it aided, and whose feelings it gratified."

Readers of this book who have reached the present page by honest means may perhaps consider that Walter Scott stopped some way short of the whole truth. But then they know far more than he, and also they belong to a different age. In Scott's day a lady was still a lady, to be handled with delicacy and considered by gentlemen with a humble and reverent eye: a lady had not become, as she now is, a woman, a fellow creature, subject ever for cool analysis and amused appraisement, and, when she touches too active politics, forcible ejection from our Senate. Scott's day was more chivalrous. But chivalry is not all. People for the most part receive the treatment they ask for, and if women still wanted the old homage they could have it. But they have, probably very sensibly, voted for something else.

Nor, as a matter of fact, does one wish to suggest that Miss Seward—I cannot, although it is the un gallant year of 1907, call her plain Seward—was not the good and kindly woman that Scott depicts. I am sure that she was. For she was not petty, and her faults were mainly foibles—they were not vices. They were all very human too, and very literary: merely conceit and jealousy and snobbishness. But her heart was right and her sense of honour right, and nothing else matters very much. Seward—no, I can't say it,—Miss Seward was a warm friend, a faithful lover. She put La Rochefoucauld to the blush by exhibiting a dis-
A SUMMING UP

tressing want of fortitude in bearing the troubles of others. She was generous both with praise and with money. Her dominating weakness was a very natural, if foolish, desire for others’ subservience; and this an independent woman with more than average brains can always have if she wants it. The mere circumstance of her sex still gives her—and at that time far more so—a good deal, for by entitling her to politeness from men as a natural due, she is put in possession of at any rate the shadow if not the substance. By a woman ambitious of ruling, substance and shadow can easily (I suspect) be confounded. Everything conspired to increase Miss Seward’s self-esteem and importance; for the three things that might have corrected it were all lacking to her: poverty, London life, and marriage. When a vain single woman is in a position to fortify herself in the provinces behind ramparts of admirers she is in a dangerous way. Miss Seward early fell a victim and never recovered.

I do not say that such women may not have happy lives, for I think that their triumphs when they come are so real as to compensate for other things that are lacking. But of course they and their lives are wrong. A conceited woman is a sin against man and nature.

Miss Seward, I think, had a happy life; or at least not a deeply unhappy one. It gave her most of the things that she most valued—power, position, fame, and the indulgence of her passion for scenery and poetry. It brought her flattery and objects to flatter. It gave her lords and ladies and many friends. Love in the fullest sense was denied her, but it is a debatable point whether she was not happier in wistfully desiring to be the second Mrs. Saville than she ever would have been had that title been hers. For it is impossible to think of the Swan as a wife. Wives are not Swans.

Miss Seward died on the 25th of March, 1809. I have already cited a portion of her will; I quote here the earlier
half. The italics are her own: "I Anne, or as I have generally written myself, Anna Seward, daughter of the late Reverend Thomas Seward, Canon Residentiary of the cathedral church of Lichfield, do make and publish my last will and testament, in manner following: I desire to have a frugal and private funeral, without any other needless expense than that of a lead coffin, to protect my breathless body. If the dean and chapter shall not object to our family vault in the choir being once more opened, I desire to be laid at the feet of my late dear father; but, if they should object to disturbing the choir pavement, I then request to be laid by the side of him who was my faithful excellent friend, through the course of thirty-seven years, the late Mr. John Saville, in the vault which I made for the protection of his remains, in the burial ground on the south side of the Lichfield cathedral: I will that my hereafter executors, or trustees, commission one of the most approved sculptors to prepare a monument for my late father and his family, of the value of 500l.; that with consent of the dean and chapter, they take care the same be placed in a proper part of Lichfield cathedral.

"To every servant living in my family at the time of my decease, who shall have properly conducted him, or herself, during my last illness, I bequeath proper mourning, and ten pounds each in money, above what quarterly wages may then be due to them; it being my custom to pay their wages every quarter. To the maid servant who shall live with me at my death, I leave all the apparel which I have worn, my best laces excepted; which best laces, whether they be on gowns, or handkerchiefs, or lie unmade up in my drawers, I bequeath to my friend, Mrs. Elizabeth Smith (Mr. Saville's married daughter) now of the Close, Lichfield, together with all such contents of the bureaus, which I have always kept locked up, as she may choose to accept,
To my beloved and honoured friend, Lady Eleanor Butler, and Miss Ponsonby, of Llangolenvale, Denbighshire, I leave each a ring, value five guineas, or any other more acceptable memorial of my attachment to them, to the said amount, as they may choose. To my highly-esteem'd Miss Cornwallis, daughter of the present Bishop of Lichfield, I also leave a mourning ring of the value of five guineas; also to my long dear friend, Mrs. Mary Powys, now of Clifton, near Bristol, I leave the same small memorial of our thirty years' friendship and correspondence. Also I leave to Mr. William Feary, of Lichfield, the sum of five guineas, either for a mourning ring, or any other more acceptable token of my esteem and respect for his virtues; and the same to my friend, Thomas Lister, Esq. of Armitage. To my esteemed friend and correspondent, Dr. William Hussey, I leave a mourning ring of the same value, viz. five guineas. To my kind friends, Mr. and Mrs. Hussey Wyrley, I bequeath a mourning ring, of the value of two guineas; and to my cousins, Mrs. Thomas White, Mrs. Susannah Burrows, Mrs. Hinckley, of Lichfield, and Mrs. Martin, now of Winterbourn, I leave a mourning ring, of two guineas value; and the same also to Mrs. Charles Simpson, wife of my executor; and the same to Mr. Ironmonger, now of Lichfield.

My curious fan, of ancient date, but exquisite workmanship, and with a fresh mount of red leather, I bequeath to Mrs. White, wife of my executor, Mr. Thomas White, together with my best diamond ring, and the miniature picture of myself, by the late celebrated Miers. The miniature picture of my late dear father, by Richmond, I leave to my cousin, Mrs. Susannah Burrows.

To my cousin, the Rev. Henry White, I leave the fine portrait of my late father, by the late Mr. Wright, of Derby; also all the beautiful drawings in my possession, by the Rev. William Bree, now of Coleshill, Warwickshire. The valuable
Italian portrait, now in my green parlour, is the property of the said Henry White, a loan, not a gift, to me. I desire it may be restored to him at my death. My own picture, by the late Mr. Romney, I bequeath to my friend and executor, Charles Simpson, provided he be living; if not, I bequeath the said picture of myself to my other executor, Mr. Thomas White: and to the said Mr. Thomas White, I also leave the mezzotinto print of the dying St. Stephen, by West; also the exquisite engraving, Instruction Paternelle; each of them were presented to me by my late dear friend, Mr. Saville, for whose sake, as well as for mine, I know he will value them. The beautiful portrait of my father's mother, by the famous Sir Peter Lely, is the property of my cousin Mrs. Susannah Burrows; a loan, not a gift, to me; and as such, to be restored to her at my death.

"The miniature picture of my late dear friend, Mr. Saville, drawn in the year 1770, by the late celebrated artist Smart, and which at the time it was taken, and during many successive years, was an exact resemblance of the original, I bequeath to his daughter, Mrs. Elizabeth Smith, who I know will value and preserve it as a jewel above all prize; and in case of her previous demise, I bequeath the said precious miniature to her daughter, Mrs. Honora Jager, exhorting the said Honora Jager, and her heirs, into whose hands soever it may fall, to guard it with sacred care from the sun and from damp, as I have guarded it, that so the posterity of my valued friend may know what, in his prime, was the form of him whose mind thro' life, by the acknowledgment of all who knew him, and could discern the superior powers of talent and virtue, was the seat of liberal endowment, warm piety, and energetic benevolence.

"The mezzotinto engraving from a picture of Romney, which is thus inscribed on a tablet at top, 'Such was Honora Sneyd,' I bequeath to her brother Edward Sneyd, Esq. if
he survive me; if not, I bequeath it to his amiable daughter, Miss Emma Sneyd, entreating her to value and preserve it as the perfect, though accidental, resemblance of her aunt, and my ever dear friend, when she was surrounded by all her virgin glories—beauty and grace, sensibility and goodness, superior intelligence and unswerving truth.

"To my before mentioned friend, Mrs. Powys, in consideration of the true and unextinguishable love which she bore to the original, I bequeath the miniature picture of the said Honora Sneyd, drawn at Buxton, in the year 1776, by her gallant, faithful, and unfortunate lover, Major André, in his 18th year. That was his first attempt to delineate the human face, consequently it is an unfavourable, and most imperfect, resemblance of a most distinguished beauty."

That is the will of a good woman, with a good woman's long memory.

When the monument was erected in Lichfield Cathedral to the Seward family—to her father and mother, her sister Sarah and herself—it was Scott who wrote the memorial verses. The monument, which all visitors to the Cathedral may see, was designed and executed by Mr. Bacon, without whose assistance few illustrious persons were buried at that time. It represents filial piety, weeping at the tomb of parents and relatives, a poet's neglected harp hanging near by. Scott's lines run thus:—

Amid these Aisles, where once his precepts showed,
The heavenward pathway which in life he trode,
This simple tablet marks a Father's bier;
And those he loved in life, in death are near.
For him, for them, a daughter bade it rise,
Memorial of domestic charities.
Still would you know why o'er the marble spread,
In female grace the willow droops her head;
Why on her branches, silent and unstrung,
The minstrel harp, is emblematic hung;
What Poet's voice is smother'd here in dust,
Till waked to join the chorus of the just;
Lo! one brief line an answer sad supplies—
Honour'd, belov'd, and mourn'd, here Seward lies:
Her worth, her warmth of heart, our sorrows say:
Go seek her genius in her living lay.

I have not been able to ascertain where Miss Seward's remains were laid, whether beside her father or Mr. Saville. But I suspect that the authorities saw to it that Mr. Saville's grave was not opened.
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