



78
B 7588



ISAAC FOOT



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2008 with funding from
Microsoft Corporation



THE SAILOR KING





King William IV.
After the picture by Sir A. Shee, P.R.A.

THE SAILOR KING

William the Fourth

His Court and His Subjects

By FITZGERALD MOLLOY

Author of "*The Queen's Comrade*"

"*The Most Gorgeous Lady Blessington*"


"*Court Life Below Stairs*," "*The Life*

and Adventures of Peg Woffington"

VOL. I

WITH EIGHTEEN ILLUSTRATIONS IN-
CLUDING TWO PHOTOGRAVURE PLATES

London : HUTCHINSON & CO.

Paternoster Row   1903

PREFACE

THE reign of William IV., whilst too remote for personal recollection and too recent for history, covers a space in our annals of which comparatively little is known. Yet its seven years are wells of interest, arising from sources intellectual rather than political; for the Sailor King reigned over subjects whose works remain our proud heritage, whose names are dear to us as those of kin, whose intimate histories, touched with the glamour of romance or with direful tragedy, exercise a spell impossible to fiction and felt only in watching the actions of mortals unconsciously obeying the dictates of fate.

With the exception of the important measure that revolutionised our legislature, politics are scarcely referred to in these volumes; though prominence is given to the great political personages of the time, who form no inconsiderable part in the

multifarious procession of courtiers, poets, writers, players, women famed for beauty or talent, beaux, wits, and club gossips—all of whom, grouped with their kind or in single conspicuousness, pass before the reader page by page, like figures in a moving panorama.

CONTENTS TO VOL. I

CHAPTER I

	PAGE
The Duke of Clarence hailed as King—Heirs to the Throne—The Duke of Wellington and the Sovereign—First Acts of the New Reign—His Majesty's Eagerness for Popularity—Bernard Edward Duke of Norfolk and Earl Marshal of England—Enthusiasm of All Ranks—Receptions, Levees, and Reviews—The King is kissed in St. James Street—Royal Disregard of Etiquette—First Public Appearance of the Princess Victoria—Queen Adelaide plays Her Royal Part—Disturbed State of the Country—Reform or Revolution—The Duke of Wellington and the Reform Bill—The Lord Mayor warns him of Danger—The Fall of a Ministry—Lord Grey becomes Prime Minister—The King at Windsor—Christmas at Brighton—Queen Adelaide's First Drawing-room—Princess Victoria appears in State—Objection to her Name—Defeat of the Government—Tumult in the Parliament—Her Majesty is mobbed—The Duke of Wellington and his Wife	I

CHAPTER II

Lady Bedingfeld and her Family—Friendship with the Princess Adelaide—Lady Bedingfeld as a Convent Boarder—Glimpses of a Quiet Life—Summoned to Court—Appointed a Woman of the Bed-chamber—The Duchess of Saxe Weimar visits England—Met by Lady Bedingfeld at the Tower Stairs—The Little Princess Louisa—Lord Grey is made a Knight of the Garter—George Fitzclarence is Created Earl of Munster—His Services as a Soldier—He marries an Heiress—A Nobleman of the Old School—Lord Egremont's Wealth and Unostentation—A Patron of Artists—Daily Life at Petworth—Entertaining the Poor—Charles Greville's Praise of him—Is succeeded by his Son, afterwards first Baron Leconfield—Some Descendants of the Family	49
---	----

CHAPTER III

	PAGE
An Uncrowned King—The Duke of Wellington makes an Enquiry—His Majesty ready to satisfy Tender Consciences, but eager to economise—Charles Greville goes to Windsor—The Queen and her Crown—The Sovereign dislikes being kissed by the Bishops—Their Majesties' Coronation—Celebrations of the Ceremony—Excitement over the Reform Bill—Extraordinary Scene in the House of Lords—Defeat—The Queen's Chamberlain—Lord Howe consults the Duke of Wellington—Lord Grey demands the dismissal of Lord Howe—Vengeance on the Opposers of Reform—Riots spread through the Land—Lord Grey resigns—His Majesty takes leaves of his Ministers—The King's difficult Position—Obliged to send for Lord Grey—Proposals to create Fifty Peers—His Majesty's Private Message to the Lords—The Reform Bill is passed—Rewarding Adherents—Young William Gladstone—The Jockey Club Dinner—Lord Sefton and the King—The Court at Brighton—New Year's Eve—At the Pavilion—Lord Grey's offer to Lord Howe—Lady Howe consults George Greville—Strange Rumours of Lord Howe's Devotion to the Queen—Her Majesty's talk with Lady Bedingfeld—Lady Howe's Eccentricities	69

CHAPTER IV

Resignation of the Ministry and Disappointment of the King—Lord Melbourne and Tom Young—The New Prime Minister—Personal Appearance of William Lamb—His Meeting with Lord Bessborough's Daughter—A Clever and Singular Child—The Children of the Duke of Devonshire—The Dowager Lady Spencer and her Granddaughter—William Lamb falls in love with Lady Caroline—Melbourne House and its Mistress—Scene at a Marriage Service—Social Life—Extracts from Lord Melbourne's Diary—Lady Caroline hears of a New Poet—Sensation caused by Byron in Society—Lady Caroline's First Sight of him—Their Second Meeting—The Poet calls at Melbourne House—Lord Hartington introduces the Waltz into England—Lady Caroline's Infatuation—Resents her Husband's Indifference—Byron proposes to Miss Milbanke—A <i>Savante</i> and an Heiress—Quarrels between Lady Caroline and the Poet—Sensational Scene in a Supper Room—Two Versions of a Parting—Lady Caroline is taken to Ireland—Byron's Ardent Letter—An Unexpected Blow and its Consequences—She loses her Brain and is bled—Result of a Note	99
---	----

Contents

ix

CHAPTER V

	PAGE
Lord Byron needs Money—Miss Milbanke's Fortune—A Letter to Tom Moore—Marriage of the Poet—Two strange Stories—Clouds accumulate—Lady Byron leaves her Lord—His supposed Madness—Letters of his Wife—Refuses to be reconciled to Byron—Disappointed by his Sanity—The Deed of Separation—Feelings of the Public towards Byron—Lady Jersey befriends him—Her Party in honour of the Poet—A red-haired Coquette—Reasons for quitting England—Farewell to his Wife—Lady Byron's Sympathy for Lady Caroline Lamb—Fracas with her Page—Sensation at Melbourne House—William Lamb's proposed Separation from his Wife—Lady Caroline writes a Novel—The Copyist is mystified—Publication of the Novel—Curiosity is excited—Caricature of Byron—The Deed of Separation remained unsigned—Comedy <i>versus</i> Tragedy—Lady Granville calls at Whitehall—Her description of Lady Caroline	133

CHAPTER VI

Lady Caroline Lamb's Novel—Lord Byron's Opinion of it—Strange Scene at Bocket Hall—Lady Caroline's Illness—Letter to Lady Morgan—William Godwin—Correspondence with Lady Caroline—She will regard him as her Master—Edward Lytton Bulwer as a Boy—His Verses on a heroic Occasion—William Lamb's afflicted Son—Lady Caroline's second Novel—A Superabundance of Activity—Lord Byron's Death—An unexpected Meeting—Lady Byron's Feelings—Lady Caroline's increasing Eccentricities—Her Husband's Forbearance—Life at Bocket Hall—Lady Caroline summons Bulwer from Cambridge—Love and Jealousy—A Comedy of Sentiment—The Parting of Husband and Wife—Lady Caroline is distressed—Determined to go abroad—Celebrates the Anniversary of her Marriage—Queen of the Revels—Leaves England and returns—Failing Health—Pathetic Letter—The coming of great Calmness—Affection for her Husband—Farewell	161
--	-----

CHAPTER VII

Daily life at the Sailor King's Court—Dancing with Lord Amelius Beauclerk—Lord Mayo sings Irish Songs—Lord Denbigh appointed Chamberlain to the Queen—Lord Howe's Letter—Lord Grey a Guest at Windsor—The Duke of Argyll is appointed Lord High

Contents

	PAGE
Steward—Lord Anglesey's quondam Wife—Lady Caroline Capel—The little Queen of Portugal visits Windsor—Prince George of Cambridge and Her Majesty—Lady Bedingfeld's suggestion—Dinner in St. George's Hall—The Princess Victoria—The Duchess of Kent and Their Majesties—Disagreements between her and the King—The Princes of Wurtemberg visit England—The Question of Royal Salutes—Prince Albert of Saxe-Coburg—Baron Von Stockmar's Opinion of him—The Princess Victoria first sees him—The King invites the Princes of Orange to England—Letter from Prince Albert—The Princess Victoria writes to the King of the Belgians	201

CHAPTER VIII

Literary Celebrities—Samuel Rogers and his Famous Breakfasts—His Singular Appearance and Sardonic Wit—Fanny Kemble and her Views of the Stage—Plays Juliet at Covent Garden Theatre—Result of her Experiment—A Guest at Great Houses—Meets Lady Holland—Old Lady Cork—Fantastic Appearance and Youthful Spirit—Entertaining in New Burlington Street—Lady Harriet D'Orsay's Remarks—The Marchioness of Salisbury—Supports the Splendour of Ancient Days—The Tragic Ending of her Days—Harriot Mellon's Early Days—Thomas Coutts the Banker led to the Altar—Harriot becomes Duchess of St. Albans—Liberality to her late Husband's Family—The Inheritance of Miss Angela Burdett afterwards Baroness Burdett Coutts—Lady Morgan's Success—Mixing with the World of Fashion—Byron's Last Mistress—Stories of the Poet—Harriet Martineau as a Lioness—Discourses on the Vanity of Man—Richard Monckton Milnes—Anecdotes of Lady Stepney	219
---	-----

CHAPTER IX

The Hospitalities of Holland House—The Spirit that chasteneth—Crowded Tables—Young Macaulay and his wonderful Memory—Charles Greville at a Holland House Dinner—Sitting beside a Man in Black—Macaulay's flow of Information—William Wordsworth's personal Appearance—Fanny Kemble's Story of the Two Poets—Wordsworth is appointed Laureate—Trying on Rogers' Court Suit—Young Alfred Tennyson—Severe Criticism of his Poems followed by Ten Years' Silence—Introduced to Rogers and his Friends—Benjamin Disraeli's fantastic Dress—His Determina-

Contents

xi

PAGE

tion to succeed—Besieged by Invitations—Invited to Great Houses—At a Fancy Dress Ball—Lady Morgan's Description of him—His Friend and Councillor Edward Lytton Bulwer—Description of the Author of "Pelham"—Popularity as a Novelist—William Makepeace Thackeray as a Boy—Is established in Hare Court Chambers—Seeks Employment as Illustrator of Pickwick . . . 263

CHAPTER X

Mary Wollstonecraft and William Godwin—A Middle-aged Juliet—Shelley elopes—His Wife separates from him—His Meeting with Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin—A Second Elopement—Crossing the Channel—A Fat Lady makes Enquiries—Travelling through France—Shelley returns to England—Jane Clairmont and Lord Byron—Shelley meets Byron—The Writing of Ghost Stories—Production of "Frankenstein"—Harriet's Suicide—Shelley's Second Marriage—Life at Pisa, and Visit of Captain Trelawny—His First Impressions of Shelley—At the Villa Magni—Mary Shelley's Forebodings—Strange Occurrences—Shelley's Terrible Dreams—Apparition of the Poet seen by Mrs. Williams—Shelley leaves his Home for Leghorn—The Last Sight of him—Intolerable Suspense—Trelawny breaks the News—The Poet's Remains are cremated—Byron's Behaviour to Mrs. Shelley—She returns to England—Her Husband's Posthumous Poems—She receives Literary Celebrities 289

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

VOL. I

	<i>Facing page</i>
WILLIAM IV. (<i>Photogravure plate</i>)	<i>Frontispiece</i>
MRS. JORDAN. (<i>After George Romney</i>)	5
CHARLES, SECOND EARL GREY, K.G. (<i>After Sir Thomas Lawrence</i>)	33
RICHARD WILLIAM PENN CURZON-HOWE, FIRST EARL HOWE. (<i>After G. Ward</i>)	80
LADY CAROLINE LAMB	114
LADY BYRON. (<i>After W. J. Newton</i>)	136
THE HONBLE. MISS MONCKTON, AFTERWARDS LADY CORK. (<i>After Sir Joshua Reynolds</i>)	231
MISS HARRIET MELLON (AFTERWARDS THE DUCHESS OF ST. ALBANS). (<i>After Sir Wm. Beechey</i>)	241
MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT SHELLEY. (<i>After Richard Rothwell</i>)	294
PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY. (<i>After Amelia Curran</i>)	306

CHAPTER I

The Duke of Clarence hailed as King—Heirs to the Throne—The Duke of Wellington and the Sovereign—First Acts of the New Reign—His Majesty's Eagerness for Popularity—Bernard Edward Duke of Norfolk and Earl Marshal of England—Enthusiasm of All Ranks—Receptions, Levees, and Reviews—The King is kissed in St. James's Street—Royal Disregard of Etiquette—First Public Appearance of the Princess Victoria—Queen Adelaide plays Her Royal Part—Disturbed State of the Country—Reform or Revolution—The Duke of Wellington and the Reform Bill—The Lord Mayor warns Him of Danger—The Fall of a Ministry—Lord Grey becomes Prime Minister—The King at Windsor—Christmas at Brighton—Queen Adelaide's First Drawing-room—Princess Victoria appears in State—Objection to Her Name—Defeat of the Government—Tumult in the Parliament—Her Majesty is mobbed—The Duke of Wellington and His Wife.

CHAPTER I

WEARY greyness still brooded above the world as just before dawn on June 26th, 1830, George IV. passed into eternity. Windsor Castle, the scene of his death, was yet silent, the sky fresh flushed with the glory of a newborn day, when Sir Henry Halford, physician-in-ordinary to His late Majesty, big with importance, and mounted on a sturdy roan, went clattering down the empty street of the royal borough, and scarce drew rein until he reached Bushey Park, peaceful in its dewy freshness, spreading meads, and giant chestnut trees, where William Duke of Clarence lived in retirement.

Sir Henry, a keen-eyed, self-sufficient, thin-lipped man, who had secured wealth and honour through a judicious marriage, and whose obsequious manner and cringing bows to all representing power or likely to give reward, had earned for him the name of the "eel-backed baronet," had ridden in haste and without authority, that he might be first to salute the Duke as King, and henceforth be associated in his Sovereign's memory with an important event.

The latter, hale, restless, and an early riser, was already abroad, clad in his green coat and wearing a white beaver hat ; when seeking and finding him, Sir Henry went down on one knee in the garden path, kissed the eagerly extended hand, and gave him the tidings long expected.

William Henry, third son of George III., had been born on August 21st, 1765, and at the date of his accession was in his sixty-fifth year. As a lad, brimful of vitality, eager for adventure, and smiling on the world, he had entered the Navy, sailed over many seas, and seen something of continents—notably America—outside his father's kingdom. And from being a spruce lieutenant, he had risen to be Admiral of the Fleet. He had also been created Earl of Munster and Duke of Clarence, and been given an allowance of twelve thousand a year. It is more interesting to remember that at the susceptible age of five and twenty, he fell in love with Dorothy Jordan, who was three years his junior, a buxom Irish girl, irresistible in her rosy charms, a comedian whose silvery voice, infectious laughter, and winning ways made her not only the first actress of her day, but, according to Leigh Hunt, the first that had ever adorned our stage. The connection the young Duke openly formed with her, which was countenanced by his family, and sanctioned by society, lasted some twenty years ; Mrs. Jordan, in the intervals of her theatrical engagements, acting as mistress of his household at Bushey



After the painting by George Romney.]

MRS. JORDAN.

[To face p. 5.



Park—of which he was Ranger—and presiding at the head of his table at dinner parties, where his royal brothers sat to right and left of her.

At the end of this time, in 1811, monetary difficulties, frequently more effective than infidelities in ruining domestic happiness, led to their separation ; for the Duke was involved in debt, whilst she wished to devote her time wholly to the stage, that she might provide for the children to whom she had given birth before meeting with her royal lover. They therefore parted amicably, and not without regret, the Duke bearing testimony to her many good qualities and making her an allowance of four thousand four hundred a year, for the maintenance of herself and her daughters. Mrs. Jordan died abroad in 1816. She had borne him ten children, nine of whom were living at the time of his accession to the throne, and who were known by the surname of Fitzclarence. These were George and Frederick, both in the army ; Adolphus, a rear-admiral ; Augustus, a clergyman ; Sophia, who became the wife of Lord De L'Isle and Dudley ; Mary, who married Colonel Fox, an illegitimate son of Lord Holland ; Elizabeth, who married the Earl of Erroll ; Augusta, married to the Hon. John Kennedy Erskine, and after his death to Lord John Frederick Gordon, who assumed the name of Halyburton ; and Amelia, who selected Lord Falkland for her husband.

When, on November 6th, 1817, the Princess Charlotte Augusta of Wales, only child of the

Regent, and wife of Prince Leopold of Saxe Coburg, died after giving birth to a stillborn infant, the royal brothers came into direct succession to the Crown. Of the seven, four were married, but were either childless or without lawful issue; the remaining three were bachelors. These were William Duke of Clarence, third son; Edward Duke of Kent, fourth son; and Adolphus Frederick Duke of Cambridge, seventh and youngest son of George III. All three now hastened to secure wives, who it was hoped might produce heirs to the Crown.

The bride selected by his mother for the Duke of Clarence, then in his fifty-third year, was Amelia Adelaide Louise Therese Caroline Wilhelmina, eldest daughter of George Frederick Charles Duke of Saxe Meiningen, an excellent man, who had died from the combined effects of a neglected cold and a violent rage caused by a demand from the Kaiser of sixty thousand florins as a fine for refusing certain knightly honours too expensive to accept. From the date of his death, the Princess Adelaide, with her brother and sister, had been carefully and economically reared by their mother until reaching her twenty-sixth year, when she was sought as a wife by one who had never seen her.

After some negotiations and the preparation of a limited wardrobe, the Princess Adelaide and her mother started for London, which they reached in the fading light of a July evening in 1818, and drove to Grillon's Hotel in Albemarle Street. No

one waited to receive these tired and lonely ladies, save the proprietor; for the Regent was dining, and the bridegroom elect was out of town. After dinner, however, the Regent drove down to Albemarle Street and waited on them; and presently a carriage and four horses tore up to the hotel, from which the Duke of Clarence, sent for in hot haste, jumped out and rushed upstairs, impatient and curious to see the wife selected for him. No record of his first impressions is left; but time proved that her sensible bearing and gentle manners were sufficient to gain and hold his respect and affection through life.

No time was lost in wooing, for on the 18th of this same month of July 1818, the Duke of Clarence and the Princess Adelaide were made man and wife; the ceremony taking place in a room in Kew palace, fitted as a chapel. Some weeks previously, on May 7th, the Duke of Cambridge had married at Cassel in Hanover; whilst on the 29th of the same month, the Duke of Kent had taken to wife Mary Louisa Victoria, widow of Prince Ernest Charles of Leiningen, by whom she had two children, and sister of Prince Leopold and Prince Ernest of Saxe Coburg, the latter of whom became father of Albert, afterwards Consort of Queen Victoria.

On the following March 26th, 1819, the Duchess of Cambridge gave birth to a son, christened George, who in course of years became Commander-in-Chief of the Army; whilst on the succeeding day the Duchess of Clarence became mother of a girl who survived her

entrance into life only by a few minutes. More important still was the fact that the Duchess of Kent at Kensington Palace, on May 24th, gave birth to an infant christened Alexandrina Victoria, who, her father said, was too healthy to satisfy the members of his family, by whom, although she held only the fifth place in succession to the throne, she was regarded as an intruder.

The grief and disappointment caused by the death of the Duke of Clarence's infant were presently lessened by the hope of future offspring, which was fulfilled in December 1820, when another child was given to the Duke and Duchess of Clarence. It lived but three months : and as time passed they mournfully realised that fate denied them an heir.

The first years of their married life were spent chiefly abroad, after which they lived at Bushey House and in the apartments allotted to them in St. James's Palace. The former residence, because of its seclusion and situation, was preferable to both ; the latter bringing a complaint to the Regent from the Duke of its "dirt and unfitness," which he requested might be remedied for the "sake of the amiable and excellent Duchess." As a result Clarence House was built for them.

Always freehanded and indifferent to the accumulation of money, the Duke had been heavily in debt at the date of his marriage, but the Duchess having from necessity learned the virtues of economy, took his expenditure in hand, and reducing its extravagance,

gradually satisfied his creditors, and found something to spare for charities. Both thoroughly agreed in living plainly, in despising ceremony, and in assuming an air almost republican in its simplicity. Meantime the Duke not unnaturally looked forward to his succession to the throne, from which he was separated by two brothers whose indifferent health did not promise length of days.

One of these, Frederick Duke of York, died on January 5th, 1827, an event which not only brought the Duke of Clarence a step nearer to kingship but gained him a welcome increase of income from twenty-six thousand five hundred to thirty-eight thousand five hundred per annum. At the same time Canning, then prime minister, made him Lord High Admiral of England.

When Sir Henry Halford had given the new monarch all details concerning his brother's death, he hurried away to communicate the same to other members of the royal family. On the King being left alone with the Queen, the latter burst into tears; for she saw that the life of seclusion and simplicity so dear to her, had come to an end; and she looked forward with reluctance and distaste to the publicity, ceremony, and fatigue necessary to her position as a royal consort. With many and cheery words the King sought to comfort her; he being eager to assume his rights as Sovereign and to taste the delights of a popularity that he foresaw would be his. The discussion of their future was soon disturbed;

for presently the Duke of Wellington, then Prime Minister, who had already been to Windsor, came driving up the avenue in haste, to announce officially the death of the late Sovereign.

Scarce a greater contrast could be conceived than that which marked these two men as they stood face to face at this historic moment. Small in stature, burly, with florid, sanguine countenance, and head shaped like a pineapple; His Majesty was rough, garrulous, and diffuse in speech, bustling in his movements, undetermined in character, without much intelligence, but with great good nature, and well disposed towards all men; whilst the duke, looking taller than his five feet nine inches warranted because of his spare upright figure and habit of holding his head well poised above his black satin cravat, met the world with steadily piercing eyes, which emphasised the eagle expression of his aquiline features. Sixty years of an eventful life had turned his hair and whiskers white, lined his forehead, left him imperturbable and self-contained, simple and direct in speech as became a soldier, and had taught him a philosophy that regarded all friends as possible enemies, and all enemies as possible friends.

Hitherto little cordiality had existed between them: for it was owing to Wellington's strictures and control that the Duke of Clarence had considered himself forced to resign his post of Lord High Admiral; whilst recently a coldness had sprung up between them, owing to the statement made by the heir to

the throne that, on ascending it, he would retain Wellington in office. This, which would have pleased a man less conscientious, was considered improper by Wellington, who whilst acting as minister to the King refused to treat with His Majesty's successor, and therefore took no notice of the remark, much to the discomfiture of the Duke of Clarence, who considered himself rudely treated by the prime minister. However, the new Sovereign was too generous to resent such mortifications, and he immediately set Wellington at his ease, by declaring he would retain him and his colleagues in office.

Before parting, it was decided that the King should speedily follow the duke to town; and such haste did the Sovereign make, that by one o'clock he entered the state-room of St. James's Palace, where the greater number of the Privy Councillors awaited him. Dressed as a British admiral, and looking hale and hearty, His Majesty, with a brisk step and bustling air, took his place on the throne, and made a speech in which he referred sympathetically to the late King, declared that he relied with confidence on the advice and assistance of Parliament, and upon its zealous co-operation in his anxious endeavours, under Divine Providence, to maintain the reformed religion, to protect the rights and liberties, and to promote the prosperity and happiness, of all classes of the people.

"Nobody expected from him much real grief, and he does not seem to know how to act it concisely," says Charles Greville. "He spoke of his brother

The Sailor King

with all the semblance of feeling, and in a tone of voice properly softened and subdued, but just afterwards, when they gave him the pen to sign the declarations, he said in his usual tone: 'This is a damned bad pen you have given me.'

This being done the royal Dukes of Cambridge, Sussex, and Gloucester, knelt and took the oaths of allegiance, other privy councillors doing likewise. Wellington kissed hands formally as First Lord of the Treasury, other ministers following suit.

The stamps of the late King, which had been affixed to official papers, were broken; the archbishops were directed to substitute in the church service the name of their most gracious Sovereign Lord King William, for that of George. Then came the important consideration of the name by which the monarch should be proclaimed. He himself gave preference to his second name, and wished to assume the style of Henry IX., which had been given by the Stuart upholders to Cardinal York, grandson of James II. But after much cogitation it was decided that he should be known as William IV., this resolution being mainly due to the superstitious feelings of the lords spiritual, who remembered an old prophecy, stating that as "Henry the Eighth had pulled down monks and cells, Henry the Ninth would pull down bishops and bells."

Amongst those who hurried to St. James's to greet His Majesty, was Bernard Edward, twelfth Duke of Norfolk, then in his sixty-fifth year. Though Earl

Marshal, he was not a member of the Privy Council ; an honour not held by any of his ancestors since the days of James II. ; but his desire to become a Privy Councillor having been made known to the King, he immediately granted it, and later on made the duke a Knight of the Garter.

All business for the day transacted, the Sovereign left St. James's Palace about five o'clock, and escorted by a detachment of Life Guards, went rattling gaily through the streets, where he was awaited by crowds anxious to see and cheer him. Next day being Sunday, he and his Queen attended Divine service and listened to a sermon preached by his son, the Rev. Augustus Fitzclarence, briefly described as "suitable to the occasion."

On the following morning—seemingly symbolic in its promise of a glorious day—His Majesty was early astir, glowing in good spirits, communicative to all around, and most willing to enter on his new dignities as Sovereign. Accordingly he arrived at St. James's Palace soon after nine o'clock, to see its stone-paved, grey-walled courtyard already crowded with citizens eager to witness the ceremony of proclamation. By ten o'clock Sir George Naylor, straight-backed and blazing in gold, rode proudly in, followed by heralds and pursuivants in their robes, and eight officers-of-arms, silver maces in hand. The excitement and stir of their stately entrance among the surging voluble mass reached its climax when His Majesty, the blue Garter ribbon relieving

his mourning, appeared at a window, benevolent and smiling, and was received with a thundering cheer, that touched a heart quickly receptive to appreciation, and brought tears to his blue eyes. A band of fifteen trumpets struck up the National Anthem, hundreds of voices roaring its words and drowning all accompaniment ; its conclusion was followed by a double salute, announcing the proclamation, whose slow-spoken words were heard in silence until the last, when, to the sound of fresh clamour and full-throated cheers, the king-at-arms and his men turned their horses, and rode at quick pace to Charing Cross, where the proclamation was next made.

The new reign began with every prospect of popularity, the King's good nature, homely simplicity, and jocularly winning him a warm place in the people's hearts. But having spent so many years of his life as a country gentleman, he seemed unable or unwilling to assume a regal bearing, and gave many proofs of his indifference to ceremony. Once when the Duke of Norfolk had ridden down to Bushey, to explain some point of etiquette to his Sovereign, the latter declared he must not leave without seeing Her Majesty ; and ringing a bell, said to the answering servant : "Tell the Queen I want her." On another occasion when Lord Howe was taking leave of the monarch, he was told that, if he waited a moment, the Queen who was about to drive out, would "drop him" at his own house at Twickenham. In the same unostentatious manner, the King,

when Sir John and Lady Gore had lunched with him, called for their carriage, handed Lady Gore into it, and waited on the doorsteps to see them drive off. He openly declared he wanted neither magnificence nor luxury, and one of his first acts was to dismiss his late brother's cooks.

For many intimate details of the Sailor King's life posterity is indebted to Charles Cavendish Fulke Greville, a scion of the noble houses of Portland and Warwick, and a friend of the Duke of York's, whose stud he managed, and whose life he wrote. His unusual ability might readily have won him distinction as a legislator, if early in life he had not become a Clerk of the Council to George IV., a position he continued to hold under that monarch's successor. High born and well bred, something of a cynic, avowedly an epicurean, his square figure was surmounted by a face remarkable for its refinement and delicate outline ; his tense, well-chiselled lips belonging to that type that can utter acid truths with exquisite politeness. His position brought him many friends ; he was consulted by ministers and had advised kings. Holding the secrets of courts and cabinets, he was eminently fitted to keep the journals that have become standard references for the events of the forty years they cover ; and are valuable, not only for their keen observation and critical judgment, but for their honest impartiality, and the fact that they contain nothing he has not seen or heard himself, or heard from reliable witnesses.

According to this authority there never was anything like the enthusiasm with which the new monarch was greeted by all ranks. "Though he has trotted about both town and country for sixty-four years, and nobody ever turned round to look at him, he cannot stir now without a mob, patrician as well as plebeian, at his heels. All the Park congregated round the gate to see him drive into town the day before yesterday." . . . Levees, reviews, dinners, visits followed each other in rapid succession, and a vast number of addresses were presented to the King, who received them with characteristic geniality. His brother, the Duke of Sussex, who introduced the Freemasons, desired that they should be given a separate and ceremonious audience, but to this His Majesty would not consent, and on their being summoned to his presence addressed them in his usual hearty conversational tone, saying: "Gentlemen, if my love for you equalled my ignorance of everything concerning you, it would be unbounded." With the Quakers he was less at ease, their self-possessed unbending demeanour and grave measured speech repressing the royal pleasantries. "They were very prim and respectable persons," says Charles Greville; "their hats were taken off by each other in the room before the throne room, and they did not bow, though they seemed half inclined to do so; they made a very loyal address, but without 'Majesty,' and said 'O King.' There was a question after his answer what they should do. I thought it was whether they should kiss hands, for the King

said something to Peel, who went and asked them, and I heard the King say : ‘ Oh, just as they like ; they needn’t if they don’t like ; it’s all one.’ ”

Yet another address was presented by a body amongst whom was Lord Chancellor Eldon, who some years previously had fallen under his displeasure ; a fact the King was eager should be forgotten ; so when the Chancellor was passing the royal presence His Majesty stopped him to say : “ My lord, political parties and feelings have run very high, and I am afraid I have made observations upon your lordship, which now——” But at this point the Chancellor stopped him, saying he could not permit an apology from his Sovereign, and the King rested satisfied that his good intentions were understood and accepted.

Rising early in the morning, the King found the summer days too brief for his activities, and showed an energy and enthusiasm, amazing in one of his age. As an instance of the manner in which one of these were spent by His Majesty, the records of Charles Greville’s journal for July 20th, 1830, may be quoted. In the morning the King, dressed for the first time in military uniform, with a pair of gold spurs half way up his legs, inspected the Coldstream Guards ; the Queen watching the proceedings from the windows of Lord Bathurst’s house. When the review ended Her Majesty held an informal drawing-room, where ministers’ wives and various officials were presented to her, every one in undress except the officers. Plain and timid, the Queen went through her part, “ as if

she was acting, and wished the green curtain to drop." After this Their Majesties accompanied by the royal dukes, drove to St. James's Palace, where they breakfasted, and at one o'clock a council was held to swear in privy councillors and lords-lieutenant, and to receive addresses from the Oxford and Cambridge Universities.

The review made this an hour late, writes the clerk of the council, and "the lieutenants who had been summoned at one, and who are great, selfish, pampered aristocrats, were furious at being kept waiting, particularly Lord Grosvenor and the Duke of Newcastle, the former very peevish, the latter bitter-humoured. I was glad to see them put to inconvenience. I never saw so full a court, so much nobility, with academical tagrag and bobtail. After considerable delay the King received the Oxford and Cambridge addresses on the throne, which (having only one throne between them) he then abdicated for the Queen to seat herself on and receive them too. She sat it very well, surrounded by the Princesses and her ladies and household. When this mob could be got rid of the table was brought in and the council held."

The Duke of Wellington was then sworn as Constable of the Tower and Lieutenant of Hants; Lord Jersey and the new privy councillors next took the oath, followed by the lieutenants "six or seven at a time, or as many as could hold a bit of the testament." Greville suggested that to expedite business, His Majesty would dispense with their kneeling, which he readily agreed to. "I told him their

name or county, or both, and he had a civil word to say to everybody, inviting some to dinner, promising to visit others, reminding them of former visits, or something good-humoured : he asked Lord Egremont's *permission* to go and live in his county at Brighton."

In continuing Charles Greville says : " All this was very well ; no great harm in it ; more affable, less dignified than the late King, but when this was over, and he might very well have sat himself quietly down and rested, he must needs put on his plainer clothes and start on a ramble about the streets, alone too. In Pall Mall he met Watson Taylor and took his arm and went up St. James's Street. Here he was soon followed by a mob making an uproar, and when he got near White's a woman came up and kissed him. Belfast (who had been sworn in Privy Councillor in the morning), who saw this from White's, and Clinton thought it time to interfere, and came out to attend upon him. The mob increased, and always holding to Watson Taylor's arm, and flanked by Clinton and Belfast, who got shoved and kicked about to their inexpressible wrath, he got back to the Palace amid shouting and bawling and applause. When he got home he asked them to go in and take a quiet walk in the garden and said : ' Oh, never mind all this : when I have walked about a few times they will get used to it, and will take no notice.' There are other stories, but I will put down nothing I do not see or hear, or hear from other witnesses. Belfast told me this in the Park, fresh from the scene

and smarting from the buffeting he had got. All the Park was ringing with it, and I told Lady Bathurst, who thought it so serious she said she would get Lord Bathurst to write to the Duke of Wellington directly about it." As a result of this correspondence the Queen told Lady Bathurst next day, that for the future the King must walk early in the morning, or in some less public place than the London streets.

It was on the evening following whilst at dinner, that it suddenly occurred to His Majesty to invite his brother-in-law, the King of Würtemberg, then at Boulogne, to visit him. Accordingly before the meal ended he despatched his eldest son, George Fitzclarence, whom he now employed in everything, with a message begging the King of Würtemberg would come to London. Away hurried George Fitzclarence wearing his silk stockings and cocked hat, which the haste of his mission did not permit him to change; and such was his speed that he accomplished his journey there and back in fifty-six hours, then considered marvelously quick travelling. The foreign monarch was in time to see William IV. prorogue parliament on July 23rd, speaking of which occasion Greville says: "I can fancy nothing like his delight at finding himself in a state-coach surrounded by all his pomp. He delivered his speech very well, they say, for I did not go to hear him. He did not wear the crown, which was carried by Lord Hastings. Etiquette is a thing he cannot comprehend. He wanted to take the King of Würtemberg with him in his coach,

till he was told it was out of the question. In his private carriage he continues to sit backwards, and when he goes with men, makes one sit by him and not opposite to him. Yesterday, after the House of Lords, he drove all over the town in an open calèche with the Queen, Princess Augusta, and the King of Würtemberg; and coming home he set down the King ('dropped him,' as he calls it) at Grillon's Hotel. The King of England dropping another King at a tavern."

The good nature and simplicity of William IV. won golden opinions from all classes; but the absence of all ceremony was found embarrassing on occasions by his friends, such as the Duke of Wellington, who one morning in July received a message saying His Majesty would dine with him that day. His grace, who was preparing for another festivity, was accordingly obliged to make ready for his monarch, who about midday drove the King of Würtemberg to Windsor, from which he returned covered with dust and his horses dead beat, at the hour when the duke was expecting him. As he came through Hyde Park all the carriages and horsemen drew up near Apsley House to see the Sovereign pass, and hearing of his approach the duke rushed down without his hat, and waited in the midst of his servants and the mob to see royalty drive by.

The King "dropped" his brother sovereign at Grillon's hotel, but both had made their toilettes by eight, and arm-in-arm entered the duke's dining-

The Sailor King

room, where most of the English and foreign ministers awaited them ; amongst the latter being the Duc de Laval, ambassador to Charles X., then about to tumble from the French throne. King William was in high spirits, talked freely, and enjoyed an excellent dinner, in the course of which he commanded the band to play its merriest waltz to celebrate the toast he was about to give. He then proposed the health of his sister, the Queen of Würtemberg, passing many eulogiums on the connubial felicity enjoyed by herself and her husband ; a subject which all present felt was not an agreeable theme for their host, conjugal fidelity not being his forte. His Majesty next requested the band to play "See the Conquering Hero comes," at the conclusion of which he rose. When all present followed his example he bade them sit down : telling them that he had been so short a time on the throne, he did not know whether etiquette required that he should speak sitting or standing ; but he had been so long used to speak on his legs, he would do so then. After this introduction, he proposed the health of his host, whom he compared to the great Duke of Marlborough, adding that though Wellington had received little support from the Crown at the outset, his career had been one continued course of victory over the armies of France. Then, recollecting that the ambassador of that country was present, the King begged him to remember that when he talked of victories over the French armies, they were not the armies of his ally and friend Charles X., but of

Napoleon, who had usurped his throne, and against whom the minister himself was combatting.

Gabriele von Bülow, wife of the Prussian Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary to the Court of St. James, in writing home to her family, gives some interesting particulars of the events then exciting the town. In a communication dated July 27th, 1830, she says :

“ Since the late King was laid to rest in his silent tomb, yesterday fortnight, his successor has done wonders. His activity and energy are really marvellous. Each day is filled with business, audiences, reviews, luncheons, dinners, etc. ; on Monday he went to a ball, which in my humble opinion he would have done better to avoid. The days of the King of Würtemberg’s visit were particularly lively. The above-mentioned ball was given in his honour by the Duke of Wellington. But I must begin by describing this day from the morning onwards.

“ At eleven o’clock every one assembled at the duke’s, where the King and Queen were expected to lunch after the review in Hyde Park. They had already lunched there on the 21st, when I saw the Queen for the first time as Queen, and was greeted by her with unaltered friendliness and kindness. According to etiquette, Lady Aberdeen was to have presented me, but before she had time to do so, the Queen had given me her hand. The King also shook hands at once. But I am wandering away from my Monday, and it was no Black Monday, I assure you.

The Sailor King

The Court came and left (the Duke of Wellington) late, so that no one got away before half-past two. I drove the Countess Munster home, after we had stuck fast a long time in the row of carriages which could not move backwards or forwards. So I only got home towards four o'clock, when all hands that could hold a needle, had to set to work to manufacture me a Court train which had to be ready at half-past five, when I drove off again to St. James's Palace, where the entire diplomatic corps was to dine with the King at seven o'clock.

"We had, however, obtained permission to be present before dinner at the Chapter of the Knights of the Garter, convened for the purpose of investing the King of Würtemberg with the insignia of the order. That was too interesting a ceremony to be missed. The Countess Munster had confided our troubles about our trains to the Queen; neither of us possessed such an appendage, as we had been commanded to appear without them at dinner, and had only been informed at the duke's that a train would be obligatory for any one assisting at the ceremony of the investiture. The Queen cleverly advised us to have light trains quickly made of crêpe, and to take them off before dinner, as she herself intended doing. Well, punctually at half-past five I was ready, dressed in veil and train, and delighted to be able to attend the ceremony.

"As a picture, the Chapter of the Order of the Garter is a beautiful counterpart to the prorogation of

parliament. Both of these spectacles transported us to ancient times and made a great and solemn impression on the mind. The gentlemen really looked most picturesque, and seemed ready posed for their portraits. The Duke of Sussex, who is certainly no beauty, would have made a splendid picture. The King of Würtemberg looked terribly modern in his stiff uniform. How I wish the children could have seen the Queen's entrance. All the princesses (even little Victoria) and their ladies-in-waiting followed in her train; they wore deep mourning, long court trains, and veils reaching to the ground. The Queen and then the King took their places on the throne, followed by the King of Würtemberg as soon as he had been invested with the Order of the Garter. The princesses stood on the left of the throne, and next to their ladies-in-waiting came the Countess Munster and myself; the enterprising diplomatic ladies, they call us, for we are present on all occasions.

“The veil suits the Queen's beautiful fair hair and white neck perfectly; indeed, I have never seen her more becomingly dressed than on Monday, when I was pleased to see how well she played her royal part. She had learned it so quickly and without losing any of her own individual amiability and characteristic courtesy. The King has no less amiable and winning manners, and is very original in his behaviour. Towards the end of the dinner he proposed the health of the new knight, and made a long speech standing up in his place, while by his orders all the guests remained

seated. It is delightful to see him enter upon the royal estate with a certain pleasurable freshness ; he wears his dignity with a *con amore* air, but without forgetting that he is the ruler of a free nation ; indeed, it is by the great value he attaches to that fact that he wins my heart. He is already exceedingly popular.”

However much the Queen might shrink from publicity, she was now forced by duty, as well as by the King’s unconcealed delight in them, to take part in the festivities and ceremonies of the court, which after the dullness resulting from the late monarch’s seclusion, roused the capital to excitement, gaiety, and an expenditure that profited and pleased the people. For now the music of bands and the trotting of Life Guards were heard daily through the summer forenoons, as they attended reviews, levees crowded beyond all precedent, or audiences ; cheering crowds awaited and followed Their Majesties, who gave immense dinners, to which more guests were invited than room could be found for ; whilst the great ministers bade royalty to sumptuous breakfasts, and the nobility at large entertained them at balls whose brilliancy rivalled each other.

But neither the King’s popularity nor the splendour of court ceremonies, blinded the vast bulk of the people to the heavy taxation that crippled them, to the abuse of power by a privileged class, and to the appalling waste of public money in pensioning and maintaining a large number of needy courtiers and government officials, whose places were sinecures, but whose salaries

were substantial. Aggravated by the huge expenditure, banefulness, and extravagant waste of the late reign, public opinion had been surging in sullen angry revolt ; and now when the French Revolution of July 1830, which flung Charles X. from the throne, was followed by that of Belgium ; when Spain and Poland were ready for insurrection, those who knew that example is the most powerful incentive, feared that the irrepressible dissatisfaction and unrest at this time stirring England to its centre might, under prolonged strain or further provocation, burst into civil warfare.

Solid grounds for such serious alarm were given by the northern provinces, where intense suffering from long and bitter depression was experienced. In the great manufacturing towns vast numbers of men—desperate because deprived of employment by the introduction of machinery that supplanted manual labour—banded together to destroy the machines and wreck the properties of their owners ; whilst the failure of crops in the agricultural districts produced starvation, whose victims demanded work or bread, and obtaining neither, burned hayricks, pillaged farmhouses, stole food, and spread terror broadcast.

It now became obvious to all that the remedy of abuses, long and patiently borne, could be obtained only through reform or revolution. In a country like England the former was considered the more feasible ; for it was believed that the voice of the English people would be found as powerful in remedying evils and obtaining rights, as a stormy general uprising had been

in more than one adjoining nation. But in order to abolish wrongs and secure rights through constitutional and peaceful means, parliamentary representation must first be remedied; the people must find fitting representation in their legislative assembly. Since the reign of William of Orange, when distrust of the Jacobites and fears of the Catholics pervaded the court party, and every effort was used to exclude them from participation in the management of the Kingdom, the scheme of parliamentary representation had remained unaltered; whilst time, progress of thought, spread of education, and desire for liberty had augmented its defects, and more glaringly exhibited the disseverance of commercial property and intelligence from political power and responsibility.

One interest alone, that of the landed proprietors, was adequately represented in the legislature. Commerce, manufactures, shipping, the great industries that had become the power and glory of the nation, had little voice in its government. As an example it may be stated that, whilst many obscure boroughs had their representatives, great towns like Birmingham and Manchester had none. An oligarchy composed of the great landowners held undisputed sway; the laws it framed, the measures it supported or frustrated, being all subservient to its own interests.

Parliamentary reform had already been vainly attempted; three times by William Pitt towards the close of the previous century; once by Sir Francis Burdett in 1819; and once by Daniel O'Connell,

who in the last weeks of the late reign sought to introduce universal suffrage, triennial parliaments, and the ballot. The nation had now arrived at that stage of its growth when further opposition to its wishes had become dangerous; and the old order looked aghast at demands for the disfranchisement of boroughs, the representation in parliament of large towns, and an increase in the number of county members; these being the chief items in the first Reform Bill.

The popularity the Sailor King gained on coming to the throne was founded on the belief that he—who from youth had mixed little with the court and much with the people; who in the House of Lords had warmly advocated the Catholic Emancipation Bill, and who had shown a democratic spirit—was in favour of reform. With feverish impatience and resolute will, the nation awaited results. The new parliament met in October 1830, and so strong was the general feeling against the ministry that not one of its members had obtained a seat by an open or popular election. Excitement rose to its height on the first night of the session when the Duke of Wellington as prime minister, standing up cold and stern in the midst of an assembly electrical with emotion, and meeting unflinchingly the hostile glances of his opponents, declared in his thin emphatic voice that so long as he handled the reins of Government, he would never grant reform.

This decisive statement, that proved the death warrant of his political power, produced the wildest sensation; for all over the land a feeling of bitter indignation against him and his ministers spread with the rapidity of flame. Incensed opinion in the capital found its climax when it was whispered that, if they attended the Lord Mayor's banquet at the Guildhall, a scene of hostility and bloodshed might be expected to mark the indignation of an exasperated populace.

Official expression was given to this rumour by the Lord Mayor, who wrote to the prime minister saying that although the respectable citizens were decidedly loyal, yet it was known that, both in London and the provinces, a certain set of desperate and abandoned characters were anxious to avail themselves of any circumstance to create tumult and confusion, and from what he had learned it was the intention of such miscreants to make an attack on the duke's person as he entered the Guildhall. A cabinet council was hastily summoned to hear the Duke of Wellington read this and various other letters he had received, all speaking of a plot to assassinate him and raise a universal tumult. His Grace at once declared his intention of not attending the banquet, having, as he added, no desire to be assassinated; and his startled colleagues after five hours' deliberation likewise agreeing to absent themselves from the city feast, it was thought advisable to recommend His Majesty to take the same course.

On this advice being tendered to the King by the duke, the latter thought his Sovereign expected and was relieved by it; though on hearing the Lord Mayor's letter read, tears started to the King's eyes. The banquet was indefinitely postponed; troops were hurriedly summoned to London; thousands of special constables, the new police force, sailors, volunteers, and marines, were called on to protect the city; a double guard was placed on duty at the Bank; and the moat surrounding the Tower was filled with water. Harriet Countess Granville, in writing to her brother the Duke of Devonshire on November 9th, says, in speaking of the ministers' determination not to venture into the city: "Some say they had notice of a house taken from whence the duke was to have been shot, others that the tradesmen wished it, and that there was a plot to detain the King as a hostage. I am uneasy about the House of Lords where Granville has just gone, as they say there will be a piece of work. Abercromby says the report was that twenty thousand men were coming up to-morrow from Liverpool, Manchester, etc."

The crowds that flocked from the country and suburbs to witness or take part in the expected riots were disappointed, for no disturbance occurred, with the exception of a smart brush near Temple Bar, where several iron crowbars and flaunting banners were seized and their holders dispersed by the city police, who were even then considered "a magnificent

set of fellows." A swarming mob also collected in front of the Foreign Office, shouting "Liberty or Death"; to which one of the sentries replied: "My lads, I am sorry I cannot give you liberty, but I can give you death if you like this very moment"; whereon they discreetly adopted an action that left them free to fight another day.

But though no disturbance took place in the capital, danger was universally apprehended. "The alarm is still very great," writes Charles Greville, "and the general agitation which pervades men's minds unlike what I have ever seen. Reform, economy, echoed backwards and forwards, the doubts, the hopes, and the fears of those who have anything to lose, the uncertainty of everybody's future condition, the immense interests at stake, the magnitude and imminence of the danger, all contribute to produce a nervous excitement which extends to all classes—to almost every individual."

By all but the Duke of Wellington it was foreseen that his ministry could not last; but he, according to Granville, "says Government counts upon a majority of a hundred upon Tuesday next, scoffs at danger to himself, and is determined to fight it out to the last." Nor had he long to wait; for on the night on November 15th, 1830, the ministry was defeated on a motion for a committee of enquiry into the Civil List; and two days later it accepted the inevitable, and waited on the King, who received its members with the greatest kindness, shed tears, but accepted their



From an engraving after the picture by Sir Thomas Lawrence, P.R.A.]

CHARLES, SECOND EARL GREY, K.G.

To face p. 33.



resignation without remonstrance, and with as much dignity as the homeliness and simplicity of his character would allow. He then commanded Lord Grey to form a ministry, a commission which was accepted on the condition that he and his colleagues should introduce a Reform Bill into parliament. On this being accepted, a Whig administration was brought together, of which Earl Grey was First Lord of the Treasury ; Sir James Graham, First Lord of the Admiralty ; and Lord Melbourne, Home Secretary.

Charles, second Earl Grey, who will be remembered in history as the statesman who introduced and carried the first Reform Bill, was a striking type of an English nobleman. Patrician in his instincts, his sympathies, by a not uncommon contradiction, were with the people. Grave and handsome in appearance, he was punctilious in manner, careful in dress, and noble-minded and honourable in his dealings. Now in his sixty-seventh year, he had at the age of thirty married a daughter of William Brabazon, first Lord Ponsonby, of Bishop's Court, Kildare. This lady, with characteristic Irish extravagance, had presented him with fifteen children. In the training of these his democratic tendencies had first shown themselves ; for in an age when children were taught to regard their progenitors and elders as too sacred for contradiction or comment, his offspring were encouraged to advocate and discuss their opinions even when opposed to their parents, whom they invariably addressed by their Christian names.

Whilst political events occupied the public mind His Majesty continued to keep himself in touch with his subjects. Hurrying down to Windsor he had gone over every room in the castle, with eager curiosity, and then commanded that the terrace should be thrown open to the people ; a kindness not without its penalty, for visitors presently developed a habit of climbing up to the windows that they might stare open-mouthed at royalty, of plucking leaves from the orange trees, and of writing their names on the marble statues. Later the King visited Brighton, when on arriving at the Pavilion, he insisted on going everywhere and being shown everything ; and for all whom he encountered he had gracious phrases. Long years afterwards, his keeper of the paddocks used to relate to all who would listen the first words addressed to him by his Sovereign : " Mr. Morley," His Majesty says to me, " you and I and Eclipse were all born in the same year."

Whilst at Brighton he drove over to Lewes, where after a great lunch, in returning thanks for himself and the Queen, he took an opportunity of politely professing his esteem and affection for his consort.

Beginning by saying that amongst the many favourable circumstances under which Providence called him to the throne, there was none for which he was more grateful, or on which he set higher value, than in having married " an individual so excellent in every amiable and good feeling." In this country, he continued, " character finds its way forth into the world and is always known ; I have no doubt, therefore, that

you are already well aware of what I would say. But I must take the opportunity of speaking what I most sincerely am convinced of, that Her Majesty, who sits before you, possesses every quality calculated to give worth and lustre to her exalted station. Of this I am satisfied also, that the great share of that good and kindly feeling which has been so largely manifested towards me since I have occupied the throne, has not only been due to her estimable qualities, but has strictly and truly been exhibited and paid on account of that sense which is entertained of them."

His first Christmas as King was spent at the Pavilion, Brighton, where he was delighted to come in contact continually with many old naval officers, who elected to spend their last days beside the sea. One and all of them were treated with an unostentatious friendliness that went straight to their simple hearts. When meeting them on the parade or in the streets, His Majesty would pause, if unaccompanied by the Queen, to grasp them by the hand, offer them snuff, exchange reminiscences of former times, and tell stories that ended in roars. Occasionally he would suddenly appear at the hall door of some superannuated admiral, to bid himself and his wife "Come along, come along directly to dinner." Once, when the spouse of some old sea dog wished to excuse herself from accepting an invitation on account of her gown, the King answered her: "Oh, never mind it: the Queen and myself are quiet people, and indeed she does nothing after dinner but embroider flowers."

One day, whilst walking with his secretary, Sir Herbert Taylor, on the Steyne, His Majesty encountered an old friend, who was not a resident at Brighton. Waving his stick in the air, the King called out to him: "How are ye, what brings ye here, and how long do ye stay?" The individual so warmly greeted replied that he had come to see an ailing relative, and must return next day. "Pooh, pooh, pooh," said the King, with a hearty chuckle, "you mustn't go away until you have dined with me." "Please Your Majesty, I am under the necessity of returning immediately," answered this favoured subject. "Nonsense, come to-morrow, come to-morrow. Sir Herbert, do you mind he doesn't go away until he has dined with me," said the King. On this the invited guest frankly owned that he could not have the honour of dining with His Majesty, as he had not brought his breeches with him; without which he could not appear at the royal table. At this the Sovereign burst out laughing. "Not brought your breeches with you?" he said. "Well, come without them, come without them," and wringing his friend's hand he continued on his way.

Parliament met on February 3rd, 1831, when it was announced that the Reform Bill would be brought forward on the second of the following month. It was now whispered abroad that, although the King was favourably inclined towards it, the Queen was the reverse. The curiosity, excitement, and expectation of the public, the vast majority of which eagerly and

clamorously demanded this measure, rose day by day ; and resentment to Her Majesty's supposed opposition was shown, when on her return from the theatre on the night of February 22nd, a stone was sent crashing through a window of the royal carriage, which was surrounded by a seething, threatening, howling mob. Followed by furious thousands, it reached St. James's, when the King, who was greatly incensed, sent for Baring, the officer who had ridden beside the coach, and enquired who had thrown the stone. It had terrified Her Majesty, he said, and was "very disagreeable, as he should always be going somewhere."

Two days later the Queen celebrated her birthday by holding her first drawing-room, made memorable as the most magnificent held since the presentation of the late Princess Charlotte of Wales after her marriage ; and as being the occasion of the first public appearance at Court of the Princess Victoria, England's future Sovereign. Early in the morning the church bells all over the capital rang through the misty air ; flags were hoisted on the palaces and public buildings ; occasional gleams of sunshine brightened the streets, and took its keen edge from the nipping air. Before noon a detachment of the Royal Horse Guards clamoured into the courtyard of St. James's Palace, where bands were already stationed ; whilst the passages from the entrance to the throne-room were lined by yeomen of the Guard in crimson, and footmen in their state liveries of purple and gold.

At two o'clock Her Majesty, superbly dressed, wearing a splendid coronet without feathers, but looking pale and timid, entered the state-room accompanied by the King, hearty in appearance and breezy in manner; followed by his sister, the Princess Augusta, his sisters-in-law, the Duchesses of Cumberland and Gloucester, the Dowager Duchess of Leeds as Mistress of the Wardrobe, the Marchioness of Ely as Lady-in-Waiting, and the Marchioness of Westminster, the Countess of Brownlow, and Lady Clinton, as Ladies of the Bedchamber. Almost at the same moment the Princess Victoria and the Duchess of Kent arrived in state attended by their suite: when the former, according to the *Morning Chronicle*, "was introduced in a wheel-chair, her feet and ankles being so delicate as to be an insufficient support for the weight of her person." Short in stature, more mature in appearance than her twelve years warranted, self-possessed and dignified, she was "dressed in a frock of English blond, simple, modest and becoming." Taking her place at the left hand of the Queen, the Princess Victoria was an object of unconcealed interest, a feeling she returned by closely observing all that passed; and was much amused when His Majesty—who exercised his privilege of kissing the ladies presented to him—having saluted the young bride of an old friend, laughingly turned towards him saying: "Ah, ah, you can't help yourself."

The foreign ambassadors and ministers and their

wives having been presented, then came many noble dames, His Majesty's own subjects, each striving for a graceful display of a train in a limited circle, all wearing a forest of nodding feathers on their heads, but none, in deference to the Queen's wishes, daring to come into her presence with that unlimited and unclothed expanse of bosom and shoulder which it had pleased the late Sovereign to see. Queen Adelaide had also resolved that no woman whose reputation was not above suspicion should be presented to her; but one of these, titled, more remarkable for her beauty than her virtue, having skilfully eluded a severely exercised censorship, came flaunting forward to kiss the royal hand, which was sternly withheld from her, whilst Her Majesty curtly said: "Will you be good enough to pass on?" when, covered with confusion, she quitted the presence and was seen no more in the drawing-rooms of her Sovereign.

This crowded and gorgeous scene of women, magnificently dressed, with plumed heads and sparkling jewels, of men in brilliant uniforms decorated with the insignia of various orders, was not permitted to pass without a display of the party spirit then animating all ranks; for my Lady Jersey, a Tory of the rankest odour, having heard that Lord Durham, son-in-law of Earl Grey, and member of the Whig Ministry, had declared he would have the rash statements she had made of his wife and other Whig ladies contradicted in presence of the Queen, the Countess on catching sight of him rushed across the royal drawing-room,

and beside herself with anger confronted him saying : " I hear you have said things about me which are untrue ; and I desire you will call upon me to-morrow with a witness to hear my positive denial ; and I beg that you will not repeat such things about me " ; she then flounced back to her seat, mighty proud of her exploit, leaving him crimson with rage, and muttering that he would never enter her house again.

With reference to the appearance at this drawing-room of England's future monarch, it may be stated that one of the last acts of the late Government had been to pass a Bill making the Duchess of Kent Regent, in case the King died before the Princess Victoria attained her majority ; and that at an early meeting of the new parliament, an additional allowance of ten thousand pounds was made to the six thousand which the young Princess had already received. It is interesting to recall that, because of its foreign derivation, the great bulk of the English people objected to the name of Victoria being borne by their future Sovereign ; who, christened Alexandrina after one of her sponsors, the Emperor of Russia, and Victoria after her mother, was usually called Drina by the members of her family. On the additional grant being made by parliament, voice was given to the objection generally felt ; and two influential members of the House of Commons, Sir Matthew White Ridley, and Sir Robert Inglis, urged that, as the name Victoria " did not accord with the feelings of the English people," the Princess when she came to the throne should assume the style of

Elizabeth II. To this the future Sovereign was unwilling to accede; for already she had taken violent and invincible antipathy to Queen Elizabeth and "deprecatcd any association with her."

At the same time the new ministry was willing to allow Queen Adelaide fifty-four thousand pounds per annum, the amount given to the consort of George III.; but to this the King would not consent, and his refusal to burden his people with this sum increased his popularity immensely.

The Reform Bill to which the country looked forward with impatient eagerness was introduced in the Commons by Lord John Russell on March 1st, 1831, and was then printed. According to the Clerk of the Council, nothing else was talked or dreamt of; from morning till night every one in the clubs, streets, and private houses, debating its clauses, and wondering if it would pass. The Bill was read a second time before one of the most crowded houses ever known, and on a division being taken at three o'clock on the morning of the 23rd of the month, it was carried by a majority of one. This narrow escape probably prepared its supporters for a subsequent defeat by eight votes, on a hostile amendment, carried on April 19th. Lord Grey then decided to make an immediate appeal to the country, which he felt assured would sufficiently increase the number of his followers to enable him to pass the Bill through the lower House. To this step the Opposition was angrily hostile; it being their opinion that the King should not sanction a general election,

but seize this opportunity to emancipate himself from the Whigs, by sending for the Duke of Wellington and commanding him to form a new ministry.

His Majesty so far disagreed with them as to think that, in appointing Lord Grey prime minister, he had pledged himself to accept reform ; and that the earl's dismissal would be a breach of compact. He therefore readily gave his consent to the privately made request of his ministers that he would dissolve parliament in person, on the second day after their defeat. So secretly was the royal intention kept, that meanwhile Lord Wharncliffe gave notice of a motion to ask the King not to dissolve parliament, and so eager was His Majesty to keep his promise, that when told the cream-coloured horses employed on state occasions could not be got ready in time, he answered: "Then I will go with anybody else's horses." This was unnecessary, and eventually the black Hanoverian horses drew the royal coach.

Nothing could exceed the tumult of both Houses when they met at three o'clock on the day of dissolution. In the Commons the Government was furiously attacked by speakers whose anger increased because they received no reply ; and Sir Robert Peel was in the midst of a furious speech denouncing the cabinet for its incompetency, folly and recklessness, when the sound of guns was heard announcing the King's arrival at Westminster. Then followed a wild burst of triumphal cheers, above which was heard Sir Henry Hardinge screaming out : "The next

time you hear those guns, they will be shotted, and take off some of your heads," a prophecy received with derisive laughter. But undeterred by every kind of noise and interruption, Sir Robert Peel, pale from anger, cool in the midst of confusion, continued to shout sentences of condemnation against his political opponents, and to declare that the time was fast approaching when no man of honour could serve under the Crown. His harangue only came to an end when with grave presence the Black Rod entered to summon the faithful Commons to the House of Peers. Here proceedings had been still more outrageous. On attempting to move his address, Lord Wharncliffe had been interrupted by the Duke of Richmond, an ardent reformer, who endeavoured to prevent him speaking by raising points of order, of which Lord Lyndhurst assured him he knew nothing and shook his fist at him threateningly. At the same time Lord Londonderry, one of the bitterest opponents of reform, roared, stamped, gesticulated, flourished his whip in the faces of his opponents, and was held by the tails of his coat to prevent him flying at their throats; whilst the Chancellor, Lord Brougham, mischievous as an elf, delighted in the general disturbance which he stirred to greater fury by some stinging retort or pointed epigram as he flounced in and out of the House. Ineffectual and unheeded, the Speaker was endeavouring to obtain order, when suddenly His Majesty entered.

On reaching the adjoining robing-room he had been startled to hear sounds of general confusion and asked what noise was that, when he was answered : " If it please your Majesty, it is the Lords debating." Then turning to Lord Hastings he said : " I wear the crown ; where is it ? " As the coronation had not then taken place, he ought not to have worn it. Lord Hastings, however, brought it, and would have put it on his head, when His Majesty declared : " Nobody shall put the crown on my head but myself " ; when, suiting the action to the word, he turned with a smile to Lord Grey and said : " Now, my Lord, the coronation is over." Then the great doors on the right of the throne were flung wide, and to the cry of " the King, the King ; God save the King," His Majesty accompanied by the prime minister, the Chancellor, and other great officers, entered with a firm step, seated himself on the throne, and with every sign of anger looked at the quarter where disturbance was still visible. Greville was told by George Villiers, afterwards Earl of Clarendon, that in his life he had never seen such a scene, and as he looked " at the King upon the throne with the crown loose upon his head, and the tall grim figure of Lord Grey close beside him with the sword of State in his hand, it was as if the King had got his executioner by his side, and the whole picture looked strikingly typical of his and our future destinies."

When the Commons arrived His Majesty began his brief speech, saying he had come to prorogue parliament

with a view to its immediate dissolution; laying emphasis on the last two words. On his return through the streets he was warmly cheered by immense and excited crowds, who familiarly cried out: "Well done, old boy; sarved them right. Three cheers for the King and Reform. Hip, hip, hurrah!" a demonstration that delighted the monarch, who bowed to right and left, his cheery face basking in smiles. To celebrate the dissolution of parliament, the city and its neighbourhood for miles round, blazed with illuminations and bonfires; crowds, singing, cheering, bellowing, arguing and excited, surged through the streets, where they chanced to encounter the Queen as she returned from a concert. No sooner did they recognise the royal carriage than they surrounded it, furious with this opposer of reform, thrusting faces distorted by passion close to hers, their hoarse voices menacing her, their violence being only kept at bay by the free use of her footmen's canes, no body-guard being in attendance. As she neared St. James's Palace a howling mob still pursuing her, the King heard the tumult as he uneasily walked backwards and forwards waiting for her return, and when her chamberlain, Lord Howe, as usual preceded her, His Majesty asked: "How is the Queen"? "Very much frightened, sir," answered his lordship, on which the King hurried down to meet her and showed great anger at her distress.

From St. James's Palace, the crowd which every moment increased in numbers, took its way to the

Duke of Wellington's house, in which they smashed every pane of glass; the police who would have protected it being obliged to fly for their lives. A touch of tragedy lay in the fact that whilst this packed and turbulent mob, seething with vengeance and clamorous with threats, were sending volleys of stones and showers of splintered glass into every room, in one of them the lifeless body of the Duchess of Wellington lay in silence and darkness awaiting burial. For here was the bleak ending of a brief romance, ennobled by chivalry, but blighted by uncongeniality. That dissolution of their union by death should bring relief rather than irretrievable desolation, would have seemed impossible to those who, in the rosy beginning of their lives, were devoted to each other; for some thirty years before, whilst the future hero of Waterloo was attached to Lord Westmorland's staff in Dublin, he had fallen deeply in love with one of the reigning beauties of the vice-regal court, Lady Catherine Sarah Dorothea Pakenham, daughter of the third Lord Longford.

Though her father refused his consent to her marriage with a younger son whose income was limited, and whose prospects were not promising, Lady Catherine declared she would regard herself as his betrothed, and wait until his better fortune enabled him to marry her. Satisfied with this he soon afterwards went to India. He had not been gone many months when she was attacked by smallpox, a disease which in those days left disfiguring traces on its

victims. And no sooner did she discover that her beauty was ruined, than she wrote to her lover saying she would no longer consider herself as his future wife. But with that sense of honour that distinguished him, he refused to be released because she who loved him was stricken; and on his return from the East they were married in St. George's Church, Dublin, on April 10th, 1806.

She bore him two children. Only when too late was it discovered that in manners, tastes, and habits, they were uncongenial; and though she adored him to her last day, like many another wife who has more affection than tact, she was unable to adapt herself to her husband's ways, or bend to his inflexible will. Dreary disappointment was felt by both: misunderstandings darkened and chilled their lives. To her, the accidents of his good fortune did not compensate for want of his affection; to him, the belief that he was unable to inspire it entered like iron to his heart, and corroding there wrung from him, in the latter days of his lonely life, the tragic cry that he had never been loved.

Though no formal separation took place between them, they lived much apart. During her last illness his attentions to her were un failing—to woman's eyes mechanical and pitiful substitutes for love; and there was no doubt her death added to that sadness which grew on him with his years. For though the greatest general of his time, a conqueror whose praise was the theme of Europe, the adviser and friend of

monarchs, a minister who had carried a measure that gave toleration and justice to a large section of the community, a man who had received rich rewards and the highest honours his country could bestow on him, he was wont to declare his heart-felt opinion that, "There is nothing in this world worth living for."

CHAPTER II

Lady Bedingfeld and her Family—Friendship with the Princess Adelaide—Lady Bedingfeld as a Convent Boarder—Glimpses of a Quiet Life—Summoned to Court—Appointed a Woman of the Bedchamber—The Duchess of Saxe Weimar visits England—Met by Lady Bedingfeld at the Tower Stairs—The Little Princess Louisa—Lord Grey is made a Knight of the Garter—George Fitzclarence is Created Earl of Munster—His Services as a Soldier—He marries an Heiress—A Nobleman of the Old School—Lord Egremont's Wealth and Unostentation—A Patron of Artists—Daily Life at Petworth—Entertaining the Poor—Charles Greville's Praise of him—Is succeeded by his Son, afterwards first Baron Leconfield—Some Descendants of the Family

CHAPTER II

WHILST the general elections were taking place, and Whig candidates, pledged to support the Reform Bill, were being returned all over the country, the Court was enjoying itself in simple and homely fashion, the most intimate account of which is given by Charlotte Georgiana Lady Bedingfeld. A member of the old Catholic family of the Jerninghams, who claim descent from Margaret Plantagenet, niece of Edward IV., she had married a scion of the house of Bedingfeld, also Catholic, whose history dates from the Norman Conquest. But though rich in ancestry, her husband, Sir Richard Bedingfeld, was not equally well endowed with worldly substance; and desirous of economising, and of educating his family abroad, at a time when such a right was denied to his co-religionists at home, he left his historic moated manor-house of Oxburgh in Norfolk, and took up his residence at Ghent in 1816. Whilst there Lady Bedingfeld made the acquaintance, soon to ripen into friendship, of the Princess Ida of Saxe Meiningen, recently married to Charles Bernard Duke

of Saxe Weimar ; and when presently the duchess was visited by her sister, Princess Adelaide, the future Queen of England, also showed a warm regard for Lady Bedingfeld.

Years passed, and Lady Bedingfeld returned to England, where in 1829, she lost her beloved husband. From that time, even more than before, did she devote herself to works of charity and piety ; so that her renown spread among her neighbours, and led to her being described as a remarkable personage to her brother, as he travelled in the Bury coach, by an old lady wholly unacquainted with him. "Every night," said this gossip, "does Lady Bedingfeld prostrate herself before a crucifixion, monstrously bigoted, but will walk arm-in-arm with her inferiors, and affable and charitable to a degree." Her husband, two of the brothers she loved so well, her mother whom she worshipped, and a son and daughter having been taken from her by death, and the remainder of her children removed from her by marriage, the world became to her a desolate and dreary place, from which she sought peace and refuge in the old convent of Benedictine nuns at Hammersmith, that during the furious anti-Catholic riots that spread terror and destruction through the capital in 1790, had escaped because of its sanctified association with Queen Elizabeth, who had been educated within its ancient walls.

Lady Bedingfeld did not enter the convent as a member of the community, but as a boarder who,

whilst sharing the religious exercise of the nuns, was free to live in her own apartments; their floors waxed and shining as mirrors, their long narrow windows opening on orchards and gardens; the quaint furniture her own, endeared to her by a hundred associations; on the neutral colours of the painted walls, delicate miniatures and striking portraits of those she loved. Here she took up her residence in her sixtieth year, finding, as she writes, something in the strict order and control of a religious house which was wise and salutary. "I should never have gained so much ground in the way of resignation elsewhere. One of the most agonised feelings attached to the loss I have sustained is the *dreary independence* it bestows, at least it is so to me. My disposition has always found it pleasanter, in all the daily arrangements of life (as relating to myself), to follow rather than to lead."

Enjoying perfect liberty, she occasionally entertained her family and friends at dinner, or walked with them in the spacious shady gardens crowded with old-world flowers, and somnolent with a soothing peace, broken only by the voices of nuns singing in their choir stalls, or the slow ringing of bells that summoned to compline, mass, or vespers. But this detachment from a world once brimful of happiness to her, this profound stillness which permitted so many heart-wrenching pictures of the past to rise before her, was not easily borne at first.

By way of illustrating a life from which she was

summoned to fill a post at Court, and to which she returned with relief when her duties permitted, a few brief quotations may be given here from her diary, contained in the Jerningham Letters, published by Messrs. Macmillan, and edited by Mr. Egerton Castle, through whose courtesy they are cited. The first was written when she had been but a few days in the convent, and is dated February 22nd, 1830.

“When dusk came on, and I could not see to do anything, all my melancholy came over me, and everything else was forgotten—I laid down on my sofa and wept. After a time the servant brought the lamp and the tea things, and I revived, drank tea, and wrote to Constance Clifford. . . . I walked in the garden in the evening; there was something very soothing to me in the weather, still and grey and fresh, like subdued sorrow. The abbess and mother prioress were each walking up and down (separately) the long gravel walk. I had Godfredus, which greatly helped to elevate my mind. I felt it, however, rather embarrassing to pass the abbess without any mark of recognition, and took refuge in the farther garden, but there it was damp. At half-past four the nuns said the long litany; I found a quiet passage to the bottom chapel, through the garden, and I spent a little time there with satisfaction.”

Under the date March 2nd is given a quaint and pathetic record of the manner in which the twenty-four hours were spent, that affords some insight into the inner life of this lonely soul.

“A night of less sleep than usual ; awake by six. The weather very close ; but one mass, which I was glad of, for I felt as if I could hardly kneel. The abbess came rather later than usual which curtailed her visit. I abstain from butter at breakfast, though I eat as much as I can of a French roll. For the first time I began to believe that dry bread is less nourishing than when accompanied with butter, for notwithstanding I seem to swallow as much solid bread as I did before Lent, I feel a painful sickness by twelve o'clock, and it hinders me from enjoying the only sunshiny hour of the day, that of the abbess's visit. I have leave not to fast, but I wish to make a difference. . . .

“After dinner I returned to my room and my spirits gave way. I went into the lower chapel at four for the litany and compline (to-morrow being a feria). I hoped to be alone, but I found the pensioners there ; it seems they come to the litany in Lent. I outstayed them some time, shedding many tears. When I thought the nuns were gone to supper, I ventured forth to the bottom of the garden, but it felt damp and I dared not stay. I returned to my room and rang for my tea. I took up Godfredus, but I could not check my tears—the abbess arrived and it roused me. It was almost dark ; I know not if she could see my countenance ; her conversation had its usual effect, and I am now much better. I take nothing to eat at tea, but save the piece of my morning roll to eat with a glass of water before I go to bed. It is two

hours to tea, and I begin to feel faint ; and my bit of roll is very small, for I was obliged to take a piece of it at twelve. . . . I went to bed but had a very disturbed night, and every time I began to fall asleep I was aroused by a knock, seemingly upon the chest of drawers close to my bed. I felt surprised but not alarmed ; the idea of ghosts had long ceased to terrify me. Many times have I lain, looking about my room at the dead of night, and wishing to see the dear, well-remembered forms of those who have disappeared for ever. I had a light in my room and could conceive no cause for these little knocks—they were exactly as if somebody had knocked with their knuckle at my door, or rather on the drawers at my bedside. Whatever it was I answered it with a prayer. It occurred four times ; everything in the house was perfectly still above and below, but the house dog barked.”

The friendship formed in Ghent between the Princess Adelaide and Lady Bedingfeld was not forgotten ; for when the former became Duchess of Clarence the latter was bidden to friendly luncheons at Bushey House ; whilst when her Royal Highness came to the throne, the convent boarder was summoned to the Court, appointed a Woman of the Bed-chamber in the spring of 1831, and in the autumn, at the request of the Queen, was given by the King the precedence of a baron's daughter.

On one bright May day in 1831, before her regular attendance began, Lady Bedingfeld whilst present at a drawing-room at St. James's Palace, was told by

Lord Howe that she was to remain—after the courtiers had gone, as the Queen wished to speak to her.

When presently the ceremonies were over, and Her Majesty with sighs of relief was free to undo the bandages from her knee, which were supposed to lessen the fatigue of bending it to those presented, she joined Lady Bedingfeld, kissed, and sat down beside her. The Queen was in brighter spirits than usual, for on the following Wednesday she expected to receive her sister Ida, Duchess of Saxe Weimar, whom Captain Fitzclarence was to conduct across the Channel in the royal yacht and land at the Tower stairs; and it was her desire that Lady Bedingfeld should come to St. James's Palace at twelve o'clock on that day, and set out with the ladies appointed to meet the duchess and her six children. It may here be mentioned that one of these was the late Prince Edward of Saxe Weimar, who afterwards became a captain in the 1st Life Guards, Commander of the Forces in Ireland, and married Lady Augusta Gordon-Lennox, daughter of the fifth Duke of Richmond.

On the appointed date, May 18th, Lady Bedingfeld drove to St. James's Palace, where she was shown into a drawing-room and told that the Queen had not yet arrived from Windsor. Here she was left undisturbed for a tedious hour, during which she became restless and hungry; then, hearing the clatter of hoofs and roll of wheels, she hurried to the window to see coaches white with summer dust drive into the court-

yard. These she concluded had brought some of the royal suite from Windsor. Presently a woman servant entered to say a mistake had been made; for Lord Howe and Lady Mayo had already gone to the Tower; but as Her Majesty was anxious Lady Bedingfeld should also meet the Duchess of Saxe Weimar, fresh horses would be put under one of the newly arrived coaches for her use.

On being offered lunch she asked for a crust, that was brought by a footman just as the conveyance was ready. "I snatched up my shawl and my crust and rushed out of the room to get into it," she writes. "As I set my foot on the stairs I heard myself called from behind, and thinking it was Miss Wilson I answered impatiently without looking: "No, no, I can't stop." A nimble step came down four or five steps after me; I looked back, it was the Queen herself. She laughed and looked pleased at my impatience, and I looked astonished and shocked, for I knew not she was in the palace. Her Majesty did not of course detain me a moment; into the carriage I flew and preceded by a man on horseback in the dress he had worn from Windsor, I set off at a good rate along Pall Mall, not without dread that I should meet the royal carriages returning with the Duchess of Saxe Weimar."

Fast as four horses could carry her she drove eastward, until the City was reached, where lumbering carts seemed to bar her way "with malicious apathy," and crowds stared into the royal coach. Eventually she rattled in through the grim gates of the Tower and

was surrounded by beefeaters and guards, bustling and excited, for the royal yacht had already arrived, and the duchess was expected to land momentarily. Then up came Lord Howe in haste, who after some explanations accompanied her to the Tower stairs just in time to receive the duchess, who grasped Lady Bedingfeld's arm, and instead of mounting the steps, looked round anxiously to see that care was taken of her little daughter the Princess Louisa, then fourteen, who suffered from a spinal complaint that paralysed her legs. The duchess's hand "trembled exceedingly and her eyes were full of tears," says Lady Bedingfeld. "I advised her to stay and look, feeling sure the sailors would manage it well. In a moment we saw the Princess Louisa raised in her chair on the barge-man's shoulders; and in the same instant, her eye catching mine, she called out cheerfully: "Oh, Lady Bedingfeld." Then, eight coaches being filled by the duchess, her children, and her suite, away they drove, making a fine show as they passed through the streets to St. James's.

At the Queen's request Lady Bedingfeld undertook the charge of the invalid princess who was much attached to her, and was in consequence in constant attendance at Court; though such an occupation does not seem to have suited this lover of quiet and rest, as may be gathered from an entry in her journal made on one of the royal birthdays. "When we were in the King's closet the Princess Augusta shook hands with me and said: 'Do not look so grave, it does not

suit you.' I was dreading the fatigue of the evening, but was not aware I showed it. When the Duke of Norfolk came and spoke to me, I hardly knew him, he looked so well in a splendid uniform with the Earl Marshal's staff in his hand ; in general he appears so *chétif*."

In the following month, May 1831, His Majesty increased his popularity with the supporters of reform by making Lord Grey a Knight of the Garter, though at the time there was no vacancy in the Order. In writing to announce his bestowal of this favour, His Majesty said he "thought it of the greatest importance at the present moment to confer upon him a signal mark of his regard, and of his satisfaction with the whole of his lordship's conduct." About the same time honours also fell to the share of the Sovereign's family, who, since their father's accession to the throne had been impatiently urging him to ennoble them. Accordingly on May 12th, 1831, the King directed letters patent to be passed under the Great Seal, granting the dignities of baron, viscount, and earl of the United Kingdom and Ireland to his eldest son, George Fitzclarence and his heirs lawfully begotten, by the names, styles, and titles of Baron Tewkesbury, Viscount Fitzclarence, and Earl of Munster ; whilst his remaining children were given the titles and precedents of the sons and daughters of a marquis.

The new Earl of Munster, George Augustus Fitzclarence, born in 1794, was now in his thirty-seventh year. When barely fourteen he had been

appointed a cornet in the 10th Hussars. A sprightly youth, liking his profession, he had seen active service in Spain, where he had been aide-de-camp to General Slade at Corunna, and galloper to Sir Charles Stewart, afterwards second Marquis of Londonderry, then Wellington's adjutant-general. Taken prisoner on one occasion, George Fitzclarence had made a hair-breadth escape during a *mêlée*, been twice wounded, and by general bravery well earned the promotion which awaited his return home. Later he had served in India where he became aide-de-camp to the Marquis of Hastings; and on peace being made with the Maharajah Scindiah, had been sent with despatches overland to England. An account of his travels through countries then little known was afterwards published by him, entitled, "Journal of a Route across India and through Egypt to England." He had already given the public "An Account of the British Campaign in Spain and Portugal in 1809"; and the appreciation in which his abilities were held is shown by the fact that he was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society; and of the Royal Geographical, Antiquarian, Astronomical, and Geological Societies of London; and President of the Society for the publication of Oriental Texts.

Having served in Ireland as regimental major, and as lieutenant-colonel in the Coldstream Guards, he retired on half-pay unattached. Meanwhile, this scion of royalty, who is described as a good-looking, kind-hearted man much beloved by his fellow-officers,

had in 1819 married a wife whose portion in all amounted to eighty-five thousand pounds. This well-dowered bride was a sister of his old friend, Colonel Wyndham, and natural daughter of George O'Brien Wyndham, third Earl of Egremont, a descendant and part inheritor of the vast estates of Algernon, tenth Duke of Somerset; his grace being the eldest son of that mighty heiress who had the distinction of being twice widowed and thrice married before reaching her sixteenth year; and who, as wife of the proud Duke of Somerset, succeeded Sarah of Marlborough as Mistress of the Robes to Queen Anne.

In addition to his English estates, Lord Egremont had, in 1774, succeeded to the Irish property of his uncle, Percy Wyndham O'Brien, Earl of Thomond; which increased his income to about eighty thousand pounds per annum. This inheritance had come to him in his twenty-third year, when he was engaged to marry Lady Mary Somerset, and at a time when he was described by that delightful old gossip, Mrs. Delany, as a very pretty man with a vast fortune, very generous, and not addicted to the vices of the times. But he neither married Lady Mary Somerset, nor Lady Charlotte Maria Waldegrave, to whom he engaged himself six years later, and who judiciously broke with him because of his indifference to her charms, and of his infatuation by those of Lady Melbourne, of whom more anon.

Though one of the most remarkable of the great nobles of this reign, Lord Egremont took small

part in politics ; notwithstanding that whenever he addressed the House he maintained the traditional standard of the Wyndham oratory. Nor did he desire to mix with the Court ; his delight being to live in his magnificent house at Petworth where he entertained lavishly, interested himself in the welfare of his tenants, bred horses that frequently won the Oaks and Derby, dispensed charities amounting to twenty thousand a year, and acted as a generous patron to painters and sculptors, whom he continually employed. His home was crowded by a magnificent collection of pictures and statuary, begun by the second earl and continued by his successor, who built a gallery for their better display.

At Petworth, Turner had a studio into which none was permitted to enter but the earl, who gained admittance on giving a peculiar knock agreed upon between them ; and where among other pictures the master painted his Dewy Morning, and his Apuleia and Apuleius ; Here also, came annually with his wife and family, Charles Robert Leslie, who during one of his visits painted his famous Sancho and the Duchess. Benjamin Haydon, Flaxman, and Constable were other men of genius whom Lord Egremont received and employed ; and whose work he, who was one of the most cultivated amateurs of the day, delighted to watch in its progress. Plain spoken to bluntness, he never wasted words, or let others waste them on him ; and after conferring the greatest favours would hurry away before thanks could be returned,

His manners were shy, his mode of living unostentatious, his liveries plain, and his carriages had neither arms nor coronet on their panels. Detesting ceremony, he liked his friends to come and go as it suited them and say nothing about it; and above all he desired that they should never take leave of him. Under these circumstances—as might have been expected—he was never in need of company; and Petworth which could accommodate a hundred guests was sometimes taxed to lodge them. Meeting them at breakfast he left them to their own devices for amusement during the day, and met them again at seven o'clock at the head of his table, where he helped to satisfy their appetites.

It was inevitable that human nature, in its untrained and unlovely specimens, should take advantage of such boundless kindness; but those who forgot they were not living at an hotel, were apt to have their memories strengthened by a host who, though he seldom took the trouble to be angry, could swiftly turn out of doors those who wantonly infringed on his hospitality.

Speaking of him in his eighty-second year, Greville says his course was nearly run, and he had the mortification of feeling that though surrounded by children and grandchildren, he was almost the last of his race, for his family would soon become extinct. "Two old brothers and one childless nephew are all that are left of the Wyndhams, and the latter has been many years married. All his own children

are illegitimate, but he has everything in his power though nobody has any notion of the manner in which he will dispose of his property."

Lord Egremont did not die until five years later, and meantime this authority had an opportunity of seeing him entertain the poor women and children of the parishes adjoining Petworth. It had been the earl's custom to give them a great dinner at Christmas time, but his illness preventing this, he had no sooner recovered than he decided it should take place. So one fine day towards the end of May, sunshine filling unclouded skies, the park trees bursting into bloom, a soft southern breeze blowing, fifty-four tables, each fifty feet long were placed in a vast semicircle on the lawn before the house. When the firing of guns announced the hour for the feast, enormous joints were sent from the kitchen to two tents in the centre of the tables, where they were carved by gentlemen from the neighbourhood, and served by the peasantry. In this way plates of meat, plum puddings, and loaves were piled like cannon balls on hurdles and distributed amongst the guests. About four thousand had received tickets, but a vast number of the uninvited remained looking on outside the barriers, until the old earl who could not endure to see any one hungry, ordered these to be taken down and all admitted, when about six thousand were fed.

"Nothing could exceed the pleasure of that fine old fellow," says the chronicler. "He was in and out of his room twenty times, enjoying the sight of these

poor wretches, all attired in their best, cramming themselves and their brats with as much as they could devour, and snatching a day of relaxation and happiness. After a certain time the women departed, but the park gates were thrown open ; all who chose came in, and walked about the shrubbery and up to the windows of the house. At night there was a great display of fireworks, and I should think at the time they began not less than ten thousand people had assembled. It was altogether one of the gayest and most beautiful spectacles I ever saw ; and there was something affecting in the contemplation of that old man—on the verge of the grave from which he had only lately been reprieved, with his mind as strong and his heart as warm as ever—rejoicing in the diffusion of happiness, and finding keen gratification in relieving the distresses and contributing to the pleasures of the poor.”

Lord Egremont died in 1837, at the age of eighty-five, unmarried but beloved ; when George Wyndham, the eldest of his three illegitimate sons, inherited Petworth, together with estates in England and Ireland amounting to about one hundred and ten thousand acres.

On April 14th, 1859, he was created first Lord Leconfield, and ten years later died at Petworth in his eighty-second year, when he was succeeded by his second and eldest surviving son, Henry, who had been for some time an officer in the Life Guards and Member of Parliament for West Sussex. When

in his thirty-sixth year, this peer married Lady Constance Evelyn, second and youngest daughter of Lord Dalmeny and sister of the present Lord Rosebery. The third son of the first Lord Leconfield, and grandson of the last Earl of Egremont, the Hon. Percy Scawen Wyndham, married a daughter of Sir Guy Campbell, baronet, whose grandparents were the ill-fated Lord Edward Fitzgerald, and his wife the mysterious Pamela, supposed to have been the daughter of Madame de Genlis by the Duke of Orleans (*Egalité*), whom she strongly resembled, and who settled a pension of six thousand francs a year on her. In this way the Right Hon. George Wyndham, son of the Hon. Percy Scawen Wyndham, can claim as his great-grandparents, Lord Edward Fitzgerald and the beautiful Pamela.



CHAPTER III

An Uncrowned King—The Duke of Wellington makes an Enquiry—His Majesty ready to satisfy Tender Consciences, but eager to economise—Charles Greville goes to Windsor—The Queen and her Crown—The Sovereign dislikes being kissed by the Bishops—Their Majesties' Coronation—Celebrations of the Ceremony—Excitement over the Reform Bill—Extraordinary Scene in the House of Lords—Defeat—The Queen's Chamberlain—Lord Howe consults the Duke of Wellington—Lord Grey demands the dismissal of Lord Howe—Vengeance on the Opposers of Reform—Riots spread through the Land—Lord Grey resigns—His Majesty takes leave of his Ministers—The King's difficult Position—Obliged to send for Lord Grey—Proposals to create Fifty Peers—His Majesty's Private Message to the Lords—The Reform Bill is passed—Rewarding Adherents—Young William Gladstone—The Jockey Club Dinner—Lord Sefton and the King—The Court at Brighton—New Year's Eve—At the Pavilion—Lord Grey's offer to Lord Howe—Lady Howe consults George Greville—Strange Rumours of Lord Howe's Devotion to the Queen—Her Majesty's talk with Lady Bedingfeld—Lady Howe's Eccentricities.



CHAPTER III

THE new parliament met early in June 1831, with a large Whig majority, having for its prime minister Lord Grey, who according to Lady Granville at this time, "looked like a spring morning." The session had scarcely begun when an important question was brought forward by the late leader of the opposition. Though George IV. had been laid to rest some twelve months, neither the new monarch nor his ministers made the slightest preparation for the coronation; the omission of which ceremony would not have been without precedent in the history of our sovereigns. However, the Duke of Wellington and his supporters were resolved that William IV. should be crowned; and on July 4th, his grace sharply enquired of the premier whether he had received any instructions regarding His Majesty's coronation. On being answered in the negative, he next asked if it were not essential that within a certain specific period the King should take certain oaths connected with this ceremony. Lord Grey answered he was aware of the oaths to

which reference was made, but did not know that the law prescribed any particular time or place when or where they should be administered. In continuation he said the delay was owing to the fact that coronations had hitherto entailed vast expense, and it was important that the solemn compact which was then entered into between the King and the people should be effected at as low a charge as possible. He could only repeat that he had no commands from His Majesty on the subject, but the oaths prescribed by law should be taken in some way or other.

One result of the enquiry was, that a week later a committee of the Privy Council began to make arrangements for the coronation ; which the King, indifferent if not averse to the proceeding, desired might be as brief as possible ; and that all ceremonies might be dispensed with except those of the Church. Later, when presiding at a council of peers held at St. James's Palace, he said, "he would be crowned to satisfy the tender consciences of those who thought it necessary ; but that he considered it was his duty, as this country in common with every other was labouring under distress, to make it as economical as possible." In expressing this statement His Majesty probably remembered that the expenses of the previous coronation had amounted to two hundred and forty thousand pounds ; of which sixteen thousand had been paid to Rundell, the famous goldsmith and jeweller, as interest on the precious stones lent by him for the occasion.

The Privy Council committee sanctioned an estimate well under thirty thousand pounds for the cost of King William's coronation; and Charles Greville as its secretary, rode down to Windsor one Sunday in August in the midst of thunder, lightning, and rain, to consult with the Queen regarding the crown she would wear. "I was ushered into the King's presence, who was sitting at a red table in the sitting-room of George IV., looking over the flower garden," says he. "A picture of Adolphus Fitzclarence was behind him (a full length), and one of the parson, Rev. Augustus Fitzclarence, in a Greek dress opposite. He sent for the Queen who came with the Landgravine and one of the King's daughters, Lady Augusta Erskine, the widow of Lord Cassilis's son. She looked at the drawings, meant apparently to be civil to me in her ungracious way, and said she would have none of our crowns, that she did not like to wear a hired crown, and asked me if I thought it was right that she should. I said: 'Madam, I can only say that the late King wore one at his coronation.' However, she said: 'I do not like it, and I have got jewels enough, so I will have them made up myself.' The King said to me: 'Very well, then *you* will have to pay for the setting.' 'Oh no,' she said; 'I shall pay for it all myself.' The King looked well, but seemed infirm."

A few days later, a programme of the coronation was taken down to Windsor for His Majesty's approval. "The homage," to quote Greville once

more, "is first done by the spiritual peers with the archbishop at their head. The first of each class (the archbishop for the spiritual), says the words, and then they all kiss his cheek in succession. He said he would not be kissed by the bishops, and ordered that part to be struck out. As expected, the prelates would not stand it; the archbishop remonstrated, the King knocked under, and so he must undergo the salute of the spiritual as well as the temporal lords."

The date of the coronation was fixed for Thursday, September 8th, 1831. The dawn of this autumnal day was chill and dreary, rain had fallen heavily through the night, dark clouds crossed the sky, but undeterred by promises of drenching showers, vast numbers set forward through the silent streets in the early morning, anxious to secure good positions on the route of the procession. At five o'clock a royal salute was fired by the artillery, and an hour later the Household troops took up their position from St. James's Palace to Westminster Abbey, where soon after the peers and peeresses began to arrive.

At half-past ten the roar of cannon announced that the procession had started, and thousands of eager eyes were turned in one direction to see a squadron of Life Guards trotting briskly forward, splashing mud from the ill-paved streets to right and left. They were followed by eight carriages, each drawn by six horses containing the King's sisters—the Queen of Württemberg, the Princess of Hesse Homburg, and the unmarried Princess Augusta Sophia; together

with the Queen's sister, the Duchess of Saxe Weimar. Then came His Majesty's brothers with their wives, also in state carriages, close behind which marched the King's bargeman and his forty-eight watermen in their bright liveries ; and after them ten coaches carrying members of the royal household ; another squadron of Life Guards ; a long and glittering line of gallant equerries, and *aides-de-camp* on horseback, two and two, with yeomen riders on each side ; the marshalsmen in ranks of four, a hundred yeomen of the Guard, and then the state coach drawn by eight cream-coloured horses, a yeoman at each wheel, and two footmen at each door, in which sat the King and Queen, he wearing the uniform of a British admiral, she dressed in "a gold gauze over a white satin petticoat, with a diamond stomacher, and a purple velvet train lined with white satin and a rich border of gold and ermine."

Ringings of bells greeted them, in response to which the Queen, looking nervous and pale, repeatedly bowed, whilst the King, ruddy and jovial, nodded familiarly to right and left. Bands played, hats and handkerchiefs were waved, thousands of voices hurraed as the procession went up Pall Mall to Charing Cross, through Whitehall and Parliament Street, and so reached the Abbey where the peers and peeresses in their robes, with the lords spiritual, were already in their places ; whilst the great officers of the state, the Archbishops of Canterbury and York, and the bishops appointed to carry the chalice, paten, and

Bible were already assembled in the Jerusalem Chamber in readiness to join Their Majesties. The coronation then took place, shorn of much of the stately grandeur which had heretofore marked the ceremony ; so that the dissatisfied spoke of it as " a half-crownation."

A subject of general remark was the absence from amongst the royalties present of the Princess Victoria, whose health it was afterwards explained, made it necessary for her to absent herself from a fatiguing ceremonial and enjoy the air in the Isle of Wight.

The day was kept as a general holiday, to celebrate which the new entrance from Carlton Terrace to St. James's Park was opened for the first time. At night the city was illuminated and fireworks were discharged in Hyde Park attended by serious accidents and loss of life. The usual coronation dinner to the peers in Westminster Hall was not given ; but the King entertained his family at a banquet in St. James's Palace ; when he made a speech saying that the day had afforded him great satisfaction ; but he did not at all agree with those who had considered the ceremony indispensable ; for the compact between himself and his people was as binding in his mind, before as after the ceremony ; that no member of the House of Hanover would forget the condition on which he held the crown, and that he was not a whit more desirous now than before taking the oath to watch over the liberties and to protect the welfare of his people.

No sooner had public excitement regarding the coronation subsided, than it was quickly and violently roused once more over the prospect of the Reform Bill, with results that distracted the Court and shook the country to its centre. On September 22nd, 1831, the measure was passed in the House of Commons by a large majority, and was then fiercely debated in the House of Lords for five nights; the intensity of party spirit reaching its climax in the early hours of October 8th. The scene presented by the Upper House on this occasion has been described as singularly impressive. At half-past five, whilst the first glimmer of dawn was struggling with darkness, Lord Grey, tall, calm, and dignified, rose up and spoke for an hour and a half with a clearness of statement and fervent eloquence that seized the attention of an assembly, crowded not only with its own members, but with that of the Commons who stood in rows three deep below the bar, sat on the ground against the wall, or perched themselves on the railings. Yet not only the prime minister, but those also who opposed him, were listened to in a solemn silence worthy of a great occasion when one of the most important pages in the history of legislation was being written. Francis Jeffrey, the direful spirit of the *Edinburgh Review*, the most sensitive soul that ever delighted in flaying an author, at this time one of the Commons, in describing what he saw, writes: "Between four and five when the daylight began to shed its blue beams across the red candle light, the scene was very picturesque, from the

singular grouping of forty or fifty of us sprawling on the floor, awake and asleep, in all imaginable attitudes and with all sorts of expressions and wrappings. . . . The candles had been renewed before dawn and blazed on after the sun came fairly in at the high windows, and produced a strange but rather grand effect on the red draperies and furniture and dusky tapestry on the walls."

At seven o'clock in the morning this great debate ended in the defeat of the Reform Bill by a majority of forty-one votes ; and by an assemblage which, about the same time, flung out a Bill to abolish death as punishment for forgery.

Next day all the London papers with the exception of the *Morning Chronicle* and the *Times*, appeared in borders of deep black ; but what the latter paper lacked in its show of sable, it compensated for by the crimson language in which it attacked the bishops for their irreconcilable violence against the Reform Bill. News of the defeat having been immediately despatched to Windsor, the King declared he was not disappointed, and suggested that it should be remodelled. The evident change in his views led his ministers to dread and to resent an influence in the royal household, known to be bitterly hostile to them, and exercised by the Queen's Chamberlain, Lord Howe, who not only voted against the Government, but as his correspondence proves, was endeavouring "to open the King's eyes and show him the great difficulties in which he was placed" ; and to induce the Duke of

Wellington to join in an intrigue which would overthrow his opponents.

As early as the previous May, some unpleasantness had arisen between His Majesty and the prime minister, regarding the Queen's Chamberlain, an account of which is given by John Wilson Croker. Whilst the latter with several other guests of the Duke of Wellington was staying at Walmer, they were surprised by the arrival one morning before seven o'clock of a courier from Windsor with a despatch for the duke. In times of such political uncertainty, curiosity became agape, heads were put together, whispers and looks exchanged, all concluding that something of significance had happened. "I myself did not feel the same curiosity about the matter," writes Croker, "but while we were amusing ourselves with all manner of guesses, the duke sent for me into his room to tell me, *sub sigillo*, that the messenger had brought him a letter from Lord Howe, soliciting (by the King's own command) His Grace's advice about a very impertinent paragraph in the *Times*, as to a letter written by Sir Herbert Taylor, by the King's order, to Lord Howe, 'to rebuke him for chattering,' says the paragraph, 'about the Reform Bill.' There was a letter written by Sir H. T. in the King's name to Lord Howe to request him to regulate his opposition to the Bill, so as not to compromise the King or Queen; but this letter was known only to the King, Taylor, Lord Grey and (of course when it reached him at Gopsal on Saturday) Lord Howe himself.

“As the paragraph appeared in Monday’s *Times*, it was clear that Lord Grey must have communicated the information to the *Times*, or to some one who had communicated it to the *Times*. Lord Howe, who meanwhile had come back to town, hurried to the King and complained that what was, he thought, known only to the King and himself should be thus made known to, and perverted by, the editor of a newspaper, and his first movement was to resign his office on the spot. This exhibition of Lord Grey’s indiscretion and his connection with the *Times* (which has been extraordinarily violent and offensive) produced a great effect on the King, who wept at the situation in which he found he was placed, and entreated Lord Howe not to resign or to take any step in this embarrassing and extraordinary affair till he had consulted the Duke of Wellington, and this was the occasion of the messenger.

“The duke answered him in an excellent letter (such as, agreeably to a suggestion of Lord Howe’s, might be shown to the King) in which after expressing his regret at this new sign of the connection of the ministers with the revolutionary press, and their disregard, not only to all delicacy, but of their duty towards the King, he advises him not to resign, which is, perhaps, the object of the informant of the *Times*, but to leave it to His Majesty’s own discretion and sense of his dignity to vindicate himself from a continuance of such proceedings. The letter is long and calculated to open the King’s eyes to the alarming



From an engraving after the painting by G. Ward.

RICHARD WILLIAM PENN CURZON-HOWE, FIRST EARL HOWE.

[*Face p. 80.*]



signs of the times, even if, as may be gathered from Lord Howe's letter, His Majesty were not already alarmed on the subject.

"I told the duke, in return, that I had heard before I left town that Lord Howe was *en butte* to the ministers, and that there would very soon be a trial of strength on the part of ministers to get rid of him ; that I had been informed that the Queen had told the King that she was well aware of the intrigues of his ministers to get rid of Lord Howe ; that she, at least, never would consent to part with him on such grounds as they alleged ; that if His Majesty pleased to dismiss him, she, of course, would submit, but in that case she hoped His Majesty would allow her to do without a chamberlain altogether, which in these times of economy, would hardly be objected to by the ministers, if she had no objection. I told the duke that I had heard all this ten days ago, with the intimation that Lord Howe would be the pivot on which the fate of the ministry would turn as far as Windsor was concerned. The duke was very much struck by the circumstance of the King's advising Lord Howe to consult him, and he made a forcible use of this topic in his answer to Lord Howe, as showing the King's false position when he was obliged to seek council against his ministers from their political antagonists."

Though it is more than doubtful that a man of Lord Grey's high sense of honour had communicated a private letter to the revolutionary press, as the *Times* was called, it was quite certain that the Premier journeyed

to Windsor in the following October (1831) to request the dismissal of Lord Howe, who had recently declared that nothing would induce him to resign and that the ministers might yet find him a thorn in their sides more annoying than they dreamt of. Lord Grey was graciously received by His Majesty who readily agreed to his wishes, but the Queen, indignant at such an action, resentfully and persistently declined to nominate a successor to her chamberlain, who, equally outrageous at what he considered an insult, resolved with Her Majesty's permission to retain his post unofficially. This injudicious action gave firmer root to the opinion already entertained by the public, that "domestic importunity"—to use a select phrase of the *Times*—was being used to turn the King from his liberal principles. The same journal, in commenting on this incident, took the liberty of reminding Her Majesty that "a foreigner was no very competent judge of English liberties, and politics are not the proper field for female enterprise or exertion."

The defeat of the Reform Bill by the peers had been received at first with feelings of sulky stupor by the people; but soon their smouldering indignation burst into flame, and on October 12th the Lord Mayor and corporation, attended by about sixty thousand citizens, marched to St. James's Palace and presented His Majesty with a petition, praying that the measure should not be denied them. A levee was held that day and the crowd instead of dispersing, remained in the park to see the enemies or friends of the Bill

leave the Court. The latter were vehemently cheered and the former were hooted, two of them being singled out for special vengeance ; for when the Marquis of Londonderry appeared on horseback, he was hailed with a shower of stones, and only escaped by drawing his pistol, setting spurs to his horse, and riding for his life through the yelling, menacing crowd that surrounded him. His Majesty's brother, the Duke of Cumberland, was not so fortunate ; for not only was he stoned, but he was dragged from his horse, and probably would have been torn to pieces if he had not been rescued by the police. And such was the feeling of the public at large against the enemies of reform, that when the mail coach brought news to Perth that His Royal Highness and the Duke of Wellington had been shot, it was received with ringing cheers by the inhabitants, who applied to the authorities for permission to illuminate by way of expressing their satisfaction. Before night ended the crowd that had gathered in St. James's Park attacked the houses of the Earl of Dudley, the Marquis of Bristol, and the Duke of Wellington, leaving them without a pane of glass. During the remainder of his life the latter refused to have his windows mended ; and for years the ugly sight of smashed glass in Apsley House, proved a painful reminder of this reign of terror. It was protected from further possible violence by heavy iron shutters fastened from within ; whilst these were covered inside by sliding mirrors that hid their grim hideousness from visitors and inmates.

The feeling of hatred against, and desire for vengeance on those opposed to reform penetrated the provinces, and burst into flame at Bristol on the occasion of the entry into that city of the Recorder, Sir Charles Wetherell, who was notorious for his active hostility to the measure. Disguised as a labourer he barely escaped from being torn asunder by the mob, who furious at losing their prey, and eager to show their hatred to another opposer of the Bill, burned down the episcopal palace. In the fray which followed between them and the military, many were killed and wounded; and by the end of three days the greater part of the city was reduced to smouldering ruins. A reign of terror also left Derby blood-stained and smoking. Nottingham Castle, the seat of the Duke of Newcastle, was attacked and reduced to ruins; at Gloucester the prison was set on fire and the inmates released; in Somersetshire the bishop of the diocese was set upon whilst consecrating a church; at Croydon the Archbishop of Canterbury whilst presiding over a meeting for the Propagation of the Gospel, was obliged to fly for his life; and the prelates in general who had voted against reform, were burned in effigy all over the country.

Though defeated, the Whig government did not resign, and the Reform Bill once more passed the House of Commons by a large majority in April, 1832, and early in the following month was again thrown out by the Lords. It was, therefore, evident

that it could not be carried through the Upper House unless its opposers were outnumbered by the creation of about fifty Liberal peers ; but though William IV. had made so many knights that they were popularly known as "The Thousand-and-one," and "The Arabians," he hesitated to flood the peerage. As a result Lord Grey tendered his resignation, and the Duke of Wellington, who felt bound "to enable the King to shake off the trammels of his tyrannical ministers," readily undertook to obey His Majesty's commands, and form a new Government.

The monarch took leave of the Cabinet "with a great effusion of tenderness" ; and when the Household waited on him, to resign their badges and sticks of office, he seemed weary and depressed ; as if doubtful after all of the supreme joy of that sovereignty on which he had entered with so light a heart. To one of these he said plaintively : "Lord Foley, you are a young man—at all events, in comparison with me—and you will probably come into office again ; but I am an old man, and I am afraid I shall not have the pleasure of seeing you here."

Never possessing a strong will, and being readily impressionable to the influences around him, this lover of peace and good will towards all was now sadly perplexed, and found small relief in strong expletives. For according to Greville he was incessantly worried by all the members of his family who were opponents to the Reform Bill, "and he

has probably had more difficulty in the long run, in resisting the constant importunity of his entourage, of the womenkind particularly, than the dictates of his ministers ; and between this gradual and powerful impression, and his real opinion and fears, he was not sorry to seize the first good opportunity of shaking off the Whigs."

But the triumph of those who congratulated themselves on the change of Government was immediately turned to rage ; for with one or two exceptions the Duke of Wellington found his former ministers unwilling to co-operate with him, and he was obliged to inform His Majesty that owing to the excitement of the present crisis, he was unable to form a cabinet. The King was therefore obliged to send for Lord Grey, when the suggestion of creating a batch of peers had to be faced once more. His Majesty was still opposed to the project, and it is doubtful if the prime minister regarded it with favour. But though the precedent was bad, the crisis was serious ; it being generally believed that no choice was left between reform and revolution. Ultimately, after many interviews between His Majesty and his ministers and much perturbation of spirit, the King gave his written authority for the creation of "an adequate but indefinite number" of peers ; a proceeding that so appalled the Tory nobles that they were quite willing to obey the Sovereign's privately conveyed request to refrain from voting against the Reform Bill when it was next brought forward,

and in this way to render the threatened addition to their order unnecessary.

Accordingly when the Reform Bill came before the House of Lords on June 4th, 1832, all but twenty of its former opponents quitted the chamber, when it passed by a majority of eighty-four. Three days later it received the royal assent, and on passing into law was celebrated all over the land with such rejoicings as probably had never been seen before.

In the following December Parliament was dissolved in order that the elections under the Reform Act might take place. A brief extract from the journals of a thorough-paced Tory, John Wilson Croker, throws some light on this stirring time. Writing on December 13th, he says: "The elections are going as badly as possibly for the Tories as a party. Of about one hundred and fifty returns they have only about forty-four. . . . Tom Duncombe is in the most ludicrous misery for his defeat. Folks thinks that he must join Brummell (exiled by debt). He says that it cost Lord Salisbury fourteen thousand pounds, and that for half the money he could have retired: the extent of bribery is—I repeat it—enormous and will decide all."

These elections were memorable amongst other things for the return as one of the members for Newark, in the Tory interest, of young William Ewart Gladstone, who sacrificing his own desire to enter the Church which held his keenest interests to

the last, obeyed his father's wishes and became a politician. And from this date with two brief exceptions he continued to sit in the Commons until his resignation in 1895.

In the first Reformed Parliament which assembled in January 1833, the Whigs had an overwhelming majority of five hundred and nine, against one hundred and forty-nine Tories. The ministry "like honest men," as Croker says, then set about paying some of their debts to those who had assisted them ; when Lord Stafford was created Duke of Sutherland and Harry Vane, Marquis of Cleveland, the influential owner of six borough seats, was made a duke. "When I told Francis Leveson, six months ago," writes Croker to Lord Hertford, "that his father was a reformer in hopes of being a duke, he laughed at me and assured me that the poor old man had no such thoughts, but was frightened at the idea of losing his present titles and estates, and supported the ministers out of mere cowardice and dotage. When Cartwright on the hustings at Northampton, prophesied that Cleveland was to be a duke, the patriot peer was indignant, and actually obliged Cartwright to unsay what he had said," and lo, in a few weeks the *Gazette* fulfils my rejected guess, and Cartwright's disavowed assertion.

"Then they have made Western a peer, because he was beaten in Essex by Baring. This last stroke has been particularly designed to show how cordially the King is with them ; for surely, if there were any

peerage which His Majesty might and ought to have refused, it was this particular one; for, besides the obstinate indecency of making a man a peer only because he was rejected by a *reformed constituency*, there was the peculiarity in the case, that Baring was the man to whom the King owed and professed great obligation, for his readiness in May last to sacrifice his own comfort and his private feelings for His Majesty's service. And what do you think is the excuse that the King has condescended to give the Tories for this strange act? Why, forsooth, that he wanted to have another friend to the agricultural interest in the House of Lords. *Risum teneatis?* Yet his favourite society is Tory; and all his verbal civilities and attentions at Brighton are for the Tories. He promised, it is said, Sir H. Neale the command at Portsmouth, *vice* Foley, dead; but his ministers would not consent, and His Majesty submitted, but consoled his own dignity by inviting Neale to spend a week at Brighton, and to dine with him every day, 'to show *the fellows* and the world his real sentiments.' Is not that capital?"

Though the Sovereign had been greatly harassed whilst these events were taking place, his love of entertaining, his desire to see jovial faces around him, his eagerness for an opportunity of making speeches asserted themselves, and he resolved to give a dinner to the Jockey Club at St. James's Palace; for though Buckingham Palace, which had been rebuilt for George IV., was now finished and ready for

habitation, both the King and his Consort disliked it, and his successor, Queen Victoria, was the first monarch to reside there. Chief amongst the members of the Jockey Club was my Lord Sefton, an ardent reformer ; who, indignant at the late resignation of the Whig ministry and at His Majesty's willingness to get rid of them, determined that he would not be entertained by the King. He therefore removed his name from the list of the club's members ; so that when a royal invitation was sent to him he excused himself from accepting it, by stating that he no longer belonged to the club. Unaware of his motive, the monarch good-naturedly asked him to come as his friend ; but his lordship without making reply absented himself.

When, a few days later, Lord Grey was reinstated as prime minister, Lord Sefton's animosity to the Sovereign cooled ; and the Queen's next ball was attended by the whole Sefton family, including the eldest son, Lord Molyneux, who had just returned from Liverpool, where he had made a political speech bitterly commenting on Their Majesties' bearing towards the Reform Bill.

By this time the King had been made aware of Lord Sefton's reason for refusing his invitation, and publicly turned his back on him ; whilst next day he bade the Queen's Chamberlain forbid Lord Molyneux to appear at Court. And presently when Lord Lichfield, as Master of the Buckhounds, was about to give the customary dinner at the con-

clusion of the Ascot races to the King, the latter angrily erased Lord Sefton's name from the proposed list of guests. On this Lady Lichfield pleaded for him with the Queen, saying that his action regarding the Jockey Club had been greatly misrepresented; when Her Majesty coldly replied she hoped it was so, and the Sefton family continued in disgrace.

In December of this year, 1832, Their Majesties went to Brighton where they were followed by many courtiers, among whom were the Chesterfields, the Cowpers, the Howes, Lord Alvanley, with whom Charles Greville stayed, Lord Lansdowne, fresh from Paris, Lord Dudley, eccentric to the brink of madness, the Princess Lieven, wife of the Russian ambassador breathing political intrigue, and scores of others. All day long the town was a scene of bustle, excitement, and gaiety; the courtiers, as Greville says, finding "plenty of occupation in visiting, gossiping, dawdling, riding, and driving; a very idle life and impossible to do anything. The Court very active, vulgar, and hospitable; King, Queen, Princes, and Princesses and attendants constantly trotting about in every direction." A fresh diversion was added to their existence when Lord Palmerston brought down and introduced to Their Majesties Namik Pacha, the Turkish Ambassador in his bejewelled and crimson fez and high boots, a gold chain and medal round his neck, his heavy slow-motioned eyes observant of all strange sights, and his mind suffering severe shock and bewilderment, from the fact stated by Greville, "that all the stupid vulgar

Englishwomen followed him about as a lion, with offensive curiosity."

Christmas came and was celebrated with joyous festivity by the Court. "On the last day of the year there was a small party at the Pavilion," says John Wilson Croker. "When the clock struck twelve everybody got up from the card table and went and kissed the Queen's hand and made the King a bow and wished Their Majesties a happy new year; upon which the King started up in great spirits, and insisted on having a country dance to dance in the new year. Lady Falkland sat down to the piano, struck up a lively tune, and everybody took out their partners; and who do you think the King took out? Lord Amelius Beauclerk. You know Lord Amelius and you think I am jesting. No, by all that's nautical, quizzical, clumsy, monstrous, and masculine, Lord Amelius was His Majesty's partner; and I am told by one who saw it, that the sight of the King and the old admiral going down the middle, hand in hand, was the most royally extravagant farce that ever was seen.

"Lord Munster," adds this correspondent, "has been lately at Brighton, and has had even better luck than Lord Amelius; for his father gave him last Tuesday two thousand five hundred sovereigns, with which he made the best of his way to Petworth, in hopes, I suppose, that Lord Egremont, would take the royal hint and imitate so laudable an example."

Amongst all the courtiers at Brighton none was more

carefully and critically observed than William Penn, who had succeeded his paternal grandfather as Viscount Curzon of Penn, and been created Earl Howe in July 1821. The first Lord Howe—grandfather of the present earl—was at this time in his thirty-fifth year; and had been eleven years married to Harriet Georgiana, a daughter of Robert sixth Earl of Cardigan; a daring horsewoman, a delightful dancer, unusually tall, strikingly handsome, decisive in manners, and having as Lady Granville states “a brilliancy, life, and glowing animation that youth ought always to have, but so seldom has.”

Already high in favour with the late sovereign, to whom his courtly bearing and gracious manner had recommended him, Lord Howe, on the accession of the Sailor King, had continued to enjoy the favour of royalty, and been appointed, as already mentioned, chamberlain to Queen Adelaide. Then followed the unforeseen; for he had not been many months at Court, before the entourage, with uplifted eyebrows and twitching lips, began to notice his devotion to Her Majesty, whose prominent features, yellow hair, and sallow complexion made her seem plain to less appreciative eyes. Dismissed from his office for political reasons, he had continued to hold it unofficially, an act that gave food for fresh gossip to the uncharitable. Later, when the Reform Bill had become law and party spirit grew less violent, the prime minister desiring to conciliate the Queen, wrote to Lord Howe offering to reinstate him as Her Majesty’s chamberlain, provided

that in future he refrained from opposing the Government, though he was not bound to support it. In reply Lord Howe declared he would accept no favour from the prime minister, and added that the stipulation mentioned was an insult; so that the peace offering failed to have the effect intended.

Writing of the Christmas spent at Brighton by the Court, Charles Greville one of the keenest observers of its movements says: "Lord Howe is devoted to the Queen and never away from her. She receives his attentions, but demonstrates nothing in return; he is like a boy in love with this frightful majesty, while his delightful wife is laid up (with a sprained ankle and dislocated joint) on her couch." It is doubtful if the Royal Consort, who was devoted to her elderly husband, was aware of her chamberlain's infatuation; and it is certain that her resentment at his dismissal rose from the fact that neither the King nor Lord Grey had consulted her about it; for if they had, "she would have consented to the sacrifice at once with a good grace; but in the way it was done she thought herself grossly ill-used," as Lady Howe from her couch explained to Charles Greville. Commenting on this information with suspicious cynicism, he says:

"It is impossible to ascertain the exact nature of this connection. Howe conducts himself towards her (the Queen) like a young ardent lover; he never is out of the Pavilion, dines there almost every day, or goes every evening, rides with her, never quitting

her side, and never takes his eyes off her. She does nothing, but she admits his attentions and acquiesces in his devotion ; at the same time there is not the smallest evidence that she treats him as a lover. If she did it would be soon known, for she is surrounded by enemies. All the Fitzclarences dislike her, and treat her more or less disrespectfully. She is aware of it but takes no notice. She is very civil and good-humoured to them all ; and as long as they keep within the bounds of decency, and do not break out into actual impertinence, she probably will continue so."

In the following month, January 1833, Lady Howe asked her husband to show the correspondence regarding the chamberlainship to Greville, who found it long and confused ; and on his opinion being asked by the earl, advised him to prevail on the Queen to appoint some one else in his place. "I could not tell him all that people said," continues Greville, "but I urged it as strongly as I could, hinting that there were very urgent reasons for so doing. He did not relish this advice at all, owned that he clung tenaciously to the office, liked everything about it, and longed to avail himself of some change of circumstances to return ; and that, though he was no longer her officer, he had ever since done all the business, and in fact was, without the name, as much her chamberlain as ever.

"Lady Howe, who is vexed to death at the whole thing, was enchanted at my advice, and vehemently

urged him to adopt it. After he went away she told me how glad she was at what I had said, and asked me if people did not say and believe everything of Howe's connection with the Queen, which I told her they did. I must say that what passed is enough to satisfy me that there is what is called 'nothing in it,' but the folly and vanity of being the confidential officer and councillor of the Queen, for whom he has worked himself up into a sort of chivalrous devotion. Yesterday Howe spoke to the Queen about it, and proposed to speak to the King; the Queen (he says) would not hear of it, and forbade his speaking to the King."

Later in the year, Lady Bedingfeld had a conversation with Her Majesty touching on this subject. In reply to the remark made by the Lady of the Bedchamber, that no doubt Lord Grey regretted his action regarding the chamberlainship, Her Majesty said everybody told her so; but if he was sorry why did he not make some apology. "If he had done so, all would have been forgotten. She treated him now with civility, as she did all who came, but he always looked so embarrassed and trembling, that she did not know what to say. I attributed it," adds Lady Bedingfeld, "to the shyness so often found in the English character, though united with talent and public life."

The Queen then mentioned that the first time she went alone in state to the playhouse attended by Lord Denbigh, she also took Lord Howe with her

to show that though obliged by the ministry to dismiss him, he had done nothing to displease her. "I could not help sighing when she told me this," writes her sympathetic confidant, "for the Queen is so truly good and virtuous that she has no idea that people should fancy she likes him *too well*. I ventured to say that the newspapers had been very insolent and ill-natured about her. She replied: 'Yes, she knew that, but truth at last always found its way.'"

She then spoke of the various members of her suite. She considered Lady Bingham handsome, worldly, and not over wise, and believed her sister, Lady Howe, was much cleverer, more amiable, but odd in manner, saying and doing just what came into her head. As an instance of this, the Queen said that once when she and the King were driving with Lord and Lady Howe, the latter being tired, put her feet on her husband's knees as she sat facing him; at which her royal mistress could not help laughing "at the oddity of the thing, and Lord Howe's extreme embarrassment. But this was not all, for presently she put them out of the window of the royal carriage, heeding her lord's signal of distress only to remark in surprise: 'What do you mean by shaking your head?'" On another occasion when the earl and countess, together with Her Majesty were looking at and ticketing some articles intended for a bazaar, Lady Howe took a fancy to a pair of slippers which her husband offered to buy

for her if they fitted her, when putting one on her foot, she planted it on the table. "I think such actions would be improper in a family party," comments Lady Bedingfeld, "but it approaches to madness in the presence of the King and Queen."

CHAPTER IV

Resignation of the Ministry and Disappointment of the King—Lord Melbourne and Tom Young—The New Prime Minister—Personal Appearance of William Lamb—His Meeting with Lord Bessborough's Daughter—A Clever and Singular Child—The Children of the Duke of Devonshire—The Dowager Lady Spencer and her Granddaughter—William Lamb falls in love with Lady Caroline—Melbourne House and its Mistress—Scene at a Marriage Service—Social Life—Extracts from Lord Melbourne's Diary—Lady Caroline hears of a New Poet—Sensation caused by Byron in Society—Lady Caroline's First Sight of him—Their Second Meeting—The Poet calls at Melbourne House—Lord Hartington introduces the Waltz into England—Lady Caroline's Infatuation—Resents her Husband's Indifference—Byron proposes to Miss Milbanke—A *Savante* and an Heiress—Quarrels between Lady Caroline and the Poet—Sensational Scene in a Supper Room—Two Versions of a Parting—Lady Caroline is taken to Ireland—Byron's Ardent Letter—An Unexpected Blow and its Consequences—She loses her Brain and is bled—Result of a Note

CHAPTER IV

MENTION has already been made in these pages of a minister whose intellect, birth, and personality made him one of the most prominent and interesting figures of his time. This was William Lamb, second Viscount Melbourne, Home Secretary in the Grey Administration, and afterwards prime minister.

A man who delighted in ease, a philosopher conscious of the illusion of greatness, honour was thrust upon him unwittingly, and in this way. On a resolution being moved in the House of Commons, on May 27th, 1834, to reduce the temporalities of the Irish Church, four members of the cabinet resigned—the Duke of Richmond, then Postmaster-General; the Earl of Ripon, Lord of the Privy Seal; Sir James Graham, First Lord of the Admiralty; and the Cabinet Secretary, the Right Hon. Edward Stanley, who on the death of his grandfather, the twelfth Earl of Derby, in the following October, assumed the courtesy title of Lord Stanley of Alderley, though he still continued to be known to his friends as Sir Benjamin Backbite, and to his familiars as Ben.

The Sailor King

The King sorely disappointed the opposition, by retaining instead of dismissing his ministry ; for not only had recent experiences taught him caution, but he felt a warm regard for Lord Grey because of his unassuming and dignified behaviour on being recalled to office ; and His Majesty therefore urged him to fill the vacancies in his cabinet, and retain his premiership.

But to this request Lord Grey was unwilling to accede, and accordingly he resigned ; for now in his seventieth year, wearied of party strife, and wounded by his seceders he longed for the place that could be obtained only by retirement. The King was therefore left in sad perplexity which he sought to relieve by realising a favourite scheme ; the formation of a cabinet that would include members of both parties. The result of such a hazardous experiment, it was generally believed, would depend on Viscount Althorp, a minister who had resigned at the same time as the prime minister. John Charles Spencer, Lord Althorp, generally known as Jack, who in the following November succeeded his father as third Earl Spencer, had gained great influence in the House of Commons, owing to his winning personality rather than to his abilities ; and is still remembered as the public benefactor who reduced the stamp duty on newspapers from threepence-halfpenny to a penny, and the advertisement tax from four shillings and sixpence to half a crown. Charles Greville in speaking of him says that though many detested Lord Althorp's political

principles, and some despised his talents, none despised or detested the man, whose good nature, honesty, and want of ambition procured him greater influence than any other minister possessed. It was therefore thought that, if he could be persuaded to revoke his resignation and take command of the Government, all might yet be well.

The first Lord Lytton told Sir William Fraser that, whilst all were in suspense regarding the cabinet, six Whig ministers dined together; one of whom suggested that each should write down the name of the man who would be prime minister. None hesitated but Lord Durham, who they all believed would set down his own; on examination it was seen that he had written Lord Melbourne's, and was the only one who had done so. When presently Viscount Melbourne was sent for by the King, he was as much surprised as his colleagues that this unexpected honour had fallen on him, and said "he thought it was a damned bore, and that he was in many minds what he should do, be premier or no." Tom Young, his secretary, to whom this remark was made—described by Greville as a vulgar, familiar, impudent fellow, "a writer and runner for newspapers, an active citizen struggling and striving to get on in the world"—at once replied: "Why, damn it, such a position was never occupied by any Greek or Roman, and if it only lasts two months, it is well worth while to have been prime minister of England."

"By God, that's true," said Melbourne. He, there-

fore, waited on His Majesty, but though he refused to act on the royal suggestion and form a coalition ministry, he was appointed first minister in July 1834; Viscount Althorp consenting to act as Chancellor of the Exchequer.

The man who now filled the highest office in Government had, in the days of his youth been an actor in one of the strangest, most dramatic romances that fate had ever woven for a statesman; the intimate history of which has never heretofore been told. The second son of the first Viscount Melbourne and his wife, the daughter and heiress of Sir Ralph Milbanke, William Lamb was born in 1779. His beautifully moulded features, large, clear, expressive eyes, intelligent expression, and well-formed figure entitled him to be considered a handsome youth: whilst his frank manner, generous impulses, his singularly melodious voice, love of humour, and infectious laughter, made him a favourite with all—save his father.

He had just reached the blissful age of two-and-twenty, when at his father's country residence, Manresa House, Roehampton, now the property of the Jesuits, he met Lady Caroline Ponsonby, only daughter of Frederick, third Earl of Bessborough, by his first wife Lady Henrietta Frances Spencer, granddaughter of that graceless, joyous Jack Spencer, who had been the delight and despair of his famous grandmother, Sarah Duchess of Marlborough.

Lady Caroline, who was William Lamb's junior

by six years, was at this time little more than a child ; but her natural quickness, her marked individuality, the precocious development of her many talents, gave her the appearance of being older than her sixteen summers. Her figure was small, slight, delicate, and singularly graceful ; her features were irregular, and the incomparable charm of her face was found in the contrast presented by a pale, clear complexion, brilliant, dark eyes, and golden hair.

Five sunny years of her impressionable childhood had been spent in Italy, where her invalid mother had been ordered. On their return to England, the latter, finding her petulant wilful child a tax on strained nerves, asked her sister, Georgiana, the beautiful Duchess of Devonshire, to take charge of Caroline, who then went to live with her cousins, Lord Hartington, afterwards sixth Duke of Devonshire; Lady Georgiana Cavendish, subsequently married to Viscount Morpeth, who succeeded his father as sixth Earl of Carlisle ; and Lady Harriet, who became Countess of Granville.

According to an account of her childhood given by Lady Caroline to her friend Lady Morgan, the young people were woefully neglected. Though ceremoniously served on silver in the morning, they were allowed to make a dash for the kitchen after dinner, where they eagerly scrambled for such dainties as pleased them. Seldom seeing their parents, and being left to their own devices for instruction, their ignorance was amazing. The world, according to their belief

was divided into two classes, dukes and beggars ; and though undecided as to whether bread was made or grown, they had no doubt that horses were fed on beef. Though at the age of ten, Lady Caroline could neither write nor spell, she composed and recited verses that were pronounced wonderful by the unanimous voice of her hearers. Her favourite occupations were to wash her dogs and polish a piece of Derbyshire spar.

Soon after her tenth birthday Lady Caroline's life in the Devonshire household ended, when she was taken by her cousin Lady Georgiana Cavendish—whose chief delight lay in chasing butterflies—and placed under the care of her grandmother, the wife of the first Earl Spencer. The old dowager—countess who had read widely, and obtained a reputation for ability, was remarkable for the splendour of her jewels, her interest in Sunday schools, and the stately grandeur of her household ; not the least impressive of its members being a solemn housekeeper who, attired in glossy satin, hoop, and ruffles, severely presided over seventy servants, attended the ladies in the drawing-room when her mistress received in state, and held such sway over the family that, by breaking a lath above her head, she had frightened one of its daughters into a distasteful marriage with a ducal suitor.

Lady Caroline at once interested and perplexed her grandmother, to whom she appeared unlike all other children ; for though she could not write she composed romances, and concerning herself in politics,

pronounced Charles James Fox—whose liberal tendencies were an abomination to many—an ideal statesman, whose health she drank in bumpers of milk. Her impetuous moods, romantic fancies, and highly strung temperament, so alarmed Lady Spencer that she consulted one of the most famous physicians of the day, Dr. Warren, regarding her granddaughter's mental state. By his advice Lady Caroline was neither to be thwarted nor forced to learn, lest contradiction or study might lead to madness, of which he added, there were no symptoms as yet. As it happened, restraint instead of force was necessary where her studies were concerned ; for in the thirst for knowledge she now developed, she learned everything permissible, and not content with reading French and Italian, she mastered Greek and Latin ; so that not only could she follow a classic play in which her brothers took part at Harrow, but could recite an ode from Sappho in the original. She delighted in music, composed songs, and played the harp ; painting in water colours was a passion she followed through life ; her caricatures showed delicious humour ; she could write verses, and ride bare-backed horses.

Original in all things and indifferent to opinion, she despised the prevailing fashion in dress, and garbed herself in picturesque modes of her own designing ; and as she detested convention she avoided the usual preliminary reference to health and weather in opening her conversations, and plunged impulsively into whatever topic interested her at the moment.

Her bright, whimsical, clever talk, sharply contrasted with the demure primness and rounded periods then in vogue ; but additional delight was given to her words by a voice singularly sweet, low, and caressing, which according to one who knew her, " was at once a beauty and a charm that worked much of that fascination which was peculiarly hers."

It is little wonder that she first attracted the attention, and then won the affection of William Lamb, a young man whose deep reading, philosophic thought, and admiration of cleverness lifted him above others of his age and position. Nor was he left long in doubt or despair regarding his chances of winning her ; for among the brilliant and distinguished men, the heirs to, or possessors of historic titles and vast estates who were the guests of her father at Roehampton, or were received by her grandmother in the stately drawing-rooms of St. James's Square, there was none in Lady Caroline's eyes to compare with him. The relatives who realised that she had fallen in love with William Lamb treated it as one of her foolish whims ; for it could not be supposed that this fascinating and only daughter of a great house, indulged by her parents, the admired of many, would be permitted to marry a man who was then a mere younger son reading for the Bar, and whose income must largely depend on his talents, which at this time gave no promise of raising him to distinction.

The first important page in the story of his life

concerns his love for Lady Caroline. Almost before he could declare it, circumstances made it possible for him to be accepted as her husband when, by the sudden death of his elder brother, Peniston Lamb, on January 24th, 1805, William, became heir to his father's titles and estates. Peniston had in his lack of talent and ambition, in his apathetic temperament, closely resembled his father whose favourite he had been ; whilst on William was lavished the affection and admiration of his mother whose mental and physical gifts he had largely inherited. Sir Joshua Reynolds has left three examples of her bewitching beauty which readily gave her a foremost place among the loveliest women of her day ; but it was not her personal charms more than her ready wit, her shrewd but sympathetic insight into character, her unfailing tact, learned by careful watchfulness of the world, that gave her a fascination over the cleverest men of her time, made her the adviser of princes, the confidant of statesmen, and enabled her to raise her commonplace and indolent husband from a baronet to a peer.

All her ambitious hopes became centred in her eldest surviving son, for whom she resolved to work with that energy that had already accomplished much ; and though she could not induce his father to make him an allowance of more than two thousand a year, being three thousand less than his brother had enjoyed, she was instrumental in obtaining for him a non-contested seat in Parliament ; for it was now decided that he

should give up law and devote himself to public affairs. She was also anxious that he, a man of handsome presence and promising talents, should make a brilliant marriage, and encouraged his devotion to Lady Caroline Ponsonby, whose family connections with the great Whig houses, must aid his political career. Happy that his mother approved of his choice, happier still in the expectation of gaining so piquant and fascinating a bride, he was continually at Roehampton in the spring of this year which saw him his father's heir; and here, under the budding chestnut-trees, whilst the whole world woke to a joy akin to their own, he asked Lady Caroline to become his wife. In that moment of ecstasy a gleam of sober sense shot through her mind, and she refused him on the ground that her violent temper would wreck his happiness; but a whimsical idea succeeding, she strove to comfort his disappointment by offering to accompany him dressed in boy's clothes, and act as his secretary.

Their engagement followed, and the date of their marriage was fixed for June 3rd, 1805. The ceremony was marked by splendour, was attended by a crowd of the noblest men and women in the realm, and was celebrated by a bishop assisted by many deans and canons; but it had scarcely ended when the bride's highly wrought nerves gave way under the strain, and in a violent frenzy she abused his spiritual lordship, tore her wedding garments, and was carried in an almost insensible condition to the carriage which waited to convey this wedded pair on their honeymoon.

When this ended the young couple took up their residence with the bridegroom's parents at Melbourne House in Whitehall. Originally the name Melbourne House had been given to a mansion which stood next to Burlington House in Piccadilly, whose enclosed gardens covered the spot now known as the Albany. This dwelling, which had been designed by the architect of Somerset House, had been lavishly decorated by such artists as Cipriani and Rebecca, was much admired by one of its constant visitors, the Duke of York and Albany, who one day jestingly told Lady Melbourne he longed for such a house as hers. In the same spirit she answered that she wished she had such a house as his ; for the royal duke's mansion, standing in Whitehall between the Treasury and the Horse Guards, and looking on St. James's Park, seemed even more imposing than her own. So gallant a man could only reply that to a woman of her gifts all things were possible. The project broached in jest soon developed into seriousness, and in a little while, with the consent of the King, the exchange of mansions together with their furniture was made ; their names being likewise altered ; so that the Piccadilly residence became known as York House and later on as the Albany, whilst the name Melbourne House was transferred to the mansion in Whitehall.

It was here that Lady Caroline Lamb's first child was born on August 11th, 1807, a son who was named George Augustus Frederick by his sponsor the Prince of Wales. Her joy was boundless ; the pride of

motherhood elated her ; and to coo and chatter to this morsel of humanity, to watch the wonder in its eyes, the movements of its limbs, to dangle and exhibit him, was occupation for which all others were impetuously flung aside. That delightful little lady Miss Berry, who preferred to keep her spinsterhood rather than become the wife of her old friend and constant correspondent, Horace Walpole ; who refused to be introduced to the great Samuel Johnson, because she felt sure he would have said something disagreeable of her friends, and that they should have insulted each other ; and who was herself the centre of social life, tells of the pride with which Lady Caroline carried her to the top of the house, to see the child who, says she, “ a very few years afterwards was seized with fits and his life despaired of. He is too big for his age—only eight months old.”

After a little while the novelty, wonder, and delight of her baby's appearance on the scene began to weary Lady Caroline, who turning to former pursuits passed her days in writing verses, composing music, painting in water colours, acting in amateur theatricals, flirting, and playing the harp ; one occupation quickly giving place to another, none of them steadily pursued ; whilst her evenings were spent in visits to the great houses, whose reception rooms with their embossed ceilings, frescoed walls, waxed floors, and innumerable lights, were crowded with men and women whose orders and jewels were less conspicuous than their gracious manners and courtly movements. It was

from one of these "immense assemblies" at which Lady Caroline figured as hostess, that Miss Berry escaped at half an hour past midnight and walked beyond the Admiralty in search of her carriage. "Many of the company," says she, "were not away till near three, and the Prince of Wales and a very few persons supped below in Lady Melbourne's apartment, and were not gone till past six; Sheridan of the number, who was completely drunk."

Though Lady Caroline's wit and piquancy, the charm and originality of her manner, the ever-varying expression of her mobile face, drew men around her at such crowds, her husband was now seldom seen among them. For her eternal pursuit of pleasure and excitement, her insatiable desire for admiration, her caprices, want of discrimination, flirtations, and butterfly existence, became a severe strain on William Lamb, who was devoted to reading, delighted in theological works, appreciated the classics, and who sighed for the quiet of domestic life which his choice of a partner for ever forbade him to enjoy. Dis-satisfaction followed. "I think lately, my dearest William," she wrote to him, "we have been very troublesome to each other, which I take by wholesale to my own account and mean to correct, leaving you in retail a few little sins which I know you will correct. Also do not say 'Java.' Condemn me not to silence, and assist my imperfect memory. I will, on the other hand, be silent of a morning, entertaining after dinner; docile, fearless as a heroine in the last volume of her

troubles, strong as a mountain tiger, and active as those young savages, Basil's boys, to whom by-the-bye, you will give one shilling apiece. You should say to me, *raisonnez mieux et repliquez moins.*"

This letter, dated May 1809, was written some three years before Lady Caroline's infatuation with Lord Byron was watched with expectancy, excitement, and amusement by society, but with heartbeating apprehension by her relatives. Among those whom she met at Holland House—whose hostess delighted to surround herself by literary men—were Tom Moore the Irish bard, and Samuel Rogers the banker poet. Becoming friendly with both, she presently heard from them of another poet, who had shown Rogers in the autumn of 1811 two cantos of his poem "Childe Harold," which was not published until March in the following year. These sheets were in an evil hour lent by Rogers to Lady Caroline. The rapture and ring of their verses quickly caught her ear, sensitive to the measure of melody; her vivid imagination pictured its succession of dazzling scenes, and to a temperament so sympathetic as hers, its prevailing sadness made potent appeal.

To know the author of such a poem became the dominant desire of one to whom novelty and sensation were as the breath of life. "I must see him; I am dying to see him," she told Rogers, with an eagerness, childish in its impetuosity.

"He has a club foot and bites his nails," was the acid reply which escaped Rogers's thin lips.



LADY CAROLINI LAMB.

To face p. 114.



“If he is as ugly as *Æsop* I must know him,” came the peremptory answer of this spoiled favourite.

The desire Lady Caroline expressed was shared by almost every woman in society, when on its publication “*Childe Harold*” was received with rapturous admiration. An atmosphere of romance already surrounded its author, and was strengthened from the fact of his being wholly unknown to the drawing-rooms of rank and fashion. Every detail which enquiry could glean concerning his life, inflamed the general eagerness to see him. Then, in his four-and-twentieth year, he was a peer of the realm, belonging to an illustrious family tracing descent from the Norman conquerors. Already he had travelled in foreign lands ; had proved himself on the occasion of his maiden speech in the House of Lords, an orator whom Lord Granville considered to resemble Burke ; had shown himself a satirist who in “*English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*” had exposed certain wise, learned and revered critics to the scorn and laughter of generations ; and had struck chords of passion and pathos in verses that found answering echoes in many hearts.

A matter of still greater attraction to women was his reputation for personal beauty and elegant manners that no adulation could exaggerate ; and his character for eccentric conduct and reckless libertinism, which was found not less shocking than interesting. Added to these were the whispered stories of the extravagant liberality of his publishers, and his scornful disdain of money ; all incentives to that curiosity, interest,

and admiration which caused his cantos to be committed to memory, recited, and copied into the gilt-edged, coloured-paged albums of those who aspired to fashion, refinement, and romance.

Far from rejecting the advances of society as it was feared, Lord Byron sought an entry within its circle where all things were delightfully novel and enticing to him. Invitations from the noblest and most distinguished hostesses were sent him by every post; carriages conveying the brightest butterflies of fashion to his rooms, blocked St. James's Street by day; whilst his appearance at night in the drawing-rooms of great houses was eagerly waited for by the fairest and most aristocratic women, whom the glamour of his romantic appearance, the promise of his genius, and the darkly conceived possibilities of his reputation, combined to dazzle and to fascinate. If her sex in general showed such indiscriminate curiosity regarding the poet peer, the hysterical excitability with which Lady Caroline looked forward to meeting him may readily be imagined. From the first she was determined that they should become friends, and intuition assured her that, being a man of no ordinary type, Byron must be attracted by stratagem to her side from the crowd of female worshippers perpetually surrounding him. No doubt troubled her that she, who from childhood had never brooked contradiction or suffered defeat, could accomplish this desire. Its realisation would not only add fresh zest to existence, but secure her an additional social victory.

An opportunity to attempt his captivation offered when, at a brilliant reception at Westmorland House, early in the season of 1812, she saw him standing among a throng of high-born women, who were gazing at him rapturously as they offered the incense of their praise. All she had previously heard of him had failed to prepare her for the indelible impression he made on her receptive mind. His pale, oval face lighted by blue grey eyes that seemed dark by comparison with his fair complexion and deep auburn hair, the exquisite curve of his clear cut lips, and the melancholy of his expression, made direct appeal to her imagination and touched her heart. As she watched him with eager eyes and quickened pulse, her hostess crossed the room and asked if she would not come and be introduced to Lord Byron. Without answering, she rose as if to comply with this request; but when those crowding round the poet parted to make way for her, she looked at him coldly for a second and, without giving the slightest inclination of her head or uttering a word, turned her back on him and quitted the murmuring circle of his worshippers. On her return home that night she made the following entry regarding him in her diary:—"Mad, bad, and dangerous to know"; an opinion which time taught her to endorse.

Lady Caroline's treatment of the poet—so startlingly different from that he had previously experienced from her sex—piqued his vanity and made him desirous to become acquainted with her. Three days later they

met again, this time at Holland House, when Lady Holland with more sense of the courtesy due to her guest than Lady Westmorland had shown, said to her, "I must present Lord Byron to you." On the introduction being made, Lady Caroline graciously received the poet, who was quickly interested by the verve and originality of her conversation and charmed, as all others, by the delicious music of her voice. Before parting a sufficient friendship was established between them to sanction Byron's request for permission to call on her ; and this being readily granted, he presented himself at Melbourne House next day. At the moment of his visit Lady Caroline had just returned from riding, and still in her habit, heated from exertion and bespattered with mud, was talking to her literary admirers Moore and Rogers ; but on hearing Byron announced she started to her feet, and without waiting to receive him rushed from the room, "to wash herself," as she states.

On her return, radiant in a fresh toilette, Rogers turning to Byron said : "You are a happy man. Lady Caroline has been sitting here in all her dirt with us, but when you were announced she flew to beautify herself."

Byron outstayed the other visitors ; and before leaving asked if he might call that evening at eight o'clock ; for already that dangerous attraction between himself and Lady Caroline was established, which was to end in misery for both. Eight o'clock was the hour at which she dined, but so gross a consideration as dinner

could not be permitted to interfere with this wondrous and absorbing friendship ; so his request was granted, and that evening for the first time since his entrance into society, the poet absented himself from the homage awaiting him in a score of drawing-rooms, that he might sit with Lady Caroline, and listen to the seductive music of her voice.

From that time he became a constant visitor at Melbourne House, where his influence soon made itself felt. During this season, Lady Caroline's cousin, the Marquis of Hartington, returned from St. Petersburg, where he had learned amongst other things a new figure in dancing called a waltz. As this had not been seen in England he was anxious to have the prestige of introducing it, but was not permitted to carry out his wishes at Devonshire House. For, three years after the death of his mother, his father had married a second wife, Lady Elizabeth Foster, daughter of the reprobate Bishop of Derry, who was likewise fourth Earl of Bristol. This lady, it was generally whispered, morally resembled her sire. But to refute such infamous insinuations, she was careful with advancing age to preserve the proprieties, and was so severely virtuous that she would not tolerate in her drawing-rooms such vain and worldly delights as dancing. To please her cousin, Lady Caroline gave dancing parties at Melbourne House, where his waltz was introduced, when being considered extremely improper, it became immensely popular. Here, as Lady Caroline states, "all the

The Sailor King

bon ton assembled, there was nothing so fashionable. But after a time Byron contrived to sweep them all away." For, as capering round a ballroom was an impossibility to a man with a malformed foot, and an encroachment on the time which he wished wholly to be devoted to himself, these dancing parties were discontinued by Lady Caroline, who, falling completely under his dominion, received his admiration with unconcealed satisfaction. On the other hand, Byron's intense egotism was flattered by the fascination he exercised over a woman whose beauty, talents, and eccentricities rendered her one of the most notable personages in society. In his vanity he coveted the envy of men as much as the admiration of women, and in his correspondence he relates that he was congratulated by his friends on his conquest of William Lamb's wife.

"Lord Byron is still upon a pedestal, and Caroline William doing homage," writes in May 1812 one of her Devonshire House cousins, Harriet, now Countess Granville; the double names being used to distinguish this heroine of romance from her sister-in-law, the wife of George Lamb who was also named Caroline. "I have made acquaintance with him," continues Lady Granville. "He is agreeable but I feel no wish for any further intimacy. His countenance is fine when it is in repose, but the moment it is in play, suspicious, malignant, and consequently repulsive. His manner is either remarkably gracious and conciliatory, with a tinge of affectation, or irritable

and impetuous, and then I am afraid perfectly natural."

It was not long before those who delighted in scandal coupled the names of the idol and his worshipper, in a manner damaging to her fame and his honour ; but William Lamb loving his wife and trusting her implicitly, paid no heed to such rumours. To him her infatuation for the poet was merely a new craze of his wayward, whimsical, childlike wife, and he felt certain that her caprices and exactions would speedily put an end to Byron's melodramatic passion. In a tolerant, playful manner he ridiculed the poet, who whilst hinting at a blighted life and a desolate heart, took quantities of medicine, drank pints of vinegar and starved himself, that he might preserve his figure from hereditary stoutness that would have unfitted him for the *rôle* of a woe-stricken hero. Nor was this all, for William Lamb, tolerant and honest, laughed outright at Byron's seductive verses with their haughty, gloomy, sin-smirched and self-accused heroes, doubly accursed in faultless metre ; and when his wife read to him her own compositions, written under Byronic influence, breathing bitter self-reproach and hinting at nameless deeds perpetrated by herself, instead of being scared he was merely amused.

Such treatment seemed intolerable, and she became indignant at his refusal to take her infatuation seriously. If he would only menace her with his hate, threaten her with his vengeance, attempt to poison her in secret,

The Sailor King

or imprison her in a wine cellar, she might have posed as a helpless victim to a tyrant's jealousy; as an unhappy martyr to an unconquerable love, as a heroine whose gloomy fate equalled that of a dreary Byronic hero. But William Lamb had more sense of humour than love of melodrama, a boon deeply resented by his wife who, writing to a friend, complained: "I might flirt or go about with what men I pleased. He was privy to my affair with Lord Byron and laughed at it. His indolence renders him insensible to everything."

Another member of Lady Caroline's family—Lady Melbourne—had won Byron's intense admiration. Describing her as the best friend he ever had in his life and the cleverest of women, he adds that he "never met with half her talent." That one so experienced, so careful of her son's honour, should extend her friendship to Byron and welcome him as her guest, is sufficient to prove her belief in the platonic nature of his attachment to Lady Caroline. Yet her knowledge of its danger was sufficient to make her warn him. The response had the true Byronic ring. "You need not fear me," wrote the poet. "I do not pursue pleasure like other men; I labour under an incurable disease and a blighted heart. Believe me, she is safe with me." Probably Lady Melbourne recognised the incurable disease and the blighted heart merely as picturesque accessories to an unhealthy pose; at all events, she set about finding him a wife and proposed as such, her own niece Anne Isabella, more euphoniously

called Annabella, Milbanke, sole child and heiress of Sir Ralph Milbanke the owner of estates in Durham and Yorkshire. At the time when malign fate in the gracious person of Lady Melbourne, suggested Annabella as a partner for Byron, she was in her twentieth year, short in figure, with a round face and regular features whose general expression was placid severity. Long after the storm had passed above her head, leaving her unruffled and self-righteous, she is described by Fanny Kemble, who knew her personally, as a peculiarly reserved and quiet woman, "with a manner habitually deliberate and measured, a low subdued voice, and rather diffident hesitation in expressing herself; and she certainly conveyed the impression of natural reticence and caution. But so far from appearing to me to justify the description often given of her, of a person of exceptionally cold, hard, measured intellect and character, she always struck me as a woman capable of profound and fervid enthusiasm, with a mind of rather a romantic and visionary order."

Cleverer than the average woman of the day, she read philosophy and wrote verses; and at a date when such ideas were heterodox and deserving of the stake, had dared to think that great service might be rendered to the public by lectures delivered by women on important and unsuspected truths; and that wide spheres of usefulness lay before her sex in the adoption of careers then closed to them, especially in the study and practice of medicine.

An immeasurable contrast existed between her character and that of Lady Caroline Lamb, who, with tolerant contempt and epigrammatic brevity, she termed Beautiful Silliness. The latter, however, was shrewd enough to think that a female with a learned mind and a bad figure, who understood statistics and was punctual in her attendance at church, was no mate for a poet with a fiery imagination, a wide experience, absorbing vanity, and an irresponsible temperament. Her opinion on this point would have been strengthened could she have read his confession made a few years previously to Robert Charles Dallas in a letter now in the Morrison collection, in which the poet says: "In morality I prefer Confucius to the Ten Commandments, and Socrates to St. Paul (though the two latter agree in their opinion of marriage). In religion I favour the Catholic emancipation, but I do not acknowledge the Pope; and I have refused to take the sacrament, because I do not think eating bread or drinking wine from the hand of an earthly vicar will make me an inheritor of heaven. I hold virtue in general, or the virtues severally, to be only in the disposition; each a feeling, not a principle. I believe truth the prime attribute of the Deity, and death an eternal sleep, at least of the body. You have here a brief compendium of the sentiments of the *wicked* George Lord Byron, and till I get a new suit you will perceive that I am badly clothed."

It was probably the wicked reputation of the poet which caused Miss Millbanke to refuse his proposal

of marriage made in 1812. The decision was expressed with such courtesy, that Byron begged her to become his correspondent if not his wife. Agreeing to this she wrote to him occasionally, and commenting in the following year on one of her letters, he says: "What an odd situation and friendship is ours, without one spark of love on either side, and produced by circumstances which in general lead to coldness on one side and aversion on the other. She is a very superior woman and very little spoiled, which is strange in an heiress—a girl of twenty—a peeress that is to be in her own right—an only child and a *savante*, who has always had her own way. She is a poetess—a mathematician—a metaphysician, and yet withal very kind, generous, and gentle, with very little pretension. Any other head would be turned with half her acquisitions and a tenth of her advantages."

Byron's offer was not allowed to interfere with his friendship for Lady Caroline, in whose company most of his mornings were spent, whilst they frequently met in the evenings at balls from which usually she was driven home in his carriage by the poet. Occasionally, when uninvited to a party he attended, she would await his return in the street. Once as he left a great reception at Devonshire House to which she had not been asked, Samuel Rogers saw her talking to Byron with half her body thrust into the carriage which he had just entered.

The witness of this scene, was shown a letter

from Lady Caroline, assuring Byron at a time when he was harrassed by debt, that if he wanted money all her jewels were at his service. As her husband had foreseen and predicted, lasting friendship between her and the poet was impossible. Each being egotistical, vain, and exacting in their demands for perpetual admiration, mutual disappointment succeeded, and their excitable tempers clashed. Byron's first offence was his lack of appreciation for her verses, which had all his mannerisms and none of his inspiration. Reproaches followed laden with charges of jealousy; quarrels were not infrequent. "More than once," says Rogers, "on coming home I have found Lady Caroline walking in the garden (behind his house in St. James's Place) and waiting for me to beg that I would reconcile them."

However, Lady Caroline's tempers and exactions—those deadliest foes to fascination and passion—were soon to achieve what neither propriety nor common-sense had been able to effect. Least of all men could Byron suffer or pardon scenes that her restless desire for sensation and increasing extravagances tempted her to enact, and that covered him with ridicule. One of these dramatic exhibitions which set the town talking, happened at a ball given by Lady Heathcote on July 5th, 1813. The world of fashion, rank and renown, including Lady Caroline and Lord Byron, were present, and all went well until supper time when some hasty words passed between them, which so enraged Lady Caroline that she seized a knife,

brandished it above her head and stabbed herself in the breast, causing blood to gush upon her neighbour's clothes. The wildest sensation followed, screams and exclamations filled the air, guests fled from the room, friends gathered round her, and ultimately she was taken to another apartment. As it was then supposed she was fainting, a glass of water was given her, when she seized and smashed the glass and struck herself with the broken pieces.

Long years after Lady Caroline and Lord Byron had been laid in earth, Lady Heathcote's card of invitation to him was exhibited amongst his relics, bearing on it the words written in the poet's hand, "This card I keep as a curiosity, since it was at this ball (to which it was an invitation) that Lady Caroline L. performed ye Dagger Scene—of indifferent memory."

Soon after this melodramatic occurrence came the final break in her friendship with the poet, two different accounts of which are given, one by Byron, the other by Lady Caroline. According to Captain Medwin, who was not remarkable for accuracy, Lord Byron in speaking of Lady Caroline said: "I am easily governed by women, and she gained an ascendancy over me that I could not easily shake off. I submitted to this thralldom long, for I hate scenes and am of an indolent disposition; but I was forced to snap the knot rather rudely at last. Like all lovers, we had several quarrels before we came to an open rupture. One was made up in a very

odd way and without any explanation. She will remember it. Even during our intimacy I was not at all constant to this fair one, and she suspected as much. In order to detect my intrigues she watched me, and earthed a lady into my lodgings, and came herself, terrier-like, in the disguise of a carman. My valet who did not see through the masquerade, let her in; when, to the despair of Fletcher, she put off the man and put on the woman. Imagine the scene, it was worthy of Faublas. Her after-conduct was unaccountable madness, a combination of spite and jealousy. It was perfectly agreed and understood that we were to meet as strangers. We were at a ball. She came up and asked me if she might waltz. I thought it perfectly indifferent whether she waltzed or not, or with whom, and told her so in different terms but with much coolness. After she had finished a scene occurred which was in the mouth of every one."

Lady Caroline's version of their parting is told in a letter she wrote to her friend and confidant, Lady Morgan, a bright, sympathetic, clever Irishwoman, the successful author of a number of works, the centre of a fashionable and distinguished social circle. Lady Caroline says that her mother, becoming anxious and miserable regarding the Byronic connection, endeavoured to break it; and as a first step towards this end, induced her to accompany her parents to Ireland where a great part of Lord Bessborough's estates lay. Before her departure Lord Byron wrote

her the following letter, which she treasured through life, and on her death-bed bequeathed to Lady Morgan :—

“ MY DEAREST CAROLINE,

“ If tears which you saw, and know I am not apt to shed—if the agitation in which I parted from you, agitation which you must have perceived through the whole of this most nervous affair, did not commence until the moment of leaving you approached—if all I have said and done, and am still but too ready to say and do, have not sufficiently proved what my real feelings are, and must ever be towards you, my love, I have no other proof to offer. God knows I wish you happy, and when I quit you, or rather you, from a sense of duty to your husband and mother, quit me, you shall acknowledge the truth of what I again promise and vow, that no other in word or deed shall ever hold the place in my affections which is, and shall be, most sacred to you, till I am nothing. I never knew till that moment the madness of my dearest and most beloved friend. I cannot express myself. This is no time for words, but I shall have a pride, a melancholy pleasure, in suffering what you yourself can scarcely conceive, for you do not know me. I am about to go out with a heavy heart, because my appearing this evening will stop any absurd story which the spite of the day might give rise to. Do you think now I am cold, and stern, and wilful? Will ever others think so? Will your mother ever—that mother to whom, indeed, we must sacrifice much more, much more on my part than she shall ever know or can imagine? ‘ Promise not to love you ’? Ah, Caroline, it is past promising. But I shall attribute all concessions to the proper motive, and never cease to feel all that you have already witnessed, and

more than can ever be known but to my own heart, perhaps to yours."

"May God forgive, protect, and bless you ever and ever. More than ever,

"Your most attached,

"BYRON.

"P.S.—These taunts have driven you to this, my dearest Caroline, and were it not for your mother, and the kindness of your connections, is there anything in heaven or earth that would have made me so happy as to have made you mine long ago? And not less now than then, but more than ever at this time. You know I would with pleasure give up all here and beyond the grave for you, and in refraining from this must my motives be misunderstood? I care not who knows this, what use is made of it—it is to you, and to you only that they are, *yourself*. I was and am yours freely and entirely to obey, to honour, love, and fly with you, when, where, and how yourself *might* and *may* determine."

Immediately after the receipt of this truly Byronic epistle, Lady Caroline was hurried away to Ireland, where it was hoped she might be free from his influence. This was unlikely to happen whilst they continued a correspondence which, on his part she declares, was "the most tender and the most amusing." But other causes were at work to bring about the desired separation. In her absence from town the man who was ready "to give up all here and beyond the grave" for her, had formed a friendship for Lady Oxford, and was now as devoted to her as he had formerly been to Lady Caroline. Unaware of this,

the latter was looking gladly forward to meeting him on her return, and had reached Dublin on her way, when a letter was put into her hands, addressed to her in the poet's well-known writing. That its seal bore the initials of Lady Oxford whom she detested, even before learning of Byron's disloyalty, did not prepare her for the contents of this note which she tore open with expectant delight. Its words are given in a novel called "Glenarvon" that she subsequently wrote, and which Byron acknowledges to be in part a copy of his own; and ran as follows:—

"I am no longer your lover; and since you oblige me to confess it by this truly unfeminine persecution, learn that I am attached to another, whose name it would of course be dishonest to mention. I shall ever remember with gratitude the many instances I have received of the predilection you have shown in my favour. I shall ever continue your friend, if your ladyship will permit me so to style myself. And as a first proof of my regard, I offer you this advice: correct your vanity, which is ridiculous; exert your absurd caprices on others, and leave me in peace."

In writing of this brutal note Lady Caroline said: "It destroyed me; I lost my brain. I was bled, leeches, and kept for a week in the filthy Dolphin Inn." So far, however, as Byron was concerned, it served his purpose; for she left him in peace—for awhile.

CHAPTER VI

Lord Byron needs Money—Miss Milbanke's Fortune—
A Letter to Tom Moore—Marriage of the Poet—
Two strange Stories—Clouds accumulate—Lady
Byron leaves her Lord—His supposed Madness—
Letters of his Wife—Refuses to be reconciled to
Byron—Disappointed by his Sanity—The Deed of
Separation—Feelings of the Public towards Byron
—Lady Jersey befriends him—Her Party in honour
of the Poet—A red-haired Coquette—Reasons for
quitting England—Farewell to his Wife—Lady
Byron's Sympathy for Lady Caroline Lamb—Fracas
with her Page—Sensation at Melbourne House—
William Lamb's proposed Separation from his Wife
—Lady Caroline writes a Novel—The Copyist is
mystified—Publication of the Novel—Curiosity is
excited—Caricature of Byron—The Deed of
Separation remained unsigned—Comedy *versus*
Tragedy—Lady Granville calls at Whitehall—Her
description of Lady Caroline

CHAPTER V

LORD BYRON now turned his thoughts once more to matrimony. Although he received such liberal sums as ten thousand guineas for the "Siege of Corinth," and "Parisina," and sold the third canto of "Childe Harold" for twenty-eight shillings a line, he was continually beset by pecuniary difficulties. An offer had been made for his ancestral home, Newstead Abbey, which he was unwilling to sell, and where he now wished to settle down as an English country gentleman. To keep his home and assume the character he desired, probably because it was of all others the most unsuitable to him, it was necessary he should have money and a wife. Miss Milbanke had ten thousand pounds fortune in the present, the certainty of an inheritance from her father, and the probability of riches from her uncle in the future. He therefore proposed to her for a second time in September 1814, when unhappily for both she accepted him. She would have been more than mere woman if the triumphs of rivalry and the pride of conquest had not urged her to this decision; in which, judging from subsequent

events, it is reasonable to surmise love played a small part.

In announcing his engagement to his friend Tom Moore, Byron tells him he is going to marry one "you think too strait-laced for me"; and in referring to her fortune says that she is likely to prove a considerable *parti*. "All her father can give or leave her, he will; and from her childless uncle Lord Wentworth, whose barony it is supposed will descend on Lady Milbanke (his sister) she has expectations. But these will depend upon his own disposition, which seems very partial towards her. She is an only child and Sir Ralph's estates, though dipped by electioneering are considerable. Part of them are settled on her; but whether that will be dowered now, I do not know, though from what has been intimated to me, it probably will. . . . I certainly did not dream that she was attached to me, which it seems she has been for some time. I also thought her of a very cold disposition, in which I was also mistaken—it is a long story, and I won't trouble you with it. As to her virtues, etc., you will hear enough of them (for she is a kind of pattern in the north) without my running into a display on the subject."

From a marriage with one whose attachment to himself he had not suspected, whom he had considered cold, and on whose dowry he dwells at such length, little happiness could be expected; a conclusion which was doubtless arrived at by Byron, whom, a few weeks before it took place, Moore found in a state of



From an engraving after the painting by W. J. Newton.

LADY BYRON.

(To face p. 136.)



wretchedness, despondency, and restlessness. The ceremony was celebrated on January 2nd, 1815, after which the bride and bridegroom set out for Halnaby near Darlington, one of Sir Ralph Milbanke's seats, where the honeymoon was to be spent. Byron afterwards confided to Johanna Baillie, that as he and his wife drove up the avenue where the assembled peasants and tenantry were welcoming them with cheers, he asked his wife: "What could induce you to marry me"? "Good heavens; because I loved you," came the reply. "No," said the bridegroom; "you have a spice of mother Eve; you married me because your friends wished you not to do so. You refused me twice, and I will be revenged."

An interesting sequel to this story is given by Samuel Rogers, who, on being allowed to glance over the memoirs of Byron, before they were burnt by Moore, read there a statement made by their writer which said that, suddenly starting from his first sleep on his marriage night, he saw a ruddy glare caused by the reflection of candle-light shining through the crimson curtains of the bed, on which starting up, he exclaimed in a voice loud enough to waken his wife; "Good God, I am surely in hell."

Exactly a month after his marriage, Byron writes to tell Moore that he has been transferred to his father-in-law's, together with his lady and her lady's-maid, that the "treacle-moon is over and I am awake and find myself married." He is still of opinion that one ought to marry upon a lease, although, in

courtesy he adds, that he would renew his, at the expiration, though his next term were for ninety and nine years. Eight days later, he speaks of going abroad with his correspondent, adding, "If I take my wife you can take yours; and if I leave mine you can do the same."

In March, Lord and Lady Byron were in town, a house in Piccadilly Terrace, having the ominous number of thirteen, being lent them by the Duchess of Devonshire. Here their serenity was occasionally disturbed by duns; for the bride's dowry having been settled on herself, her husband was the richer merely by five hundred a year, whilst his expenses were considerably greater than they had been in his bachelor days. A promise of maternity gave happiness to the young wife, though it was shadowed by misgivings of her lord's sentiments regarding two women, to whom he had shown devotion before his marriage. The first of these was his cousin Mrs. Masters, the second was Lady Caroline Lamb.

In a letter written in August 1815 to Lord Byron's step-sister, Augusta Leigh, Lady Byron pens a significant sentence or two. Referring to a "certain person," evidently Lady Caroline, she says: "By the bye, I believe she is affronted with me. Knowing that I did not voluntarily give cause I shall not break my heart. She has never called on me, and when I made her a visit with my mother, was very dignified. I never told you of it, nor of my meeting with Mrs. Masters there. She asked after Byron. Such a wicked look-

ing cat I never saw. Somebody else looked quite virtuous by the side of her. Oh, that I were out of this horrid town, which makes me mad. You know I am not apt to fancy about my own salvation, but I really do feel a conviction that my health will be much injured by a continuance here. If I were in the country I believe I could regain my good looks (if I were ever blest with any) and my good spirits wonderfully."

Towards the end of this same letter she confesses to being annoyed at Byron's intention "of visiting La Tante to-morrow." Her aunt, it will be remembered, was Lady Melbourne, under whose roof Lady Caroline lived. Evidently referring to the latter Lady Byron says: "I do not like the inclination to go to her. Do you really think it will diminish? Whilst it exists I must in some degree suffer."

In the following month of September, Lady Byron's mind must have been much more at ease regarding "somebody else," for William Lamb and his wife had gone to Paris, from whence Lady Granville writing to her sister Georgiana, Lady Morpeth, says: "Nothing is *agissant* but Caroline William in a purple riding habit, tormenting everybody; but I am convinced ready primed for an attack upon the Duke of Wellington, and I have no doubt that she will, to a certain extent succeed, as no dose of flattery is too strong for him to swallow or her to administer. Poor William hides in one small room, while she assembles lovers and tradespeople in another. He

looks worn to the bone. She arrived dying by her own account, having had French apothecaries at most of the towns through which she passed. She sent here immediately for a doctor, but by mistake they went for the Duke of Wellington." In response to this communication Lady Morpeth tells her sister she has heard from Caroline William, "Who writes me word that she detests Paris, which she says is gay without interest, noisy beyond bearing; that she is magnificently but uncomfortably lodged, alone or in a crowd; and that every countenance bears the stamp of suppressed ill-humour if native, pique if Austrian or Russian, open insolence or vulgar wonder if English"; the battle of Waterloo being fresh in the memory of all.

Meantime the small incidents of daily life, that make the sum total of existence, proved that happiness was impossible between dispositions so diametrically opposed as those of Lord Byron and his wife. The former confided to his intimate friend, the Hon. Edward Ellice, that "when he came home he would find half a dozen old blues with Lady Byron, who if a man made a joke, thought he was sure of damnation." And no doubt so rigidly minded a lady must have been horrified by any man, even though her husband, who expressed himself as "having a great mind to believe in Christianity, for the mere pleasure of fancying he might be damned."

The fact was that slowly and surely a devastating storm was brooding over number thirteen, Piccadilly

Terrace. An idolised only child, accustomed to submission, high tempered, precise, intolerant, and inflexible, Lady Byron was not a woman to submit to neglect or wrong without violent protest. Soon to become a mother she was sorely tried by her husband's words and actions. His unconcealed attentions to others of her sex, his refusal to sit at table with her on the plea that he could not bear to see women eat, his desire to leave her that he might roam abroad, his laudanum drinking, his avowal that marriage was an unendurable bondage into which he had entered, not through love but from resentment and a desire for revenge at having been at first refused, his threatening to blow out his brains, and his general manner—illustrated by his reply of "damnably" to her question as to whether she was in his way—all convinced her that his natural irritability had reached the stage of mental derangement.

Her child Ada was born on December 10th, 1815, and a month later, acting on Byron's suggestion, conveyed to her in a note, she left his house, of which the bailiffs were in possession, for her father's, and so parted from the husband she was never more to see. On reaching her old home Kirkby Mallory, Lady Byron, physically weak and mentally distressed, poured into her parents' sympathetic ears the story of her sufferings, which she considered could only be accounted for on the ground of her husband's insanity. Whilst eager to soothe her it was evident they did not agree with this opinion; for her mother at once decided

that Byron should be invited to join his wife, and reconciled to her.

On the evening of her arrival at Kirkby, Lady Byron wrote to tell her sister-in-law of this intention, and to inquire how the poet was affected by her absence. "I conceive," she says, "that in his morbid state of feeling he has no desire for the absent, and may feel relieved for a time. Make him to write to me if you can, because any manual exertion is good for him, since his active habits decrease with the progress of disease—and to employ the powers externally diminishes the mental irritability. On the whole I am satisfied I have come here. I am sure it was right, and must tend to the advantage of all. I am very well. My mother suggests what would be more expedient about the laudanum bottle than taking away. To fill it with three-quarters of water, which won't make any observable difference, or if it should, the brown might be easily made deeper coloured."

Though stating in this letter that she was very well, in the next, written on the following day and preserved in the British Museum, she tells Mrs. Leigh that her mind is altogether over-strained, her body weak, that there were scarcely two hours in the day when her head was not burning, and that she suffered from a continual waste of vitality. This condition resulted from the wearisome suspense felt whilst waiting the decision of the medical men she had commissioned to enquire into her husband's sanity.

In recording the various devices by which she sought to relieve her mind she says: "I galloped yesterday like Lady Caroline Lamb, and felt something like pleasure whilst I was in danger of fracturing my sconce"; and again she writes: "I have been endeavouring to work off some of my agonies, and have addressed them to Byron. God bless you and him."

All her letters at this time prove her strong conviction of Byron's madness. "It seems," she says to her sister-in-law, "the malady is by no means more confirmed, and I conceive that it does not exist more strongly than at many former periods. This is melancholy for those to whom he is dear, for it does not render the case more hopeful, though it suspends the melancholy termination. . . . The fact of the pistol is striking. Such apprehensions are on the very verge of derangement, and there is but little difference between such an intention and its execution." Finally, on January 25th, she writes: "If it be disease, any strong shock will for a time restore reason, though in the end it can make no difference, and as far as a boundless and impious pride may be combined with it, reverses and humiliations would be mercies. Indulgence and success are more injurious than anything. I have neither forgotten considerations of justice nor charity—and for the latter I have done much since I saw you. My own mind has been more shaken than I thought, and is sometimes in a useless state for hours."

Before the month ended she was made aware of the doctor's opinion that Byron was perfectly sane. This statement, which to another wife would have brought immeasurable relief, roused her to bitterest indignation ; and she angrily declared that she would never again live with a man whose unkindness to herself could not be attributed to madness. In this resolve she was upheld by her father, who wrote to Byron demanding a consent to a separation from his wife. This communication received on February 2nd, 1816, came as a surprise to the poet, who, unwilling to believe that Lady Byron sanctioned her father's action, requested Augusta Leigh to discover if it were true. In answer to this enquiry, Lady Byron wrote the following letter on February 3rd :—

“MY DEAREST AUGUSTA,—You are desired by your brother to ask if my father has acted with my concurrence in proposing the separation. He has. It cannot be supposed that in my present distressing situation, I am capable of stating in a detailed manner the reasons which will not only justify this measure but compel me to take it ; and it never can be my wish to remember unnecessarily those injuries for which, however deep, I feel no resentment. I will now only recall to Lord Byron's mind his avowed and insurmountable aversion to the married state, and the desire and determination he has expressed ever since its commencement to free himself from that bondage, as finding it quite insupportable, though candidly

acknowledging that no effort of duty or affection has been wanting on my part. He has too painfully convinced me that all these attempts to contribute towards his happiness were wholly useless, and most unwelcome to him."

The effect of such a letter, compact with coldness and breathing self-righteousness, could not have been conciliatory to a man of Byron's temperament ; yet he wrote to his wife and to her father protesting against the proposed separation. In the second series of the famous Morrison collection of autograph letters, may be found the following answer of Lady Byron to her husband, dated Kirkby, February 13th, 1816.

"On reconsidering your last letter to me, and your second to my father, I find some allusions which I will not leave to be answered by others, because the explanation may be less disagreeable to you from myself. From my letters of January 15th and 16th, it can be fully and clearly proved that I left your house under the persuasion of your having a complaint of so dangerous a nature, that any agitation might bring a fatal crisis. My entreaties before I quitted you, that you would take medical advice, repeated in my letter of January 15th, must convince you of such an impression on my mind. My absence, if it had not been rendered necessary by other causes, was medically recommended on that ground as removing an object of irritation. I should have acted inconsistently with my unchanged affection for you, or indeed with the common principles of humanity, by urging my wrongs

at that moment. From subsequent accounts, I found that these particular apprehensions, which I and others had entertained, were groundless. Till they were ascertained to be so, it was my intention to induce you to come to this place, where, at every hazard, I would have devoted myself to the alleviation of your sufferings, and should not then have reminded you of my own, as believing you, from physical causes, not to be accountable for them. My parents, under the same impression, communicated by me, felt the kindest anxiety to promote my wishes and your recovery by receiving you here. Of all this my letter of January 16th is a testimony.

“If for these reasons (to which others were perhaps added) I did not remonstrate at the time of leaving your house, you cannot forget that I had before warned you earnestly and affectionately of the unhappy and irreparable consequences which must ensue from your conduct, both to yourself and to me, that to those representations you had replied by a determination to be wicked, though it should break my heart.

“What then, had I to expect? I cannot attribute your ‘state of mind’ to any cause so much as the total dereliction of principle, which since our marriage, you have professed and gloried in. Your acknowledgements have not been accompanied by any intentions of amendment.

“I have consistently fulfilled my duty as your wife. It was too dear to be resigned till it became hopeless. Now my resolution cannot be changed.”

Byron's letter to his wife had been followed by one from the Rev. Francis Hodgson, one of his earliest and most intimate friends, "and on the whole the most dissipated of the set," as Sir John Hobhouse told Benjamin Haydon. That this opinion was not too harsh may be gathered from a letter addressed to Hodgson by Byron, which is unfit for general publication and concludes with the injunction: "Remember me to yourself when drunk. I am not worth a sober thought." The grace of ordination, a wealthy wife, and an appointment to the snug vicarage of Bakewell, no doubt reformed Hodgson who lived to become a respectable Provost of Eton. Meanwhile he was fond of giving religious advice to Byron, who used to reply that he would listen to him as soon as he paid the twelve hundred pounds he owed him.

At this crisis the Rev. Francis Hodgson offered religious advice also to Lady Byron, in a letter that together with its answer, is among the Morrison collection. Beginning by assuring her that though he cannot feel certain as to whether or not he is outstepping the bounds of prudence, yet there was so much at stake that he could not help running the risk; and begging that she will forgive his interference, he pleads for his friend who "declares himself ignorant of the specific things which have given the principal offence," and wishes to hear them, that atonement may be made. In answer, Lady Byron stated that she married with the determination of enduring everything that contributed to the poet's

welfare ; and that in leaving him she probably saved him from bitter remorse. " I may give you a general idea of what I have suffered, by saying that he married me with the deepest determination of revenge, avowed on the day of my marriage and executed ever since with systematic and increasing cruelty, which no affection could change. . . . He does know, too well, what he affects to enquire."

In a letter written to her sister-in-law about the same date, February 14th, Lady Bryon expresses many excellent platitudes and philosophic maxims by way of justifying her refusal to be reconciled to her husband. Her happiness can never be restored, and the degree of her misery must depend on the principles of her conduct and not on its consequence. She deems it her duty to God to act as she does, and is resigned to misfortunes that may follow ; since, if she took any other course, she would forfeit her peace of conscience. No temporal advantages or privations would have the least weight with her. It was her decided opinion with regard to her husband, that no fatal event would follow : and it was a serious error to regard worldly disgrace as a great evil, in comparison with some that might follow with prosperity to a man of his character. She expressed an anxiety to know who might look beyond this world, if pride be indulged in and not be expiated ; and she had come to the original conclusion that adversity may be most beneficial where it is most bitter. Not that she would voluntarily be a means of chastisement,

though she seems to have been made so, and was doomed to participate in the suffering. Yet the present afflictions might be repaid in blessings.

Such admirable phrases were followed by more direct reference to her husband. "His grief and despair," wrote this unrelenting wife, "which I do not doubt are of the same too worldly nature, the loss of character by the anticipation of a measure which he had long intended, only with advantages of which he is deprived in this case, touches him most sensibly. It is not for *me* but for the accompanying circumstances that he feels so deeply. All this it is in his disposition to revenge on the object, if in his power. When his revenge avowedly began as soon as I became so by marriage, and seems to have increased in force rather than diminished, what would it be now? Those who consider his welfare ought not to desire my return. There is nothing of which I am more certain."

Steps were now taken by Lady Byron to secure a legal separation, which she believed necessary to her safety and peace; but to which her husband, still trusting she would relent was unwilling to agree. Whatever hope he entertained of preventing this action must have been dispersed by a letter written by Lady Bryon to his friend, the Rev. Francis Hodgson, on February 24th. In this she repeated her former charges of Byron's acts of violence and signs of aversion to herself; the cause of which, she had found consolation in thinking, were due to

madness, a malady she still trusted latently existed; because, though it would not free him of responsibility to man, it would "acquit him towards God."

Finally, she added, "Every possible means have been employed to effect a private and amicable arrangement, and I would sacrifice such advantages on terms, as I believe, that the law would ensure to me, to avoid this dreadful necessity, yet I must have some security, and Lord Byron refuses to afford any. If you would persuade him to the agreement, you would save me from what I most deprecate."

The struggle between husband and wife continued, he asking for "specific charges in a tangible shape," to which she threatened through her lawyers to bring the case into the Ecclesiastical Court. Eventually, this woman of inflexible purpose succeeded, and on April 22nd, 1816, Byron signed two deeds of separation. It is not improbable Lady Byron heard, and was made more obdurate by the fact, that whilst these negotiations were proceeding, her husband had begun an intrigue with Claire Clairmont, of whom more will be said presently. Meantime, a storm had been rising in the social atmosphere, under which even Byron's haughty spirit had to bow. The fell force of hatred and calumny raged against a man, whose conduct prevented his wife from living with him after a brief and blighting experience of twelve months. Nor were charges of execrable immorality alone responsible for the hostility that assailed him. Political opinions, that induced him to laud Napoleon and

lampoon the Prince Regent ; scepticism, at a time when religion and respectability were inseparable ; success, that had ensured him supreme interest and enthusiastic admiration ; eccentricities, that defied custom ; genius, that outstripped all contemporaries ; satire, that had lashed incompetency and hypocrisy, had all earned him enemies, who now seized and welcomed the opportunity to hound from his country the man whose name they made a synonym for all vice. The press flung mud at him, the doors of many houses were closed to him, women who once had fawned on him, no longer saw him as they drove by, men scowled at him threateningly, whilst an unwashed and malignant crowd surrounded and followed his carriage.

But whilst generally execrated, his cause was warmly advocated by at least one leader of society. This was Sarah Sophia, wife of the fifth Earl of Jersey, daughter of the tenth Lord Westmorland, and granddaughter of Robert Child, of Osterley Park, and Child's Bank, Temple Bar, in which she had the chief interest. A woman of great beauty she had been declared by Balzac to be the *Vrai type de l'aristocratie Anglaise*. Freed from the inanity that frequently accompanies good looks, she was remarkable for her strong feelings, and resolute character, as well as for a restless energy that led her to entertain, visit, travel, and interest herself in social and political affairs, with a persistency and ardour that sadly fatigued her husband, whose languid temperament and love of peace was the opposite to hers. Formerly she had

advocated with energy the cause of the unhappy consort of George IV., and she now with equal warmth defended Byron, whom she considered misunderstood and maligned. She had therefore offered him the use of her residence, Middleton Park, in Oxfordshire, as a refuge until the storm assailing him had spent itself; but on his declining this, and expressing his determination to live abroad, she decided to give an assembly in his honour, to which she would command the attendance of society. For this cards were issued and accepted by those who considered it inexpedient to refuse or offend one whose wealth, position, and ability gave her an exceptional place in their order.

The appointed night arrived, when carriages and coaches came rolling in quick succession to the countess's door, and presently her drawing-rooms were filled by a blaze of beauty and splendour. But though the guests had accepted their hostess's invitation, their submission to her desires did not extend to signs of friendliness towards Byron, whom they stared at curiously or contemptuously, or bowed to ceremoniously, a few venturing to smile at him, the generality behaving as if an exchange of civilities with him would involve their reputations. Months later he could laugh when telling that whilst leaning against the mantelpiece, as one after another these dames swept haughtily past him, a little red-haired, bright-eyed coquette came flirting up to him, and with a look that was exquisitely insolent said: "You

had better have married me ; I would have managed you better." It was no wonder that "he stole away from the ignominy" of this scene ; no wonder that in writing later on of his departure from England he said : "I was accused of every monstrous vice by public rumour and private rancour ; my name, which had been a knightly or a noble one since my fathers helped to conquer the kingdom for William the Norman, was tainted. I felt that if what was whispered and muttered was true, I was unfit for England ; if false, England was unfit for me."

Before leaving he addressed his wife in prose and verse. In his letter to her he said : "More last words—not many—but such as you will attend to. I have no reason to expect an answer, neither does it import, but you will at least hear me. I have just parted from Augusta, almost the last being whom you have left me to part with. Wherever I go, and I am going far, you and I can never meet in this world, nor in the next. Let this content or atone. If any accident occurs to me, be kind to Augusta ; if she is then also nothing, then to her children. . . . And recollect that, though it may be an advantage to you to have lost a husband, it is sorrow to her to have the water now and the earth hereafter between her and her brother. It may occur to your memory that you formerly promised me thus much. I repeat it, for deep resentments have but half recollections. Do not deem this promise cancelled, for it was not a vow."

The Sailor King

The poem beginning with the well-known lines,

Fare thee well, and if for ever,
Still, for ever, fare thee well :
Even though unforgiving, never
'Gainst thee shall my heart rebel.

though addressed to his wife, was given to the public, for whom it was probably written. Byron left England on April 25th, 1816, for Switzerland, where he was joined by Claire Clairmont and the Shelleys.

That overwhelming hate should drive from his native land the man she had loved must have grieved Lady Caroline Lamb ; who, although out of pique, and to prove that she no longer cared for him, had presented in the pages of her novel "Glenarvon," a picture that was really a caricature of the poet, had never ceased to regard him with devotion ; never been able to rid herself of the baneful charm of his influence. That her depressed condition gained the sympathy of the adamantine Lady Byron is proved by a letter written by her soon after her husband's departure to Mrs. George Lamb, in which, referring to Lady Caroline, she says : "I am glad you think of her with the feelings of pity which prevail in my mind, and surely if in *mine* there must be some cause for them. I never was nor never can be, so *mercilessly* virtuous as to admit *no* excuse for even the worst of errors."

Lady Caroline's ceaseless restlessness, her unaccountable caprices, made old Lord Melbourne regard her as a fidget, but her prudent and kindly mother-in-law exercised a soothing influence over her ; whilst in

the midst of some explosion of temper, some strange vagary, her little son would timidly take her hand, and with gentle wondering eyes turned to hers, strive to soothe her, when she would burst into tears of remorse and regret.

The patience with which the poor lady's family bore with her was strung to its last extreme by a *fracas* with her page, whom she describes as "a little *espiègle*." The boy delighted in flinging detonating balls into the fire, which startled and irritated Lord Melbourne, who scolded her for permitting such conduct. She, in turn, abused the page. One day when she was playing ball with the latter, he again threw a squib into the fire, when she flung the ball at him, which striking his temple caused some blood to flow. The boy being frightened called out: "Oh, my lady, you have killed me." His accusation and the sight of his blood frightened her out of her wits, and on the impulse of the moment she ran into the hall screaming out: "O God, I have murdered the page." What follows is briefly told by herself. "The servants and people in the street caught the sound, and it was soon spread about. William Lamb would live with me no longer."

His relations, who had for some time considered that this rising politician ought not to be plagued by the eccentric humours of such a wife, now insisted that he should separate from her. At a conclave of both their families this decision was agreed to; Lady Caroline neither protesting nor pleading for pardon,

but accepting a fate which she owned to meriting ; her calm behaviour surprising all. Meantime, whilst deeds of separation were being prepared, she employed herself in writing "Glenarvon," the novel already mentioned. Unknown to all save Miss Welsh, her son's governess, she worked at the book night and day with characteristic impatience, until it was completed in a month. As it was necessary that her blurred manuscript should be fairly copied before it was sent to a publisher, she wrote to a copyist she had heard of, whose name, Woodhead, it was hoped did not describe his mental abilities—asking him to call at Melbourne House. As it pleased her eccentric humour to mystify him, she arranged that he should find Miss Welsh seated at a harp, whilst she, Lady Caroline, dressed in a suit of the page's clothes, in which she looked to be a boy of fourteen, was discovered busily writing at a table. The copyist addressed Miss Welsh as Lady Caroline without having his mistake corrected ; and when in the course of conversation the governess airily pointed to the studious author, the good man expressed his amazement that a mere lad could produce a novel. In the second act of this little comedy, when Woodhead called again, he was startled to find that the person addressed as Lady Caroline had altered so greatly in so short a time, for this eccentric woman was now habited in her proper clothing. On his enquiring for the marvellous boy, Lady Caroline sorrowfully assured him that the lad was dead.

"Glenarvon" which was written without the knowledge of her family, was published anonymously in 1816. The author's name, however, was allowed to become known, and it was whispered that its hero was none other than Lord Bryon. No better advertisement could be desired by enterprising publisher; for at this time society was gasping over the sensation of Lady Bryon's parting from her husband, presumably for reasons which a decent reticence made the world more anxious to discover. As scandal had generally associated his name with the author, and their quarrel and her resentment were public property, it was hoped that in her desire for revenge the impulsive and irresponsible Lady Caroline would not only disclose shocking and entertaining details of his wickedness, but explain the tantalising mystery of his conjugal rupture. Curiosity was therefore alert, and the book was eagerly read by all classes. The result was disappointment; for though its hero might pass as a caricature of the poet, its pages were innocent of the desired narrations, and its regrettable freedom from scandal was not compensated for by interest or merit. Shadowy portraits of herself and her husband were recognised in the book, and the man who represented William Lamb was described as having "an utter contempt for hypocrisy in word and act, with a frankness and simplicity of character sometimes observed in men of extraordinary abilities, but never in the ordinary, or the corrupted mind."

It may be that this appreciation tempered the

vexations she had caused her husband ; or that now they were about to part he remembered how she had warned him of her tempers before accepting him as her husband ; recalled the bright beginning of their married days and her worship of him, and from pity was led to condone her childish wilfulness and caprices for which she could scarcely be held accountable. At all events, he looked forward to their separation with regret, and with a tenderness that underlay a placid exterior, resolved that it should be made with as little pain as possible to her.

Accordingly on the day when, the deed being ready, Lady Caroline's brother, William Ponsonby, and the family solicitor called at Melbourne House to witness William Lamb's signature, the latter left them in the library whilst he went upstairs to explain to his wife that their son should remain with her at Brocket Hall, and to say a few soothing words of farewell. As a considerable time passed and he still remained absent, those who waited began to wonder ; a further delay exhausted the snuff-box and the patience of the solicitor, when Lady Caroline's brother went in search of William Lamb, whom he found seated beside his wife, who was feeding him with scraps of bread-and-butter. Reconciliation had been made between them, the deed remained unsigned, and the lawyer quitted Melbourne House marvelling over the incomprehensible ways of married clients.

By way of celebrating the reconciliation, her relatives who were less tolerant of her behaviour than her

husband, called on her, among them her cousin, Lady Granville, who writes: "I went yesterday to Whitehall, followed the page and Lady Asgill through the dark and winding passages and staircases. I was received with rapturous joy, embraces, and tremendous spirits. I expected she would have put on appearance of something, but to do her justice she only displayed a total want of shame and consummate impudence, which, whatever they may be in themselves, are at least better or rather less disgusting than pretending or acting a more interesting part. I was dragged to the unresisting William, and dismissed with a repetition of embassades and professions. I looked as I felt, stupefied. And this is the guilty, heart-broken Calanthe who could only expiate her crimes with her death. I mean my visit to be annual."

CHAPTER VI

Lady Caroline Lamb's Novel—Lord Byron's Opinion of it—Strange Scene at Bocket Hall—Lady Caroline's Illness—Letter to Lady Morgan—William Godwin—Correspondence with Lady Caroline—She will regard him as her Master—Edward Lytton Bulwer as a Boy—His Verses on a heroic Occasion—William Lamb's afflicted Son—Lady Caroline's second Novel—A Superabundance of Activity—Lord Byron's Death—An unexpected Meeting—Lady Byron's Feelings—Lady Caroline's increasing Eccentricities—Her Husband's Forbearance—Life at Bocket Hall—Lady Caroline summons Bulwer from Cambridge—Love and Jealousy—A Comedy of Sentiment—The Parting of Husband and Wife—Lady Caroline is distressed—Determined to go abroad—Celebrates the Anniversary of her Marriage—Queen of the Revels—Leaves England and returns—Failing Health—Pathetic Letter—The coming of great Calmness—Affection for her Husband—Farewell.

CHAPTER VI

BYRON'S portrait, painted with a free hand in the pages of "Glenarvon" roused the wrath of his friend Tom Moore, and induced him to write a bitterly hostile critique of the novel for the *Edinburgh Review*, which he subsequently suppressed at the urgent entreaties of a friend ; but Byron himself professed to laugh at a representation which must have sorely hurt his excessive vanity. When the censor at Venice refused to sanction the publication of its translation until he had consulted the poet, the latter, as he writes to John Murray, told him that he did not recognise the slightest relation between himself and the book ; and that whatever opinions might be upon the subject, he would never prevent or oppose the publication of any book in any language on his own private account, and therefore he desired that the poor translator might be allowed to reap the fruit of his labours. This show of indifference would have seemed more sincere if he had not added the line : " You may say this with my compliments."

In writing to Moore on December 16th, 1816, Byron tells him that Madame de Staël had lent him

"Glenarvon," and adds his opinion that if the authoress had set down the truth, the story would not only have been more romantic, but more entertaining. "As for the likeness," says he, with mendacious untruthfulness, "the picture can't be good—I did not sit long enough."

Hearing of this remark with various others of a similar kind made by him, poor, foolish, impetuous Lady Caroline was so incensed that she resolved to punish and show her indifference to him, by burning his letters, his portrait, and the presents he had made her.

Lady Caroline was at this time staying at Brocket Hall, whose glorious wide-spreading park, studded by old trees and watered by a winding stream, seemed to her the most fitting scene for the ceremony which her erratic mind devised. Accordingly she ordered to be built in the park a huge bonfire shaped like a funeral pyre, that would serve as the instrument of her sacrifice. When various preparations were completed, and notice of her intentions had been spread abroad, she set out one sunny morning in May from the Hall, dressed in flowing draperies and attended by a procession of maidens in virgin white who scattered primroses in her path. With the stately and solemn air of a priestess proceeding to a rite, she passed under budding boughs of limes and chestnuts and fragrant hawthorn, until she reached the pyre, when taking a portrait of Byron, a ribbon-tied bundle of letters, and the presents he

had given her, she silently and sadly placed them on its summit. A torch was then handed to her, which with the air of a Fury she brandished thrice above her head and then set fire to the holocaust. As the flames kindled, hissed, and leaped, the white-robed maidens joined hands and danced in a circle round and round the pyre, to the strains of a chant Lady Caroline had composed and taught them for the occasion. The scene lost nothing of its fantastic impressiveness from the fact that the portrait burned was not that Byron had given her, and that the letters destroyed were not those he had written to her, but copies of the originals, with which at the last moment she was unable to part. This ruse was kept secret, lest its disclosure would nullify the effect it was hoped an account of this holocaust would have, in proving to the poet that the destruction of all mementoes he had given to her meant the cessation of her love for him.

But his strong influence still dominated her impressionable mind, and though besought by relatives to keep silent regarding him, she was ever ready to pour into the ear of any stranger who seemed sympathetic an account of Byron's affection for herself; incidents and conversations, real and imaginary, that had passed between them; together with details of their quarrel, which according to her had been caused by enemies who were adepts in wickedness.

The miniature he had given her was still a treasured object; and she had the chair on which he sat whilst being painted by Sanderson, fastened to the floor in

the great drawing-room at Melbourne House. When, in passing through London on one occasion, Lady Morgan called at Melbourne House, the groom of the chambers told her that Lady Caroline was receiving in her bedroom. There she was seen by her visitor lying on a couch wrapped in fine muslins "full of grace and cordiality, but more odd and amusing than ever. She embraced me," continues Lady Morgan, "with all the cordiality of authorial sisterhood, and insisted on my meeting her with my husband at Almack's for which she gave me tickets." Lady Morgan declares there was no kindness she would not take the trouble to devise for those who were in favour, "but it was hazardous not to accept the offer."

In the spring of 1818 Lady Melbourne died, when her daughter-in-law lost a kindly and restraining influence, and before the year was out it was thought that Lady Caroline's life would end, a fall from her horse in December having brought on a nervous fever. Her account of her illness and recovery, to Lady Morgan from Brompton Hall, is told with a characteristic verve that must be given in her own words.

"For one week I never swallowed anything. The moment of danger is now passed, and I believe in truth, I died; for assuredly a new Lady Caroline has arisen from this death. I seem to have buried my sins, griefs, melancholy, and to have come out like a new-born babe, unable to walk, think, speak;

but perfectly happy. So, finding myself—after I had wished for death and died—alive again, I made them carry me out into the air in a blanket, and then to the astonishment of every one, ordered my horse next day, and sat upon it and would ride, and now am well, only weak. I have positively refused to take any draughts, pills, laudanum, wine, brandy, or other stimulants. I live upon meal-porridge, soda-water, arrowroot, and all the farinaceous grains.

“ My mind is calm—I am well pleased to be alive—gratified for the kindness shown me; and never mean to answer any questions further back than the 15th of this month, that being the day of this new Lady Caroline’s birth; and I hate the old one. She had her good qualities but she had grown into a sort of female Timon—not of Athens—bitter, and always going over old past scenes. She also imagined that people hated her. Now, the present Lady Caroline is as gay as a lark, sees all as it should be, not perhaps as it is; and having received your very clever letter, full of good sense, means to profit by it; but at present like her predecessor, and like one of your countrymen, is going about wanting work. I have nothing necessarily to do. I know I might and ought to do a great many things, but then I am not compelled to do them. As to writing, assuredly enough has been written, besides it is different writing when one’s thoughts flow out before one’s pen, and writing with one’s pen waiting for thoughts.”

She did not remain long in want of work, for

in February 1819 she employed her energies in canvassing for the return to Parliament of her husband's younger brother, George Lamb. The result of this election is unimportant in comparison with the fact that it brought her into contact with William Godwin, then less remarkable as being the father-in-law of Percy Bysshe Shelley, than as the author of "Caleb Williams" a powerful novel dramatised under the title of *The Iron Chest*; and as the writer of daringly advanced theories, contained in a book called "Political Justice," which was variously regarded as an abomination of desolation, and as the inspired utterances of a sage and prophet. This man, to whom later on she addressed letters that throw light on her strange wayward life, was now in his sixty-third year. The seventh son of a dissenting clergyman, sufficiently prolific to produce thirteen children, and so poor that his stipend never exceeded sixty pounds a year, the lad had been brought up with a narrowness that was possibly responsible for the mental reaction which was to startle philosophers and politicians. In youth the books allowed him were "The Pilgrim's Progress," and "An Account of the Pious Deaths of Many Godly Children"; whilst for taking a cat in his arms on a Sunday his father, as he relates, "seriously reprov'd my levity, remarking that on the Lord's day he was ashamed to observe me demeaning myself with such profaneness." From being a Calvinist and an usher, he became a free thinker, an ardent champion for political liberty, and, as he expresses it, "an enemy

to that servility under which the species have so long laboured."

The first overture was made to him by Lady Caroline when she presented her compliments and expressed her fears that his politics would incline him to refuse his interest for Mr. George Lamb, but added her hopes that it would not offend if she solicited it. The answer came promptly. "You have mistaken me. Mr. George Lamb has my sincere good wishes. My creed is a short one. I am in principle a Republican, but in practice a Whig. But I am a philosopher, that is a person desirous to become wise, and I aim at that object by reading, by writing, and a little by conversation. But I do not mix in the business of the world, and I am now too old to alter my course, even at the flattering invitation of Lady Caroline Lamb."

This reply gratified her, and presently she was successful in coaxing the philosopher from his retirement and inducing him to figure in the crowd of politicians, wits, poets, authors, painters, and dramatists, whom she delighted to gather in her drawing-room. Evidence of the advance in their friendship is seen in a letter, without date, which is addressed to him, saying that her brother William Ponsonby was as enchanted as herself with the two books he had given her; and begging that a list of all his publications might be sent to him. "I forget my brother's number, but it is next door to the Duke of St. Albans," she says, and adds, "Mr. Lytton

Bulwer, a very young man and an enthusiast, wishes to be introduced to you. He is taking his degrees at Cambridge; on his return pray let me make him acquainted with you. I shall claim your promise of coming to Brocket; would your daughter or son accompany you?

“Hobhouse came to me last night; how strange it is I love Lord Byron so much now in my old age, in despite of all he is said to have said; and I also love Hobhouse because he so warmly takes his part. Pray write to me, for you see your advice has had some effect. I have been studying your little books with an ardour and a pleasure which would surprise you. There is a brevity that suits my want of attention, a depth of thought which catches at once, and does not puzzle my understanding, a simplicity and kindness which captivates and arouses every good feeling, and a clearness which assists those who are deficient, as I am, in memory. I am delighted, so are my brothers; the few men who are about me, are all eager to get your books; but what has vexed me is that the two children and four young women to whom I endeavoured to read them did not choose to attend. . . .

“After all, what is the use of anything here below, but to be enlightened and to try and make others happy? From this day I will endeavour to conquer all my violence, all my passions; but you are destined to be my master. The only thing that checks my ardour is this:

“ For what purpose, for whom should I endeavour to grow wise? What is the use of anything? What is the end of life? When we die, what difference is there here between a black beetle and me? Oh, that I might, with the feelings I yet possess, without one vain, one ambitious motive, at least feel that I was in the way of truth, and that I was of use to others. The only thoughts that ever can make me lose my senses are these :

“ A want of knowledge as to what is really true.

“ A certainty that I am useless.

“ A fear that I am worthless.

“ A belief that all is vanity and vexation of spirit, and that there is nothing new under the sun.

“ The only prayer I ever say beside the sinners, and the only life I shall ever leave written by myself of myself is that I have done those things which I ought not to have done, and have left undone those that I ought to have done.”

Lady Caroline's acquaintance with Edward Lytton Bulwer, mentioned in this letter, began in his childhood, but at what exact age he does not say, though giving the circumstances which led to it. One day whilst out driving she saw an accident befall a workman, when with her usual good nature she had him placed in her carriage and conveyed to Bocket Hall, where his injuries were attended to. News of her action reaching her neighbours at Knebworth, it seemed to young Bulwer's enthusiastic imagination worthy of being preserved in immortal verse. The

idea was no sooner conceived than it was executed, and the result forwarded to the heroine who, delighted with the lines, became anxious to see the prodigy that produced them, and in acknowledging their receipt, begged of Mrs. Bulwer to bring over the little poet when next she called.

On seeing the boy she took a violent fancy to him, and declared that she must paint his portrait. This she did, representing him as a scantily clad child, seated in solitary contemplation on a rock in the midst of a waveless sea, one hand supporting a prematurely wise-looking head, sun rays obliquely shaping themselves in a glorified curtain in the background. From this time forward she saw and corresponded with him, until their friendship reached a crisis in the latter years of her brief life.

William Godwin, the philosopher, sage, and scholar, to whom the letter just quoted is addressed, was ready to sympathise with and strengthen by his words this poor woman, whose distraught mind alone prevented her from realising the happiness she longed for; and that her tolerant and affectionate relatives, her gifts, and her luxurious surroundings vainly offered her. Accordingly he proposed a day for his call on Lady Caroline, to talk over subjects which interested them; but meantime she had gone to Brompton Hall, from whence on May 15th, 1821, she wrote to say how pleased she had been to receive his note, and how much she regretted being unable to see him at Melbourne House. She hoped to induce him to visit

her in the country, offered to send a carriage to Barnet for him any day he would name, and then in her usual unconventional style continues :

“ Write and tell me all you would have said, or half, if you will not all. It shall be sacred unless you permit otherwise. I am impatient to know what you have been doing since the great work came out ; I read it and admired it much. It is a more delightful and cheering view of this world than the other. I am no judge which is the truest. . . . I hope you are well ; are you happy ? Pray honour me so far as to write me a longer letter than the last, for every word you write is to the purpose. Yours is a beautiful style. I believe the saying so to you is the repeating what has been said by every one for years. Forgive me. I am too stupid and comfortable to think of anything new or witty. Believe me, however, with much interest and respect,

“ Yours,

“ CAROLINE LAMB.”

Apart from the pleasure his conversation invariably gave her, she was anxious, as she tells him in one of her letters, to consult him about her son, who though now in his fourteenth year showed no sign of mental progress. Tall for his age, inheriting the good looks of his parents, his health was delicate and his languid temperament showed a distressing weariness with his surroundings. Adored by his mother, the object of his father's affectionate solicitude, the companion of

old Lord Melbourne, nothing they could devise seemed to give him pleasure. Courteous and gentle, he never failed to thank them for their gifts and the tenderness they showered on him; but he expressed neither interest nor pleasure in all their endeavours to please him. When they talked he listened, and when they laughed he smiled, but it was impossible to ascertain whether he understood what was said, as he neither questioned them nor commented on their words. He could even play cards with his grandfather, but he never cared whether he lost or won, or whether the game ended abruptly or was continued for hours.

It was in vain his father strove to rouse his attention, that Lady Caroline sought to pique his curiosity; the heavy cloud shadowing the brain of this child of a neurotic mother, dulled all impression, and refused to be dispersed. The most notable physicians had been interested in his case, and all that medical skill could achieve had been done for him; but Lady Caroline hoped that her friend Godwin, a clear-eyed student of the human mind, a metaphysician in advance of his time might, by observing her son, diagnose his case and devise some wonderful means by which he might be cured. If her husband did not share in her sanguine expectations, he was far from discouraging them, and being intensely interested in the author of "Political Justice" was desirous of seeing him at Brocket Hall. Writing "actually at four in the morning," Lady Caroline assured Godwin her husband had desired

her to remind him of his promise to visit them. In this note, which bears no date, she says :

“You would not say if you were here now, that nature had not done her best for us. Everything is looking beautiful, everything in bloom. Yet do not fancy that I am here in rude health, walking about and being notable and bountiful. I am like the wreck of a little boat, for I never come up to the sublime and beautiful—merely a little gay merry boat, which perhaps stranded itself at Vauxhall or London Bridge—or wounded without killing itself, as a butterfly does in a tallow candle. There is nothing marked, sentimental, or interesting in my career. All I know is that I was happy, well, rich, joyful, and surrounded by friends. I have now one faithful kind friend in William Lamb, two others in my father and brother—but health, spirits, and all else is gone—gone, how? Oh, assuredly not by the visitation of God, but slowly and gradually by my own fault.”

Seeking for some outlet for her superabundant mental energy, Lady Caroline once more took to novel writing, and in 1822, published her second book, “Graham Hamilton,” which was considered much better than her first, and brought her additional notoriety at a time when it was rare for a woman to write and rarer still for a member of the nobility to appear in the ranks of authors.

In this same year her friend William Godwin suffered the loss of his son-in-law, and England of its greatest contemporary poet.

Such letters of condolence as William Godwin may have received from Lady Caroline, are not forthcoming ; but one is still preserved written to him in September 1823, full of that interesting subject, self, on which she delighted to talk. This singular communication says :

“From the moment when I saw you last under such excessive agitation, until the present moment, I have been as you said I might be if I would, calm and perfectly well, and tolerably happy. Is it not strange, then, that I can suffer my mind to be so overpowered, and mostly about trifles? Can you think of me with anything but contempt? Tell me would you dislike paying me a little visit? I will not allure you by descriptions of a country life. If you come I imagine it is to pay me a friendly visit, and if you do not I shall feel secure you have good reasons for not coming. The whole of what passed, which set me so beside myself, I forget and forgive ; for my own faults are so great that I can see and remember nothing beside. Yet I am tormented with such a superabundance of activity, and have so little to do, that I want you to tell me how to go on.

“It is all very well if one died at the end of a tragic scene after playing a desperate part ; but if one lives and instead of growing wiser, one remains the same victim of every folly and passion, without the excuse of youth and inexperience, what then? Pray say a few wise words to me. There is no one more deeply sensible than myself of kindness from

persons of high intellect, and at this period of my life I need it.

“I have nothing to do—I mean necessarily. There is no particular reason why I should exist; it conduces to no one’s happiness, and on the contrary I stand in the way of many. Besides I seem to have lived five hundred years, and I feel I am neither wiser, better, nor worse than when I began. My experience gives me no satisfaction; all my opinions, and beliefs, and feelings, are shaken as if suffering from frequent little shocks of earthquakes. I am like a boat in a calm, in an unknown, and to me unsought-for sea, without compass to guide, or even a knowledge whither I am destined. Now this is probably the case of millions, but that does not mend the matter, and whilst a fly exists it seeks to save itself. Therefore excuse me if I try to do the same. . . . Every one as usual is kind to me. I want for nothing this earth can offer but self-control. Forgive my writing so much about myself, and believe me most sincerely yours.”

The superabundance of activity mentioned in this letter found employment in the writing of her third best, and last novel, “Ada Reis,” which was published in 1823. Once given to the public she became anxious for its success, and wrote to solicit the help of her friend Lady Morgan, in securing that end. To her the authoress states that all she asked of John Murray, its publisher, was a dull sale or a still birth, but adds that this is contrary to her desires

or ambition. "But what can I do?" says she. "I am ordered peremptorily by my own family not to write. All you say is true, and so true that I ask you if one descended in a right line from Spenser, not to speak of the Duke of Marlborough, with all the Cavendish and Ponsonby blood to boot, which you know were always rebellious, should feel a little strongly upon any occasion, and burst forth, and yet be told to hold one's tongue and not write, what is to happen? You cannot do me a greater favour than to recommend and set abroad "Ada Reis." I will send you three copies, and with them the letters I have received from Gifford, Lady Dacre, and several others whom you know. In the meantime, I am doing all I can for your future work upon 'Salvator Rosa.'"

The kindly reviews her novel received, the success and the congratulations it brought her, soothed and gratified her restless spirit for a time; so that she was able to write: "I am satisfied with all I have. My husband has been to me a guardian angel, I love him most dearly; and my boy, though afflicted, is clever, amiable and cheerful. Let me not be judged by hasty words and hasty letters. My heart is as calm as a lake on a fine summer day; and I am as grateful to God for His mercy and blessing as it is possible to be."

The most dramatic scene, in a career which had known many sensational incidents, happened in the following year. On April 19th, 1824, Lord Byron, harassed in mind, disappointed by those whose cause

he had sacrificed himself to serve, unattended by relatives or close friends, in want of common necessities, surrounded by confusion and misery, and exhausted by agonising convulsions, died at Missolonghi, in his thirty-seventh year. The death of one she had passionately loved, and with whom reconciliation could never be made, seriously depressed her. The following summer was spent by her at Brocket, in whose glorious woods and parks she delighted, and to combat her melancholy she often took long drives about the surrounding country. It was whilst she was being driven in an open carriage along the shady Hertfordshire roads, one sultry afternoon in July, that she was met by a funeral procession taking its gloomy way in an opposite direction. As her carriage drew to one side, she leaned forward to enquire whose funeral it was, and in answer was told it was Lord Byron's on its journey northwards to Hucknall-Torkard Church, when, with a half-stifled scream, she fell back insensible.

This weird and unexpected meeting with the *cortège* of one who had dominated her mind, appealed to and startled her vivid imagination, and produced a shock under which she sank. For not only did her health give way, but she was no longer able to interest herself in the ordinary affairs of life.

As might have been expected, Lady Byron's feelings regarding her husband's death were less keen. In a letter, for which these volumes are again indebted to the Morrison collection, dated August 26th, 1824,

addressed to Mrs. George Lamb, and redolent of self-righteous satisfaction, she states :

“ I may at least say that, as my friend, you will be glad to learn that no part of my strange and melancholy experience has left the slightest tinge of bitterness on my mind. To have seen the utter fruitlessness of an attachment to which all was sacrificed must indeed remain a source of sorrow ; but in so decided a case, death could hardly be said to extinguish a hope long before crushed.”

In the next paragraph she refers to the strong reaction in Byron's favour that—now he could no longer be aware of or benefit from it—changed general hostility to sympathy, and led men and women alike to think their judgment had been too severe, their actions merciless towards one who, if he had sinned, had not been forgiven. “ I had a visit not long ago from Lady Westmorland,” writes the poet's unafflicted widow, “ evidently very kindly meant—but her views and mine differ. She wants to oppose the transient excitement produced by artful management on the state of opinion, and to let it subside unnoticed. Of course I shall pursue my own plan, and she may fight with unsubstantial adversaries, for as such I regard the party feelings of the moment.”

In the course of time a violent change occurred in Lady Caroline Lamb's condition, when, recovering from her prostrating melancholy, her craving for excitement became keener than ever, and her temper so unrestrained, that when contradicted she smashed

every article of glass or china within her reach. Few days indeed passed that her eccentricities did not increase the strain on her husband's endurance. For example, once when they were expecting some distinguished guests to dinner, she surveyed the table prepared by the servants, and found fault with its arrangements. According to her opinion something more strikingly decorative was necessary, such as an elevated plant in the centre, or a statue—yes, a statue would certainly be better ; and to illustrate her idea she lightly stepped on the table in the midst of glass and china, and posed in a classic attitude. The unappreciative butler, fancying she had at last become mad, hurried from the room in search of his master, whom he begged for God's sake to come to her. On seeing her still posing, he called out in his gentlest tones, "Oh, Caroline, Caroline," and taking her in his arms lifted her down and led her into the garden where, in order to soothe her mind he spoke of other subjects. His forbearance was rewarded, for that evening she received her guests without showing any traces of mental excitement, and as usual charmed them by her cleverness, wit, and originality.

On another occasion when about to return the visit of one of her country neighbours, she insisted on sitting on the box beside the coachman, "for company" as she stated. Arriving at her destination the powdered footman who waited to hand her down, was startled from his conventional calmness by hearing her call out : "I am going to jump off and you must

catch me," and in another second she was in his arms. On entering the drawing-room she was quite calm, and her hostess heard nothing of this eccentricity until it became the gossip of the servants' hall.

Her exacting moods and her querulous tempers were not always fleeting, and at times her husband vainly sought to tranquillise her. From day to day he never knew what extravagance she might, without thought or malice, indulge in; what unintentional humiliation she might bring upon him. The strain he suffered seemed to reach its limit, when one evening throughout dinner at Melbourne House she was intolerably exasperating. No sooner had she withdrawn than he quietly ordered the carriage and drove to Brocket Hall, in search of the peace which her presence would never permit him. Always a lover of books he turned to them for consolation in his misery, and remained in the library far into the night; for one of his favourite theories was that no man was so dull and no volume so trivial, but that something might be learned from them. Forgetful of time in his absorption, he was eventually disturbed by hearing sounds which broke the profound silence of early morn and horribly startled him, when hurrying to open the door he saw his wife prostrate at the threshold, convulsed with tears, bewailing her behaviour, and begging for reconciliation.

It was in this year 1824, whilst he was yet a young graduate at Cambridge, that Edward Lytton Bulwer, then in his twenty-first year, was asked on

a visit to Brocket Hall. Previously his acquaintance with his hostess had been superficial, but it now rapidly ripened into friendship; for her attention to this youth flattered his vanity and he became fascinated by what in an autobiographical chapter he describes as the wild originality of her talk, with its great and sudden contrasts from deep pathos to infantile drollery, now sentimental, now shrewd, sparkling with stories of the eminent persons she had known, or becoming grave as she boldly plunged into metaphysical speculations, occasionally profound, sometimes absurd, and generally suggestive.

Brocket Hall was crowded with guests, and occasionally its eccentric mistress would send her page to their bedrooms at three o'clock in the morning with a message to say she was playing the organ, and begged the favour of their company to hear her. "Strange to say," adds Bulwer, who tells this anecdote, "it was a summons generally obeyed, and those who obeyed did not regret the loss of their sleep; for when the audience had assembled she soon relinquished the solemn keys of the organ, and her talk would be so brilliant and amusing, that the dawn found one still listening spellbound without a thought of bed."

The part of her conversation that interested him most, dealt with her recollections and descriptions of Byron, who was ever uppermost in her mind. The reading of the poet's letters also delighted Bulwer; and it gratified Lady Caroline to point out one special

sentence in them which said: "You are the only woman I know who never bored me." Time had softened the rancour of such slights as she had suffered from Byron, and there was no bitterness in her reference to him; nay, if any dared to find fault with him she would fire up in his defence.

In writing years afterwards Bulwer declared her no mean judge of character, and added that her estimate of Byron was sound, when she described him as "a being somewhat akin to herself in strange caprices and wild affections—spoiled by a too early reputation for other things besides genius—but on the whole with many redeeming qualities, lovable and noble." Bulwer says he is bound to add that in the poet's letters to Lady Caroline, "despite the evident passion that dictated and coloured them, there was no trace of the selfish and heartless libertine; rather a desire to save her, as it were, from herself, and a consideration for her happiness chastening and predominating over the thought of his own."

The correspondence between Lady Caroline and Bulwer which followed his return to Cambridge, contained much sentiment and romance, "which looked like love, but it never came to that," as he admits; adding, "I believe that what I felt for her had its origin rather in gratified vanity than in anything else. On both sides this feeling had little to do with the heart, but a great deal to do with the imagination."

One of Lady Caroline's nervous illnesses followed

his visit, and she summoned him to what she declared was her deathbed. The Cambridge undergraduate hastened to her side, where he spent hours in the exchange of tender sentiments. The patient recovered and the guest departed. When next they met, it was on Christmas day, and he at once noticed a coldness in her manner. The inevitable explanation was sought and given, both probably enjoying a scene which was played to perfection. Lady Caroline declared she was wrong in loving him, and that henceforth she would regard him merely as the dearest of her friends. "She talks sentiment exceedingly well and with singular grace," comments this successor of Byron, who left her half pleased, half piqued, and as he assures us, more in love than ever with this woman, who was nearly twenty years his senior.

The last act in this comedy of sentiment was played soon after, when he was again invited to visit Bocket, to accompany a large number of guests staying there to a ball given by Lady Cowper at Panshanger. He arrived at the Hall about three o'clock, but did not see his hostess until they met at dinner. She avoided all conversation with him, and instead of giving him a place in her carriage as she drove to Panshanger, reserved that honour for a Mr. Russell, a natural son of the Duke of Bedford, whom Bulwer describes as "a fashionable man, extremely handsome, but dull, insipid, and silly." He adds: "I was not then jealous of him, for I was conscious of my own superiority to him in everything but good looks. But I imagined

(for like most women she is fond of coquetry) that she was only trying to make me jealous.’”

At the ball Lady Caroline took the new favourite’s arm and walked about the room with him, which made the old favourite angry and sarcastic when, towards the end of the evening, she spoke to him. On their return to Brocket he told her he should leave before she was up, and bade her goodbye; but early next morning he received a short note from Lady Caroline imploring him not to go before she had seen him. He then went to her rooms when, throwing her arms round his neck, she burst into tears and begged him to forgive her. Needless to say he remained. Peace being established between them they agreed to ride out, but Russell went with them.

“Although she certainly did not try to make me jealous,” says Bulwer, “I soon saw that she felt for him that love of the imagination which she had felt before for me. She could not help liking me still in an affectionate way; but he was the idol of the moment. I was miserable; I left her before she got home, and repaired to my room. You know my stormy paroxysms when I am violently affected. I was in one of these when she came into my room. She implored me not to give way to my passions and not to be deceived. I said to her: ‘I will believe you and be happy, if you will only say that I have no reason to be jealous of Mr. Russell. Say this and I will never again insult you by being so.’”

Lady Caroline assured him she had known Russell

for a very long time, and that Bulwer was in all respects more worthy of her affections. Thus conciliated, the future novelist went down to dinner. Opposite him sat Russell, and on his hand was the ring Byron had given to Lady Caroline ; "one which was only to be worn by those she loved." Bulwer had often worn it himself, and had been pressed to accept it, but refused because it was so valuable.

"And now he wore it," wrote the indignant rival. "Can you conceive my resentment, my wretchedness? After dinner I threw myself upon the sofa. Music was playing. Lady Caroline came up to me. 'Are you mad?' she said. I looked up. The tears stood in my eyes. I could not have spoken a word for the world. What do you think she said aloud? 'Don't play this melancholy air. It affects Mr. Bulwer so that he is actually weeping.' My tears, my softness, my love, were over in a moment. I sprang up, laughed, talked, and was the life of the company. But when we broke up for the evening I went to her and said : 'Farewell for ever. It is over. Now I see you in your true light. Vain and heartless, you have only trifled with my feelings in order to betray me. I despise as well as leave you. Instead of jealousy I only feel contempt. Farewell ; go and be happy.'"

After this speech, worthy of a deeply wronged and defiant hero of melodrama, Bulwer left her to suffer the remorse that heroines are erroneously supposed to endure, and next morning set out for Brighton, where he arrived in a high fever and had himself relieved of

twenty ounces of blood. The final touch of comedy is given to this scene by his statement that William Lamb understood his feelings and was particularly kind to him.

As time passed Lady Caroline's absurd caprices continually brought renewed pain and humiliation to her husband, whose philosophic tolerance almost amounted to apathy, and whose chivalrous feeling towards women was singular in making no exception regarding his wife. Fond of repeating one of the detached thoughts of Horace Walpole: "To those who think, life is a comedy; to those who feel, a tragedy," William Lamb strove to realise this maxim. But endurance reaching its extensive limits, he was eventually forced to declare that they must live apart. The determination that appeared reasonable to her family who sympathised with him, seemed cruel to his wife. In writing of her troubles from Melbourne House on June 2nd, 1825, to Lady Morgan, who had expressed a desire to see a miniature of Byron, Lady Caroline says: "I have sent for, and I know not if I shall receive, the portrait you wished to see. I am afraid you have seen me under great irritation and under circumstances that might try any one. I am too miserable. You have not yet advised me what to do—I know not, care not. Oh, God, it is a punishment severe enough; I can never recover it; it is fair to William Lamb to mention that since I saw you he has written a kinder letter; but if I am sent to live by myself, let them dread the violence of my

despair—better far go away. Every tree, every flower, will awaken bitter reflection. Pity me, for I am too unhappy ; I cannot bear it. I would give all I possessed on earth to be again what I once was, and I would now be obedient and gentle ; but I shall die of grief.

“ Think about Ireland—if only for a few months—yet what shall I do at Bessborough alone ? God bless you ; bearing this is a sad ending to a too frivolous and far too happy a life. Farewell ; if you receive the portrait return it, and send the letter ; it is his parting one when I went to Ireland with mamma (I mean Lord Byron’s). She was near dying because she thought I was going to leave her. William at that time loved me so much that he forgave me all, and only implored me to remain. My life has not been the best possible. The slave of impulse, I have rushed forward to my own destruction. If you like the drawing of me which Peckett did before he died, I will try and have it copied. Ever with sincere interest and affection, Caroline.”

Byron’s letter here referred to has already been given in these pages ; as to sending his miniature to the novelist, Lady Caroline reserved to herself the privilege of changing her mind. In a characteristic letter, she writes : “ No, no, not that portrait out of my hands—I cannot bear. I will have it copied for you. I must take it with me to Paris. Thank you, dear Lady Morgan, for your advice, but you do not understand me, and I do not wonder you

cannot know me. I had purposed a very pretty little supper for you. I have permission to see all my friends here ; it is not William's house ; besides he said he wished me to see every one and Lady—— called and asked me who I wished to see. I shall therefore shake hands with the whole Court Guide before I go. The only question I wish to solve is, shall I go abroad ? Shall I throw myself upon those who no longer want me, or shall I live a good sort of half life in some cheap street a little way off ; or shall I give lectures to little children, and keep a seminary, and thus earn my bread ; or shall I write a kind of quiet everyday sort of novel, full of wholesome truths ; or shall I attempt to be poetical, and failing, beg my friends for a guinea a-piece and their name to sell my work upon the best foolscap paper ; or shall I fret, fret, fret, and die ; or shall I be dignified, and fancy myself as Richard the Second did, when he picked the nettle up—upon a thorn ? ”

She then speaks of Faustus, admires the overture “tacked to it,” and declares the scenery beautiful, affecting “and not unlike Lord Byron, that dear, that angel, that misguided and misguiding Byron whom I adore, although he left that dreadful legacy on me—my memory. Remember thee—and well.” In the same breath she hopes that her husband and Lady Morgan's may become better friends. “As to myself,” she continues, “I never can love anything better than what I thus tell you. William Lamb, first ; my mother, second ; Byron, third ; my boy,

fourth ; my brother William, fifth ; my father and godmother, sixth ; my uncle and aunt, my cousin Devonshire, my brother Fred, myself, my cousins, next ; and last my *petit* friend, young Russell, because he is my aunt's godson ; because when he was but three I nursed him ; because he has a hard-to-win, free, and kind heart : but chiefly because he stood by me when no one else did."

Negotiations for her separation from her husband were continued, during which she declared her heart was broken, but not her spirit ; "and if I will but sign a paper," said she, "all my rich relations will protect me, and I shall no doubt go with an Almack ticket to heaven."

There had never been any question of her needing to live in a cheap street, to bewilder little children by lectures, or to earn her bread in any other way ; for her indulgent husband made liberal provisions for her. It was his wish that she should reside at Brocket Hall with his father and her boy, where he would occasionally call to see her. Lady Caroline, however, declared that she would live abroad for three years, and on a doctor being engaged to accompany her, her wishes were not opposed. Before leaving Brocket Hall she desired to celebrate the anniversary of her marriage by giving a *fête* to the tenants on her father-in-law's estate, and to the villagers of the surrounding districts, of whom she would then take leave.

On a glorious morning in the month of June 1825,

all Brocket woke to a state of excitement. Long before midday crowds of rustics in their Sunday clothes, began to gather in the great park, their presence startling the deer and driving them into its shady solitudes. As the clock in the stable chimed twelve, Lady Caroline dressed in fantastic garb made her slow exit from the Hall, and followed by a procession of young girls dressed in white, who scattered flowers and danced to the music of fiddles, took her way to a chair of state placed beneath a spreading oak, under which Queen Elizabeth is said to have rested. The Welwyn band, which she had long supported for the amusement of the people, followed, the tenants and villagers bringing up the rear of this long procession. Arriving at Queen Elizabeth's oak, they formed themselves into a semi-circle, when the white-robed maidens went through the figures of some fantastic dance invented by Lady Caroline for the occasion, which ended by their suddenly falling sideways on the grass.

Dinner was then served, after which the ballroom, decorated with garlands and flags, was thrown open to those who danced, whilst games were played in the park by the children. In the course of the afternoon Lady Caroline appeared as Queen of the Revels, and scattered silver among them. As the sun set she assembled all once more, and from her throne beneath the boughs addressed a few affectionate words of farewell to them, which were interrupted by hopes for her speedy return, and were finally greeted with

hearty cheers. Then the soft darkness of a summer night fell as a curtain on the scene.

Next day she left for the Continent, where a glimpse of her as she appeared to the wondering eyes of foreigners is given us by prim little Fanny Burney, who saw her at Brussels. "She had," says this writer, "one shoulder, half her back, and all her throat and neck displayed, as if at the call of some statuary for modelling a heathen goddess." After an absence of about two months her restlessness made her return to England. Before leaving she had changed her mind once more, and given Byron's miniature to Lady Morgan to be taken care of, and almost her first thought on reaching the shores, was to regain her treasure. Therefore, in a note dated from Dover, she says, to the author of "The Wild Irish Girl" :

"It would be charitable in you to write me a letter, and it would be most kind if you would immediately send me Lord Byron's portrait, as more than six weeks have expired and I am again in England ; if you will send it to Melbourne House, to the care of the porter, I shall be most sincerely obliged to you. My situation in life is new and strange. I seem to be left to my fate most completely, and to take my chance on rough or smooth without the smallest interest being expressed for me. It is for a good purpose, no doubt ; besides, I must submit to my fate, it being without remedy. I am now with my maid at the Ship Tavern, Water Lane, having come over from Calais. I have no footman, page, carriage, horse, nor fine rooms.

The melancholy of my situation in this little dreary apartment is increased by the very loud jovial laughter of my neighbours, who are smoking in the next room. Pray send me my invaluable portrait, and pray think kindly of me."

Back again at Brocket Hall in the company of her father-in-law, now dozing away the remainder of his existence, and of her son ever anxious to soothe her, Lady Caroline's days which were drawing to a close were passed in a restfulness previously unknown to her. It is possible that the light which often illumines a life at its setting, revealed to her faults that, though committed without malice or intention, were effectual in destroying her peace, and in parting her from her husband; for regret subdued her waywardness, and she eagerly welcomed the letters and visits she received from him whose generous heart and wide mind led him to pity rather than resent her follies. To friend, and stranger, she was ever ready to declare that "she could never love any one better than William Lamb"; whilst she continually wrote verses in praise of him, which she first sent to her husband and then to the "Keepsakes," "Books of Beauty," "Gems," and other elegant literary inanities whose pages they were supposed to enhance.

As her efforts at authorship were discouraged by her family, she turned for sympathy to Lady Morgan whose encouragement she felt all the more "as everybody wishes to run down and suppress the vital spark of genius I have, and in truth it is but small; about

what one sees a maid gets by excessive beating on a tinder-box. I am not vain, believe me, nor selfish, nor in love with my authorship ; but I am independent, as far as a mite and bit of dust can be. I thank God being born with all the great names of England around me ; I value them alone for what they dare do, and have done ; and I fear nobody except the devil, who certainly has all along been very particular in his attentions to me, and has sent me as many baits as he did Job. I however am, happily for myself, in as ill a state of health as he was, so I trust in God I shall evermore resist temptation."

In 1827 William Lamb was appointed Chief Secretary for Ireland, when it became his great desire that his son, now twenty years old, might live with him in Dublin. For besides his deep affection for the lad, which made separation from him painful, he also—with that blessed hope which refuses to be extinguished in the parents of afflicted children—trusted that change of scene, excitement, and life amongst new surroundings would rouse the boy's dormant intellects ; and that a new miracle would be wrought in his favour. The evening of July 4th was spent by William Lamb at Brompton Hall, where he bade an affectionate farewell to his clinging, tearful wife ; and as daytime was considered too hot for travelling along the dusty high roads, he set out at night on his journey to Ireland, accompanied by his son Augustus.

In the following November Lady Caroline's health

became seriously affected, and dropsy rapidly developed. In her frequent and affectionate letters to her husband, she showed no trace of her former petulance, made no reference to her stormy past, never repined, and in speaking of her illness made no complaint of her sufferings. Knowledge of the inevitable change she saw gradually approaching, scared her spirit and sweetened her memories of the man she had worshipped in the days of her girlhood ; he who had been the truest friend and most forbearing husband that woman ever had. On his part he looked forward to their parting with bitter regret. He was now the occasional guest of Lady Morgan, at her house in Kildare Street, Dublin, and the authoress relates that when dining with her on November 27th, to meet some distinguished friends, he was in the lowest of spirits, owing to bad news he had heard of his wife's condition. On the 3rd of the following month, he forwarded from the Chief Secretary's Lodge in the Phoenix Park, to Lady Morgan, some letters received by the previous day's mail, which he described as very melancholy. One of these from Lady Caroline, written soon after an operation had been performed said,

“Dearest William, this is the first time I can write. I have suffered much and I hope patiently, since I wrote last. Tapping is by no means an agreeable sensation. It does not give pain like a tooth drawn, but it turns you deadly cold and sick. The operation was more troublesome than usual ; this is the first day I feel easy. All the county have

been to see me. My dear brother has read to me and soothed me, and is coming back. I never met with such affection and kindness as from all persons of both our families. . . . But what pleased me most was your dear letter saying you loved and forgave me. God bless you, dearest. My love to Augustus. All here doing well. Ever yours, Caroline.”

Soon 'after Christmas she was moved from Brocket Hall to Melbourne House, that she might be within more convenient reach of the doctors. All who saw her held little hope of her recovery ; she herself had none. She continued to see her relatives and to write to her husband and a few of her old friends. To one of these—Lady Morgan—she penned the following letter, pathetic, yet tempered with some of the old spirit which had made her a delightful conversationalist and correspondent.

“I have wandered from right, and I have been punished. I have suffered what you can hardly believe. I have lost my mother, whose gentleness and good sense guided me. I have received more kindness than I can ever repay. I have suffered also, but I deserved it. My power of mind and body are gone ; I am like the shade of what I was. God bless you : I write from my heart. You are one like me, who, perhaps, have not taken the right road. I am on my death-bed ; say I might have died by a diamond, I die now by a brickbat ; but remember the only noble fellow I ever met with is William Lamb ; he is to me what Shore was to Jane Shore. Pray excuse the sorrows

this strange letter will cause you. Could you be in time I would be glad to see you; to you alone would I give up Byron's letters.—Much else, but all like the note you have. Pray excuse this being not written as clearly as you can write. I speak as I hope you do, from the heart.”

She now expressed an ardent longing to see and say farewell to her husband, who had never believed her faithless to himself, an opinion shared by Lord Byron's intimate friend, Samuel Rogers. William Lamb therefore made preparations to cross the channel, and be with her at the last, but was prevented from leaving Dublin until January 23rd, 1828.

On reaching Melbourne House, the scene of his early married life, he hurried to her room. Those wonderful dark eyes, the light and charm of her beauty, were watchfully fixed on the door, outside which her straining ear had caught sound of the dear, familiar footsteps, and on seeing him, brightened as with the old flame of youth and joyousness. Then her voice, sweet as of old, but faint as the mellow notes of a much worn instrument, called his name in happy security of his presence, which from that moment was scarce ever to leave her whilst life remained. Her head was nestling tenderly against his breast, when on January 26th she peacefully passed out of life. Her death brought him bitter grief, and Mr. Torrens in his biography of William Lamb says that years after Lady Caroline's death, he would speak of her with tears and ask moodily: “Shall we meet in another world?”

The miniature of Byron which she had valued so greatly was bequeathed by her to Lady Morgan, who regarded it as a sacred relic. At her death it was sold amongst the more valuable of her effects at Christie's.

In the following July (1828) William Lamb succeeded to his father's title and estates, whilst as already stated he became Home Secretary in 1830, and Prime Minister in July 1834.

CHAPTER VII

Daily life at the Sailor King's Court—Dancing with Lord Amelius Beauclerk—Lord Mayo sings Irish Songs—Lord Denbigh appointed Chamberlain to the Queen—Lord Howe's Letter—Lord Grey a Guest at Windsor—The Duke of Argyll is appointed Lord High Steward—Lord Anglesey's quondam Wife—Lady Caroline Capel—The little Queen of Portugal visits Windsor—Prince George of Cambridge and Her Majesty—Lady Bedingfeld's suggestion—Dinner in St. George's Hall—The Princess Victoria—The Duchess of Kent and Their Majesties—Disagreements between her and the King—The Princes of Wurtemberg visit England—The Question of Royal Salutes—Prince Albert of Saxe-Coburg—Baron Von Stockmar's Opinion of him—The Princess Victoria first sees him—The King invites the Princes of Orange to England—Letter from Prince Albert—The Princess Victoria writes to the King of the Belgians

CHAPTER VII

DAILY life at the Sailor King's Court was spent in guileless homely pleasures, undisturbed by social or political events of importance ; and though the hearty enjoyment with which His Majesty had mounted the throne lessened with custom, and was chastened by experience of all his high position entailed, yet a naturally buoyant disposition and a mind unfamiliar with introspection, left him young for his years, and indifferent to the burden which must freight the shoulders of a monarch.

His habits were simple. At a quarter to eight every morning a *valet de chambre* knocked at his bedroom door, when attired in trousers and dressing-gown the king went into the adjoining apartment. "Let who will be there," says Charles Greville, who gives these particulars, "he never takes the slightest notice of them till he emerges from the sanctuary, when like the *malade imaginaire*, he accosts whoever may be present with a cheerful aspect. He is long at his ablutions and takes up an hour and a half in dressing." At half-past nine came breakfast with the Queen and her ladies, after which he read *The Times*

and *The Morning Post*, and occasionally made such audible comments on their news, as "That's a damned lie." Then flinging these journals aside, he went to the library, where his secretary Sir Herbert Taylor awaited him, and dictated letters and discussed business until two o'clock. By that time he was ready for lunch, which usually consisted of a couple of cutlets and two glasses of sherry, for at all meals he ate and drank with moderation. The afternoon was spent in driving and visiting. After dinner at half-past seven he sat in the drawing-room with the Princess Augusta his sister, and such of his daughters as happened to be visiting him.

Those who wished to play gathered round the card-table, whilst the Queen embroidered or sewed, the Princess Augusta strummed the piano, and the King nodded and started by turns. Occasionally the heavy monotony of these evenings was broken by mild excitement, such as when His Majesty insisted on old Admiral Lord Amelius Beauclerk joining him in a country dance; or induced Lord Mayo, when in waiting, to sing Irish songs. "He has no voice and sings quite out of tune, but the King likes to play upon him, tho' he looks very grave all the time," says Lady Bedingfeld, to whom we are indebted for many glimpses into the domestic circle of the Court.

In January 1833 the Queen was prevailed on to appoint a Lord Chamberlain in place of the Earl of Howe, when she nominated William Basil Percy,

seventh Earl of Denbigh, who had been a Lord of the Bedchamber to the King, in which post he was succeeded by Lord Adolphus Fitzclarence, His Majesty's son. This did not sever the Queen's friendship for her former Chamberlain, who with his family was a frequent guest at Windsor Castle, and who was once more appointed as her Lord Chamberlain in 1834, an office he held till her death. So late as 1840 Sir Robert Peel, in corresponding with John Wilson Croker, mentions an interesting instance of Her Majesty's friendly communications with the earl. "A day or two before we went to Gopsall," writes, Sir Robert, "Lord Howe received a letter addressed to *Lord How*, the envelope of whity brown with an inscription "per railroad." He thought it one of a dozen letters addressed to him from people who wanted money, or a subscription, or the permission to dedicate, or work for a bazaar, or anything else than a letter from Queen Adelaide, and was very nearly throwing in into the grate. However, he opened the envelope, and discovered the letter from the Queen (Victoria) announcing to Queen Adelaide her intended marriage, addressed in the Queen's own hand to Queen Adelaide, and written in very kind and affectionate terms—as full of love as Juliet. I suppose some footboy at Windsor Castle had enclosed and directed it to *Lord How*. If it had been disregarded, and had thus remained unanswered, what an outcry there would have been of neglect, insult, and so forth—and not unjustly."

The Sailor King

In connection with the appointment of Lord Denbigh as Lord Chamberlain to the Queen, Lord and Lady Grey were invited to Windsor; hearing of which Lady Bingham—Lady Howe's sister—asked His Majesty if it were true, and being answered that it was, declared she made it a point never to speak to any member of that family, and would stay in her own apartments whilst they remained at the Castle. The King, who was too lenient to assert his authority or dignity over this member of his household, of whose conduct he disapproved, contented himself by remarking to Lady Bedingfeld that he did not consider Lady Bingham or her husband were "overstocked by sense." Both Their Majesties were exceedingly gracious to Lord and Lady Grey. The King, full of jokes, sitting by him at the card table, and by some disarrangement of ideas continually calling him Lord Howe, which mightily amused all within hearing as well as Lord Grey himself.

Among other visitors at the Castle at this time were the Duke of Devonshire, of whom the King interestedly enquired where he meant to be buried—and Madame de Ludolf, whose husband had been Ambassador at Constantinople where Lord Ponsonby then represented his country. Anxious that Lady Ponsonby should be well received in the capital of the Turk, the King desired that she should be recommended by Madame de Ludolf to all her friends there, adding that she might tell them Lady Ponsonby "was the daughter of one of his late brother's sultanas,

Lady Jersey"—wife of the fourth earl, and mother-in-law of Byron's friend.

At this time George William, sixth Duke of Argyll came to the Castle on being appointed as Lord High Steward of the Household. His grace was "an amiable, thoughtless man, who whistled away the cares of life" that he had brought on himself by early extravagances. In 1810 he had married Lady Anglesey, whose marriage with her lord had been dissolved in Scotland at her suit, and who, says Lady Bedingfeld, "will not admire meeting his quondam wife with the higher rank of duchess and an obsequious husband, for he has always treated her with the most shameful contempt, and now he must be a little more careful in his expressions." On arriving at Windsor Castle he was presented by the King to the Queen. "As we were following her to luncheon," says the above-quoted authority, "he came into luncheon also, but seemed rather embarrassed, which is odd in a man like him." At dinner that evening he sat beside Her Majesty, and Lady Bingham was to have taken her place next him; but, as his grace was a Whig and owed his appointment to Lord Grey, she seated herself the other side of the table, next Lord Falkland, "which His Majesty observed aloud. At dessert the king made a little speech, and gave the Duke of Argyll's health. Those who were near him said the Duke turned quite pale, and made no speech in return to thank the King; he was terribly embarrassed, which the kind-hearted King, probably perceiving, called out,

'Doors' (the signal of departure) and the Queen and we ladies left the dining-room."

An endless procession of visitors came and went, among them being Lady Caroline Capel, sister to the Duke of St. Albans, whom Lady Bedingfeld found "a handsome, slatternly-looking young person, pretty, but I could fancy her anything low drest up. Perhaps it is something of Nell Gwynn hanging about her. She is descended from that worthy personage." The most important of all who were received at Windsor in the summer and autumn of 1833, was Donna Maria da Gloria, now for the second time to visit England. This girl Queen, daughter of Don Pedro, who had reigned as Emperor of Brazil from 1822 to the Revolution in April 1831, when he withdrew his claims to the throne of Portugal in favour of this child, was now in her fourteenth year. As she had been treated with incivility by Louis Philippe, King William, who hated the French monarch and the French nation "with a sort of Jack Tar animosity," declared at breakfast one morning that it would be only common humanity to offer hospitality "to the poor girl," and that he would invite her to Windsor. Hearing this, the Queen turned to Prince George, afterwards Duke of Cambridge, then a lad of fourteen, and laughingly assured him that the little Queen had fixed on him as her future husband, and was coming to fetch him, on which he shook his head and said he must decline the honour. But the joke was continued later on, Her Majesty with apparent

seriousness, assuring him that it had all been arranged by the kings, and that Donna Maria would carry him away ; when he declared he would hide or run off to America ; and was only pacified when Lady Bedingfeld suggested that, if he went with her to the convent at Hammersmith, no one would think of looking for him there.

When September 10th, the day appointed for the visit of the Portuguese Queen arrived, King William considered it a great bore, but this did not prevent him from showing her the courtesies due to her rank ; and accordingly, a guard of honour was despatched to meet the Queen and her stepmother, the ex-empress who was a granddaughter of the unfortunate Josephine, wife of Napoleon ; a regiment of the Foot Guards with their band was drawn up in the court ; a guard of honour stationed in the park, whilst the household assembled in the corridor.

“ We waited till we all got cold and tired,” writes Lady Bedingfeld. “ At last Prince George returned from riding, and ran in quite out of breath to tell us that he had seen the carriage and that it was fast approaching. On hearing this we prepared to station ourselves as we had been told to do, the ladies at the bottom of the staircase. The Queen was to stand at the top, which is at the entrance of the private apartment, with Lady Mayo behind her.” Then came a clatter of hoofs and the roll of wheels in the court yard, the band struck up “ God save the King,” and His Majesty, followed by all his gentlemen, went down to

The Sailor King

receive the royal visitors, and afterwards to conduct them, one on each arm, to Queen Adelaide, who warmly embraced and led them to the great drawing-room, where the Household were presented to them ; and they in turn presented their suite of two ladies and three gentlemen, "so little, so old, so bent, so ugly, that it was almost impossible not to laugh at their grotesque appearance."

Dinner was served that evening in St. George's Hall, her Portuguese majesty—who was tall and stout, "her features small and childish, fat cheeks squeezing up her mouth, no expression whatever, no colour, not fair though with light eyes and hair"—sitting between the King and Queen, who contrary to their custom sat at the same side of the table which was "splendidly decorated, the service all Vermeil, and from the good arrangement of the pages and footmen, the courses are removed as quickly as in a family party of ten persons." Donna Maria's health was drunk, and "the evening was passed as usual, the ladies, including the Queen, working, and the gentlemen walking about."

Next morning at breakfast, as the guests remained in their own apartments, their hosts together with those at the table had the pleasure of discussing them. Prince George of Cambridge began by saying the little Queen looked like an immense doll, the King added that he had never seen a more uninteresting child ; his consort, always amiable, was sure her little Majesty would improve ; but Lady Bedingfeld was of opinion

that her voice was ugly and her manner as uncouth as that of a princess from the Sandwich Islands.

Among the visitors that flocked to Windsor Castle, St. James's Palace, or the Pavilion, Brighton, the heir presumptive to the Crown was notable for her absence. When some eight months after the birth of the Princess Victoria, the Duchess of Kent became a widow, and felt, as she said, "alone—almost friendless and alone," in a country whose language she did not then speak or understand, she had received every assurance of sympathy and kindness from the Duchess of Clarence, who was likewise a stranger in a strange land. The Duke of Clarence, fond of children, kind-hearted, and simple-minded, had also shown much affection towards his niece; but from the day he ascended the throne, a change became perceptible in the feelings exhibited towards him and his consort by the Duchess of Kent; who, rigorous and exacting in all relations of life, and conscious of her importance as mother, guardian, and director of a future monarch, was tenacious in her claims for the rights and privileges due to herself and her child, though far from tactful in her methods of asserting them.

Early in King William's reign, he had been offended by her prompt application to the Duke of Wellington, then Prime Minister, to be regarded as a Dowager Princess of Wales, and granted a suitable income over which she should have sole control for herself and the Princess Victoria, who she desired should be treated as heiress apparent; whilst on the other

hand the duchess was offended by the reply that no proposals such as she suggested could be made, until the King's Civil List was settled. The coolness that followed between her and His Majesty was probably accountable for the absence from his Coronation of the Princess Victoria.

That she did not attend his Court was also a subject of grievance to the King ; but the duchess considered it unadvisable that her daughter should be disturbed in the studies which were to prepare her for her high station ; or that she should at too early a date be weighted by its importance and responsibility. Occasionally this devoted mother took the Princess to places of interest and cities of importance in England ; it being, as she stated in her replies to the addresses of municipal corporations, the object of her life "to render her daughter deserving of the affectionate solicitude she so universally inspires, and to make her worthy of the attachment and respect of a free and loyal people." But these "royal progresses" as His Majesty satirically styled them, added to his displeasure with the duchess, of whose influence with his heir and with the people, he began to feel jealous.

In one of her quiet talks with Lady Bedingfeld, Her Majesty in referring to the Duchess of Kent, said they used to be like sisters, "and are now very friendly when they meet, but that the duchess does so as seldom as possible ; and when she does, names her own hour, and if that hour does not suit the Queen, she makes it an excuse for not calling at all.

Formerly when the Queen—then Duchess of Clarence—used to visit the Duchess of Kent, she sought her in all her rooms familiarly till she found her, and the Duchess of Kent did the same by her, and does so still; but when the Queen calls on the duchess she is made to stop in some particular room, till the duchess makes her appearance; she seems to wish to be on great form.”

In June 1832 the Princes Alexander and Ernest of Wurtemberg, first cousins of the Princess Victoria, were her mother's guests at Kensington Palace. Amongst other festivities the King entertained them at a juvenile ball at St. James's, where his niece, when not dancing, sat beside Her Majesty “and seemed to retain her former affection for her, which gratified the Queen.” To please the Duchess of Kent, the royal consort asked her to call her nephews, that she might converse and become better acquainted with them, “Her Majesty observing to her, that she could not run about the room after these two young men, but that their aunt might call them up to her. However, the duchess declined doing it,” as the Queen told Lady Bedingfeld; who adds: “The Princess Victoria is sometimes taken to the opera, and stays till a very late hour, but her mother took her from the ball long before it broke up, and on the Queen saying she hoped at least she would leave her nephews, she said they had been at a review and were fatigued. Note that they are six feet high and very stout for their age.

“These same young princes were invited to stay

some days to see Windsor, but the Duchess sent an apology saying that she could not spare them or come with them, and that as they had paid their respects to the King at the Drawing-room, it was not necessary. When the Queen received this note she felt a little indignant, and not knowing what to reply, determined to go to the King, to ask what answer she should make. Finding, however, that Lord Grey was with the King, she did not like to go in, lest Lord Grey should think she was come to hear what he was saying. She thought it better to send for Sir Herbert Taylor, and told him he could enter the king's closet at all times, but she could not. Sir Herbert, however, said she might and ought to go in herself, and show the note from the Duchess of Kent. He accordingly went in to announce her, and the King said he would come and speak to her. But Sir Herbert said that the Queen preferred coming to him, as she wished to have Lord Grey's opinion also on the refusal contained in the note. When the King heard it, he said carelessly: "Well, let them stay away if they do not choose to come, and say I hope to see them another time." But both Lord Grey and the Queen agreed in thinking that no renewal of invitation should be named, and a note of regret only be sent, that the princes could not manage to come to see what excited the curiosity of every stranger. The Queen told me," continues Lady Bedingfeld, "she had the curiosity to look in the paper to see what they did on the day they were invited, and she saw they went to the

Zoological Gardens. She said Lord Grey seemed quite pleased to be of the same opinion as her."

When their visit to Kensington Palace ended, the Duchess of Kent and the Princess Victoria took them in the yacht *Emerald* round the Isle of Wight, staying at Ryde and Cowes, where they were greeted with royal salutes. Indignant that these honours—which he considered were due only to himself and his Consort—should be paid to the Duchess of Kent, the King desired that such practice should be discontinued, giving his orders to that effect to Sir James Graham, First Lord of the Admiralty. He, however, thought it would be more polite to request the duchess to waive this ceremony of her own accord, and to send word that as she was travelling for her amusement, she had no desire to receive royal salutes. But scorning such a suggestion she insisted on her rights to be received in this manner; when, still more angry, the King gave an order in Council that henceforth the royal standard was to be saluted only when himself or Her Majesty were on board.

In the early days of her widowhood the Duchess of Kent had found a wise and sympathetic adviser in her brother Prince Leopold, who from the date of his marriage to the late Princess Charlotte of Wales until 1831, when he accepted the throne of Belgium, had resided in England. Actively solicitous in all that concerned his niece, it was his ardent desire that she should marry his nephew and her cousin Prince Albert of Saxe-Coburg-Saalfeld, who, born in August 1819,

The Sailor King

was three months her junior. Though the Princess Victoria had been kept in ignorance of this project, the Prince, through the gossip of his nurse and the hints of his grandmother, had from an early age learned to regard himself as the future husband of "The Flower of May." As a lad his large expressive blue eyes, fair hair, and clear complexion, made him singularly handsome; whilst his disposition showed a love of frolic, of boyish sports, and of art, to which with increasing years he became devoted.

It was not, however, until May 1826, when the Princess Victoria had reached her seventeenth birthday, that he and his elder brother Ernest being invited on a visit to their aunt at Kensington Palace their first meeting took place. Previous to this date, Baron von Stockmar,—who had been physician, private secretary, and Controller of the Household to Prince Leopold, but who, on the latter becoming King, had retired to Coburg,—in writing confidentially to his former master, said: "Albert is a fine young fellow, well grown for his age, with agreeable and valuable qualities; and who, if all things go well, may in a few years turn out a strong, handsome man of a kindly, simple, yet dignified demeanour externally; therefore he possesses all that pleases the sex, and at all times and in all countries, must please. It may prove too a lucky circumstance that even now he has something of an English look." He adds that it must be made a *sine quâ non* that the object of this visit should be kept strictly secret from the

young people "so as to leave them completely at their ease."

The King, who was well aware of the project of marrying his niece to her cousin, was far from sharing it; he desiring that she should select as her husband Alexander, younger son of the Prince of Orange. Therefore, at the same time that the Princes of Saxe-Coburg came to Kensington, he invited the Prince of Orange and his two sons, together with Duke William of Brunswick, to stay with him at Windsor; being determined that the Princess Victoria might have a wider circle of eligible suitors to select from. Their Majesties courteously welcomed and hospitably entertained all the princes, who danced at royal balls, attended reviews, lunched with the Lord Mayor and were shown the sights of London.

No record tells us what the Princess Victoria thought of her future husband on first seeing him. He, in a letter he wrote home on June 1st, merely mentions "our cousin is very amiable." Its general contents form a diary of his experiences. He had been to a levee which was long, fatiguing, but very interesting; the same evening he had dined at Court and afterwards listened to a concert. Next day the King kept his birthday, when about four thousand persons congratulated His Majesty. This drawing-room held at midday, was followed in the evening by a great State dinner and concert, which lasted till one. "You can well imagine," writes this lad, who had not reached his seventeenth birthday, "that I had

many hard battles to fight against sleepiness during these late entertainments."

Despite the demands these made on his time, he found opportunities to sketch, walk, and play music in company with the Princess Victoria, who soon after his departure was made aware that he had been selected as her future husband by her mother and her uncle. Therefore, in writing to the latter on June 7th, 1836, she said:—"I have only now to beg you, my dearest Uncle, to take care of the health of one now so dear to me, and to take him under your special protection. I hope and trust that all will go on prosperously and well on this subject, now of so much importance to me."

CHAPTER VIII

Literary Celebrities—Samuel Rogers and his Famous Breakfasts—His Singular Appearance and Sardonic Wit—Fanny Kemble and her Views of the Stage—Plays Juliet at Covent Garden Theatre—Result of her Experiment—A Guest at Great Houses—Meets Lady Holland—Old Lady Cork—Fantastic Appearance and Youthful Spirit—Entertaining in New Burlington Street—Lady Harriet D'Orsay's Remarks—The Marchioness of Salisbury—Supports the Splendour of Ancient Days—The Tragic Ending of her Days—Harriot Mellon's Early Days—Thomas Coutts the Banker led to the Altar—Harriot becomes Duchess of St. Albans—Liberality to her late Husband's Family—The Inheritance of Miss Angela Burdett afterwards Baroness Burdett Coutts—Lady Morgan's Success—Mixing with the World of Fashion—Byron's Last Mistress—Stories of the Poet—Harriet Martineau as a Lioness—Discourses on the Vanity of Man—Richard Monckton Milnes—Anecdotes of Lady Stepney

CHAPTER VIII

THOUGH the Sailor King's court could lay small claim to intellectual brilliancy, his capital was rich in men and women whose abilities distinguished or whose eccentricities enlivened it. And in those days when London was much smaller, its society more circumspect; when talent had not yet become universal and genius was still a distinction, a choice company of those prominent in art, literature, and fashion, formed a charmed circle; fascinating glimpses into which are given by many of its members in the diaries they kept, the letters they wrote, the table talk they recorded.

Notwithstanding his sixty odd years, Samuel Rogers maintained a supreme place among them, not merely because of his fame as a poet, but because of his quaint personality, his generous heart, his unbounded hospitality. The joys of youth had been sacrificed by him to the delights of composition; for his first poem, "The Pleasures of Memory," was written by candle-light during solitary evenings that succeeded seven hours spent daily above the account books of

his father's bank, where he was clerk. Eventually succeeding to the business, he turned his back on it, that he might devote himself to literature, society, and travel. One of his journeys abroad was made memorable by his association with Byron and Shelley, and by the inspiration it gave him to write the poem "Italy," by which he is best remembered. Though admired by the cultured few, it was coldly received by the general public, then infatuated by the passionate heroics of "The Corsair" and his kindred; and at a time when "every nineteenth century shopboy in England quoted Byron, wore his shirt collar open, and execrated destiny," Samuel Rogers remained obscure.

Without resenting this fate, he sought to reverse it, and therefore burning the unsold copies of his poem, he spent two years in revising, rewriting, improving, and enlarging it; furthermore, at a cost of fifteen thousand pounds he had it illustrated with engravings, by Edward Goodall, father of Frederick Goodall, from pictures by Turner, whose merits were by this means first brought prominently before the public. The poem then met the desired appreciation, for this immense outlay resulted in profit to the author. A man of refined tastes, his house in St. James's Place, whose garden commanded a pleasant prospect of the Green Park, was one of the sights of London; chimney pieces carved by Flaxman, bookcases painted by Stothard, curiosities collected during his travels, valuable pictures and carvings, making it a temple of art. It was here that he entertained at his famous breakfasts

the most distinguished men and women of his day. Though his father had advised him never "to go near" titled people, he invited to his table the few peers and peeresses who were the equals in wit and talent of his commoner guests. Here it was that Byron first met Moore and Campbell; here Lady Holland made the acquaintance of Fanny Kemble; here Alfred Tennyson was introduced to Mrs. Norton; and here visitors from across the Atlantic, who had brought with them letters of introduction to Rogers, were made known to his famous countrymen.

The appearance presented by a pallid, ascetic, and wrinkled countenance, and by an attenuated figure, was continually made a subject of ghastly jokes by his friends; whilst his bitter humour and caustic remarks, made him so formidable to his guests, that as one of them said, "they might be seen manœuvring which should leave the room last, so as not to undergo the apprehended ordeal" of comment. A sample of his sardonic wit was given by Rogers to Sir Henry Taylor when, on excusing his acerbity, he said: "I have a very weak voice; if I did not say ill-natured things no one would hear what I said." By that strange contradiction so frequently found in interesting characters, this man, who never hesitated to make bitter speeches to those whose vulgarity, pretence, or foolishness irritated him, could show a gentle sauvity and open-handed generosity to struggling artists, poor poets, and all needy scholars, whom he frequently helped without ostentation, and "would

never say a word against them until they offered to repay him."

Now that Samuel Rogers had played his part on life's stage, he liked to watch with sympathetic interest and kindly intent those fresh to its scenes, whose hopes were as high, whose illusions were as seductive, as those which once had stirred him to effort. And for none of these had he more paternal affection than for Fanny Kemble, whose family had been his friends for many years; and who, educated with care, kept aloof from the green room and apart from the players, had made a sensational success as an actress, at a time when the theatrical profession was considered scarcely respectable for women. Niece of the majestic Sarah Siddons and the ponderous John Kemble, and daughter of the less fortunate Charles Kemble, Fanny was low in stature with large hands and feet, her features irregular, her skin dark and coarse, the attraction of her face lying in the extraordinary capacity of its expression.

Whilst inheriting some share of theatrical ability from her people, she had also developed an irrepressible repugnance to acting, which led her to acknowledge that, if it were not for pecuniary results, she would rather make shoes than be a player. It was only when Covent Garden theatre, in the mismanagement of which her father had a large share, was in debt to the amount of twenty-three thousand pounds and had been seized on by creditors, that her parents thought of bringing Fanny forward as a new Juliet,

in the vague hope that she might attract the town and avert their ruin. She was accordingly asked to commit the love-lorn maiden's part to memory and recite it before them. Their comments, "very well, very nice, my dear," were hardly encouraging, and having been kissed and caressed and sent to bed, she sat down on the stairs and gave way to floods of tears, which relieved her suppressed nervousness. A few days later her father took her to Covent Garden theatre, to judge if her voice had sufficient strength to fill the building. Crossing its stage for the first time, she was bewildered by its dimly lit spaces, its far-reaching recesses empty and silent, its boards echoing to the tread, canvas banqueting halls, streets, dungeons, and forests lying on either side against its grim walls; in front the vast amphitheatre whose shadows were pierced here and there by thin shafts of light from high windows, that half revealed rows of stalls and cavernous looking boxes wrapped in grey holland.

Here she recited Juliet's lines so satisfactorily that it was decided she should make her first appearance on the stage as that ill-starred heroine, three weeks later. This brief time was spent in rehearsing, in making acquaintance with her fellow players, not one of whom she had ever spoken to or had seen off the stage; and in consultations about her costume, which it was eventually settled should be a fashionable ball dress of white satin with a long train, short sleeves, and a low body with a girdle of paste brilliants.

The Sailor King

Every detail, from the preparations behind the scenes to the representations before the curtain, was more or less repugnant to Fanny Kemble; who after making such a confession wisely adds that being so devoid of enthusiasm, respect or love for her profession, it was wonderful that she ever achieved any success in it. This aversion to acting, which neither time nor triumph did anything to lessen, reminded her of a similar antipathy felt towards her calling by Miss Brunton, an eccentric woman and a clever actress, who afterwards became Lady Craven, but who, whilst on the stage and in the middle of some tragic scene would sometimes say, in an aside to the *dramatis personæ*: "What nonsense all this is. Suppose we don't go on with it."

Strengthened by the conviction that she was bound to help her parents and conform to their will, Fanny Kemble prepared for what she spoke of as her impending trial. To prevent fatigue, she had no rehearsal on the day of her first appearance, but spent the morning practising the piano and walking in St. James's Park, where she read "Blunt's Scriptural Characters"; found by her quite absorbing, a fact she subsequently thought was curious "because certainly such subjects of meditation were hardly allied to the painful undertaking so immediately pressing upon me."

The date of her first appearance was fixed for October 5th, 1829, and on the afternoon of that day she drove to the theatre so early that the sunset

flashed into the carriage, when her mother who accompanied her said, "Heaven smiles on you, my child." To give her greater confidence, not only her father, but her mother, who had left the stage twenty years previously, appeared in the cast. Three women, one of them her aunt, dressed Fanny, who when ready was placed in a chair, her white satin train laid carefully over the back of it. "And there I sat," said she, "ready for execution, with the palms of my hands pressed convulsively together, and the tears I in vain endeavoured to repress welling up into my eyes and brimming slowly over, down my rouged cheeks."

The whole company whose fate depended on her success, stood watchful and sympathetic around her; now and then her father coming to enquire how she was; her aunt murmuring "dear child" and "poor thing," whilst little Bob Keeley, who was to play Peter, gave her advice regarding the audience, which if not original was sage, but sounded comical when uttered in his nervous, lachrymose voice: "Never mind 'em, Miss Kemble, never mind 'em; don't think of 'em any more than if they were so many rows of cabbages."

Then came the nurse's call for Juliet who rushed across the green baize stage and for a moment was stunned by the thunderous welcome offered her by a friendly and chivalrous audience, whom she saw through a mist. Clutching hold of her mother, the Lady Capulet, she stood "like a terrified creature at bay, confronting the huge theatre full of human

beings," and though she spoke her lines, scarce a word was audible. But presently she forgot herself, the lines she uttered sent hot waves over her face and neck, whilst their poetry sounded like music in her ears; and only when the play ended it seemed as if she awoke, and then, "amid a tumultuous storm of applause, congratulations, tears, embraces, and a general joyous explosion of unutterable relief at the fortunate termination of my attempt, we went home."

That night she sat down to supper, as she records, with her "poor rejoicing parents, well content, God knows, with the issue of my trial; and still better pleased with a lovely little Geneva watch, the first I had ever possessed, all encrusted with gold work and jewels, which my father laid by my plate, and I immediately christened Romeo, and went, a blissful girl, to sleep with it under my pillow."

Her success was so great that by the end of the season the management of Covent Garden had paid thirteen thousand pounds to their creditors; whilst the young actress received what was then considered an exorbitant salary of thirty guineas a week. Her girlish appearance, the charm of her innocence, her courage in helping her parents made her the idol of the hour. Crowds of fashionable youths nightly waited to peep under her bonnet as with lowered head she hurried from the theatre to her carriage; Sir Thomas Laurence made a sketch of her as Juliet, which was engraved and exhibited in shop windows;

her likeness was printed on neck and pocket-handkerchiefs as well as on jugs, plates, and saucers.

And now, instead of trudging long distances on foot when the hire of a hackney coach was a matter of consideration, she had a comfortable carriage; instead of wearing faded threadbare dyed frocks, she arrayed herself in fashionably made gowns of fine texture in which she appeared transfigured. A horse, a brown habit, and a crimson waistcoat, were among her purchases. Visitors besieged her door, and invitations poured in upon her.

Her social success was crowned when she appeared at Rogers's table, where among other remarkable people she met Lady Holland by the special desire of that eccentric personage, who "drank out of her neighbour (Sydney Smith's) glass, and otherwise behaved herself with the fantastic despotic impropriety in which she frequently indulged, and which might have been tolerated in a spoilt beauty of eighteen, but was hardly becoming in a woman of her age and personal appearance."

From the hour of her first success the great houses flung wide their doors to Fanny Kemble, and none of her contemporaries give more graphic and amusing views of society at this period. Quite early in her social career she attended a ball given by one of the great literary notabilities, Thomas Campbell the poet; where, says she, "Every material for a delightful evening—good rooms, pretty women, clever men—were brought into requisition, to make what, after all,

appeared to me, nothing but a wearisome hot crowd." The apartments were overfilled, and she found it impossible to converse with any one for five minutes. If one stood up one was squeezed to death, and if one sat down one was stifled. "I too," she writes, "who was the small lioness of the evening, was subjected to a most disagreeable ordeal, the whole night being stared at from head to foot by every one that could pass within staring distance of me. You probably will wonder at this circumstance distressing a young person who three times a week exhibits herself on the stage to several hundred people ; but there I do not distinguish the individual eyes that are fixed on me, and my mind is diverted from the annoyances of my real situation by the distressful circumstances of my feigned one."

With a delightful feminine touch the young actress declares that her sorrows were added to when, at the beginning of the evening, a beautiful dress, which she wore for the first time, was spoiled by having some coffee upset over it by Miss Macdonald ; a girl whose loveliness was considered superb, but whose sense could hardly claim such admiration ; for to soothe Fanny Kemble's supposed distress and displeasure, this awkward person sacrificed her own velvet gown by deliberately pouring coffee over it and ruining its beauty.

"Now, I will tell you what consolations I had to support me under these trials," says Fanny Kemble. "First, the self-approving consciousness of the smiling



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

THE HONBLE. MISS MONCKTON, AFTERWARDS LADY CORK.

[To face p. 31.]



fortitude as to which I bore my gown's disaster ; secondly, a lovely nosegay which was presented to me ; and lastly, at about twelve o'clock, when the rooms were a little thinned, a dance for an hour which sent me home perfectly satisfied with my fate. By the bye, I asked Campbell if he knew any method to preserve my flowers from fading, to which he replied : 'Give them to me, and I will immortalise them.' I did so, and am expecting some verses from him in return."

Among those present at this ball, and without whom no social gathering would be considered complete, was an individual whose small and shrunken figure, wrinkled and aged face, made her seem like one whom time had forgotten to gather into his fold. This was Mary Monckton, widow of Edmund Boyle, seventh Earl of Cork and Orrery ; who, when a young, beautiful, and vivacious Irish girl, had been Maid of Honour to the Princess of Wales, mother of George III. Her delightful humour, her bright repartee had attracted the great wits, polished courtiers, and literary men of the day, chief among them solemn Samuel Johnson to whom she spoke "with all imaginable awe." Outliving George III.'s long reign and that of his successor, she was eighty-four when the Sailor King came to the throne ; but until close upon a hundred, she delighted in gathering round her the most extraordinary or notable men and women, foreigners or natives, of that day. Though unashamed of her age, which she generally stated under her

signature in her notes and letters, she sought to preserve the semblance of youth by rouging, powdering, and wearing juvenile toilettes. As a rule she dressed in rich white silk, and attended parties in a bonnet and veil of the same colour, which made her slender diminutive figure look like a white witch; whilst her bonnet, being surmounted by huge plumes, suggested to a humourist that she resembled a shuttlecock; for "she was all cork and feathers." Her fantastic appearance was heightened by the page who followed her, dressed in a suit of vivid green, and wearing a velvet cap.

With an ardent admiration for youth, with which she desired to surround herself, and with a longing for gaiety in which her spirit exulted, she crowded her rooms three times a week with joyous guests; subdividing them after a fashion, and giving each gathering the name of a colour which seemed appropriate to the social and mental qualities of those invited. Her pink parties were for the exclusives, her blue parties for the literati, her grey parties for the religious. "I have one party for all sorts, and I have no colour for it," she said to Lady Morgan. "Call it dun ducketty mud colour," suggested the authoress, at which the countess laughed and at once adopted the suggestion.

The great wax-floored rooms where she received in her house, 6, New Burlington Street, were lighted by scores of candles, but bare of all furniture except a hired piano and comfortable armchairs fixed against the walls, so that no small circles or coteries could be

formed at her assemblies. Around these apartments servants carried red hot ladles in which perfumes burned, until all present were enveloped in clouds of incense. In the gardens on which they looked, parrots and macaws flew about, their screeches drowning the music of bands hidden behind trees.

Though hating music herself, and refusing to dwell in the same house with a piano, she indulged her guests with "plenty of noise," as she termed a concord of sweet sounds. For one of these parties she engaged some Tyrolese to sing after driving a hard bargain with them ; for with a combination not uncommon, the countess was as miserly as she was profuse. "She picked them up in the Regent's Park," says Lady Morgan, "and brought them down to thirty shillings, which she was heard wishing to beat down to eight, when she stood with them where she thought there was no one to listen, but they held out for the thirty shillings."

The same authority tells us that hearing the Opera people sing one night at the Duke of St. Albans', Lady Cork went up to her host and said: "Now, couldn't you send me the pack for my evening." The duke agreed, and they were sent, together with a grand piano, to the countess, who on seeing them got frightened and said, "*Je suis une pauvre veuve, je ne saurais payer de tels talens, mais vous verrez la meilleure société, la Duchesse de St. Albans,*" etc. The Primo Amoroso bowed, and acknowledged the honour, but intimated that her grace always paid them. Next day

Lady Cork went to the duke and accused him of taking a word at random *tout de bon*; overhearing which the duchess "came forward in a rage, and scolded the little duke like a naughty schoolboy."

Fanny Kemble mentions her attendance at one of the old countess's parties, but makes no mention of its colour. She and her mother started from their roomy comfortable house in Great Russell Street within a few minutes of Sunday morning, and reached New Burlington Street to find it blocked by a line of coaches and carriages, its narrow side-ways lined by footmen and stragglers watching the fine ladies with their turbaned heads, full skirts, and low cut gowns, the men with their tight trousers, elaborate waistcoats, and high stocks, as they entered the house. "Such rooms, such ovens, such boxes full of fine folks and foul air in which we stood and sat, and looked and listened, and talked nonsense and heard it talked, and perspired and smothered and suffocated," writes the caustic actress. "On our arrival as I was going upstairs I was nearly squeezed flat against the wall by her potent Grace the Duchess of St. Albans. We remained half an hour in the steaming atmosphere of the drawing-rooms, and another half-hour in the freezing hall before the carriage could be brought up: caught a dreadful cold and came home: did not get to bed till two o'clock, with an intolerable faceache and toothache, the well-earned reward of a well-spent evening."

It was at a less crowded gathering at Lady Cork's

that Fanny Kemble first met "the beautiful Lady Harriet d'Orsay," the girlish wife of the French fop who, having possessed himself of her money, basely neglected her to spend days and nights in exhibiting his corseted, perfumed, bedizened figure as a type for admiration to the wondering, envious eyes of London dandies. Lady Harriet, Fanny Kemble, and Lady Ellesmere, seated on their immovable chairs, fell to discussing their hostess, when the latter said: "It was Lady Cork who had originated the idea that after all heaven would probably turn out very dull to her when she got there, sitting on damp clouds and singing 'God save the King'"; when Lady Harriet replied, "I suppose it would be rather tiresome for her, poor thing, for you know she hates music, and there would be nothing to steal but one another's wings."

In this last remark Lady Harriet referred to a habit which the countess developed of mistaking other people's property for her own. This became so notorious that unsympathetic tradesmen refused to bring their goods for inspection to her carriage, had her carefully watched when she entered their shops, and occasionally were ungenerous enough to demand the articles she had absent-mindedly secreted about her person. Whether these were useful or useless to her was quite immaterial; the excitement and delight of filching articles not belonging to her being sufficient to repay the risk of rude requests for their restitution. Once, when leaving a country house where she had been staying, she saw and quietly picked up

a hedgehog that was crossing the hall, a pet of the porter's, and took it away in the carriage. Finding it an uncomfortable footwarmer, she decided to dispose of it at the first town where she changed horses, and there offered it to a confectioner in return for a sponge cake ; assuring him that a hedgehog would be invaluable in his establishment for the destruction of black beetles, with which his premises, she had been told, were infested.

An article of greater size with which she once possessed herself was a carriage ; for on leaving a house one day where she had been paying a call she was struck by the handsome equipage waiting at the door. Without hesitation she assured the coachman that his mistress had placed it at her disposal, and ordered him to drive her all over the town to visit various friends. When after some hours she was traced, overtaken, and dispossessed, she merely remarked that on consideration, she did not think the carriage quite suited her, as its steps were too high for her short legs. For all that, she was easily moved over the sorrows of others ; and Sydney Smith used to relate an instance where she was so overcome by sympathetic emotion on hearing a charity sermon, that having no money about her, she asked him to lend her a guinea. "I did so," said he. "She never repaid me, and spent it on herself."

Another prominent personage in the society of this reign was the widow of James, seventh Earl and first Marquis of Salisbury, and grandmother of the present

marquis. One of the great beauties at the Court of George III. she had been a leader of fashion, a grande dame remarkable for her high-bred manners, a hostess in whose drawing-rooms the great Tories assembled, a fearless horse-woman, who, clad in a sky blue habit, with black velvet collar, and a jockey cap, hunted with the Hatfield hounds, riding hard and clearing fences as ardently as any sportsman in the field. Years passed her in quick succession, each taking from her something which never could be replaced, but leaving her a young spirit that clung tenaciously to life and to former traditions. A Tory to the last, she had actively opposed reform, had had herself conveyed to the court of Queen Adelaide in a sedan chair emblazoned with the arms of her house, and carried and attended by servants in splendid liveries; had her coach lighted at night by the flambeaux of her running footmen; whilst by day, stirred by a pathetic desire to retain her reputation for grace and skill as a horsewoman, and all unburdened by her eighty odd years, she had herself strapped into a saddle and ambled up and down Hyde Park, in the midst of a joyous and vigorous throng, each individual seeming a blotch to her aged eyes when they were not closed in sleep, as not infrequently happened.

But above all things she delighted in finding herself the centre of gay assemblies, where her sunken cheeks glowing with the artificial hue of childhood, her drooping head surmounted by golden curls, she absorbed and became rejuvenated in the atmosphere of the rosy,

pulsating, joyous youth around her. Seeing her at one of these gatherings, Fanny Kemble described the dowager marchioness as "like nothing in the world but the mummy carried round at the Egyptian feasts, with her parchment neck and shoulders bare, and her throat all drawn into strings and cords, hung with a dozen rows of perfect precious stones, glittering in the glare of the lights with the constant shaking of her palsied head."

Tragedy, alas, awaited this heroic and historic figure. On the last Friday in November 1835 she drove in her coach and four with outriders and lacqueys to spend the Christmas holidays with her son, according to her custom; Samuel Rogers being one of the guests at Hatfield at the time. On the following afternoon, before dinner, one of her maids left her in her dressing-room, writing letters by the light of three wax candles placed close to her. No more was seen of the dowager marchioness. An hour later the smell of fire caused alarm, and volumes of smoke coming from her apartments showed where the danger lay. But by this time the fire had made such progress that it was impossible to enter her rooms, and nothing of their occupant was found but a few charred remains. The supposition was that she had fallen asleep, and set fire to her cap. In this way her youthful spirit had escaped from its decaying casement. Her death was made more memorable from the fact that some portion of the noble house of Hatfield served as her funeral pyre. The valuable library was, however, preserved.

A person of higher rank and lower birth, claims equal notice in the society of this time ; this being Harriot Mellon, once a player, later the wealthiest woman in England, and finally the wife of a duke, boasting of royal descent. Harriot's mother had in the sprightly beginning of her varied career, been wardrobe keeper, money-taker, and player of small parts in the Cork theatre. Presently came the inevitable man, calling himself Mellon, declaring himself in the army, but of whom, before or after his brief appearance, she knew nothing. No sooner had he mysteriously vanished, than the vivid imagination and inaccurate judgment which are the precious gifts of the Celtic temperament, asserted themselves, and she at once declared herself the wife of Lieutenant Mellon, who had gone abroad to win fortune for her dear sake. Meanwhile she gave birth to Harriot, whom she proudly declared had "a drop of rale good blood in her veins," for which reason Irish pride forbade her to play with other imps less aristocratic and more ragged.

In time mother and daughter came to England, where money was more plentiful and public opinion less censorious ; one earning her bread as a strolling player, the other picking up her education behind the scenes. Harriot made her first appearance on the stage as a bowed and weeping figure above the tomb of Juliet ; and after much privation, extensive wanderings, and the strange experiences which her position invited, she came to London when barely

The Sailor King

eighteen and was engaged by Richard Brinsley Sheridan to play Lydia Languish in his own comedy of the *Rivals*. Her first performances at Drury Lane were a failure ; but presently the comely appearance of the lively brunette with the merry eyes, scarlet, pouting lips, and rounded figure ; her musical voice, vivacious movements, and infectious laughter, won her a high place in public favour and made her a formidable rival to Mrs. Jordan.

Among her warmest admirers was Thomas Coutts, a gentleman of Scotch descent, who with much of the shrewdness and success that distinguished his countrymen, had, assisted by his brother, founded the great banking house of Coutts & Co. ; and at this time had accumulated a fortune of nine hundred thousand pounds. For one of his birth and temperament, his choice of marriage partners was singular ; his first wife being a kitchen-maid in his brother's house. She bore him three daughters, whose fortunes secured them titles ; Susan marrying George Augustus, third Earl of Guilford ; Frances marrying John, first Marquis of Bute ; and Sophia becoming the wife of Sir Francis Burdett.

At the time when Thomas Coutts met Harriot Mellon he was an elderly man whose wife had long been a bed-ridden paralytic, mentally deranged. Remarkable for his benevolent disposition, unbounded charity, and simple tastes, he was esteemed by all men. The relations between him and the player were said to be strictly platonic ; but when Harriot



From a mezzotint, after the picture by Sir Wm. Beechey, R.A.]

MISS HARRIET MELLON (AFTERWARDS THE DUCHESS OF ST. ALBANS).

[To face p. 241.]



began to spend money lavishly, sport diamonds, and set up a carriage, people were unkind enough to smile at the story she told of her wonderful luck in possessing the winning number of a lottery ticket.

Mrs. Coutts died in the winter of 1814, and in the first month of the new year, Harriot led the widower's tottering but eager steps to the altar of St. Pancras Church, where they were joined in holy matrimony, he being at the time eighty whilst she was less than half his age by two years. The kindest and most considerate of men, he not only made her his wife, but seven years later doubled her obligations to him by making her his widow. By his will he appointed her his universal legatee, and bequeathed to her his share in the banking-house and business in the Strand, which was alone worth fifty thousand a year. His property in and around Canterbury was sworn under six hundred thousand pounds. Though she lived extravagantly, and gave widely in charity, especially to the starving and struggling members of her late calling, she laid aside some forty thousand annually, which was judiciously invested. But whilst reserving to herself the sole and uncontrolled use of her immense income, she was generous even in her lifetime to her husband's daughters; giving thirty thousand pounds to Lady Guilford, and ten thousand a year to each of her daughters; twenty thousand pounds to Lady Burdett; and twenty thousand to Lady Bute, together with two thousand a year to her son Lord Dudley Stuart

from the date of his marriage with the daughter of Prince Lucien Bonaparte.

For over five years from the date of her widowhood, she spent a great portion of her days in declining suitors that came in battalions, and included all classes from princes to players. Repetition of the same reply becoming wearisome, she eventually permitted herself to be wooed and won by William Aubrey de Vere Beauclerk, ninth Duke of St. Albans, then in his twenty-seventh year, she in her fiftieth. The marriage was apparently happy; the buxom, middle-aged, bustling duchess being everywhere attended by her slim juvenile-looking husband whom she ordered about to her heart's content. Plumed with a forest of ostrich feathers, covered with diamonds, and dressed in rich brocades, she made her bow before Queen Adelaide with a grace and ease of one accustomed to mimic courts; and later presented to Her Majesty the Ladies Beauclerk, the duke's young sisters whom she had undertaken to chaperone, and to dispose of in marriage. She rode in a coach whose emblazoned panels and four spanking horses were the admiration of the Park; gave balls that set the town talking of their magnificence; and kept a box in Covent Garden and Drury Lane Theatres, where she was often seen, watchful and critical of those who played the parts in which she had once won applause and laughter. One night, when she had seen her old friend Charles Kemble play Charles II., at Covent Garden, the duchess, followed by the Ladies Beauclerk,

after the fall of the curtain, was taking a short cut to her carriage by crossing the stage, when she met the manager, still wearing his costume of the merry monarch. She immediately stopped to shake hands with him and then presenting him to her sisters-in-law, said : " There my dears, there's your ancestor." Fanny Kemble who tells the story, slyly adds : " I suppose in her earlier days she might not have been a bad representative of their ancestress."

The Duchess of St. Albans outlived King William by a few weeks, and by her will left the bulk of her property, including the half profits of the banking house, the mansion in Stratton Street, Piccadilly, and all her movables, plate, and diamonds, to Angela, afterwards Baroness Burdett Coutts, youngest daughter of Sir Francis Burdett, and granddaughter of Thomas Coutts, whose surname she adopted.

A woman of very different calibre from the duchess, though like her, an Irishwoman and the child of a player, was Lady Morgan, whose name has already been mentioned in these pages, and who was a notable figure in the literary and aristocratic society of this reign. The date of her birth was a mystery that none might dare to unravel ; but she delighted in telling droll stories of her father Robert Owenson, a convivial, reckless, fascinating, strolling player, whose Hibernian blandishments had won the heart of a prim English maiden, daughter of severely respectable followers of John Wesley. The result of this strange union was " a fine little lively

craythur," called Sydney, who before she reached her teens, could sing, dance, mimic, and act in a wonderful way, that led many to predict her future distinction.

Her first employment as a governess was unsuitable to one who liked to dance jigs better than to give lessons ; who loved fun and flirtation, and stole hours from the night to write a romance in six volumes. Its publication in four brought her emancipation from teaching, and hope of independence ; when she began to write her brilliant novel, "The Wild Irish Girl." Unflagging energy and force of talent alone helped her in this task ; for, as she afterwards wrote : " All that counsel, acquirement, and instruction give to literary composition were in my early career of authorship, utterly denied me." The aim and object of her labour were to aid her impecunious father, now a widower ; to show the manner in which her country suffered from misrule ; to depict the prejudices that retarded its progress, and to remove the barrier of misunderstanding that in those days far more than in these arose between Celt and Saxon.

Her novel, which she sold for three hundred pounds, brought her immediate popularity, and set her on the broad road to success which she was to travel through the remainder of her life. Scarcely four feet high, her slightly curved spine and uneven shoulders were surmounted by a large and well-shaped head, that was covered by a close-cropped wig, bound by a fillet of solid gold. But all blemishes of her figure

were atoned for by her animated, ever-changeable face, with its lustrous electrical eyes, and its large mouth full of humour from which came a voice singularly sweet and extraordinarily capable of varied intonations, that betrayed her feelings before she could well express her thoughts.

Followed and flattered by many suitors, she was too proud of her independence, too fearful of the clashing of her forcible will with that of another, to risk her happiness in marriage. But after some dallying with Sir Charles Morgan, resident physician to the Marquis of Abercorn, then living at Baron's Court, near Dublin, she was literally forced to marry him. For Sydney Owenson, who had been invited to take up her residence as *dame de compagnie* to Lady Abercorn, was enjoying her ease in slippers and wrapper as she sat one January morning over the library fire, when the door suddenly opened and the marchioness entered, saying, "Come upstairs directly and be married; there must be no more trifling." Then, taking Sydney's arm, she went with her upstairs to a room where they found the family chaplain in full canonicals, and Sir Charles Morgan awaiting the bride who passively went through the ceremony which made her a wife. Sir Charles, who was a handsome man, with a scholarly mind and an independent income, made her the most devoted of husbands.

Fresh triumphs in the literary world awaited her, for ambitious and clever, admired for her talents,

sought for her wit, the raciest of conversationalists, the kindest hearted of women, she became the friend and correspondent of the most distinguished men in Ireland, England, and France; the terror of unappreciative critics, the adviser of ministers, and the guest and intimate of half the nobility in the kingdom. Though she did not settle in London until 1837, she frequently visited the capital in pursuit of "pleasure, business, folly, literature, fashion"; when with the fresh observation of a stranger and quick wit of her country-women, she jotted down in her diary, impressions that have become valuable illustrations of the social life of her period.

Amongst the crowd of authors, publishers, artists, booksellers, and friends who called at her fresh and pleasant apartments in St. James's Place on the first day of her visit to London in 1832, was Edward Lytton Bulwer, whom she thought a gifted and most interesting man. Her opinion was not quite so favourable of Mrs. Bulwer, whom Disraeli describes as a Juno, blazing with jewels, but whom Lady Morgan thought handsome, insolent, and unamiable. "She and all the demi-esprits, looked daggers at me," continues the authoress, "not one of them have called on me, and in society they get out of my way. How differently I should behave to them, if they came to Ireland."

Their coldness was atoned for by the attention and hospitality of the most distinguished women of the day. Old Lady Cork begged her to fix a date on

which to meet their ex-Majesties of Spain at dinner, and amongst the countess's guests she encountered a heroine of romance in the person of the market garden girl whom the first Duke of Cleveland had raised to the peerage. Lady Morgan found the duchess "a very pleasant woman, full of spirit and spirits. It was curious," she remarks, "to see that handsome head encircled with diamonds, which first attracted notice under a basket of onions and salad."

Bellini came with Pasta to see the Irish authoress and to sing to her a score of his new opera, *Norma*; and the famous singer told her that when she made her first appearance in London and played "Télémaque," she was so much ashamed of showing her legs that in striving to hide them, she did not mind her singing, and so failed. "I remember," said Lady Morgan, who as the daughter of a Bohemian loved the children of art, "one night being with you in your dressing room when you had just come off the stage in your highest wrought scene (the quartetta, "Comme o Nimé") your woman had a bit of cold roast beef ready to put into your mouth, and some porter," to which the diva replied: 'Ah si, mais je ne prends plus la viande—et pour le porter, I take it half-and-half,' which bit of London slang, from the lips of Medea, and in her sweet, broken English, had the oddest effect imaginable."

The Taglioni, *la déesse de la danse*, was brought by her husband—who was an ex-page to Bonaparte and a son of a peer of France—to call on Lady

Morgan and was questioned—by one who as she says was always studying eminent persons—on her diet, her habits, and her tastes, when she confessed to living on roast meats, supping on tea, delighting in her art, and in having her feet bathed at night in arrow-root water.

More distinguished foreigners found their way to Lady Morgan in the persons of Lucien and Joseph Bonaparte, brothers of the imperial prisoner of Elba, who had offered a crown to the former. Now living in lodgings, they had an income just sufficient to keep them from starvation. Lady Morgan thought Lucian honest and clever, his abilities in no way suffering in her estimate because, “he said what I have often preached, that nations that deserve to be free are free.” Their talk turned on Ireland when she told him, “The Irish have no idea of liberty, they want a king of their own. Come and present yourself and I will promise you a crown,” to which he laughingly answered, “Point de couronne, point de couronne.” “Voilà donc encore une couronne que vous refusez,” she told him.

Another foreigner, no less a celebrity, whom Lady Morgan met was the Countess Guiccioli, a blond, stout, bright-haired Italian, with a brilliant complexion and a large nose, a coquettish air, and a weak chin, who had the distinction of being Byron’s last mistress. It was whilst they resided at Genoa, that Lady Blessington with her lord rested in that city on their way south. Between the poet and the Irishwoman

a warm friendship soon sprang up ; but though Lady Blessington felt a womanly curiosity in the Guiccioli, the latter was not introduced to her. Byron, however, spoke of her continually ; being ever willing to talk of his own affairs to ready listeners ; a characteristic his friend Hobhouse described as “ a most pernicious propensity, inasmuch as it encouraged and fostered that morbid selfishness which was the great stain on his character, and has contributed more than any other error to the injury of his fame.”

Amongst various things Lady Blessington learned of the Guiccioli—as she afterwards told Benjamin Haydon—was that jealous of her poet, she used to watch him through a telescope when he went out riding. The question naturally asked was why he did not take her with him. “ Consider, consider, what a fright she would look in a habit,” he replied. The next interrogation related to his opinion of her appearance. Was she handsome ? “ Handsome ?” exclaimed the poet, “ she is a horror ; she has red hair.” On a hint being given him that he ought to take her out to walk, he remarked, “ She shuffles like a duck, and I am lame : a pretty couple.” Lady Blessington enquired mischievously if he ever told her so, and was assured that he did. “ And what does she say ?” was asked. “ She scratches me,” responded Byron.

Now that he was no more, this lady’s reputation—of which her second husband, the Marquis de Boissy, was excessively proud—caused her to be lionised by

London society. Always ready to talk of the lover whose face she had scratched and whose memory she revered, she told Lord Malmesbury amongst other things that the last cantos of Don Juan were all written on playbills or any odd pieces of paper at hand, whilst the poet refreshed himself with glasses of gin punch. He used to rush out of his room and read her the verses as they were written, making many alterations and laughing immoderately. "She was very proud and fond of him, but described him as having a very capricious temper, and with nothing of the passion which pervades his poetry, which he was in the habit of ridiculing—in fact, with a cold temperament. With all his abuse of England, he insisted on keeping up old customs in small things such as having hot-cross buns on Good Friday and roast goose on Michaelmas Day. This last fancy led to a grotesque result. After buying a goose and fearing it might be too lean, he fed it every day for a month previously, so that the poet and the bird became so mutually attached that when September 29th arrived he could not kill it, but bought another, and had the pet goose swung in a cage under his carriage when he travelled; so that after four years he was moving about with four geese." Lord Malmesbury adds that the countess had a large box of letters which Byron had never answered, from women "offering themselves to him on any terms. They were mostly from English ladies; such was the folly and enthusiasm which his verses inspired at the time."

The countess was deeply interested to hear from Lady Morgan's fluent lips, the story of Lady Caroline Lamb's infatuation for the poet ; and on learning that the unhappy heroine of that romance had given Byron's portrait to her friend, she, unwilling to be eclipsed in generosity, gave her a lock of his hair. The letter which accompanied this precious gift says :

“The Countess Guiccioli presents her compliments to Lady Morgan, and sends to her some lines of Lord Byron's handwriting, together with some hairs of him. She adds to that a ringlet of her own hair, only because Lady Morgan asked it. But she cannot do that without a sort of *remords*, as it was a profanation to put together in the same shrine so holy relics with so trifling a thing as it is ; for the rest, the few lines of Lord Byron's hand-writing are directed to the Count Gamba, Countess Guiccioli's father, and are written in a playful style, as he did frequently and always when he talked about the laziness and not extraordinary cleverness of his minister, Mr. Sega.

“The Countess Guiccioli wishes and hopes that a better opportunity will be presented to her, in order to show how high is her esteem and admiration for the illustrious and amiable Lady Morgan.”

A visit which gave the Irish novelist great pleasure, was that paid her by Lord Adolphus Fitzclarence, who came to request that she would dine with him in his apartments at St. James's Palace. A pleasant party assembled round his board, when the Marquis of Belfast exchanged witty sallies with Lady Morgan, who

before the evening ended, was taken by her host "into his boudoir," and shown a miniature set in diamonds. "The King," said she. "Yes, my father," he answered; and taking out another portrait, he added with emotion: "This was my mother." After a pause Lady Morgan said: "It is a great likeness, as I last saw her." "Where was that?" he asked. "In Dublin," she told him. "On the stage?" "Yes, in the *Country Girl*, the most wondrous representation of life and nature I ever beheld. I saw her also when she was on a visit at Sir Jonah Barrington's. She sent to my father to go and visit her; he did so; she called him the most amiable of all her managers." After another pause, Lord Adolphus said: "Sir Charles and you will accompany me to Chantrey's to-morrow to see her beautiful monument, which they have refused to admit into St. Paul's, though Mrs. Woffington's monument is still expected there." Lady Morgan agreed to this, and added that she could not express how much she honoured his sincere feelings to the most attentive of mothers, whose fault was that she had loved not wisely but too well.

In and out, up and down through a maze of fashionable and aristocratic circles moved Lady Morgan's friend and compatriot, Thomas Moore, who had passed his fiftieth year when William IV. came to the throne. Low sized, his round face lit by brilliant eyes, surmounted by curly locks, and beaming with suavity, his step alert, his spirit juvenile, his conversation sprightly and epigrammatic, the Irish

bard had long been the darling of society in which his little soul delighted. To drive with a duke, to gossip with a duchess, to receive the patronage of the titled, and to sing his sentimental melodies in the drawing-rooms of the great, was to him a bliss that transformed earth to paradise. Always shrewd in her judgments of mankind, Lady Morgan declared him to be "an epitome of genuine Irish character, feeling, fancy, genius, and personal vanity overwhelming all—I know him well." As if to illustrate his character, she says that on his being verbally asked to dine with them, "he accepted the invitation, but conditionally—à l'ordinaire—if some great person who he was pretty sure would, or had, asked him, did not renew his claim. This is his old way of accepting invitations. His old friend, Edward Moore, told me a pleasant story of Tom having made three of those conditional promises in one day, and got through two of them." However, as the great man did not send the invitation expected, the little man dined with the Morgans. His hostess thought he looked very old and bald, but that he still retained his cock-sparrow air. "He was very pleasant," says she, "but rather egotistical and shallow, justifying all we ever thought of his little mind and brilliant imagination. He declaimed against the spread of knowledge and the diffusion of cheap literature, as destructive to wit and talent of the highest order; pronounced that the throwing open of high and royal society would leave no play for all those

epigrammatic touches and charming literary effusions (in which, by the bye, he excels). Above all, he said the unclassical and uneducated people meddling with literature (Gad-a-mercy, fellow) and the *dilettanteisms* of the age were destroying genius."

Lady Morgan, a wide-minded woman, dared to disagree with him, and declared that if the greater number were to be the happier, wiser, better for this spread of knowledge, the goal of all human effort and labour was attained; an idea that struck him as novel. But still querulous "he exclaimed bitterly against writing-women, even against the beautiful Mrs. Norton. 'In short,' said he, 'a writing-woman is one unsexed'—but suddenly recollecting himself and pointing at me, said, 'except her,' whom in all his works he had passed over in silence."

Most amusing are the views of society, the sketches of her contemporaries, which Lady Morgan with her bright humour and quick pen have left in her diary. One morning she went to see some pictures at the Duchess of St. Albans', once a model of beauty, symmetry, and grace, but now a coarse, full-blown, dark-complexioned woman of fifty, dressed in rich white silk, wearing a quantity of gold chains and bracelets, ringlets, and a black lace veil. Proudly she showed her rooms where ducal coronets glittered on her footstools, and impressed Lady Morgan with the magnificence of gilded mirrors, pictures, superb furniture, a profusion of flowers, "and above all the attending priestesses, the abigails, all over-dressed and

ugly, such as any young duke might be trusted with."

In the evenings the author found herself the centre of all manner of notabilities, and scores of people from all quarters of the earth ; Mrs. Norton radiantly handsome and inexhaustibly witty ; Mrs. Somerville, the mathematician, "all celestial and descended from her solar system" ; Sydney Smith, whose humour was the result of a happy mind, ready to receive as much pleasure from others as his conversation bestowed on them ; Samuel Rogers, cadaverous and pale, who turned his eyes tenderly on the Irishwoman as he pressed her hand ; and Robert Montgomery the poet, a handsome little black man who bowing to the ground on being asked if he were Satan Montgomery, replied that he was, when he and Lady Morgan "began to be very facetious, and we laughed as if the devil was in us, till he was obliged to make place for Sir Alexander Creighton, physician to the late Emperor of Russia." With him she knocked up a friendship for life, and would have gone on gossiping nonsense if William Godwin, with a head which might befit a presentable giant fitted on a body of low stature, had not claimed her attention. Her conversation with him turned on his son-in-law, and she promised to call on Mrs. Shelley ; and then came the author of "Thaddeus of Warsaw," "poor dear Jane Porter," who told Lady Morgan she had been mistaken for her the other night, "and talked to as such by a party of Americans."

This by no means pleased her hearer, who says :

“ She is tall, lank, and lean, and lackadaisical, dressed in the deepest black, with rather a battered black gauze hat, and an air of a regular Melpomene. I am the reverse of all this, *et sans vanité* the best dressed woman wherever I go. Last night when Jane Porter’s communication had been made, I wore a blue satin, trimmed fully with magnificent point lace and stomacher, *à la Sevigné*, light blue velvet hat and feathers, with an aigrette of sapphires and diamonds. *Voilà.*”

Harriet Martineau, who came up to London from Norwich in the early thirties, adds her interesting account of the social life of the period. Born without the senses of taste or smell, and afflicted with deafness from the age of sixteen this vigorous little woman with a luminously intelligent face and penetrating, sympathetic eyes, a diligent mind, uncompromising honesty, and strong convictions, was at this time making an immense sensation by a series of stories dealing with political economy. Years later additional notoriety was added to her name when she advocated and practised mesmerism, by which she declared herself healed of ailments that the medical faculty considered hopelessly incurable; an advocacy and practice that caused the alienation of members of her family who had benefited by her generosity, and resulted in her being ridiculed by a large section of the press. But in the earlier years of the reign she was one of the most famous women of the day, aided in her work by Whig ministers and philanthropists, who supplied her

with statistics and suggested subjects for her tales ; invited out to dinner six evenings in every week ; visited by the most distinguished men and fashionable women ; and besieged by invitations to assemblies, which she made a point of refusing if she believed them sent with the object of lionising her ; a proceeding she had sufficient self-respect to regard as a piece of vulgar impertinence.

It was at a crowded party given by Lady Mary Shepherd, whose craze for literary celebrities was only equalled by her mania for lapdogs, that Harriet Martineau first met Richard Monckton Milnes. The descendant of a Derbyshire family, dating from the days of Elizabeth, and the son of Robert Pemberton Milnes, of Fryston Hall and Bawtry Hall in Yorkshire, Richard Monckton Milnes—who afterwards became first Baron Houghton and father of the present Earl of Crewe, had at this time just returned from his travels in Greece, and had given to the world some specimens of the poems that were to render him famous. Miss Martineau found him, she says, very young looking, with a pleasant round face and a boyish manner, “free from all shyness and gravity whatever” ; a trait that led to Sydney Smith’s calling him “The Cool of the Evening.” After this introduction, Miss Martineau, who always carried an ear trumpet, was set down beside Lady Charlotte Bury, for whose satisfaction she was made to undergo an examination as to how her stories were written.

At the first opportunity she escaped to an opposite

sofa, where she was accosted by Lady Stepney, a woman of fashion, whose drawing-rooms in Henrietta Street, Cavendish Square, were the weekly meeting-place of artists and authors, and who had published such long-forgotten novels as "The New Road to Ruin," "The Heir Presumptive," which one of the literary sisterhood, with the sweet charitableness characteristic of the craft, declared were written for her by Miss Landor, as Lady Stepney's own grammar and spelling would have disgraced a lady's maid. These novels the authoress stated brought her seven hundred pounds each; and "she paraded a pair of diamond earrings, costing that sum, which she had so earned," writes Miss Martineau, with whom she began a conversation that displayed her amazing ignorance.

Pointing to a large easy chair at Miss Martineau's elbow, Lady Stepney asked the latter if she knew for whom it was intended. On being answered in the negative, she stated it would soon be filled by Captain (afterwards Sir John) Ross, the arctic explorer, who had then just published an account of his voyages of discovery, "and that the company assembled were longing for him to come, that they might see the meeting between him and me, and hear what we should say to each other. This determined me to be off," writes Miss Martineau, "and I kept my eye on the doors, in order to slip away on the entrance of the newest lion. It was too early yet to go with any decency.

"Lady Stepney told me meantime that the Arctic voyagers had gone through hardships such as could

never be told ; but it only proved (and to this in particular she required my assent) 'that the Deity is everywhere, and more particularly in barren places.' She went on to say how very wrong she thought it, to send men into such places, without any better reason than she had ever heard of. 'They say it is to discover the North Pole,' she proceeded ; 'and by the bye, it is curious that Newton should have come within thirty miles of the North Pole in his discoveries. They say, you know,' and here she looked exceedingly sagacious and amused, 'they say that they have found the magnetic pole. But you and I know what a magnet is, very well. We know that a little thing like that would be pulled out of its place in the middle of the sea.' When I reported this conversation to my mother, we determined to get one of this lady's novels immediately, and see what she could write that would sell for seven hundred pounds. If she was to be believed as to this, it really was a curious sign of the times. I never saw any of her books after all. I can hardly expect to be believed about the anecdote of the magnet (which I imagine she took to be a little red horse shoe) and I had some difficulty in believing it myself, at the moment ; but I have given her very words. And they were no joke. She shook her headdress of marabout feathers and black bugles with her excitement as she talked. I got away before Captain Ross appeared, and never went to the house again, except to drop a card before I left London."

The Sailor King

On her way from the drawing-room to the cloak-room, Miss Martineau was accompanied by Monckton Milnes, "where he said something which impressed me much, and made me distinctly remember the earnest youth, before I discovered he was the same with 'the new poet.' He asked me some questions about my tales—then about half done, and my answer conveyed to him an impression I did not at all intend, that I made light of the work. 'No, now, don't say that,' said he bluntly, 'it is unworthy of you to affect that you do not take pains with your work. It is work that cannot be done without pains, and you should not pretend to the contrary.' I showed him in a moment that he had misapprehended me; and I carried away a clear impression of his sincerity, and of the gravity which lay under his insouciant manners." Later, when she read his poems they seemed "wonderfully beautiful in their way," and she marked her copy "all over with heroglyphics, involving the emotions with which I read them." His visits to her were sources of pleasure, and a friendship was soon established between them. This was strengthened by time, and by the fact that incidents he believed to be absolute secrets came to her knowledge, proving him to be "as nobly and substantially bountiful to needy merit and ability, as he is kindly in intercourse, and sympathising in suffering. The most interesting feature of his character as it stands before the world," adds Miss Martineau, "is his catholicity of sentiment and manner—his ability to sympathise with all manner of

thinkers and speakers, and his superiority to all appearance of exclusiveness, while on the one hand rather enjoying the reputation of having access to all houses, and on the other being serious and earnest in the deepest recesses of his character."

This was warm praise from one who speaks with scoffing merriment of the wretched vanity exhibited by so many of his contemporaries, which far transcended anything she had seen in her own sex. As an example she mentions Lord Chancellor Brougham "wincing under a newspaper criticism, and playing the fool among silly women," and amongst others includes Bulwer, sitting on a sofa, "sparkling and languishing among a set of female votaries—he and they dized out, perfumed, and presenting the nearest picture to a seraglio to be seen on British ground—only the indifference or hauteur of the lord of the harem being absent. There was poor Campbell, the poet," continues this shrewd observer, "obtruding his sentimentalities amidst a quivering apprehension of making himself ridiculous. He darted out of our house and never came again because, after warning, he sat down in a room full of people (all authors as it happened) on a low chair of my old aunt's, which went very easy on castors, and which carried him back to the wall and rebounded, of course making everybody laugh. Off went poor Campbell in a huff; and well as I had long known him, I never saw him again, and I was not very sorry, for his sentimentality was too soft, and his craving for praise too morbid to let him be an agreeable com-

The Sailor King

panion. There was Edwin Landseer, a friendly and agreeable companion, but holding his cheerfulness at the mercy of great folks' graciousness to him. To see him enter a room, curled and cravatted, and glancing round in anxiety about his reception, could not but make a woman wonder where among her own sex she could find a more palpable vanity ; but then all that was forgotten when one was sitting on a divan with him, seeing him play with the dog."

CHAPTER IX

The Hospitalities of Holland House—The Spirit that chasteneth—Crowded Tables—Young Macaulay and his wonderful Memory—Charles Greville at a Holland House Dinner—Sitting beside a Man in Black—Macaulay's flow of Information—William Wordsworth's personal Appearance—Fanny Kemble's Story of the Two Poets—Wordsworth is appointed Laureate—Trying on Rogers' Court Suit—Young Alfred Tennyson—Severe Criticism of his Poems followed by Ten Years' Silence—Introduced to Rogers and his Friends—Benjamin Disraeli's fantastic Dress—His Determination to succeed—Besieged by Invitations—Invited to Great Houses—At a Fancy Dress Ball—Lady Morgan's Description of him—His Friend and Councillor Edward Lytton Bulwer—Description of the Author of "Pelham"—Popularity as a Novelist—William Makepeace Thackeray as a Boy—Is established in Hare Court Chambers—Seeks Employment as Illustrator of Pickwick



CHAPTER IX

A WOMAN who, perhaps more than any other, exercised a potent social influence during this reign, was Elizabeth Vassal Fox, wife of Henry Richard, third Baron Holland. Singularly handsome, intellectual, the possessor of a sharp tongue and a large fortune, she had married in the days of her youth Sir Godfrey Webster, Bart., of Battle Abbey, Sussex, from whom she eloped with Lord Holland. Before a divorce could be obtained and her second marriage take place, a son was born to her, who subsequently became the husband of Mary Fitzclarence, daughter of William IV.

When holy church had blessed their union, Lord and Lady Holland settled at Holland House near Kensington, then delightfully removed from the fret and fever of London; and in this residence, made historic by those who had dwelt beneath the roof, surrounded by stately terraces and glowing gardens, spreading parks and grassy meadows, they welcomed all distinguished in literature, art, and politics, and entertained them with lavish hospitality. Lord

Holland was a scholar, an ardent advocate of liberty, whose amiable disposition bent to the stronger will of his wife; who, dictatorial and sarcastic, frequently became the dread of her guests whom it was her will to wound.

This spirit, which desired to chasten, increased with years, and in the diaries of her contemporaries many instances of her sayings are gleefully preserved by the exulting friends of the sufferers. Among them was her saying confidentially to Lord Porchester, "I am sorry to hear you are going to publish a poem. Can't you suppress it?"; her remark to Monk Lewis—on his complaining that it was stated in the *Rejected Addresses*, that he had written burlesque which he had never attempted—"Ah, you don't know your own talent"; her observation to Samuel Rogers, that as his poetry was bad enough, she hoped he would be sparing of his prose; and her confession to Tom Moore that she objected to "Lalla Rookh, in the first place because it was Eastern; and in the second place because it was in quarto"; which led the Irish bard to remark: "Poets inclined to a plethora of vanity, would find a dose of Lady Holland now and then very good for their complaint."

The guests at her dinner-table were so numerous that great inconvenience was consequently caused them. "Make room, make room," commanded the hostess on one occasion. "It certainly must be made, for it does not exist," answered Henry Luttrell. At

another time, when she ordered Lord Melbourne to move, so that a little space might be found, he said : "I'll be damned if I dine with you at all," and rising he left the house. Rogers who was a constant guest, thought that the close packing at these dinners was "one of the secrets of their conversableness and agreeableness."

Not only at her own table, but at that of others did Lady Holland's personality make itself felt. At the dinner already referred to, where she drank out of her neighbour's glass, "and otherwise behaved herself with fantastic, despotic impropriety," she provoked her host, Samuel Rogers, who, when opportunity offered, treated her to a specimen of his acid sarcasm ; for when presently conversation turned on the subject of hair, and Lady Holland said : "Why Rogers, only a few years ago I had such a head of hair that I could hide myself in it, and I've lost it all," he answered, "What a pity," but with such a look and tone, that an exultant giggle at her expense ran round the company. Macaulay also speaks of an occasion when, in November 1833, "she came to Rogers's in so bad a humour that we were all forced to rally and make common cause against her. There was not a person at table to whom she was not rude ; and none of us were inclined to submit. Rogers sneered ; Sydney Smith made merciless sport of her ; Tom Moore looked excessively impertinent ; Bobus put her down with simple, straightforward rudeness ; and I treated her with what I meant to be the coldest civility."

The Sailor King

Thomas Babington Macaulay, who has been described by Charles Greville as "short, fat, and ungraceful, with a round, thick, unmeaning face, and with rather a lisp," had been from boyhood regarded by his father Zachary, as a prodigy; for the lad could repeat all Demosthenes and all Milton, with a great part of the Bible, both in English and Greek, by heart. This superhuman memory which enabled him not only to retain, but to digest and arrange the knowledge he greedily absorbed, likewise enabled him at a later period to turn out with precision, if not always with accuracy, the store of his knowledge into articles, anecdotes, and volumes that gained him fame and fortune.

In the first year of King William's reign he had been introduced to Samuel Rogers, and at one of their early meetings at "Old Marshall's house in Hill Street" they "sat together on a bench in one of the passages, and had a good deal of very pleasant conversation." Macaulay, who at this time was known merely as a critic and essayist, was advised by the elder man to write no more reviews, but to publish separate works, adding what for him is a very rare thing, a compliment: "You may do anything, Mr. Macaulay." Rogers also told him, that if it were in his power, he would contrive to be at Holland House—where Macaulay had been invited—when he paid his first visit, "to give him an insight into its ways."

Macaulay has done some service to later generations, in describing to his sister the impression made on

him by Holland House and its host and hostess. The company, he says, sat down to dinner in a fine, long room, with a wainscoting rich with gilded coronets, roses, and portcullises. What he thought more to the purpose was that the dinner was excellent. Afterwards he had a long talk in the drawing-room with his hostess, when in speaking of the Reform Bill the word constituency was used, which she considered odious, as were also the words talented, influential, and gentlemanly. "I never could break Sheridan of gentlemanly, though he allowed it to be wrong," said she. At this Macaulay mounted his hobby with delight, and proceeding to instruct her, stated that the word talents had first appeared in theological writing, that it was a metaphor taken from the parable in the New Testament, and that it had gradually passed from the vocabulary of divinity into common use; and he finally challenged her to find it in any classical writer on general subjects before the Restoration. "She seemed surprised by this theory," he adds, "never having, so far as I could judge, heard of the 'Parable of the Talents.'" I did not tell her, though I might have done so, that a person who professes to be a critic in the delicacies of English language ought to have the Bible at his fingers' ends."

He was magnanimous enough to admit that she was a woman of great literary acquirements. "Yet," he continues, "there is a haughtiness in her courtesy which, even after all I had heard of her, surprised me. The centurion did not keep his soldiers in

better order than she keeps her guests. It is to one, 'Go,' and he goeth ; and to another, 'Do this,' and it is done. 'Ring the bell, Mr. Macaulay.' 'Lay down that screen, Lord Russell, you will spoil it.' 'Mr. Allen, take a candle and show Mr. Cradock the picture of Buonaparte.' Lord Holland is, on the other hand, all kindness, simplicity, and vivacity."

Charles Greville, who was a constant guest at Holland House, gives more intimate views of it in various entries in his journals. The hostess, he tells us, fixed her dinner hour at the unusual hour of five o'clock, and exerted her power over society by making every one attend at that time, though nothing could be more inconvenient and more tiresome than in this way shortening the day, and lengthening the evening. On reaching Holland House one November afternoon, he found his host suffering from gout, unable to walk, and lying on a couch where he talked away in good spirits whilst Rogers walked about and ever and anon looked despairingly at the clock, and John Allen, surly and disputatious, pored over a newspaper and replied in monosyllables to whatever was said to him. The grand topic of interest, far exceeding the importance of politics with the hostess, was the illness of her page, who suffered from a tumour on his thigh. "This 'little creature,' as Lady Holland calls a great hulking fellow of about twenty, is called Edgar, his real name being Tom or Jack, which he changed on being elevated to his present dignity, as the Popes

do when they are elected to the tiara. More route is made about him than other people are permitted to make about their children, and the inmates of Holland House are invited and compelled to go and sit with and amuse him. Such is the social despotism of this strange house, which presents an odd mixture of luxury and constraint, of enjoyment, physical and intellectual, with an alloy of small *désagrémens*."

On another occasion Greville describes what he terms "a true Holland House dinner, two more people arriving than there was room for, so that Lady Holland had the pleasure of a couple of general squeezes, and of seeing our arms prettily pinioned. Lord Holland sits at the table, but does not dine. He proposed to retire (not from the room), but that was not allowed, for that would have given us all space and ease." Lord Brougham, "looking like an old clothes man and dirty as the ground," was sleepy and would not talk, and "uttered nothing but yawns and grunts." Greville, who arrived rather late, found a place between Sir George Robinson, "and a common-looking man in black." As soon as he had time he began to speculate as to who might be his neighbour, who for some time opened his lips only to eat, and eventually concluded that he must be "some obscure man of letters or of medicine, perhaps a cholera doctor."

Presently, when Lord Holland remarked that self-educated men were peculiarly conceited and arrogant, and apt to look down on the generality of mankind

from their being ignorant of how much other people knew, the common looking man in black observed, that he thought the most remarkable example of self-education was that of the poet Alfieri, who, at the age of thirty was so ignorant of his own language that he had to learn it from elementary books like a child. This remark, together with some others that "came out in a way which bordered on the ridiculous, so as to excite something like a sneer," gave Greville the idea that his neighbour was a dull fellow ; so that he was mightily surprised when, later on, a man sitting opposite, addressed the unknown, saying, "Mr. Macaulay, will you drink a glass of wine with me ?"

"I thought I should have dropped off my chair," says Greville. "It was Macaulay, the man I had been so long most curious to see and to hear, whose genius, eloquence, astonishing knowledge, and diversified talents have excited my wonder and admiration for such a length of time, and here I had been sitting next to him hearing him talk, and setting him down for a dull fellow. I felt as if he could have read my thoughts, and the perspiration burst from every pore of my face, and yet it was impossible not to be amused at the idea. It was not till Macaulay stood up that I was aware of all the vulgarity and un-gainliness of his appearance ; not a ray of intellect beams from his countenance ; a lump of more ordinary clay never enclosed a powerful mind and lively imagination. He had a cold and sore throat, the latter

of which occasioned a constant contraction of the muscles of the thorax, making him appear as if in momentary danger of a fit. His manner struck me as not pleasing, but it was not assuming; unembarrassed yet not easy, unpolished yet not coarse; there was no kind of usurpation of the conversation; no tenacity as to opinion or facts; no assumption of superiority; but the variety and extent of his information were soon apparent, for whatever subject was touched upon, he evinced the utmost familiarity with it; quotation, illustration, anecdote, seemed ready in his hands for every topic."

This description of Macaulay was written in February 1832, before he developed the habit of treating his hearers to a ceaseless flow of useful information, on all possible occasions on every topic and in resonant periods, to the great weariness of his acquaintances. On one occasion, before a company that included Lords Melbourne, Morpeth, Duncannon, John Russell, and Charles Greville, the conversation turned on the portraits of the Speakers in the Speaker's house. Macaulay when asked, said he did not know how far they went back, but certainly as far as Sir Thomas More. On Lady Holland saying she did not know he had been Speaker, "Oh, yes," replied Macaulay, "don't you remember when Cardinal Wolsey came down to the House of Commons, and More was in the chair?" and he went on to describe the incident. Theology and India were next discussed, and the name of Sir Thomas Munro was mentioned, when Macaulay ex-

plained all he had ever done, said, written, and thought, until his hostess becoming bored, declared she had had enough and would have no more of him.

“This would have dashed and silenced an ordinary talker, but to Macaulay it was no more than replacing a book on the shelf and he was as ready as ever to open on any other topic,” says Greville. So when they went upstairs after dinner, the Fathers of the Church being mentioned Macaulay went on to repeat a sermon of Chrysostom in praise of the Bishop of Antioch, till Lady Holland, once more weary of his monologue, put an extinguisher on Chrysostom as she had already on Munro, and in the hope of puzzling this man of universal information said: “Pray, Macaulay, what is the origin of a doll, and when were dolls first mentioned in history?” when without the slightest hesitation he replied that Roman children had their dolls, which they offered to Venus when they grew up, quoted a line from Persius to prove this statement, and would have continued his endless stream of words had he been permitted.

An equally notable personage of the day was William Wordsworth, the poet, who now and then left his house in the peaceful and beautiful Lake District to stay with his friend Samuel Rogers, to hold conferences with his publishers, and to enjoy the distractions of the town whose spectacles he looked on as the moving pageants of a dream. Large boned, sturdily built, and clumsy of gait, his brown hard-featured face wrinkled and surmounted by a few scattered grey hairs, his

manner cheerful, marked by rustic simplicity, and courteous, he seemed more like a respectable dalesman than an inspired poet. Rogers was ever ready to welcome one for whose genius he had an exalted admiration, though he was not uniformly patient when the Lakeside poet with breezy garrulousness, monopolised the attentions of the guests and supplanted conversation by a monologue. An amusing instance of this is given by Fanny Kemble, who walking one morning in the Green Park met both, and took her place between them in great glory and exultation of spirit. As they continued their way Rogers, in his low, gentle voice, endeavoured to tell an anecdote, but was continually interrupted by Wordsworth loudly splashing into the gentle rill of his friend, until at last the latter said pathetically: "He won't let me tell my story." At that the young actress halted, as did her friends likewise, when Rogers was permitted to tell his tale. When presently Wordsworth left them, Rogers told her that lately when Wordsworth was staying at Althorp, he was found daily in the magnificent library with a volume of his own poetry in his hand. "Years after," continues Fanny Kemble, "when I used to go and sit with Mr. Rogers, I never asked him what I should read to him, without his putting into my hands his own poems, which always lay by him on his table."

That Wordsworth was not deservedly appreciated in his day is suggested by the statement he confided to Tom Moore, that at the age of sixty-five, he

had not made a thousand pounds by all his publications. Difficult must it have been for him to reconcile so hard a fact with his estimate of his own merit, borne witness to by his contemporaries, especially by Carlyle, who having found him one evening in a corner of a drawing-room, apart from "the general babble current in such places," spoke to him of the poets. Pope, Milton, and Burns were all found wanting; "even Shakspeare himself had his blind sides, his limitations; gradually it became apparent to me that of transcendent unlimited there was, to this critic probably but one specimen known—Wordsworth himself." Late in life, when he had reached his seventy-fifth year, compensation came in the offer of the laureateship; an honour at first declined on the ground of his inability to discharge its duties, afterwards accepted on his being assured that no official verses would be required of him. The appointment entailed a presentation to his sovereign, regarded by one unused to courts, as an ordeal. As the purchase of a Court suit was considered a woeful expense, Rogers offered to lend his and furthermore to instruct him in the proper method of bowing to royalty.

It therefore happened one day that when Lady Georgiana Chatterton called on Rogers, she found Wordsworth, who was a much bigger man, compressed into his friend's Court suit, all but the black silk stockings, which he absolutely declined to change for his own more comfortable pair of rough home-made

worsted ; and it was only when her woman's wit suggested that the silk stockings might be drawn over the worsted, that the argument between these duller male creatures was satisfactorily settled.

Long years after, at Wordsworth's death, the laureateship was offered to Rogers by the Prince Consort, who said that although the spirit of the times had put an end to the practice always objectionable, of exacting laudatory odes from the holder of that office, the Queen attached importance to its maintenance from its historical antiquity, and the means it afforded the sovereign of a more personal connection with the poets of the country through one of their chiefs. "I am authorised accordingly," continued Prince Albert, "to offer to you this honorary post and can tell you that it will give Her Majesty great pleasure, if it were accepted by one whom she has known so long, and who would so much adorn it; but that she would not have thought of offering it to you at your advanced age, if any duties or trouble were attached to it."

This honour was deeply appreciated by Rogers, then in his eighty-seventh year. "Coming whence it came," he replied, "in such words as were not soon to be forgotten, and under the sanction of one whose mind and whose countenance were from her earliest childhood no less heavenly than her voice, I felt as if it left me no alternative ; but when I came to myself and reflected that nothing remained of me but my shadow—a shadow soon to depart—my heart gave

way, and after long deliberation and many conflicts within me, I am come, but with great reluctance, to the resolution that I must decline the offer, but subscribing myself, with a gratitude that will not go but with the last beat of my heart, yours ever most affectionately, Samuel Rogers."

The Prince Consort's offer was made in May, but five months passed and the laureateship still remained vacant. At the end of that time Lord John Russell wrote to Rogers, saying that as he would not accept it himself, he had mentioned to the Queen those he thought most worthy of the honour, and that Her Majesty was inclined to bestow it on Mr. Tennyson, of whose character and position Lord John desired to know something. The poet referred to, Alfred Tennyson, born in 1809, was one of the twelve children of a clergyman—the Rector of Somersby in Lincolnshire. Having the run of his father's library, this precocious boy read omnivorously. At the age of eight he had written blank verse in praise of flowers; two years later and he had composed "hundreds and hundreds of lines in the regular Popeian metre"; at thirteen he had criticised "Samson Agonistes," illustrating his comments by references to Dante, Horace, and other poets; and later still had composed cantos after the manner of Scott, all of which led his father to declare: "If Alfred die, one of our greatest poets will have gone."

When about eighteen, in the spring of 1827, he and his brother Charles received twenty pounds for

a little volume called "Poems by Two Brothers," he being at the time an undergraduate at Cambridge, where in June 1829 he won the Chancellor's medal for English verse by a poem on the unpromising subject of Timbuctoo; Monckton Milnes, afterwards Lord Houghton, being amongst the competitors. Tennyson left the University without taking his degree, some four months before the Sailor King came to the throne; but in the second year of the new reign he published "Poems by Alfred Tennyson," which included, "The Miller's Daughter," "The May Queen," "The Palace of Art," and the "Lotos Eaters," usually considered amongst the most idyllic and musical verses in our language, but laughed to scorn by a writer in the *Quarterly Review* for April 1833, through some fourteen pages of that periodical, a scorn that had a sufficiently withering effect on Tennyson's nature, to keep him silent for nearly ten years; his next volume not appearing until 1842.

But meanwhile he was constantly seen in town, when he visited Samuel Rogers, and was introduced to his guests, or dined with his college friend John Mitchell Kemble, Fanny's brother, or breakfasted with Monckton Milnes. Fanny Kemble, who saw much of Tennyson, writing in February 1832, says she is always a little disappointed "with the exterior of our poet when I look at him, in spite of his eyes which are very fine; but his head and face, striking and dignified as they are, are almost too ponderous and massive for beauty in so young a man; and every now and then there is

a slightly sarcastic expression about his mouth that almost frightens me, in spite of his shy manner and habitual silence."

Though the fact outsteps the reign of William IV. it may be mentioned here because of its marvel, that at the time Lord John Russell desired to know something of Tennyson's character and position, the poet had not only published the works already referred to but had given to the world his deathless "In Memoriam"; concerning whose authorship few intellectual persons remained ignorant, though a prominent critic concluded it was the work of the widow of some military man. It may be added that on the new laureate making his first appearance before his sovereign, he wore the same court suit which Rogers had also lent to Wordsworth for a similar purpose.

Amongst the most remarkable of the novelists of this period was Benjamin Disraeli, who, born December 1804, was in his twenty-eighth year when King William succeeded to the crown, and had already published "Vivian Grey," "Contarini Fleming," and "The Young Duke," novels whose originality, satire, and brilliancy, had taken the town by storm and earned for their author an eager welcome in the highest society. He had also made a tour of the East at a time when to undertake such a journey was to win distinction, and had been sadly defeated in his candidature as a Radical member for High Wycombe.

With the marked features of his Hebraic race, his complexion was of a livid pallor, his eyes black,

penetrating and brilliant, his expression full of nervous vividness, whilst his raven-hued hair, carefully parted and brushed above his right temple, fell on the left in heavy ringlets to his collarless stock. Though nature had declined to make him handsome, he was certainly what he designed to be—striking. A young man of extraordinary penetration into the motives of mankind, of keen observation, vividly imaginative, capable of adapting himself to his surroundings, no matter how novel or uncongenial, a brilliant conversationalist, fluent with his pen, a ready wit, he recognised his own abilities as being immeasurably above the average, and fired by ambition was determined that he would occupy a position in the world's hierarchy to which they entitled him.

But his natural shrewdness showing him that talent was often driven to the wall whilst audacity vaulted into high places, he resolved to attract that he might conquer. Other youths desirous of political honours had been helped to them by the circumstances of high birth, powerful connections, ample means, university education or hereditary claims ; but he, the descendant of a despised race, the son of a mere scholar, and sometime lawyer's clerk, hampered for want of money, having but a superficial education, and with only his brains to recommend, his courage to sustain, and his ambition to beckon him, was, notwithstanding such heavy disadvantages, determined to push his way through the sneering and hostile ranks of opposition to the goal he aimed for.

Therefore, differently placed from others who entered for the same race, he saw that he must seek different means to gain his ends; when, with the wonderful intuition which enlightened him throughout his extraordinary career, he decided to gain the coveted attraction, not by the slow and serious efforts of his undoubted talents, but by the eccentricities of his dress and manner; to mystify, dazzle, and interest, that later on he might captivate and lead by the supreme right of genius.

His Oriental love of colour, splendour, and display, inherited through countless generations from the greatest, most wonderful of all races, was accountable for the glaring anomaly and gorgeous hues of his costumes. For, at a time when knee-breeches and *chapeau bras*—the fashion now known as Court dress—still survived for men, society was startled to behold Benjamin Disraeli enter its drawing-rooms in a black velvet coat lined with coloured satin, purple trousers with a gold band down each seam, a scarlet waistcoat, lace ruffles falling to the tips of his fingers, red rosettes upon his shoes, and white kid gloves over which were worn a number of antique and brilliant rings. The dress in which he derided the sober light of day and defied British prejudices was scarcely less eccentric; his waistcoat embroidered with “gorgeous gold flowers,” his magnificent stock, the quantity of chains hanging round his neck and meandering over his chest, his white ivory cane with its black cord and tassels, greatly astonishing N. P.

Willis, the American journalist and forerunner of the modern interviewer.

His conversation was not less surprising than his costumes. According to the authority just mentioned, "He talked like a racehorse approaching the winning post, every muscle in action." Whimsical ideas, gentle satire, wit, poetic descriptions, flashes of insight, and delightful nonsense chased each other through his talk. He could charm all by his gaiety, observation, imagination, his personal magnetism, just as later this "superlative Hebrew conjuror," could, according to Carlyle, hold spellbound the great lords and parties, and great interests of England, "and lead them by the nose like helpless, mesmerised, sonmambulist cattle."

Exulting in youth, flushed by the success of his novels and by the social triumphs won by adroitness and daring over prejudices against his race, he wrote jubilant letters to his sister that while describing his personal success, also present a graphic and brilliant account of society, unequalled in the correspondence of his contemporaries. His table he tells her was literally covered with invitations, some from people unknown to him; he was as popular with the dandies as he was hated by the second-rate men; and he made his way readily in the highest set where there was neither envy nor malice but where people liked to admire and be amused.

Scarce a day passed that some great house did not open its doors to this alert, dark-faced young man with his fantastic dress, his enigmatic smile, his ready

repartee. Now he was at the Hope's ball dancing in the spacious sculpture gallery and supping off gold plate ; or driving with Lady Cork to meet the Mulgraves, Tavistocks, and Lincolns ; or dining with Lord Eliot where he noticed that Sir Robert Peel " attacked his turbot most entirely with his knife " ; or with Baring Wall, whose house with its domed staircases, galleries with Corinthian columns, salons with richly painted ceilings, impressed him as much as the marvellous beauty of the Dresden china on which the banquet was served ; and again, he was rushing to " the Duchess of Kent's bear garden " ; to see the morris dancers at a party given by the Duchess of St. Albans ; or to Lady Tavistock's water party, where a joyous company, having sung all the way down to Richmond, landed at the Cedars and " wandered in beautiful gardens worthy of Paul Veronese, full, not only of flowers, but of fountains and parroquets."

Later, in company with Count D'Orsay and Henry Bulwer, with the Chesterfields, Ansons, and Worcesters, he went to a fancy dress ball at the Hanover Square Rooms, wearing a silken shirt with long sleeves ; Mrs. Norton and Mrs. Blackwood dressed as Greeks ; Lady Chesterfield as a sultana ; Lady Londonderry as Cleopatra in a costume literally embroidered with emeralds and diamonds from top to toe. In the early hours of the morning, when weary of dancing, a party of eighty " of the supremest ton and beauty, supped with Lord Lyndhurst in George Street, where nothing could be conceived more brilliant than his house

illuminated for a banquet to a company so fancifully dressed."

At a less aristocratic gathering, he met as the guests of Edward Lytton Bulwer "a large sprinkling of blues"; amongst them Mrs. Gore, a fashionable novelist now long ago forgotten, who then looked like a fullblown rose; L. E. L., over whose sentimental verses and unhappy marriage, her generation heaved many a sigh, but whose pink satin dress and white satin shoes, whose snub nose and red cheeks seemed the very personification of Brompton to the author of *Vivian Grey*; Mrs. Norton, whose beauty was dazzling and whose wit equalled his own; and Lady Morgan, who described him as "shuffling along with his ivory cane like the Ghost in *Hamlet*," and whose downright common sense led her to think "that egregious coxcomb Disraeli outraged the privilege a young man has of being absurd."

Though it was at this time the fashion to laugh at the fantastic figure of himself which it pleased Disraeli to present to the world; and though his abiding ambition to become a ruler of the State was regarded by the majority as madness, there was at least one man who believed in his abilities, encouraged his efforts, and predicted the high place he was eventually to hold. This was Edward Lytton Bulwer, who in 1828, a few months after the death of Lady Caroline Lamb, when in his twenty-fifth year, took the reading public by storm with his brilliant novel, "*Pelham, or Adventures of a Gentleman*."

Fastidious in his tastes, a leader of fashion, his manners were elegant, his figure flexible and graceful, whilst his clear cut features, fair complexion, dreamy blue eyes, and auburn hair, gave him claims to be considered handsome. Since the publication of "Pelham" he had produced "Devereux" and "Paul Clifford," which had steadily advanced his reputation, parts of the later novel being found by his friend William Godwin "so divinely written that," says the author of "Caleb Williams," "my first impulse was to throw my implements of writing into the fire, and to wish that I could consign all that I have published in the province of fiction to the same pyre." Though William Godwin did not make such a holocaust he handed over to the younger writer all the notes and data he had made regarding Eugene Aram, with the intention of writing a romance around that interesting criminal, a task which Bulwer eventually carried out. But aiming at a higher and wider fame than at this time could be gained as a novelist, the author of "Pelham" had been returned to Parliament in April 1831, whilst in the following November he succeeded the poet Thomas Campbell as editor of the *New Monthly Magazine*, having Samuel Carter Hall as his sub-editor, and Benjamin Disraeli as one of his earliest contributors; the latter supplying him with "a little paper on Egypt" and another entitled "Harlequin," for which their author received nine guineas, "this being at the rate of twenty guineas a sheet," the highest pay given by Colburn the publisher and proprietor.

Sharing with Disraeli an immense popularity as a novelist, both were soon to be eclipsed by one whose clear-sighted delineation of life, wholesome hatred of shams, and terse style, made the sententious sentimentality of the one, and the electric glamour of the other, sink into insignificance by comparison. This was William Makepeace Thackeray, who, born in 1811, had passed his nineteenth year in the beginning of this reign. His literary life may be said to have been entered on whilst he was a schoolboy at the Charterhouse, where "his little poems and parodies were very much admired by his contemporaries," as is recorded by one of them, George Venables, who in a fight with this "gentle, pretty boy," broke his nose and rendered the future novelist an unhandsome man. At Trinity College Cambridge he led "a somewhat lazy but pleasant and gentleman-like life in a set of mixed old-school fellows"; and had for his friends Edward Fitz Gerald the translator of "Omar Khayyam," Monckton Milnes, afterwards Lord Houghton, together with another poet, Alfred Tennyson, Kinglake the novelist, and John Mitchell Kemble.

After leaving Cambridge, Thackeray had lived in Germany, but about the time he reached his twentieth year and William IV. had succeeded to the throne, he had established himself in chambers in Hare Court, Middle Temple, with the intention of reading for the Bar. Finding, as he says in a private letter quoted by Herman Merivale in his admirable life of the

novelist, the education of lawyers, "one of the most cold-blooded, prejudiced pieces of invention that ever a man was slave to," he turned himself to the study of art, drew caricatures, wrote articles for the papers, and was becoming acquainted with the literary men of the day, to one of whom—Charles Dickens—he applied in 1836 for employment as illustrator of the "Pickwick Papers," then appearing serially and creating an amazing sensation.

CHAPTER X

Mary Wollstonecraft and William Godwin—A Middle-aged Juliet—Shelley elopes—His Wife separates from him—His Meeting with Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin—A Second Elopement—Crossing the Channel—A Fat Lady makes Enquiries—Traveling through France—Shelley returns to England—Jane Clairmont and Lord Byron—Shelley meets Byron—The Writing of Ghost Stories—Production of "Frankenstein"—Harriet's Suicide—Shelley's Second Marriage—Life at Pisa, and Visit of Captain Trelawny—His First Impressions of Shelley—At the Villa Magni—Mary Shelley's Forebodings—Strange Occurrences—Shelley's Terrible Dreams—Apparition of the Poet seen by Mrs. Williams—Shelley leaves his Home for Leghorn—The Last Sight of him—Intolerable Suspense—Trelawny breaks the News—The Poet's Remains are cremated—Byron's Behaviour to Mrs. Shelley—She returns to England—Her Husband's Posthumous Poems—She receives Literary Celebrities



CHAPTER X

ONE of the most interesting women of the day—not because of the literary work she produced, but on account of the fateful part she had played in the life of a man of supreme genius—was Mrs. Percy Bysshe Shelley, daughter of William Godwin, and widow of the poet; a woman whose calm, refined face, with its dead gold hair, pallid complexion, and piercing hazel eyes, seemed to many an index to the tender and tragic memories she carried in her heart.

Both her parents were remarkable, not alone for their talents, but for their rank revolt against the laws and customs of society, at a period when to step outside conventionality was to incur general odium. For her mother, Mary Wollstonecraft, who began life as a teacher, had published a book called "Vindication of the Rights of Women," which had startled the public and alienated from her the sisters for whom she had done much. Later, whilst at Paris, she had agreed to live as his wife with Gilbert Imlay, who had been a captain in the American army during

the War of Independence. That no ceremony bound them had been a matter of small importance to her at the time, though it is possible she afterwards regretted that she could not legally claim him as her husband ; for on his leaving her for another woman, Mary Wollstonecraft had attempted to drown herself by jumping from Putney Bridge and had been rescued in an insensible condition by a passing bargee.

Her next important step was to form a union with William Godwin, a man after her own heart, who, as he said, objected to marriage on principle. When, however, a child was about to be born to them, the legalisation of its birth seemed desirable to its parents, and they therefore went through a form of marriage. This infant—who afterwards became Mary Shelley—was left motherless within a few hours of its entry into the world. In due course William Godwin, struggling and impecunious, sought a second marriage, and after being rejected by a couple of his acquaintances, was wooed by Mrs. Clairmont, a widow with two children, who took up her quarters next door to him, and who for the first time addressed him from the balcony of her house, by exclaiming : “ What, do I behold the immortal Godwin ? ”

Raising his heavy lids, this dwarf-figured man with the giant’s head saw a stout middle-aged Juliet, florid of face and round-eyed, smiling encouragingly upon him. But however unromantic her form, there

could be no doubt that it encased an appreciative soul. Her courtship was brief and her marriage legal. She is described as a "clever, bustling, second-rate woman, glib of the tongue and pen, with a temper undisciplined and uncontrolled"; traits which fitted her to rule her household with the proverbial iron rod. Her leading characteristic was her fiercely jealous temperament which, resenting Godwin's affection for his daughter, made life hideous to Mary. Preventing when possible the girl's natural inclination to study, she employed her in household duties which she considered were more suitable to her. At the age of fifteen Mary, who inherited the talents of her parents, is described by her father as "singularly bold, somewhat imperious and active in mind, her desire for knowledge is great, and her perseverance in everything she undertakes almost invincible."

The girl had been brought up to revere the memory of her dead mother, whilst she devotedly esteemed her father as a great philosopher in advance of his time. In his house she had constantly met the seekers of spiritual emancipation who were drawn to him, listened to their discussions, and imbibed their doctrines. Among them was Percy Bysshe Shelley, who at the period of what probably was their first meeting in June 1814, had not completed his twenty-first year, while she had not reached her sixteenth birthday. Already he had, at the age of nineteen, eloped with Harriet Westbrook, less from love of her, than from a desire to rescue this girl of sixteen from the dreadful

tyranny of being sent back to school. Borrowing twenty-five pounds from an accommodating relative to defray the expenses of the elopement, Shelley and his companion travelled to Edinburgh where they were married in August 1811. Nearly two years later, in June 1813, a daughter was born to them, whom they named Ianthe. When in the course of the following year Harriet was again about to become a mother, it was thought advisable that they should be remarried in England, as a precaution against any possible accusation of illegitimacy which could be brought by the poet's irate father against an infant who might prove to be heir to the family title and estates. This second ceremony was celebrated at St. George's, Hanover Square, London, in March 1814.

From the time when Harriet had given birth to her first child, towards whom she showed little affection, she betrayed a marked indifference towards her husband. This feeling, born of mental disparity and different temperaments had been loyally combatted by him ; but his efforts were powerless to prevent her seeking a separation from him, which at the time, neither of them believed would be final. In May 1814 he addressed a poem appealing for her pity if not for her love, which only the coldest heart could read and resist. Later he attributed this indifference to her unfaithfulness, no proof of which existed. That Shelley believed it made little difference in his opinions or treatment of Harriet, infidelity in his wife not being considered by him an unpardonable crime.



From the painting by Richard Rothwell in the National Portrait Gallery.

[Photo by Walker & Cokerell.]

MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT SHELLEY.

[To face p. 214.]



Like Godwin he held loose, or what were considered philosophic views regarding marriage, though both had submitted to its bonds.

The sight of Mary Godwin's pale face and luminous grey eyes, together with her quiet manner, quick intelligence and gentle ways, made an instant and ineradicable impression on Shelley, then longing for sympathy, and suffering from his wife's indifference, which no action of his had warranted. On the other hand, Mary Godwin saw her ideal in this tall, slightly built youth, with ruddy complexion and delicate features, prominent blue eyes and silky brown hair falling wild and uncombed to his shoulders. The evident unhappiness and bitter disappointment he suffered through his wife; the strangely beautiful language in which he unfolded to Mary a mind freed from earthiness, his chivalrous antagonism to all forms of oppression, cruelty, and injustice, his rapturous appreciation of high and noble thoughts and deeds, and above all his devotion and generosity to her impecunious father, appealed to her heart, and as a result a friendship sprang up rapidly between them. Shelley presented her with a copy of his "Queen Mab," read to her, walked with her, spoke to her of his dreams, until presently their friendship ripened to an absorbing love.

On this being brought to Godwin's notice, he forbade Shelley the house, and sought to reconcile Harriet to him. This did not prevent Mary from meeting the poet in secret; their chief trysting place

being beside her mother's grave, shadowed by a weeping willow, and situated in old St. Pancras churchyard, then a quiet spot almost surrounded by meadows, now the noisy site of a great railway station. It was here that Mary, with the example before her of the mother she revered, with her mind impressed by her father's teachings regarding marriage, and with the belief that Harriet had voluntarily sundered herself from her husband, acknowledged her love for the poet, and agreed to be his henceforth in heart and soul. Believing himself justified in entering into relations with Mary, and scorning to conceal this step from her whom it most concerned, Shelley sought an interview with his wife that he might acquaint her with his love for Mary, and his intention to live with her. These statements produced an illness dangerous to one about to become a mother, during which he remained by her bedside, devoted in his attentions, and distracted with anxiety for her recovery.

On recovering from the effects of the shock, Harriet bitterly resented Mary's influence ; but whilst unable to prevent the inevitable, and taking considerable interest in the settlements to be made on herself, she was comforted by the idea that Shelley would soon tire of his new love and return to his lawful wife. Meanwhile Shelley busied himself in having a settlement drawn up in favour of Harriet, and in arranging for his elopement with Mary, who gloried in the thought that she alone was the woman destined

to soothe the disappointment, to nurture the genius, and to create the happiness of the man she adored. The days before their elopement could take place were passed in feverish excitement by Shelley, who was distracted between his feelings for Harriet and his passion for Mary ; his bloodshot eyes, dishevelled hair, disordered dress, and wild expression, bespeaking a mental condition which the liberal use of opium did nothing to alleviate.

One morning, towards the end of July 1814, before five had struck, and whilst the Godwin household slept, Mary quietly left her father's residence in Skinner Street, Holborn, to meet Shelley, accompanied by Mary Jane Clairmont, daughter of the second Mrs. Godwin by a former marriage, an olive-complexioned, dark-eyed girl, vivacious, ardent, pleasure-loving, imaginative and romantic ; traits which at a later period fitted her to play the part of a heroine to another poet lover. Shelley, who had ordered a chaise to be ready by four o'clock, had watched throughout the previous night, "until the lightning and the stars became pale," harassed by fears for the success of their scheme, until he saw Mary, an eager tremulous figure, hands outstretched towards him, face wan in the tender light of dawn, when rushing forward he hurried herself and her companion into the conveyance which then set out for Dover. That the lovers' flight should have been shared by a third person does not seem to have struck them as being singular. After a drive of

about twelve hours they reached Dover, covered with dust and exhausted by heat that foreboded a storm, where they dined, bargained with sailors and custom house officers, bathed, and by six o'clock set out in a small boat for Calais.

For the details of their movements during the journey now lying before them, we are indebted to the journal jointly kept by Shelley and Mary, and to that written by Jane Clairmont and published by Professor Dowden in his superb and exhaustive life of the poet. On leaving Dover the sea was comparatively smooth, the sails flapped in a flagging calm, and a summer moon slowly scaled the blue. But as night deepened a wind sprung up and a sullen heavy swell tossed the boat. Mary "was much affected by the sea," and lay motionless in Shelley's arms. The wind became violent and contrary, and hour after hour was passed in darkness and misery, until "the moon sunk in the red and stormy horizon, and the fast flashing lightning became pale in the breaking day. We were proceeding slowly against the wind, when suddenly a thunder squall struck the sail and the waves rushed into the boat; even the sailors believed that our situation was perilous." But eventually the wind went down, the lightning ceased, day broke luridly above the waters, and they landed at Calais. "Mary, look, the sun rises over France," Shelley said, as, drenched and subdued, they made their way over the wet and glittering sands towards the inn.

As the day passed their fatigues and fears were

forgotten in the strangeness of the sights around them ; the great white caps, gaudy ornaments, and short skirts of the fisherwomen ; the earringed, bare-legged sailors ; the bright-coloured garments, bronzed faces, expressive gesticulation, and vivacious manners of all delighting these youthful travellers. In the evening the packet from Dover came in, and soon after Shelley was told, "that a fat lady had arrived, who had said that I ran away with her daughter." The news was hardly given when Mrs. Godwin, voluble, florid and irate, bustled into the apartment of the runaways, to threaten Shelley, upbraid Mary, and claim her daughter Jane. Arguments and indignation were lost upon the lovers. Next morning Jane informed Shelley that she was unable to withstand the pathos of her mother's appeal ; but instead of seizing this opportunity to rid himself of the girl, who as well as being intrusive, must have been a burden to his limited means, he counselled her, as he writes, "to take at least an hour for consideration. She returned to Mrs. Godwin and informed her that she resolved to continue with us."

Next day the stormy matron left for England, and the singular trio for Paris, "travelling in a cabriolet drawn by three horses running abreast and urged by a queer upright little postillion, with long pigtail and cracking whip." No sooner had they reached the capital than its suffocating atmosphere on these August days, made them long for the cool valleys of Switzerland where they intended to pro-

ceed. But they were now without money, the aid which Shelley had expected from England was not forthcoming, the friend from whom he hoped to borrow had left Paris, and Tavernier, the business man to whom application was made, showed no haste to give relief. Before this ultimately came, Shelley sold his watch and chain for eight napoleons and a few francs. When at last he received a remittance of sixty pounds he and Jane went early in the morning to the ass-market and bought a donkey, on which it was intended that Mary should ride from Paris to Lucerne, whilst her companions trudged their dusty way on foot.

A short but painful experience proved that the donkey was "weak and unfit for labour"; so that he was presently sold and a mule purchased in his place. Then these wanderers set out once more, Mary in a black silk dress mounted on the mule, Shelley beside her carrying a basket in which was their dinner of bread and fruit, Jane, also clad in the high respectability of black silk, bringing up a weary rear. Their way lay through provinces lately desolated by war; through villages burned or sacked, their "white ruins towering in innumerable forms of destruction among the beautiful trees." Living on rancid bacon and black bread, they slept in cabarets, cottages, or wherever they could find shelter; encountering filth, misery, and famine everywhere. In this way they travelled one hundred and twenty miles in four days and reached Troyes on August 13th.

It was from this "detestable town" that Shelley wrote to his "Dearest Harriet," to show, as he says, "that I do not forget you." Before setting out from Paris he had written to the wife whom he had deserted and whom he believed unfaithful to him, begging that she would follow them; and he now urged her once more to join them in Switzerland where, he writes: "You will at least find one firm and constant friend, to whom your interests will be always dear, by whom your feelings will never wilfully be injured. From none can you expect this but me—all else are either unfeeling or selfish, or have beloved friends of their own." He then gave some account of their adventures, of Mary's health, declared he looked forward to the pleasure of welcoming her to some sweet retreat which he will procure for her among the mountains, and concluded: "With love to my sweet little Ianthe, ever most affectionately yours, Shelley."

At Brunnen, near Lucerne, they hired rooms in a château for six months, but quitted them after a residence of forty-eight hours, it having suddenly occurred to Shelley that he had best return to London. They reached Gravesend on September 13th, 1814, in a penniless condition, having with some difficulty obtained their passage from Rotterdam on credit. Shelley had already directed his bankers to honour whatever demands for money were made on them by his wife, so far as the balance to his credit permitted. On reaching London he immediately

drove to them to find that the full amount of his account had been drawn. He therefore called on Harriet from whom he received twenty pounds, together with bitter reproaches. It was yet her hope that he would return to her, and his concern for her illness seemed to justify her expectations. On November 30th, 1814, she gave birth to a boy, whom they named Charles Bysshe. The entrance into the world of this babe seems to have embittered rather than reconciled his parents; and in the following January the disappointed wife took a petty revenge on her erratic husband. "Harriet," writes Mary in her journal, "sends her creditors here; nasty woman. Now we must change our lodgings."

A time of struggle and humiliation followed Shelley, who vainly sought relief from money-lenders, was parted from Mary in his endeavour to escape bailiffs, and suffered from the "perfidy, wickedness, and hard-heartedness of mankind." However, this was ended in January 1815, when by the death of his grandfather, Sir Bysshe Shelley, the poet's father succeeded to the title and estates, and he himself became their heir. On hearing the news Mary's lover accompanied by Jane, went down to the family residence, Field Place, in Sussex, but was refused admittance by his father, when he calmly seated himself outside the hall door and began to read "Comus." Eventually Shelley came into an income of a thousand a year, a fifth part of which he allowed to Harriet and

her children, and a great portion of which was given in helping others, chief among them William Godwin.

On February 20th, 1815, Mary gave birth to a seven months' child, a delicate baby girl who survived about ten days, much to its parents' grief. A month later Mary records in her journal that she dreamt "that my little baby came to life again; that it had only been cold, and that we rubbed it before the fire and it lived. Awake and find no baby. I think about the little thing all day."

Eleven months later, on January 24th, 1816, Mary gave birth to a second child who was named William. In the spring of the same year Jane, who changed her name to the more romantic sounding Claire, expressed a desire to become an actress. Her restless temperament, excitability, love of sensation, must have prepared her friends for this decision, which it may be added was never carried out. Her intention was however fraught with dire consequence to her; for her application for employment at Drury Lane Theatre, made to Lord Byron, then one of its managers, was followed by a liaison with the poet. The date of its beginning is unrecorded, but evidence remains that she was never deeply in love with the author of "Childe Harold," and that he quickly tired of her. This intrigue was carried on without the knowledge of Shelley or Mary, who were at this time unacquainted with Byron.

Before summer dawned Shelley, seized by restlessness, broached the idea of going abroad once more; for the clearer skies and stronger suns of foreign climes

appealed to him. In this suggestion he was supported by Claire, who urged him to visit Geneva, where she knew Byron was about to stay, and where she hoped to join him. It is probable that she would have gone to Switzerland without her friends, had not her lover forbidden her to travel alone. Shelley and Mary agreed to her wishes without suspecting their cause, and the trio set out for the Continent once more and arrived at the Hotel de Sècheron, Geneva, in May, a few days before Byron, who was accompanied by his Italian physician Polidori and three menservants.

Shelley had sent a copy of his poem, "Queen Mab," on its publication to Byron, but it was here that they met for the first time. Each felt a sincere admiration for the genius of the other, though the wide difference in their characters prevented a strong friendship from establishing itself between them. Soon after Byron reached Geneva, Shelley and his companions, desiring quieter and less expensive quarters, moved to a cottage known as Maison Chapuis ; on the hill above which, and divided from it only by a vineyard, stood the Villa Diodati, where Byron established himself a fortnight later. As close neighbours they spent much of their time together, rowing on the lake, making excursions inland, and holding nightly discussions that sometimes lasted till the flush of dawn.

It was on one of these occasions, when their conversation had turned on some German ghost stories they had been reading, that Byron suddenly said : " We will each write a ghost story." Agreeing to this he

and Shelley and Polidori began to indite tales of weird imaginings that were never brought to a conclusion ; whilst Mary, though she racked her brains to find a story "that would speak to the mysterious fears of our nature and awaken thrilling horror," could think of nothing suitable, and when asked every morning if she had found one, was obliged to reply in a mortifying negative.

But at last one night after listening to a discussion on the nature and principle of life, and the possibility of its ever being discovered and communicated, she retired with the witching hour to find sleep impossible. It was then whilst her imagination was excited by what she had heard that vivid and successive images of horror arose before her ; among which she saw the hideous semblance of a human being stirred to existence by the unhallowed arts of some pale student of the occult, who frightened by his endeavours to mock the power of the Creator, fled horrified from the pursuit of his handiwork. Thrilled by fear, she turned from this phantasy, and to distract her thoughts sought a subject for her story, when in a luminous flash she saw that it lay before her. Next morning she announced that she had found her plot, and during the day, whilst Shelley was writing the "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty," and Byron was composing his "Prisoner of Chillon," she began the tale that when developed and published under the name of "Frankenstein," proved one of the most powerful and daring romances yet given to the world.

Shelley had left England with the intention of remaining permanently abroad, but as August drew to a close his abiding spirit of restlessness prompted him to return to England. Accordingly one morning towards the end of that month the trio set out on their homeward journey. Vexation and pain awaited the poet. Whilst searching for a house by the Thames in which to settle down, he was importuned once more to help the ever needy, ever exacting Godwin, to whom he had already given with a generosity that placed himself in difficulties. Though eager enough to take his money, Godwin since Mary's elopement had refused to hold personal communication with Shelley, and on one occasion had declined to take a cheque made out in the poet's name.

At the time he was striving to help Mary's father out of his plight, Shelley was sorely distressed by the disappearance of Harriet and her children, from whom he had not heard for months, and to whom no clue could be discovered until, on November 9th, 1816, her body was found floating in the Serpentine. Since his parting with her she had fallen lower than his worst suspicions could have credited; until driven from her father's house, and deserted by the groom who had been her protector, she sought to end her miseries by suicide. Her death was such a shock to her husband that, as he afterwards told Byron, he never knew how he survived it.

As a result of her death, Shelley made Mary his wife; their marriage taking place on December 29th,



From the painting by Amelia Curran in the National Portrait Gallery.]

Photo by Walker & Cokerell.

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY.

[To face p. 306.]



1816, at St. Mildred's Church, Broad Street, in the presence of Godwin, whose republican principles did not prevent him from being greatly elated because his daughter had wedded the heir to a baronetcy.

Before this time it had been discovered that Claire was about to become a mother. The Shelleys' feelings at this revelation are not recorded in their journal. Claire, however, remained a member of the household, and was carefully tended by Mary until the child was born in January 1817. News of the arrival of this infant—who afterwards became known as Allegra—was sent to its father, Lord Byron, by Shelley, who expected that the author of "Childe Harold" would rejoice at the event.

The story of Mary Shelley's married life may be told in a few sentences. In March 1818 they once more left England, to which her husband was never to return. Her two children Clara and William died abroad to her poignant grief, which found little relief in her father's statement made by way of comforting her, that—"We seldom indulge long in depression and mourning, except when we think secretly that there is something very refined in it, and that it does us honour." Consolation came when, on November 12th, 1819, a son was born to her named Percy Florence, who was destined to survive, and to succeed to his grandfather's title and estates, Harriet's son having died in boyhood. Allegra who had been taken by Byron from her mother, much to the latter's grief and mortification, had been sent to

be educated at the convent of Bagna Cavallo, where she died of typhus fever in 1822. The child's body, according to Samuel Roger's "Table Talk," was sent to England in two packages, that no one might suspect what it was, and buried at Harrow.

It was in this year 1822, the last of Shelley's life, that he made the acquaintance of Captain Edward Trelawny, who was fated to become a staunch friend to Mary. The Shelleys were at this time living at Pisa, having rented a suite of apartments on the top floor of the Tre Palazzi di Chiesa, whose southern windows overlooked the whole sunlit country until it merged into the purple mists of the distant sea. Byron with the Countess Guiccioli, her father and brother, lived in the Casa Lanfranci, a dark haunted palace almost opposite to theirs; so that this quiet old Tuscan town had become, as Mrs. Shelley wrote, "a little nest of singing birds."

A man of independent means who had travelled far and seen much of the world, the descendant of an old Cornish family, Trelawny possessed a magnificent presence; his oriental face, with its raven black hair, flashing eyes, overhanging brows, firm chin, large well-shaped nose, and upturned lips, being set off by a tall athletic frame that showed a captivating grace. His conversation was full of the strange sights he had seen, the singular adventures through which he had passed, blood-curdling in their horror, or irresistible in their comedy; the remarkable men and women he had met; so that Mary Shelley "tired with the every-

day sleepiness of human intercourse," was glad to meet with one who, as she said, "among other valuable qualities, has the rare merit of interesting my imagination."

Up to this date he was unacquainted with Byron or Shelley, both of whom he was eager to know; so whilst staying at Genoa he drove over alone to Pisa, where he knew they were staying, as was also his friend Edward Williams, who having sold his commission in a dragoon regiment and married a wife, had come to Pisa, where they become intimate with the Shelleys, and now occupied a suite of apartments in the same palace.

It was late in the evening when Trelawny arrived, but after putting up his horse at the inn and dining, he hurried to call on the Williams's. Cordially received by them, they were in the midst of an animated conversation, when Trelawny was startled to see in the passage near the open door opposite to which he sat, and shining through the dusk, a pair of glittering eyes steadily fixed on his own. Seeing him stare, his hostess glanced in the same direction, and going to the doorway laughingly said: "Come in Shelley, it's only our friend Tre, just arrived."

Dressed like a boy, in a black jacket and trousers which he seemed to have outgrown, a tall thin stripling, blushing like a girl, glided into the room and held out both hands; "and although I could hardly believe as I looked at his flushed, feminine, and artless face that it could be the poet, I returned

his warm pressure," writes Trelawny. It was only when, at Mrs. Williams's request, that Shelley began to translate aloud some passages from Calderon's "Magico Prodigioso," which he held in his hand, and Trelawny's wonder was awakened at his marvellous command of two languages, that the visitor became convinced of Shelley's identity. When the latter paused, silence ensued ; and the visitor asked : " Where is he ? " " Oh, he comes and goes like a spirit, no one knows when or where," Mrs. Williams replied.

In May 1822 the Shelleys, with their friends the Williams's, left Pisa and took a house called the Villa Magni overhanging the Bay of Lerici, one of the subdivisions of the Gulf of Spezia. This residence, standing at the foot of a wood-covered, castle-crowned promontory, was large and roomy, and was fronted by a covered terrace or verandah that gave dazzling views of sea and sky and mountains, whose colours for ever changed under sun and cloud. Shelley, always fascinated by the sea which was to lure him to his doom, was delighted by the place, and at night lay in happy wakefulness listening to the waves booming on the beach below like the roar of heavy artillery. Mary, who at this time was depressed and ailing, differed from him in taking a violent dislike to her new residence. " My nerves," she writes, " were wound up to the utmost irritation, and the sense of misfortune hung over my spirits. No words can tell how I hated our house and the country about it. The beauty of the woods made me weep and shudder ;

so vehement was my feeling of dislike that I used to rejoice when the winds and waves permitted me to go out in the boat, so that I was not obliged to take my usual walk among the shaded paths, alleys of vine-festooned trees—all that before I doated on, and that now weighed on me. My only moments of peace were on board that unhappy boat, when, lying down with my head on his (Shelley's) knee, I shut my eyes and felt the wind and our swift motion alone."

The unlucky boat referred to, had been built by Captain Roberts for Shelley at Genoa ; and on being sighted one fair May day from the terrace by her owner and Edward Williams as she rounded the bay, had been hailed by them with boyish excitement and delight. The boat which was "a perfect plaything for the summer," had but one fault. Trelawny had selected the name of the *Don Juan* for her, and to this Shelley had agreed ; but later he wished her to be known as the *Ariel*. Byron fired up on hearing this, and determined that she should be called after his poem, wrote to Captain Roberts to have its title printed on the mainsail.

"She arrived thus disfigured," writes Mary Shelley to Mrs. Gisborne. "For days and nights full twenty one did Shelley and Edward ponder on her anabaptism and the washing out of the primeval stain. Turpentine spirits of wine, buccata, all were tried and it became dappled and no more. At length the piece had to be taken out, and a reef put so that the sail does not

look worse. I do not know what Lord Byron will say, but lord and poet as he is, he could not be allowed to make a coal barge of our boat."

Many happy hours were spent by both families on this craft; Jane Williams singing to the accompaniment of her guitar, Shelley reading aloud between the intervals of receiving lessons on steering and sailing from Williams, Mary rejoicing at her escape from the terrible depression which the house so unaccountably produced upon her.

The enjoyment of these hours—the glow of sunset on lives upon which darkness was suddenly to fall—was checked by certain weird phenomena that in the light of after events were regarded as portents and warnings. The first of these happened one evening when Shelley and Williams were walking on the terrace watching the glory of moonlight on the waters, that rippling at their feet spread into trackless space. It was then that the poet, violently clutching his friend's arm, cried out: "There it is again—there." When emotion allowed him to explain, he declared that he had distinctly seen the child Allegra rise from the sea and clap her hands joyously as she smiled at him; and it required all the philosophy and reasoning of which Williams—who tells the story—was capable to convince him that his vision was a hallucination.

It was about a fortnight later that Mary, who was recovering from a dangerous illness, was inexpressibly horrified one night by hearing her husband scream,

and before she could move, by seeing him stagger helplessly into her room. Believing that he was asleep she strove to wake him, but as he continued to scream she rushed across the dark passage to the Williams's room for help. On their prompt return to Shelley, he declared he had not been asleep, but that a vision had frightened him. He imagined that whilst lying in bed the Williams's who seemingly could hardly walk from weakness, approached him, they being in the most horrible condition, "their bodies lacerated, their bones starting through their skin, their faces pale, yet stained with blood"; when Edward bade him get up, telling him that the sea was flooding the house which was coming down. Shelley had risen and gone to the window looking on the terrace and the sea which, spell-bound, he watched rushing in. But suddenly his vision changed and he saw the figure of himself strangling his beloved Mary, on which he rushed into her room and the illusion vanished.

Talking it over next morning he told her he had had many visions lately; in one of these, whilst walking on the terrace he had seen a presentiment of himself, which approaching him said: "How long do you mean to be content?"

An occurrence still more alarming happened on another night, when above the eternal beating of waves on the beach a wild and sudden scream roused the household. A quick springing from beds, a hurried striking of lights, an agonising search resulted in Shelley being discovered in the sitting-room, pale

as the dead, rigid from fear, his blue eyes fixed on space, his teeth chattering. When able to explain he declared that a cloaked figure had stolen to his bedside and beckoned him to follow. Though reluctant he was mysteriously forced to obey. On reaching where he stood this unearthly visitant let the cloak drop from her face, which Shelley recognised as his own. *Siete soddisfatto* (be satisfied), the apparition whispered as it vanished, leaving him a prey to inexpressible terrors.

Nor were such uncanny experiences limited to Shelley. Jane Williams, a woman without imagination, removed by temperament from melancholy moods, was standing one day with Trelawny at a window looking on the terrace, when she saw Shelley pass without coat or jacket. In a few seconds he passed again in the same direction. As there was no way to return from where he went save by climbing a wall twenty feet high, or by recrossing in front of the window, she was alarmed, and the more so when on leaning out to look after him she failed to see him. "Good God, can Shelley have leapt from the wall? Where can he be gone?" she asked. "Shelley?" answered Trelawny. "No Shelley has passed. What do you mean?"

On enquiry it was proved that the poet had not been on the terrace, and was far from home at the time.

On July 1st Shelley, Williams, and Captain Roberts set out in the *Ariel* to meet Leigh Hunt at Leghorn.

Mary was just able to leave her bedroom for the terrace at this time, and his departure, as she states in a letter given at length in Mrs. Marshall's absorbingly interesting "Life and Letters of Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley," added heavily to her misery. "I could not endure that he should go. I called him back two or three times, and told him that if I did not see him soon I would go to Pisa with the child. I cried bitterly when he went away. In my letters to him I entreated him to return; 'the feeling that some misfortune would happen,' I said 'haunted me.'" In the evenings she used to patrol the terrace intolerably lonely in his absence. "To see the sun set upon this scene, the stars shine, and the moon rise, was a sight of wondrous beauty, but to me it added only to my wretchedness."

On the 8th of the month Shelley and Williams left Leghorn for Lerici in the boat. Captain Roberts, who had advised them to wait and see if the weather had settled, watched them from the end of the pier as the *Ariel* went off at the rate of seven knots. Whilst straining his eyes after this ever decreasing speck, with its freight of those who had left him in high spirits, the wind came suddenly up from the Gulf. Anxious to see how the boat would weather the squall he obtained permission to ascend the lighthouse tower, and with the aid of a glass discovered them about ten miles out at sea, where they were taking in their topsails. Then the haze of the storm hid his friends from him and he saw them no more.

“When the storm cleared,” he said, “I looked again, fancying that I could see them on their return to us, but there was no boat on the sea.”

For twelve days of sickening suspense and heart-straining misery the wives of those who had gone down into the depths clung to vanishing hope, and resolutely turned from despair; the universe of pain filling their souls being brutally contrasted by the enjoyment of the peasants in their close neighbourhood, who to celebrate a feast had illuminated their homes and passed the whole of one night dancing joyously on the sands near the door of the Villa Magni, running into the sea and then back, screaming and laughing like savages. At last Trelawny, who had striven to buoy the spirits of these desolate women, and who had exerted himself in searching for traces of the absent, found their bodies washed up upon the shore. This news he hurried to break to the widows, “to prevent any ruder messenger from bursting in upon them.” As he stood on the threshold of their house he recalled the pleasant hours spent upon the terrace, Shelley’s boyish laughter, Jane’s singing to the guitar, Mary’s prattle to her babe, and marvelled that an idle puff of wind could for ever destroy such happiness. He was wakened from his reverie by the shriek of the Italian nurse, who was alarmed at seeing him. He then went upstairs and entered the sitting-room unannounced, where both women sat white, silent, and expectant. “I neither spoke, nor did they question me,” he writes. “Mrs. Shelley’s large grey eyes were

fixed on my face. I turned away. Unable to bear this horrid silence, with a convulsive effort she exclaimed: 'Is there no hope?' I did not answer her, but left the room and sent the servant with the children to them."

The next day Trelawny prevailed on them to go with him to Pisa. Preparations were made to have the bodies burnt on that part of the beach where the sea had flung them. So whilst an August sun glittered on the waters, whose smiling serenity contrasted their recent murderous mood; the islands of Gorgona, Elba, and Capraji in sight, green specks floating on the blue; the battlemented watch-towers guarding the wavering coast line; the snow-crested Apennines looming in supreme loneliness and majestic grandeur; a few friends and foreign officials saw the remains of Shelley placed in the furnace provided by Trelawny, frankincense, wine, and oil poured over them, and the pyre lighted. As the yellow flames roared, glistened, and quivered, and the heat from sun and fire made the atmosphere tremulous, the body fell open and revealed the heart, which Trelawny snatched at and preserved. Williams's remains had been burnt in the same manner on the previous day.

Mary Shelley had intended to return immediately to England. Inconsolable for one whom she spoke of as "a bright planetary spirit enshrined in an earthly temple," she barely existed, seeing one colourless week succeed another, dreading the night, but still more dreading the morning which led to another empty

and desolate day. But yet, as she writes, "I would not change my situation as his widow with that of the most prosperous woman in the world." Her resolution to leave Italy at once was not acted on, and for nearly twelve months she lived at Genoa with the Leigh Hunts and their children, "the six little blackguards," whom Byron described as being "dirtier and more mischievous than Yahoos." Her condition was made more pitiable by the refusal of her father-in-law, Sir Timothy Shelley, to provide for herself or her child, who—as Harriet's boy was living at this time—was not heir to the title and property.

Eventually Sir Timothy offered to have Mary's son "placed with a person of whom he should approve," provided that his mother renounced all control over him. To this Mary declared she would never consent. But, believing that her child's interests would be best consulted by her return to England, she desired to make the journey. As she had not sufficient funds to defray expenses, Byron offered to provide them. Time passed and he failed to keep his promise, but declared he would arrange the business with Leigh Hunt. At this time the greed of gain, and love of hoarding, had fastened on Byron, and his losses over the "Liberal" newspaper by no means sweetened his irritable and capricious temper, so that when he came to arrange for Mary's journey, he showed such unwillingness to give, such a sense of the obligation he conferred, wrote notes, as she says, "so full of contempt against me and my lost Shelley, that I could stand it no longer,

and refused to receive his still proffered aid for my journey."

Though it went to her heart to ask money from Trelawny, who in comparison with Byron was a poor man, and who had already offered to share half his income with her, she was now obliged to apply to him, when this kind-hearted friend not only hurried to assist her, but begged that from time to time she would let him know her wants. He had been racking his memory, he said, to recall some person in England that would be of service to her for his sake; "but my rich friends and relations are without hearts, and it is useless to introduce you to the unfortunate; it would but augment your repinings at the injustice of Fortune." As a knight-errant his heart had led him many a heavy journey, foolishly seeking the unfortunate, the miserable, the outcast, and when found he had only made himself one of them without redressing their grievances. "So I pray you avoid," he adds, "as you value your peace of mind, the wretched."

On July 17th, 1823, he and Byron left Genoa for Greece, from which the latter was never to return. "They sailed together," wrote Mary to Jane Williams, "Lord Byron with ten thousand pounds, Trelawny with fifty pounds, and Lord Byron cowering before his eye for reasons you shall hear soon." Mary and her son left seven days later, and without servant or companion travelled to London, and were warmly received by her father at his new home, 195, Strand,

She then wrote to announce her arrival to Sir Timothy Shelley, and in return heard from his solicitor, who advanced her a hundred pounds for her immediate expenses, and told her she would probably receive the same annually for the benefit of her child.

Relieved from immediate anxieties she removed to neat, cheap lodgings in Kentish Town, the country about which she described as really pretty ; "lawny uplands, wooded parks, green lanes, and gentle hills, form agreeable and varying combinations." The sum granted her would have been sufficient to support her for a year in Italy ; but in London, where everything seemed expensive, it would not go far, and she resolved to support herself by her writings, and by the publication of her husband's manuscripts. By the end of this year Shelley's posthumous poems were brought out, but not before three of his admirers had guaranteed to pay the expenses of the book if they were not cleared by its sale. Though its appearance gave great satisfaction to the poet's widow, it enraged his father who, under a threat of depriving her of her allowance if he were disobeyed, ordered the suppression of the book, and demanded a promise that she would during his lifetime never bring her dear Shelley's name before the public. "Sir Timothy," said she, "writhes under the fame of his incomparable son, as if it were the most greivous injury done to him ; and so perhaps after all it will prove."

In 1825 the old baronet increased her income by another hundred ; but on the appearance early in the

following year of her novel, "The Last Man," stopped her allowance.

This production which was Mary's third novel—her second, "Valperga," a fifteenth century romance, having been brought out two years previously—was published as by the author of "Frankenstein," and in this way gave a clue to its writer's name that was freely mentioned by the critics. Aggravated by this, Sir Timothy decided to punish her. However, in September 1826, Harriet's son, Charles Bysshe Shelley, died, when Mary's fine tall boy became his grandfather's heir. Mary was now allowed two hundred and fifty pounds per annum, which was increased by fifty within twelve months. She then moved into better apartments in Somerset Street, Portman Square, where she received many of the literary celebrities of the reign, mention of whom has already been made.

END OF VOL. I.

LA
539
M7
V. 1

**THE LIBRARY
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
Santa Barbara**

**THIS BOOK IS DUE ON THE LAST DATE
STAMPED BELOW.**

Series 9482

UC SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY



AA 000 263 006 9

