DOBSON AUSTIN

EIGHTEENTH CENTURY VIGNETTES

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Содержание

PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION OF 1892 4
I. EIGHTEENTH CENTURY VIGNETTES 6
II. PRIOR'S 'KITTY.' 14
III. SPENCE'S 'ANECDOTES.' 24
IV. CAPTAIN CORAM'S CHARITY 34
V. 'THE FEMALE QUIXOTE.' 43
VI. FIELDING'S 'VOYAGE TO LISBON.' 54
VII. HANWAY'S TRAVELS 63
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента. 65

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PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION OF 1892

Sixteen of the twenty papers comprised in this volume appeared in America; but only one of these – 'The Citizen of the World' – has been reprinted in England. Of the four papers remaining, one was published (in part) in the *Saturday Review*, and the other three in *Longman's Magazine*, the *National Review*, and the *Library* respectively. Where permission to reprint was required, it has been obtained; and it is hereby gratefully acknowledged.

With the exception of the last two, which are more general in character than the rest, the papers are now chronologically arranged. They do not by any means exhaust the list of subjects originally drawn up by their writer for the kind of episodical treatment at which they aim; and should these first experiments find a public, it is not impossible that they may be followed by a further collection.

The first series of 'Eighteenth Century Vignettes' was succeeded in 1894 by a second, and in 1896 by a third series. The

second and third series were printed at the Chiswick Press; the first was printed from American plates. In issuing a second and revised edition of this first series, it has been thought desirable to print the book in England. It has also been extended by a further paper – 'At Leicester Fields.' This originally appeared in the *English Illustrated Magazine* for August, 1886, but has now been corrected to date and very materially enlarged.

I. EIGHTEENTH CENTURY VIGNETTES

ON the 19th of May, 1708, Her Majesty Queen Anne being then upon the throne of Great Britain and Ireland, a coach with two horses, gaudy rather than neat in its appointments, drew up at the door of my Lord Sunderland's Office in Whitehall. It contained a lady about thirty, of considerable personal attractions, and dressed richly in cinnamon satin. She was a brunette, with a rather high forehead, the height of which was ingeniously broken by two short locks upon the temples. Moreover, she had distinctly fine eyes, and a mouth which, in its normal state, must have been arch and pretty, but was now drawn down at the corners under the influence of some temporary irritation. As the coach stopped, a provincial-looking servant promptly alighted, pulled out from the box-seat a large case of the kind used for preserving the voluminous periwigs of the period, and subsequently extracted from the same receptacle a pair of shining new shoes with square toes and silver buckles. These, with the case, he carried carefully into the house, returning shortly afterwards. Then ensued what, upon the stage, would be called 'an interval' during which time the high forehead of the lady began to cloud visibly with impatience, and the corners of her mouth to grow more ominous. At length,

about twenty minutes later, came a sound of laughter and noisy voices; and by-and-by bustled out of the Cockpit portal a square-shouldered, square-faced man in a rich dress, which, like the coach, was a little showy. He wore a huge black full-bottomed periwig. Speaking with a marked Irish accent, he made profuse apologies to the occupant of the carriage – apologies which, as might be expected, were not well received. An expression of vexation came over his good-tempered face as he took his seat at the lady's side, and he lapsed for a few minutes into a moody silence. But before they had gone many yards, his dark, deep-set eyes began to twinkle once more as he looked about him. When they passed the Tilt-Yard a detachment of the Second Troop of Life Guards, magnificent in their laced red coats, jack boots, and white feathers, came pacing out on their black horses. They took their way towards Charing Cross, and for a short distance followed the same route as the chariot. The lady was loftily indifferent to their presence; and she was, besides, on the further side of the vehicle. But her companion manifestly recognized some old acquaintances among them, and was highly gratified at being recognized in his turn, although at the same time it was evident he was also a little apprehensive lest the 'Gentlemen of the Guard,' as they were called, should be needlessly demonstrative in their acknowledgment of his existence. After this, nothing more of moment occurred. Slowly mounting St. James's Street, the coach turned down Piccadilly, and, passing between the groups of lounging lackeys at the gate,

entered Hyde Park. Here, by the time it had once made the circuit of the Ring, the lady's equanimity was completely restored, and the gentleman was radiant. He was, in truth, to use his own words, 'no undelightful Companion.' He possessed an infinite fund of wit and humour; and his manner to women had a sincerity of deference which was not the prevailing characteristic of his age.

There is but slender invention in this little picture. The gentleman was Captain Steele, late of the Life Guards, the Coldstreams, and Lucas's regiment of foot, now Gazetteer, and Gentleman Waiter to Queen Anne's consort, Prince George of Denmark, and not yet 'Mr. Isaac Bickerstaff' of the immortal 'Tatler.' The lady was Mrs. Steele, *née* Miss Mary Scurlock, his 'Ruler' and 'absolute Governesse' (as he called her), to whom he had been married some eight months before. If you ask at the British Museum for the Steele manuscripts (Add. MSS. 5,145, A, B, and C), the courteous attendant will bring you, with its faded ink, dusky paper, and hasty scrawl, the very letter making arrangements for this meeting ('best Periwigg' and 'new Shoes' included), at the end of which the writer assures his 'dear Prue' (another pet name) that she is 'Vitall Life to YT Oblig'd Affectionate Husband & Humble Sernt Richd Steele.' There are many such in the quarto volume of which this forms part, written from all places, at all times, in all kinds of hands. They take all tones; they are passionate, tender, expostulatory, playful, dignified, lyric, didactic. It must be confessed that from a perusal of them one's feeling for the lady of the chariot is

not entirely unsympathetic. It can scarcely have been an ideal household, that 'third door right hand turning out of Jermyn Street,' to which so many of them are addressed; and Mrs. Steele must frequently have had to complain to her *confidante*, Mrs. (or Miss) Binns (a lady whom Steele is obviously anxious to propitiate), of the extraordinary irregularity of her restless lord and master. Now a friend from Barbados has stopped him on his way home, and he will come (he writes) 'within a Pint of Wine;' now it is Lord Sunderland who is keeping him indefinitely at the Council; now the siege of Lille and the proofs of the 'Gazette' will detain him until ten at night. Sometimes his vague 'West Indian business' (that is, his first wife's property) hurries him suddenly into the City; sometimes he is borne off to the Gentleman Ushers' table at St. James's. Sometimes, even, he stays out all night, as he had done not many days before the date of the above meeting, when he had written to beg that his dressing-gown, his slippers, and 'clean Linnen' might be sent to him at 'one Legg's,' a barber 'over against the Devill Tavern at Charing Crosse,' where he proposes to lie that night, chiefly, it has been conjectured from the context, in order to escape certain watchful 'shoulder-dabbers' who were hanging obstinately about his own mansion in St. James's. For – to tell the truth – he was generally hopelessly embarrassed, and scarcely ever without a lawsuit on his hands. He was not a bad man; he was not necessarily vicious or dissolute. But his habits were incurably generous, profuse, and improvident; and his sanguine Irish nature led him continually to

mistake his expectations for his income. Naturally, perhaps, his 'absolute Governesse' complained of an absolutism so strangely limited. If her affection for him was scarcely as ardent as his passion for her, it was still a genuine emotion. But to a coquette of some years' standing, and 'a cried-up beauty' (as Mrs. Manley calls her), the realities of her married life must have been a cruel disappointment; and she was not the woman to conceal it. 'I wish,' says her husband in one of his letters, 'I knew how to Court you into Good Humour, for Two or Three Quarrells more will dispatch me quite.' Of her replies we have no knowledge; but from scattered specimens of her style when angry, they must often have been exceptionally scornful and unconciliatory. On one occasion, where he addresses her as 'Madam,' and returns her note to her in order that she may see, upon second thoughts, the disrespectful manner in which she treats him, he is evidently deeply wounded. She has said that their dispute is far from being a trouble to her, and he rejoins that to him any disturbance between them is the greatest affliction imaginable. And then he goes on to expostulate, with more dignity than usual, against her unreasonable use of her prerogative. 'I Love you,' he says, 'better than the light of my Eyes, or the life-blood in my Heart but when I have lett you know that, you are also to understand that neither my sight shall be so far inchanted, or my affection so much master of me as to make me forgett our common Interest. To attend my businesse as I ought and improve my fortune it is necessary that my time and my Will should be under no direction

but my own.' Clearly his bosom's queen had been inquiring too closely into his goings and comings. It is a strange thing, he says, in another letter, that, because she is handsome, he must be always giving her an account of every trifle, and minute of his time. And again – 'Dear Prue, do not send after me, for I shall be ridiculous:' It had happened to him, no doubt. 'He is governed by his wife most abominably, as bad as Marlborough,' says another contemporary letter-writer. And we may fancy the blue eyes of Dr. Swift flashing unutterable scorn as he scribbles off this piece of intelligence to Stella and Mrs. Dingley.

In the letters which follow Steele's above-quoted expostulation, the embers of misunderstanding flame and fade, to flame and fade again. A word or two of kindness makes him rapturous; a harsh expression sinks him to despair. As time goes on, the letters grow fewer, and the writers grow more used to each other's ways. But to the last Steele's affectionate nature takes fire upon the least encouragement. Once, years afterwards, when Prue is in the country and he is in London, and she calls him 'Good Dick,' it throws him into such a transport that he declares he could forget his gout, and walk down to her at Wales. 'My dear little peevish, beautiful, wise Governess, God bless you,' the letter ends. In another he assures her that, lying in her place and on her pillow, he fell into tears from thinking that his 'charming little insolent might be then awake and in pain'-.with headache. She wants flattery, she says, and he flatters her. 'Her son,' he declares, 'is extremely pretty, and has his face sweetened with

something of the Venus his mother, which is no small delight to the Vulcan who begot him.' He assures her that, though she talks of the children, they are dear to him more because they are hers than because they are his own. [1]

And this reminds us that some of the best of his later letters are about his family. Once, at this time of their mother's absence in Wales, he says that he has invited his eldest daughter to dinner with one of her teachers, because she had represented to him 'in her pretty language that she seemed helpless and friendless, without anybody's taking notice of her at Christmas, when all the children but she and two more were with their relations.' So now they are in the room where he is writing. 'I told Betty,' he adds, 'I had writ to you; and she made me open the letter again, and give her humble duty to her mother, and desire to know when she shall have the honour to see her in town.' No doubt this was in strict accordance with the proprieties as practised at Mrs. Nazereau's polite academy in Chelsea; but somehow one suspects that 'Madam Betty' would scarcely have addressed the writer of the letter with the same boarding-school formality. 'Elsewhere the talk is all of Eugene, the eldest boy. 'Your son, at the present writing, is mighty well employed in tumbling on the floor of the room and sweeping the sand with a feather. He grows a most delightful child, and very full of play and spirit. He is also a very great scholar: he can read his Primer; and I have brought down my Virgil. He makes most shrewd remarks upon

[1] A few sentences in this paper are borrowed from the writer's 'Life of Steele,' 1886.

the pictures. We are very intimate friends and play-fellows.' Yes: decidedly Steele's children must have loved their clever, faulty, kindly father.

II. PRIOR'S 'KITTY.'

IN the year 1718, and presumably after Mr. Matthew Prior had already printed his tall and extremely miscellaneous *folio* of 'Poems on Several Occasions,' there was published separately a little *jeu d'esprit* by the same 'eminent Hand,' which has not been regarded as the least fortunate of his efforts. In its first fugitive form, now so rare as to be known only to a few highly-favoured collectors, it is a single page or leaf of eight quatrains; and of this there are two issues, both attributing the verses to Prior, both claiming to be authentic, both unauthorised. The earlier, which is dated, is headed 'Upon Lady *Katherine H – des* first appearing at the *Play-House* in *Drury-Lane*;' the other, 'from Curll's chaste press,' bears the title of 'The Female Phaeton,' by which the piece is now known. The person indicated was the second daughter of Henry Hyde, Earl of Clarendon and Rochester, and the grandchild of the great Lord Chancellor and historian of the Rebellion. As she was born in 1700, she must at this time have been eighteen. She was 'beautiful,' says the poet; 'she was wild as Colt untam'd;' she was, besides,

> 'Inflam'd with Rage at sad Restraint,
> Which wise Mamma ordain'd.'

Her elder sister, Jane – the 'blooming *Hide,* with Eyes so rare,'

of whom John Gay had sung in the 'Prologue' to 'The Shepherd's Week' – was already married to the Earl of Essex. Why should not She, too, be a Toast, and 'bring home Hearts by Dozens'?

'Dearest Mamma, for once let me,
Unchain'd, my Fortune try;
I'll have my Earl, as well as She,
Or know the Reason why.'

And so the stanzas, eternally human and therefore eternally modern, dance and sparkle to their natural ending:

'Fondness prevail'd, Mamma gave way;
Kitty, at Heart's Desire,
Obtains the Chariot for a Day,
And set the World on Fire.'

Apart from the reference to Drury Lane Theatre supplied by the title, there is no clue to the incident recorded. But two years after Prior wrote these playful verses, which were sent to the lady through Mr. Harcourt, Catherine Hyde verified her poet's words by securing a suitor of even higher rank than her sister's husband. In March, 1720, she married Charles Douglas, third Duke of Queensberry, an amiable and accomplished nobleman, who, it has been hinted, must sometimes have been considerably 'exercised' by the vagaries of the charming but impetuous 'child of Nature' whom he had selected for his helpmate. Indeed,

despite her ability, many of her less sympathetic contemporaries did not scruple to suggest that her Grace's eccentricities almost amounted to a touch of insanity. Bolingbroke called her '*Sa Singularité*;' Walpole spoke of her roundly as 'an out-pensioner of Bedlam.' But neither the Abbot of Strawberry nor Pope's 'guide, philosopher, and friend' had any right to set up for a Forbes-Winslow or a Brouardel; and there is in reality little more in what is related of her than might be expected of one who, at once a spoiled child, a beauty, and a woman of parts, deliberately revolted against the tyrannous conventionalities of her time. To the last she persistently declined, as she told Swift, to 'cut and curl her hair like a sheep's head,' in accordance with the reigning fashion; and she affected in her dress a simplicity and youthfulness which nothing but the good looks she contrived to retain so long, could possibly have justified. She had a fancy for idyllic travesties, appearing now as a shepherdess, now as a peasant, now as a milkmaid. [2]

Upon one occasion she scandalized the court-usher soul of Horace Walpole by masquerading at St. James's in a costume of red flannel. As a rule, she carried her innovations triumphantly; but now and then she was forced to yield to a will more imperative than her own. Once the fantastic old King of Rath tore off her favourite white apron in the Pump Room, flinging it contemptuously among the 'waiting gentlewomen' in the hinder

[2] In this last character Charles Jervas painted her. The picture is in the National Portrait Gallery. She has hazel eyes and dark-brown hair.

benches. 'None but abigails wore white aprons,' he declared; and the grande dame *de par la monde* made a virtue of necessity, and submitted. In her own entertainments, however, she seems to have been as despotic as Nash, insisting that people should come early and leave early, and declining to provide the profuse refreshments then expected. High-spirited and whimsical no doubt she was; but the stories told of her are probably exaggerated. Those who praise her, praise her unreservedly. Her character was unblemished. She was truthful; she was honest; she was not a flatterer. And she was certainly fearless, for she dared, even in the rudimentary epoch of the two-pronged fork, to rally the terrible Dean of St. Patrick's for that deplorable habit – so justly deprecated by the Historian of Snobs – of putting his knife in his mouth. When she saw any one 'administer the cold steel,' as Thackeray calls it, she would shriek out in affected terror lest they should do themselves a mischief. She seems, although they never really met after her girlhood, to have wholly subjugated Swift, whose final tone to her comes perilously close to that fulsome adulation which, in others, stirred his fiercest scorn. 'I will excuse your blots upon paper,' he says, writing to her after Gay death, 'because they are the only blots you ever did, or ever will make, in the whole course of your life.' Further on he refers 'to the universal, almost idolatrous esteem you have forced from every person in two kingdoms, who have the least regard for virtue.' It is her peculiar art, he tells her again, to bribe 'all wise and good men to be her flatterers.' Swift was no paragon; but the praise of

Swift outweighs the sneers of Walpole.

She was the friend of men of letters – this capricious great lady, and they have judged her best. To Swift in particular it was an attraction that she loved and befriended his favourite Gay. The earlier part of the brief correspondence from which the above quotation is borrowed, shows the Duchess in her most amiable light; and it was with Gay that it originated. From the days of her marriage she had protected and petted that fat and feckless fabulist; she had championed him in the matter of his second ballad-opera in such a way as to procure her own exile from Court; and at the time she began to write to Swift, Gay was domiciled at the Duke's country house at Ambresbury, or Amesbury, near Salisbury, in Wiltshire. Gay begins by sending Swift the Duchess's 'services,' and by wishing on his own account that Swift could come to England, – could come to Amesbury. Swift replies with conventional acknowledgment of the civility of the lady, whom he had not seen since she was a girl. He hears an ill thing of her, he says' – that she is *matre pulchrâ filia pulchrior*, and he would be angry she should excel her mother (Jane Leveson Gower), who, of old, had long been his 'principal goddess.' In the letter that succeeds, the Duchess herself adds a postscript to confirm Gay's invitation. 'I would fain have you come,' she writes. 'I can't say you'll be welcome; for I don't know you, and perhaps I shall not like you; but if I do not (unless you are a very vain person), you shall know my thoughts as soon as I do myself.' No mode of address could have suited Swift's humour better; and

part of his next epistle to Gay replies to her challenge in the true Swiftian style. He begins very low down on the page – 'as a mark of respect, like receiving her Grace at the bottom of the stairs.' He goes on with a protest for form's sake against the imperious manner of her advances; but he argues ingeniously that she must like him, since they are both unpopular with the Queen. If he comes, 'he will,' he adds, 'out of fear and prudence, appear as vain as he can, that he may not know her thoughts of him.' His closing sentences are in Malvolio's manner. 'This is your own direction, but it was needless. For Diogenes himself would be vain, to have received the honour of being one moment of his life in the thoughts of your grace.'

After this, *les épées s'engagent*. As to the correspondence that ensued, opinions differ widely. Warton discovered 'exquisite humour and pleasantry' in Swift's 'affected bluntness,' and compares him to Voiture, – to Waller writing to Sacharissa on her marriage. Later editors are less enthusiastic, regarding the whole series of letters as 'empty, laboured, and childish on both sides.' Each of these verdicts is extreme. Swift tempering candour by compliment, is an unusual but not an impossible spectacle; while the Duchess writes exactly as one would expect her to write with Swift's fast friend at her elbow. Gay, knowing that she will probably follow him, warns Swift playfully that she has her antipathies, – that she likes her own way, – that she is very frank, and that in any dispute he must be on her side. Thereupon her Grace takes up the pen herself:

'Write I must, particularly now, as I have an opportunity to indulge my predominant passion of contradiction. I do, in the first place, contradict most things Mr. *Gay* says of me, to deter you from coming here; which if you ever do, I hereby assure you, that, unless I like my own way better, you shall have yours; and in all disputes you shall convince me if you can. But, by what I see of you, this is not a misfortune, that will always happen; for I find you are a great mistaker. For example, you take prudence for imperiousness:'tis from this first that I determined not to like one, who is too giddy-headed for me to be certain whether or no I shall ever be acquainted with [him]. I have known people take great delight in building castles in the air; but I should choose to build friends upon a more solid foundation. I would fain know you; for I often hear more good likable things [of you] than 'tis possible any one can deserve. Pray, come, that I may find out something wrong; for I, and I believe most women, have an inconceivable pleasure to find out any faults, except their own. Mr. *Cibber* is made poet laureate. [3] I am, Sir, as much your humble servant as I can be to any person I don't know.

'C. Q.

'P.S. Mr. *Gay* is very peevish that I spell and write ill; but I don't care: for neither the pen nor I can do better. Besides, I think you have flattered me, and such people ought to be put to trouble.'

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[3] 'Harmonious Cibber entertainsThe Court with annual Birth-day Strains;Whence Gay was banish'd in Disgrace.'Swift, On Poetry: a Rhapsody, 1733.

That this fashion of writing, so new to him, should not have captivated Swift, is impossible. He could not accept the invitation; but at least he could prolong the correspondence. In his next letter he enters upon preliminaries. He is old, dull, peevish, perverse, morose. Has she a clear voice? – and will she let him sit at her left hand, for his right ear is the better? Can the parson of the parish play at backgammon, and hold his tongue? Has she a good nurse among her women, in case he should fancy himself sick? How long will she maintain him and his equipage if he comes? A week or two later, in the form of another postscript to Gay, follows the reply of the Duchess:

'It was Mr. *Gay's* fault that I did not write sooner; which if I had, I should hope you would have been here by this time; for I have to tell you, all your articles are agreed to; and that I only love my own way, when I meet not with others whose ways I like better. I am in great hopes that I shall approve of yours; for to tell you the truth, I am at present a little tired of my own. I have not a clear or distinct voice, except when I am angry; but I am a very good nurse, when people don't fancy themselves sick. Mr. *Gay* knows this; and he knows too how to play at backgammon. Whether the parson of the parish can, I know not; but if he cannot hold his tongue, I can. Pray set out the first fair wind and stay with us as long as ever you please. I cannot name my fixed time, that I shall like to maintain you and your equipage; but if I don't happen to like you, I know I can so far govern my temper as to endure you for about five days. So come away directly; at all

hazards you'd be allowed a good breathing time. I shall make no sort of respectful conclusions; for till I know you, I cannot tell what I am to you.'

And so the correspondence, always conducted on the one side by Gay and his kind protectress, or Gay and the Duke, protracts itself until arrives to Swift that fatal missive from Pope and Arbuthnot announcing Gay's sudden death, – a missive which, overmastered by a foreboding of its contents, he kept unopened for days. At a later date some further communications followed between Swift and the Duchess. But he liked best her postscripts to his dead friend's letters. 'They made up,' he told Pope unaffectedly, 'a great part of the little happiness I could have here.'

Swift survived Gay for nearly fifteen years, and the Duchess lived far into the reign of George the Third. In the changing procession of Walpole's pages one gets glimpses of her from time to time, generally emphasized by some malicious anecdote or epithet. At the coronation she returned to Court, appearing with perfectly white hair. Yet, four years before her death, Walpole says of her that (by twilight) you would sooner 'take her for a young beauty of an old-fashioned century than for an antiquated goddess of this age.' Indeed her all-conquering charms seduced him into panegyric; and one day in 1771, she found these verses on her toilet-table, wrung from her most persistent detractor:

'To many a Kitty, Love his car

Will for a day engage,
But Prior's Kitty, ever fair,
Obtained it for an age!'

She was then seventy-one. In later life she was often at her seat of Drumlanrig, in Dumfriesshire (where she was visited by Mr. Matthew Bramble and his party [4]); and Scott in his 'Journal,' under date of August, 1826, speaks of the 'Walk' by the river Nith which she had formed, and which still went by her name. Her peculiarities, over which her friend Mrs. Delany sighs plaintively, did not abate with age; but her kind heart remained. She died in Savile Row in 1777, of a surfeit of cherries, and was buried at Durrisdeer.

[4] Expedition of Humphrey Clinker' (Letter to Dr. Lewis, September 15).

III. SPENCE'S 'ANECDOTES.'

WHEN, in the year 1741, after his quarrel with Gray, Horace Walpole lay sick of a quinsy at Reggio, the shearing of his thin-spun life was only postponed by the opportune intervention of a passing acquaintance. The Rev. Joseph Spence, Fellow of New College, Oxford, and Professor of Poetry to that University, then travelling in Italy as Governor to Henry Clinton, Earl of Lincoln, promptly arrived to his aid, summoned Dr. Cocchi posthaste from Florence, and thus became instrumental in enabling the Prince of Letter-Writers to expand the thirty or forty epistles he had already produced into that magnificent correspondence which, incomplete even now, [5] fills no fewer than nine closely printed volumes.

Spence, to whom all Walpole's admirers owe a lasting debt of gratitude, was one of the fortunate men of a fortunate literary age. In 1726 he had published a 'genteel' critique of Pope's 'Odyssey,' conspicuous for its courteous mingling of praise and blame, and not the less grateful to the person criticised because – as Bennot Langton said, and as good luck would have it – ten out of the twelve objections fell, upon the labours of Pope's luckless coadjutors, Broome and Fenton. The book made Pope his friend, and himself Professor of Poetry, in which capacity he patronised

[5] For example, a number of new letters are included in vol. iii. of the privately-printed 'Letters and Journals of Lady Mary Coke,' 1889-92.

Thomson, and protected Queen Caroline's thresher-laureate, Stephen Duck. During the continental tours which he undertook in 1730 and 1737, and in that above referred to, he collected the material for his 'Polymetis,' a tall *folio* on classical mythology, the earlier editions of which are now chiefly sought after for their irreverent vignette of Dr. Cooke, propositor of Eton, in the disguise of 'an ass's nowl.' Spence continued to dally lightly with letters, editing Sackville's 'Gorboduc,' annotating Virgil, writing a life of the blind poet Blacklock, and comparing (after the manner of Plutarch), for Walpole's private press at Strawberry, Mr. Robert Hill, the 'learned tailor' of Buckingham, with that Florentine *helluo librorum*, Signor Antonio Magliabecchi. He lived the mildly studious life of a quiet, easy-going clergyman of the eighteenth century, nursing a widowed mother like Pope, and declining to disturb the placid ripple of his days by the 'violent delights' of matrimony. He is 'the completest scholar,' 'the sweetest tempered gentleman breathing,' cries his enthusiastic friend, Mr. Christopher Pitt, himself a virtuoso and a translator of Homer. He is 'extremely' polite, friendly, cheerful, and master of an infinite fund of subjects for agreeable conversation,' says Mr. Shenstone of the Leasowes. 'He was a good-natured, harmless little soul, but more like a silver penny than a genius,' says ungrateful Mr. Walpole. 'He was a poor creature, though a very worthy man,' says clever Mr. Cambridge of the 'World' and the 'Scribleriad.' To strike an average between these varying estimates is not a difficult task. It gives us a character amiable

rather than strong, finical rather than earnest, well-informed and ingenious rather than positively learned. For the rest, 'Polymetis' has been supplanted by Lempriere, and is as dead as Stephen Duck; and its author now lives mainly by the 'priefs' which, like Sir Hugh Evans, he made in his notebook, – in other words, by the Anecdotes of the Literary Men of his age, which, when occasion offered, he jotted down from the conversation of Pope, Young, Dean Lockier, and other notabilities into whose company he came from time to time.

The story of Spence's 'Anecdotes' is a chequered one. At their author's death they were still in manuscript, though their existence was an open secret. Joseph Warton had handselled them for his 'Essay on Pope;' and Warburton had used them for Ruffhead's 'Life.' When Spence died in 1768, it was discovered that he had himself intended to print them, – that he had, in fact, conditionally sold a selection of them to Robert Dodsley, the bookseller (whom he had formerly befriended), for a hundred pounds. But before publication was finally arranged both Spence and Robert Dodsley died. Spence's executors – Bishop Lowth, Dr. Ridley, and Mr. Rolle – thought suppression for a time desirable; and the surviving Dodsley, James, although, says Joseph Warton, 'he probably would have gained £400 or £500 by it,' was easily prevailed upon, out of regard for Spence, to relinquish the bargain. The manuscript selection was then presented by the executors to Spence's old pupil, Lord Lincoln, who had become Duke of Newcastle, while

the original 'Anecdotes,' and a fair copy, remained in Bishop Lowth's possession. The Newcastle MS. was lent to Johnson, who employed it for his 'Lives of the Poets,' giving great offence to the Duke by acknowledging the loan without mentioning the name of the lender; and Malone had access to it for his Dryden, at the same time compiling from it a smaller selection, which he annotated briefly. By a series of circumstances too lengthy to detail, this last, some years after Malone's death, passed into the hands of Mr. John Murray, who published it in 1820. In the same year, and, by a curious coincidence, upon the same day, appeared another edition based upon the Lowth papers, which had also found their way into other hands. This was prefaced and annotated by Mr. S. W. Singer, and a second edition of it was issued in 1858 by J. R. Smith. Beyond these three editions of the 'Anecdotes,' there has been no other reprint but the excellent little compilation in the 'Camelot' series which the late Mr. John Underhill put forth in 1890.

As will be gathered from the above, Spence's own selection is still unpublished, and is supposed to remain in the possession of the Newcastle family. But as Malone extracted all of it that he thought worth keeping, and as Singer printed the materials on which it was based, it is not likely that its publication now, even if it were found to be practicable, would be of material interest, except to show what Spence personally regarded as deserving of preservation. With respect to the 'Anecdotes' themselves, there can be little doubt that, whatever their subsequent extension may

have been, they originated in Spence's acquaintanceship with Pope; and that their first purpose was the bringing together of such dispersed data as might serve for the basis of his biography. (So much, in fact, Spence told Warburton when they were returning from Twickenham after Pope's death; and then, like the courteous, amiable 'silver penny' that he was, surrendered all his memoranda to his more pretentious companion, in whose subsequent 'Life,' for Ruffhead's 'Life of Pope' is really Warburton's, nearly every anecdote of value is derived from Spence.) From collecting Popiana to collecting *ana* of Pope's contemporaries, would be a natural step; and it would be but a step farther to add, from time to time, such supplementary notes or *impressions de voyage* as presented themselves, even if they had no special connection with the primary matter, which is Pope and Pope's doings. Indeed, in Singer's opinion, Spence's 'Anecdotes' already contain, not only 'a complete though brief autobiography' of the poet, but also 'the most exact record of his opinions on important topics,' – a record which is 'probably the more genuine and undisguised, because not premeditated, but elicited by the impulse of the moment.' This, as far as it relates to Pope's views on abstract literary questions, is no doubt true; but 'genuine,' 'undisguised,' and 'unpremeditated' are scarcely the epithets which modern criticism has taught us to apply to some, at least, of Pope's utterances concerning his contemporaries; and in these respects we are more exactly informed than the Oxford Professor of Poetry. Take, for instance, the well-known

Wycherley correspondence. 'People have pitied you extremely,' says sympathetic Mr. Spence, who professes to speak *verbatim*, 'on reading your letters to Wycherley [i.e., the correspondence which Pope had printed]; surely 'twas a very difficult thing for you to keep well with him!' And thereupon Mr. Pope, of Twickenham and Parnassus, replies that 'it was the most difficult thing in the world;' that he was 'extremely plagued up and down, for almost two years,' with Wycherley's verses; that Wycherley was really angry at having them so much corrected; that his memory was entirely gone, – and so forth. [6] All of which Mr. Spence confidingly transfers to his tablets. But thanks to the publication by Mr. Courthope in 1889, from the manuscripts at Longleat, of most of Wycherley's autograph letters, we now know that the correspondence to which Spence referred had been considerably 'edited' by Pope with the view of misrepresenting his dealings with Wycherley; and there is even something more than a suspicion that he actually concocted those of Wycherley's letters for which there are no equivalent vouchers in the Marquis of Bath's collection.

In any case, the real documents show clearly that, instead of resenting the amendments and alterations of his 'Deare Little Infallible,' as he calls him, the old dramatist received them with effusive gratitude; and, far from reproaching the poet for

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[6] He did not tell Spence (as he might have done) that his own 'Damn with faint praise' was borrowed from the man he was decrying. 'And with faint praises one another damn,' is a line in one of Wycherley's prologues.

neglecting to visit him (which Pope implied), constantly delayed or postponed his own visits to Pope at Binfield; – in short, did, in reality, just the very reverse of what he is represented as doing in Pope's garbled correspondence. So that, in these worshipful *communiqués* to Spence, Pope must simply have been playing at that eighteenth-century pastime to which Swift refers in the 'Polite Conversation' as 'Selling a Bargain.'

In Pope's life, it is to be feared, there were not a few of these equivocal mercantile transactions. He certainly imposed on Spence's credulity when he told him that 'there was a design whieh does not generally appear,' in other words, a cryptic significance, in his correspondence with Henry Cromwell. And he also, with equal certainty, disposed of 'a great Pennyworth' (in the current phrase) when he gave him the – from his own point of view – eminently plausible account of the circumstances which led to the notorious character of 'Atti-cus.' Whether Spence, who could not be said to be unwarned, since he records Addison's caution to Lady Mary against Pope's 'devilish tricks,' had any lurking suspicion that Pope was not to be relied upon, does not appear. But it is obvious that, without Spence's 'Anecdotes,' Pope's biographers would have played but a sorry figure. From Spence it is that we get the best account of Pope's precocious early years and studies; of his boyish epic of Alcander, Prince of Rhodes, with its under-water scene, and its four books of one thousand lines; of the manner of his translation of Homer and his plan for the 'Essay on Man;' and of a number of

facts concerning the trustworthiness of which there can be no reasonable doubt. Nor can there be any doubt as to the bulk of his purely critical utterances. Many of these, and especially such as deal with individual authors, are now become trite and faded. However novel may have been the announcement under George the Second, we now learn without a shock of surprise that Chaucer is an unequalled taleteller, that Bacon was a great genius, that Milton's style is exotic. But, upon his own craft, Pope's axioms are still sometimes worth hearing. 'A poem on a slight subject,' he says, 'requires the greater care to make it considerable enough to be read.' 'After writing a poem one should correct it all over, with one single view at a time. Thus, for language: if an elegy, "These lines are very good, but are they not of too heroical a strain?" and so *vice versa*' 'There is nothing so foolish as to pretend to be sure of knowing a great writer by his style.' '*Nil admirari* is as true in relation to our opinions of authors as it is in morality; and one may say, *O, admiratores, servum pecus!* fully as justly as *O, Imitator es!*' 'The great secret how to write well is to know thoroughly what one writes about, and not to be affected.' This last, however, is scarcely more than an Horatian commonplace.

With the aid of Spence's 'Anecdotes' we gain admission to the little villa by the Thames where, during the spring of 1744, wasted by an intolerable asthma, but waiting serenely for the end, Pope lay sinking slowly. Many of his sayings, and the sayings of those who visited his sick-room, have their only chronicle in

this collection. About three weeks before his death, he printed his '*Ethic Epistles,*' copies of which he gave away to different persons. 'Here am I, like Socrates,' he told Spence, 'distributing my morality to my friends, just as I am dying.' On Sunday, the 6th of May, he lost his mind for several hours, – a circumstance which sets him wondering 'that there should be such a thing as human vanity.' Already his spirit was escaping fitfully to the Unknown. There are false colours on the objects about him; he looks at everything 'as through a curtain;' he sees 'a vision.' Most of all he suffers from his inability to think. But the old love of letters still survives; he quotes his own verses; and when in his waking moments Spence reads to him the 'Daphnis and Chloe' of Longus, he marvels how the infected mind of the Regent Orleans can have relished so innocent a book. As to his condition he has no illusions. On the 15th, after having been visited by Thompson the quack, who had been treating him (as Ward treated Fielding) for dropsy, and professed to find him better, he described himself to Lyttelton as 'dying of a hundred good symptoms!' [7]

'On every catching and recovery of his mind,' Spence tells us, 'he was always saying something kindly either of his present or his absent friends' – 'as if his humanity had outlived his understanding.' Many of the well-known figures of the day still came and went about his bedside – Bolingbroke from Battersea,

[7] This must have been a commonplace. 'Like the sick man, we are just expiring with all sorts of good symptoms,' says Swift, in the 'Conduct of the Allies,' 1711.

tearful and melancholy, full-blown Warburton, Lyttelton above-mentioned, Marchmont, blue-eyed Martha Blount; and it was 'very observable' how the entry of the lady seemed to give him temporary strength, or a new turn of spirits. To the last he continued to struggle manfully with his malady. On the 27th, to the dismay of his friends, he had himself brought down to the room where they were at dinner; on the 28th his sedan chair was carried for three hours into the garden he loved so well, then filled with the blossoms of May and smelling of the coming summer. On the 29th he took the air in Bushey Park, and a little later in the day received the sacrament, flinging himself fervently out of bed to receive it on his knees. 'There is nothing that is meritorious, he said afterwards, 'but virtue and friendship, and indeed friendship itself is only a part of virtue.' On the next day, the 30th of May, 1774, he died. 'They did not know the exact time,' writes the faithful friend to whom we owe so many of these 'trivial, fond records,' – 'for his departure was so easy that it was imperceptible even to the standers-by.'

IV. CAPTAIN CORAM'S CHARITY

AMONG a ragged regiment of books, very dear to their owner, but in whose dilapidated company no reputable volume would greatly care to travel through Coventry, is a sheepskin-clad tract entitled 'Mémoires Relating to the State of the Royal Navy of England, For Ten Years, Determin'd December 1688.' It dates from those antiquated days when even statistics had their air of scholarship and their motto from 'Tully' or 'the Antients' (*Quid Didcius Otio Litterato?*– it is in this case); and the year of issue is 1690. The name of the author does not appear, but his portrait by Kneller does; and he was none other than the diarist Samuel Pepys, sometime Secretary to the Admiralty under the second Charles and his successor. [8]

In itself the little volume is an extremely instructive one, as much from the light it throws upon the prominent part played by its writer in the reconstruction of the Caroline navy, as from its exposure of the lamentable mismanagement which permitted toad-stools as big as Mr. Secretary's fists to flourish freely in the ill-ventilated holds of his Majesty's ships-of-war. But the special attraction of the particular copy to which we are referring lies in certain faded inscriptions which it contains. On March 14, 1724, it was presented by one 'C. Jackson' to 'Tho. Coram,' by whom

[8] The copy hero described also contains – but apparently only inserted by a former owner – the scroll book-plate of Pepys.

in turn it was transferred to a Mr. Mills, being accompanied by a holograph note which is pasted at the end: 'To Mr Mills These Worthy Sir I happend to find among my few Books, Mr Pepys, his mémoires [there has evidently been a struggle over the spelling of the name], wch I thought might be acceptable to you & therefore pray you to accept of it. I am wth much Respect Sir your most humble Scrfc Thomas Coram. June 10th, 1746.' It is not a lengthy document, but, with its unaffected wording and its simple reference to 'my few Books,' it gives a pleasant impression of the brave old mariner to whom, even at the present day, so many hapless mortals owe their all; and whose ruddy, kindly face, with its curling white hair, still beams on us from Hogarth's canvas at the Foundling.

Captain Coram must have been seventy-eight years old when he wrote the above letter, for he had been born, at Lyme Regis in Dorsetshire, as far back as 1668. Of his boyhood nothing is known; but in 1694 he was working as a shipwright at Taunton, Massachusetts. His benevolent instincts seem to have developed early, for in December, 1703, he conveyed to the Taunton authorities some fifty-nine acres of land as the site for a church or schoolhouse.

In the deed of gift he is described as 'of Boston, in New England, sometimes residing in Taunton, in the County of Bristol, Shipwright.' He also gave a library to Taunton; and, from the fact that the Common Prayer Book used in the church of that town was presented to him for the purpose by Mr. Speaker

Onslow, must have been successful in enlisting in his good offices the sympathies of others. In course of time he became master of a ship; and, in 1719, a glimpse of his life, of which there are scant details, shows him being plundered and maltreated by wreckers at Cuxhaven, while a passenger on a vessel called the 'Sea Flower,' upon which occasion the affidavit describes him as 'of London, Mariner and Shipwright.' At this date he was engaged in the supply of stores to the navy. He must have prospered fairly in his calling, for he soon afterwards retired from a sea-faring fife in order to live upon his means, and occupy himself entirely with charitable objects. In the Plantations, as they were then called, he took great interest; being notably active as regards the colonization of Georgia and the improvement of the Nova Scotian cod fisheries. Lord Walpole of Wolterton (Horace Walpole's uncle), who had met him, testified warmly to his honesty, his disinterestedness, and his knowledge of his subject. Neither an educated nor a polished man (and not always a judicious one), he was indefatigable in the pursuit of his purpose, and his singleminded philanthropy was beyond the shadow of a doubt. 'His arguments,' said his intimate friend Dr. Brocklesby, 'were nervous, though not nice – founded commonly upon facts, and the consequences that he drew, so closely connected with them, as to need no further proof than a fair explanation. When once he made an impression, he took care it should not wear out; for he enforced it continually by the most pathetic remonstrances. In short, his logic was plain sense; his eloquence, the natural

language of the heart.'

His crowning enterprise was the obtaining of a charter for the establishment of the Foundling Hospital. Going to and fro at Rotherhithe, where in his latter days he lived, he was constantly coming upon half-clad infants, 'sometimes alive, sometimes dead, and sometimes dying,' who had been abandoned by their parents to the mercy of the streets; and he determined to devote his energies to the procuring of a public institution in which they might find an asylum. For seventeen years, with an unconquerable tenacity, and in the face of the most obstinate obstruction, apathy, and even contempt, he continued to urge his suit upon the public, being at last rewarded by a Royal charter and the subscription of sufficient funds to commence operations. An estate of fifty-six acres was bought in Lamb's Conduit Fields for £3,500; and the building of the Hospital was begun from the plans of Theodore Jacobsen. Among its early Governors were many contemporary artists who contributed freely to its adornment, thereby, according to the received tradition, sowing the seed of the existing Royal Academy. Handel, too, was one of its noblest benefactors. For several years he regularly superintended an annual performance of the 'Messiah' in the Chapel (an act which produced no less than £7,000 to the institution), and he also presented it with an organ. Having opened informally in 1741 at a house in Hatton Garden, the Governors moved into the new building at the completion of the west wing in 1745. But already their good offices had begun

to be abused. Consigning children to the Foundling was too convenient a way of disposing of them; and, even in the Hatton Garden period, the supply had been drawn, not from London alone, but from all parts of the Kingdom. It became a lucrative trade to convey infants from remote country places to the undiscriminating care of the Charity. Once a waggoner brought eight to town, seven of whom were dead when they reached their destination. On another occasion a man with five in baskets got drunk on the road, and three of his charges were suffocated. The inevitable outcome of this was that the Governors speedily discovered they were admitting far more inmates than they could possibly afford to maintain. They accordingly applied to Parliament, who voted them £10,000, but at the same time crippled them with the obligation to receive all comers. A basket was forthwith hung at the gate, with the result that on the first day of its appearance, no less than 117 infants were successively deposited in it. That this extraordinary development of the intentions of the projectors could continue to work satisfactorily was of course impossible, and great mortality ensued.

As time went on, however, a wise restriction prevailed; and the Hospital now exists solely for those unmarried mothers whose previous character has been good, and whose desire to reform is believed to be sincere. Fortunately, long before the era of what one of the accounts calls its 'frightful efflorescence' – an efflorescence which, moreover, could never have occurred under Captain Coram's original conditions – its benevolent founder had

been laid to rest in its precincts. After his wife's death he fell into difficulties, and subscriptions were collected for his benefit. When this was broken to the old man – too modest himself to plead his own cause, and too proud to parade his necessity – he made, according to Hawkins, the following memorable answer to Dr. Brocklesby:

'I have not wasted the little wealth of which I was formerly possessed in self-indulgence, or vain expenses, and am not ashamed to confess, that in this my old age I am poor.'

Although the Sunday services are still well attended, Captain Coram's Charity is no longer the 'fashionable morning lounge' it was in the Georgian era, when, we are told, the grounds were crowded daily with brocaded silks, gold-headed canes, and three-cornered hats of the orthodox Egham, Staines and Windsor pattern. [9]

No members of the Royal Academy now assemble periodically round the historical blue dragon punch-bowl, still religiously preserved, over which Hogarth and Lambert and Highmore and the other pictorial patrons of a place must often have chirruped 'Life a Bubble,' or 'Drink and Agree,' at their annual dinners; neither is there of our day any munificent *maestro* like Handel to present the institution with a new organ or the original score of an oratorio. But if you enter to the left of

[9] Egham, Staines, and Windsor form a triangle. According to J. T. Smith, Alderman Boydell was one of the last who wore a hat of this type ('Book for a Rainy Day,' 1861, p. 221).

Mr. Calder Marshall's statue at the gate in Guildford Street, you shall still find the enclosure dotted with red-coated boys playing at cricket, and with girls in white caps; and in the quiet, unpretentious building itself are many time-honoured relics of its past. Here, for example, is one of Hogarth's contributions to his friend's enterprise, the 'March of the Guards towards Scotland, in the year 1745,' commonly called the 'March to Finchley' – that famous performance for which King George the Second of irate memory said he ought to be 'bicketed,' and which the artist, in a rage, forthwith dedicated to the King of *Prusia*, with one 's.' A century and a half has passed since it was executed, but it is still in excellent preservation, having of late years, for greater precaution, been placed under glass. [10]

Here, too, is the already mentioned full-length of the founder – a portrait of the masterly qualities and superb colouring of which neither McArdell's mezzotint nor Nutter's stipple gives any adequate idea. Here, again, is one of Hogarth's 'failures,' the 'Moses Brought to Pharaoh's Daughter,' which is not so great a failure after all. Certainly it compares favourably with the 'Finding of Moses' by the professed history-painter, Frank Hayman, which hangs hard by, and is an utterly bald and lifeless

[10] It was disposed of in 1750 by raffle or lottery. 'Yesterday,' – says the 'General Advertiser' for May 1 in that year, – 'Mr. Hogarth's subscription was closed. 1843 chances being subscrib'd for, Mr Hogarth gave the remaining 107 chances to the Foundling Hospital. At two o'clock the Box was opened, and the fortunate chance was No. 1941, which belongs to the said Hospital; and the same night Mr Hogarth delivered the Picture to the Governors.'

production. On the contrary, in Hogarth's picture, the expression in the eyes of the mother, which linger on the child as her hand mechanically receives the money, is one of those touches which make the whole world kin. Among the circular paintings of similar charities is a charming little Gainsborough of the Charterhouse, while the 'Foundling' and 'St. George's Hospital' are from the brush of Richard Wilson.

There is a dignified portrait of Handel by Kneller, which makes one wonder how the caricaturists could ever have distorted him into the 'Charming Brute;' and also a bust by Roubiliac, being the original model for the statues in Westminster Abbey and Old Vauxhall Gardens. There are autographs of Hogarth and Coram and John Wilkes the demagogue; there is a copy of his 'Christmas Stories' presented by the author, Charles Dickens; there is a case in one of the windows full of the queer, forlorn 'marks or tokens' which, in the basket days, were found attached to its helpless inmates – ivory fish, silver coins of Queen Anne or James, scraps of paper with doggerel rhymes, lockets, lottery tickets, and the like. As you pass from the contemplation of these things – a contemplation not without its touch of pathos – you peep into the church, mentally filling the empty benches in the organ loft with the singing faces and pure voices of the childish choristers, and you remember that here Benjamin West painted the altar-piece, and here Laurence Sterne preached. Once more in Guildford Street, you turn instinctively towards another thoroughfare, where lived a later writer who must often

have made the pilgrimage you have just accomplished. For at No. 13 Great Coram Street was the home of William Makepeace Thackeray, and from the shadow of the Foundling, in July, 1840, he sent forth his 'Paris Sketch Book.' When, seven years later, he was writing his greatest novel, Captain Coram's Charity still lingered in his memory. It is on the wall of its church that old Mr. Osborne, of 'Vanity Fair' and Russell Square, erects his pompous tablet to his dead son: it is in the same building that, sitting 'in a place whence she could see the head of the boy under his father's tombstone,' poor Emmy feasts her hungry maternal eyes on unconscious little Georgy.

V. 'THE FEMALE QUIXOTE.'

ONE evening in the spring of the year 1751, the famous St. Dunstan, or Devil Tavern, by Temple Bar, – over whose Apollo Chamber you might still read the rhymed 'Welcome' of Ben Jonson; whence Steele had scrawled hasty excuses to 'Prue' in Bury Street; and where Garth and Swift and Addison had often dined together, – was the scene of a remarkable literary celebration. A young married lady, not then so well-known as she afterwards became, had written a novel called the 'Life of Harriot Stuart,' which was either just published or upon the point of issuing from the press. It was her first effort in fiction; and, probably through William Strahan the printer, one of whose *employés* she married, she had sought and obtained the acquaintance of Samuel Johnson. The great man thought very highly of her abilities: so much so, that he proposed to his colleagues at the Ivy Lane Club (the predecessor of the more illustrious Literary Club) to commemorate the birth of the book by an 'all-night sitting.' Pompous Mr. Hawkins, who tells the story, says that the guests, to the number of near twenty, including Mrs. Lenox (for that was the lady's name), her husband, and a female acquaintance, assembled at the Devil at about eight o'clock in the evening. The supper is characterised as 'elegant,' a prominent feature in it being a 'magnificent hot apple-pye,' which, because, forsooth (the 'forsooth' is Hawkins's),

Mrs. Lenox was also a minor poet, her literary foster-father had caused to be stuck with bay-leaves. Besides this, after invoking the Muses by certain rites of his own invention, which should have been impressive, but are not described, Johnson 'encircled her brows' with a crown of laurel specially prepared by himself. These ceremonies completed, the company began to spend the evening 'in pleasant conversation, and harmless mirth, intermingled at different periods with the refreshments of coffee and tea.' But there must have been stronger potations as well, since the narrator, Hawkins, who had a 'raging tooth,' and is therefore excusably inexplicit, speaks of the desertion by some of those present of 'the colours of Bacchus;' and he expressly mentions the fact that Johnson, whose face, at five o'clock, 'shone with meridian splendour,' had confined himself exclusively to lemonade. By daybreak, the 'harmless mirth' was beginning to be intermingled with slumber, from which those who succumbed were only rallied with difficulty by a fresh relay of coffee. At length, when St. Dunstan's Clock was nearing eight, after waiting two hours for an attendant sufficiently wakeful to compile the bill, the company dispersed. Their symposium had been Platonic in its innocence; but to Hawkins, demoralised by toothache, and sanctimonious by temperament, their issue into the morning light of Fleet Street had all the aspect, and something of the remorse of a tardily-terminated debauch. Before he could mentally disinfect himself, he was obliged to take a turn or two in the Temple, and breakfast respectably at a

coffee-house.

Although she is now forgotten, Charlotte Lenox, the heroine of these Johnsonian 'high jinks,' was once what Browning would have termed 'a person of importance in her day.' Her father, Colonel James Ramsay, was Lieutenant-Governor of New York. When his daughter was about fifteen, he sent her to England, consigning her to the charge of a relative in this country, who, by the time she reached it, was either dead or mad. Then Colonel Ramsay himself departed this life, and she was left without a protector. Lady Rockingham took her up, receiving her into her household; but an obscure love-affair put an end to their connection; and she subsequently found a fresh patroness in the Duchess of Newcastle. She must also have tried the stage, since Walpole speaks of her as a 'deplorable actress.' Her sheet anchor, however, was literature. In 1747 Paterson published a thin volume of her poems, dedicated to 'the Lady Issabella [sic] Finch,' – a volume in which she certainly 'touched the tender stops of various quills,' since it recalls most of the singers who were popular in her time. There are odes in imitation of Sappho (with one 'p'); there is a pastoral after the manner of Air. Pope; there is 'Envy, a Satire; 5 there is a versification of one of Mr. Addison's 'Spectators.5 To this maiden effort, a few years later, followed the novel above-mentioned, which is supposed to have been more or less autobiographical; then came another novel, 'The Female Quixote;' then 'Shakespeare Illustrated;' then a translation of Sully's 'Memoirs;' and then again more novels,

plays, and translations. Mrs. Lenox lived into the present century, supported at the last partly from the Literary Fund, and partly by the Right Hon. George Rose, who befriended her in her latter days, and ultimately, when she died, old and very poor, in Dean's Yard, Westminster, paid the expenses of her burial. She is said – by Mr. Croker, of course – to have been 'plain in her person.' If this were so, she must have been considerably flattered in the portrait by Reynolds which Bartolozzi engraved for Harding's 'Shakespeare.' It is also stated, on the authority of Mrs. Thrale, that, although her books were admired, she herself was disliked. As regards her own sex, this may have been true; but it is dead against the evidence as regards the men. Johnson, for example, openly preferred her before Mrs. Carter, Miss Hannah More, and Miss Burney; and he never, to judge by the references in Boswell's 'Life,' wavered in his allegiance. He wrote the Dedications to 'The Female Quixote' and 'Shakespeare Illustrated;' he helped her materially (as did also Lord Orrery) in her version of Père Brumoy's 'Théâtre des Grecs;' he quoted her in the 'Dictionary;' he drew up, as late as 1775, the 'Proposals' for a complete edition of her works, and he reviewed her repeatedly. What is more, he introduced her to Richardson, by whom, upon the ground of her gifts and her misfortunes (She 'has genius,' and she 'has been unhappy,' said the sentimental little man), she was at once admitted to the inner circle of the devoted listeners at North End and Parson's-Green. Another of her admirers was Fielding, who, in his last book, the 'Journal of a Voyage to

Lisbon,' calls her 'the inimitable and shamefully distress'd author of the Female Quixote.' Finally, Goldsmith wrote the epilogue to the unsuccessful comedy of 'The Sister,' which she based in 1769 upon her novel of 'Henrietta,' – an act which is the more creditable on his part because the play belonged to the ranks of that genteel comedy which he detested. A woman who could thus enlist the suffrage and secure the sendee of the four greatest writers of her day must have possessed exceptional powers of attraction, either mental or physical; and this of itself is almost sufficient to account for the lack of a corresponding enthusiasm in her own sex.

How she obtained her education, the scanty records of her life do not disclose. But it is clear that she had considerable attainments; and she obviously added to them a faculty for ingenious flattery, which, after the fashion of that day, she exhibited in her books. In her best effort, 'The Female Quixote,' there is a handsome reference to that 'admirable Writer,' Mr. Richardson; and Johnson is styled 'the greatest Genius in the present Age.' 'Rail,' she makes one of her characters say elsewhere, and painfully *à-propos de bottes*, – 'Rail with premeditated Malice at the "Rambler;" and for the want of Faults, turn even its inimitable Beauties into Ridicule: The Language, because it reaches to Perfection, may be called stiff, laboured, and pedantic; the Criticisms, when they let in more light than your weak Judgment can bear, superficial and ostentatious Glitter; and because those Papers contain the finest

System of Ethics yet extant, damn the queer Fellow, for over-propping Virtue;' – in all of which, it is to be feared, the bigots of this iron time will see nothing but the rankest logrolling. Yet it was not to Mrs. Lenox that Johnson said, 'Madam, consider what your praise is worth.' On the contrary, if Dr. Birkbeck Hill conjectures rightly, he wrote a not unfavourable little notice of the book in the 'Gentleman's Magazine' for March, 1752, – a notice, which, if it does no more, at least compactly summarises the scheme of the story.

'Arabella,' it says (the full title is 'The Female Quixote; or, the Adventures of Arabella'), 'is the daughter of a statesman, born after his retirement in disgrace, and educated in solitude, at his castle, in a remote province. The romances which she found in the library after her mother's death, were almost the only books she had read; from these therefore she derived her ideas of life; she believed the business of the world to be love, every incident to be the beginning of an adventure, and every stranger a knight in disguise. The solemn manner in which she treats the most common and trivial occurrences, the romantic expectations she forms, and the absurdities which she commits herself, and produces in others, afford a most entertaining series of circumstances and events.' And then he goes on to quote, as coming from one equally 'emulous of Cervantes, and jealous of a rival,' the opinion which Mr. Fielding had expressed a few days earlier, in his 'Covent Garden Journal,' – an opinion which, if, as Johnson asserts, he had at this time no knowledge of the

author of the book, does even more credit to his generosity than to his critical judgment. For the author of | Tom Jones' not only devotes rather more than two handsome columns to 'The Female Quixote;' but, professing to give his report of it 'with no less Sincerity than Candour,' gravely proceeds to show in what it falls short of, in what it equals, and in what it excels (!) the master-piece of which it is a professed imitation. According to him, the advantage of Mrs. Lenox in the last respect (for the others may be neglected) lies in the fact that it is more probable that the reading of romances would turn the head of a young lady than the head of an old gentleman; that the character of Arabella is more endearing than that of Don Quixote; that her situation is more interesting; and that the incidents of her story, as well as the story itself, are less 'extravagant and incredible' than those of the immortal hero of Cervantes. Finally, he sums up with the words which Johnson afterwards reproduced, in part, in the 'Gentleman's Magazine:' 'I do very earnestly recommend it, as a most extraordinary and most excellent Performance. It is indeed a Work of true Humour, and cannot fail of giving a rational, as well as very pleasing Amusement to a sensible Reader, who will at once be instructed and very highly diverted. Some Faults perhaps there may be, but these all leave the unpleasing Task of pointing them out to those who will have more Pleasure in the Office. This Caution, however, I think proper to premise, that no Persons presume to find many [He is speaking in his assumed character of Censor of Great Britain]. For if they do, I promise

them the Critic and not the Author will be to blame.'

Pro captu lectoris habent sua fata libelli. In spite of the verdict of Johnson and Fielding, – that is to say, in spite of the verdict of the Macaulay and Thackeray of the Eighteenth Century, – the Critic, it is to be feared, must be blamed to-day. Were Fielding alone, one might discount his opinion by assuming that he would naturally welcome a work of art which was on his side rather than on that of Richardson; but this would not account for the equally favourable opinion of Johnson. [11]

Nor could it be laid entirely to the novelty of the attempt, for 'Tom Jones' and 'Clarissa' and 'Peregrine Pickle,' masterpieces all, had by this time been written, and can still be read, which it is difficult to say of 'The Female Quixote; or, the Adventures of Arabella.' Mrs. Lenox's fundamental idea, no doubt, is a good one, although the character of the heroine has its feminine prototypes in the 'Précieuses Ridicules' of Molière and the Biddy Tipkin of Steele's 'Tender Husband.' It may be conceded, too, that some of the manifold complications which arise from her bringing every incident of her career to the touchstone of the

[11] Johnson had, if not a taste, at least an appetite, for the old-fashioned romances which Mrs. Lenox satirised. Once, at Bishop Percy's, he selected 'Fenxmarte of Hircania' (in folio) for his habitual reading, and he read it through religiously. Upon another occasion his choice fell upon Burke's favourite, 'Palmerin of England.' 'History as She is wrote' in 'Clelia' and 'Cleopatra;' the persistence of Arabella in finding princes in gardeners, and rescuers in highwaymen – are things not ill-invented. But repeated they pall; and not all the insistence upon her natural good sense and her personal charms, nor (as compared with such concurrent efforts as Mrs. Eliza Haywood's 'Betsy Thoughtless')

high-falutin' romances of the Sieur de la Calprenède, and that 'grave and virtuous virgin,' Madeleine de Scudéry, are diverting enough. The lamentable predicament of the lover, Mr. Glanville, who is convicted of imperfect application to the pages of 'Cassandra,' by his hopeless ignorance of the elementary fact that the Orontes and Oroondates of that performance are one and the same person; the case of the luckless dipper into Thucydides and Herodotus at Bath who is confronted, to his utter discomfiture, with the inoffensive tone of the book itself, can reconcile us to a heroine who is unable to pass the sugar-tongs without a reference to Parisatis, Princess of Persia, or Cleobuline, Princess of Corinth; – who holds with the illustrious Mandana that, even after ten years of the most faithful services and concealed torments, it is still presumptuous for a monarch to aspire to her hand; – and who, upon the slightest provocation, plunges into tirades of this sort: 'Had you persevered in your Affection, and continued your Pursuit of that Fair-one, you would, perhaps, ere this, have found her sleeping under the Shade of a Tree in some lone Forest, as *Philodaspes* did his admirable *Delia*, or disguised in a Slave's Habit, as *Ariobarsanes* saw his Divine *Olympia*; or bound haply in a Chariot, and have had the Glory of freeing her, as *Ambriomer* did the beauteous *Agione*; or in a Ship in the Hands of Pirates, like the incomparable *Eliza*; or' – at which point she is fortunately interrupted. In another place she fancies her uncle is in love with her, and thereupon, 'wiping some Tears from her fine Eyes,' apostrophises that elderly and astounded relative in

this wise – 'Go then, unfortunate and lamented Uncle; go, and endeavour by Reason and Absence to recover thy Repose; and be assured, whenever you can convince me you have triumphed over these Sentiments which now cause both our Unhappiness, you shall have no Cause to complain of my Conduct towards you.' There is an air of unreality about all this, which, one would think, should have impeded its popularity in its own day. In the Spain of Don Quixote it is conceivable; it is intolerable in the England of Arabella. But there are other reasons which help to account for the oblivion into which the book has fallen. One is, that by neglecting to preserve the atmosphere of the age in which it was written, it has missed an element of vitality which is retained even by such fugitive efforts as Coventry's 'Pompey the Little.' [12]

Indeed, beyond the above-quoted references to Johnson and Richardson, and an obscure allusion to the beautiful Miss Gunnings who, at this date, divided the Talk of the Town with the Earthquake, there is scarcely any light thrown upon contemporary life and manners throughout the whole of Arabella's history. Another, and a graver objection (as one of her critics, whose own admirable 'Amelia' had been but recently published, should have known better than any one) is that, in spite of the humour of some of the situations, the characters of the book are colourless and mechanical. Fielding's Captain Booth and his wife, Mrs. Bennet and Serjeant Atkinson, Dr. Harrison and Colonel Bath are breathing and moving human beings: the

[12] This, like 'Betsy Thoughtless,' belongs to 1751.

Glanvilles and Sir Charleses and Sir Georges of Mrs. Charlotte Lenox are little more than shrill-voiced and wire-jointed 'High-Life' puppets.

VI. FIELDING'S 'VOYAGE TO LISBON.'

NOT far from where these lines are written, on the right-hand side of the road from Acton to Ealing stands a house called Ford-hook. Shut in by walls, and jealously guarded by surrounding trees, it offers itself but furtively to the incurious passer-by. Nevertheless, it has traditions which might well give him pause. Even in this century, it enjoyed the distinction of belonging to Lady Byron, the poet's wife; and in its existing drawing-room, 'Ada, sole daughter of my house and heart,' was married to William, Earl of Lovelace. But an earlier and graver memory than this lingers about the spot. More than one hundred and forty-three years ago, on a certain Wednesday in June, the cottage which formerly occupied the site was the scene of one of the saddest leave-takings in literature. On this particular day had gathered about its door a little group of sympathetic friends and relatives, who were evidently assembled to bid sorrowful good-bye to some one, for whom, as the clock was striking twelve, a coach had just drawn up. Presently a tall man, terribly broken and emaciated, but still wearing the marks of dignity and kindliness on his once handsome face, made his appearance, and was assisted, with some difficulty (for he had practically lost the use of his limbs), into the vehicle. An elderly, homely-

looking woman, and a slim girl of seventeen or eighteen, took their seats beside him without delay; and, amid the mingled tears and good wishes of the spectators, the coach drove off swiftly in the direction of London. The sick man was Henry Fielding, the famous novelist; his companions, his second wife and his eldest daughter. He was dying of a complication of diseases; and, like Peterborough and Doddridge before him, was setting out in the forlorn hope of finding life and health at Lisbon. Since Scott quoted them in 1821, the words in which his journal describes his departure have been classic:

'*Wednesday, June* 26, 1754. – On this day, the most melancholy sun I had ever beheld arose, and found me awake at my house at Fordhook. By the light of this sun, I was, in my own opinion, last to behold and take leave of some of those creatures on whom I doated with a mother-like fondness, guided by nature and passion, and uncured and unhardened by all the doctrine of that philosophical school where I had learnt to bear pains and to despise death.

'In this situation, as I could not conquer nature, I submitted entirely to her, and she made as great a fool of me as she had ever done of any woman whatsoever: under pretence of giving me leave to enjoy, she drew me in to suffer the company of my little ones, during eight hours; and I doubt not whether, in that time, I did not undergo more than in all my distemper.'

Of Fielding's life, it may be said truly, that nothing in it became him like the leaving it. At the moment of his starting for

Lisbon, his case, as is clear from the above quotation, was already regarded by himself as desperate. To 'a lingering imperfect gout' had succeeded 'a deep jaundice;' and to jaundice, asthma and dropsy. He was past the power of the Duke of Portland's powder; past the famous tar-water of the good Bishop Berkeley. Had he acknowledged his danger earlier, his life might have been prolonged, though, in all probability, but for brief space. His health had for some time been breaking; he was worn out by his harassing vocation as a Middlesex Magistrate; and he feared that, in the event of his death, his family must starve. This last consideration it was that tempted him to defer his retirement to the country in order to break up a notorious gang of street-robbers, and so earn (as he fondly hoped) some government provision for those helpless ones whom he must leave behind him. He succeeded in his task, although he failed of his reward; and what was worse, as regards his health, much irrecoverable opportunity had been lost. By the time that his labours were at an end, he was a doomed man. The Bath waters could effect nothing in the advanced stage of his malady; and, after a short sojourn at his 'little house' at Ealing, he took his passage in the 'Queen of Portugal,' Richard Veal, master, for Lisbon. Of this voyage he has left his own account; and the posthumous volume thus produced is a curiosity of literature. It is one of the most touching records in the language of fortitude under trial; and it is not surprising to learn – as we do from Hazlitt – that it was a favourite book with another much-enduring mortal, the gentle

and uncomplaining 'Elia.'

In these days of steam power, and floating palaces, and luxurious sick-room appliances, it is not easy to realize the intolerable tedium and discomfort, especially to an invalid, of a passage in a second-rate sailing-ship in the middle of the last century. When, after a rapid but fatiguing two hours' drive, Fielding reached Redriff (Rotherhithe), he had to undergo a further penance. The 'Queen of Portugal' lay in midstream, a circumstance which necessitated his being carried perilously across slippery ground, transferred to a wherry, and finally hoisted over the ship's side in a chair. Nor were his troubles by any means at an end when he found himself securely deposited in the cabin. The voyage, already more than once deferred, was again postponed. First, the vessel could not be cleared at the Custom House until Thursday, because Wednesday was a holiday (Proclamation Day); then the skipper himself announced that he should not weigh anchor before Saturday. Meanwhile, from his unusual exertions and other causes, Fielding's main malady had gained so considerably that he was obliged to summon Dr. William Hunter from Covent Garden to tap him – an operation which he had already more than once undergone with considerable relief. On Sunday the vessel dropped down to Gravesend, reaching the Nore on July 1. Then, for a week, they were becalmed in the Downs, making Ryde just in time to lie safely on the Motherbank during a violent storm. Before the ship left Ryde, the 23rd of July had arrived; and it was not until the

second week in August that she sailed up the Tagus, having taken seven weeks to perform a journey which then, at most, occupied three, and is now generally accomplished in about four days.

If the 'Journal of a Voyage to Lisbon' were no more than the chronicle of the facts thus summarized – nay, if it were no more than what Walpole flippantly calls the 'account how his [Fielding's] dropsy was treated and teased by an innkeeper's wife in the Isle of Wight,' it would require and deserve but little consideration. That it is a literary masterpiece is not pretended; nor, in the circumstances of its composition, could a masterpiece be looked for – even from a master. But it is interesting not so much by the events which it narrates as by the indirect light which it throws upon its writer's character, upon his manliness, his patience, and that inextinguishable cheerfulness which, he says in the 'Proposal for the Poor,' 'was always natural to me.' His sufferings must have been considerable (he had to be tapped again before the voyage ended); and yet, with the exception of some not resentful comment upon the inhumanity of certain watermen and sailors who had jeered at his ghastly appearance, no word of complaint as to his own condition is allowed to escape him. On the other hand, his solicitude for his fellow-travellers is unmistakable. One of the most touching pages in the little volume relates how, when his wife, worn out with toothache, lay sleeping lightly in the state room, he and the skipper, who was deaf, sat speechless over a 'small bowl of punch' in the adjoining cabin rather than run the risk of waking her by a sound.

'My dear wife and child,' he says, speaking of a storm in the Channel, 'must pardon me, if what I did not conceive to be any great evil to myself, I was not much terrified with the thoughts of happening to them: in truth, I have often thought they are both too good, and too gentle, to be trusted to the power of any man I know, to whom they could possibly be so trusted.' In another place he relates, quite in his best manner, how he rebuked a certain churlish Custom-house officer for his want of courtesy to Mrs. Fielding. At times one forgets that it is a dying man who is writing, so invincible is that appetite for enjoyment which made Lady Mary say he ought to have been immortal. Not long after they reached Ryde he wrote to his half-brother and successor John (afterwards Sir John) Fielding: 'I beg that on the Day you receive this Mrs. Daniel [his mother-in-law] may know that we are just risen from Breakfast in *Health and Spirits* [the italics are ours] this twelfth Instant at 9 in the morning.' At Ryde they were shamefully entreated by the most sharp-faced and tyrannical of landladies, in whose incommodious hostelry they sought temporary refuge; and yet it is at Ryde that he chronicles 'the best, the pleasantest, and the merriest meal [in a barn], with more appetite, more real, solid luxury, and more festivity, than was ever seen in an entertainment at White's.' And almost the last lines of the 'Journal' recall a good supper in a Lisbon coffee-house for which they 'were as well charged, as if the bill had been made on the Bath road, between Newbury and London.' But the pleasures of the table play a subordinate part in the sick

man's diary, and often only prompt a larger subject, as when the John Dory which regales them at Torbay introduces a disquisition on the improvement of the London fish supply. As might be anticipated, some of his best passages deal with the humanity about him. With characteristic reticence, he says little of his own companions, but his pen strays easily into graphic sketches of the little' world of the 'Queen of Portugal.' The ill-conditioned Custom-house officer, already mentioned; the military fop who comes to visit the captain at Spithead; the sordid and shrewish Ryde landlady with her chuckleheaded nonentity of a husband – are all touched by a hand which, if tremulous, betrays no diminution of its cunning. Of all the potraits, however, that of the skipper is the best. [13]

The rough, illiterate, septuagenarian sea-captain, 'full of strange oaths' and superstitions, despotic, irascible and good-natured, awkwardly gallanting the ladies in all the splendours of a red coat, cockade and sword, and heart-broken, privateer though he had been, when his favourite kitten is smothered by a feather-bed, has all the elements of a finished individuality. It is with respect to him that occurs almost the only really

[13] The picture, it should be added, was not at first presented in its racy entirety. When, in February, 1755, the 'Journal of a Voyage to Lisbon' was given to the world for the benefit of Fielding's widow and children, although the 'Dedication to the Public' affirmed the book to be 'as it came from the hands of the author,' many of the franker touches which go to complete the full-length of Captain Richard Veal, as well as sundry other particulars, were withheld. This question is fully discussed in the Introduction to the limited edition of the 'Journal,' published in 1892 by the Chiswick Press.

dramatic incident of the voyage. A violent dispute having arisen about the exclusive right of the passengers to the cabin, Fielding resolved, not without misgivings, to quit the ship, ordering a hoy for that purpose, and taking care, as became a magistrate, to threaten Captain Veal with what that worthy feared more than rock or quicksand, the terrors of retributary legal proceedings. The rest may be told in the journalist's own words: 'The most distant sound of law thus frightened a man, who had often, I am convinced, heard numbers of cannon roar round him with intrepidity. Nor did he sooner see the hoy approaching the vessel, than he ran down again into the cabin, and, his rage being perfectly subsided, he tumbled on his knees, and a little too abjectly implored for mercy.

'I did not suffer a brave man and an old man, to remain a moment in this posture; but I immediately forgave him.' Most of those who have related this anecdote end discreetly at this point. Fielding, however, is too honest to allow us to place his forbearance entirely to the credit of his magnanimity. 'And here, that I may not be thought the sly trumpeter of my own praises, I do utterly disclaim all praise on the occasion. Neither did the greatness of my mind dictate, nor the force of my Christianity exact this forgiveness. To speak truth, I forgave him from a motive which would make men much more forgiving, if they were much wiser than they are; because it was convenient for me so to do.'

With the arrival of the 'Queen of Portugal' at Lisbon the

'Journal' ends, and no further particulars of its writer are forthcoming. Two months later he died in the Portuguese capital, and was buried among the cypresses of the beautiful English cemetery. *Luget Britannia gremio non dari Fovere natum*– is inscribed upon his tomb.

VII. HANWAY'S TRAVELS

ONE hot day in Holborn, – one of those very hot days when, as Mr. Andrew Lang or M. Octave Uzanne has said, the brown backs buckle in the fourpenny boxes, and you might poach an egg on the cover of a quarto, – the incorrigible bookhunter who pens these pages purchased two octavo volumes of 'Beauties of the Spectators, Tatlers and Guardians, Connected and Digested under Alphabetical Heads.' That their contents were their main attraction would be too much to say. For the literary 'Beauties' of one age, like those other are not always the 'Beauties' of another. Where the selector of to-day would put Sir Roger de Coverley and Will Wimble, the Everlasting Club, or the Exercise of the Fan, the judicious gentlemen in rusty wigs and inked ruffles who managed the 'connecting' and 'digesting' department for Messrs. Tonson in the Strand, put passages on Detraction, Astronomy, Chearful-ness (with an 'a'), Bankruptcy, Self-Denial, Celibacy, and the Bills of Mortality. They must have done a certain violence to their critical convictions by including, in forlorn isolation, such flights of imagination as the 'Inkle and Yarico' of Mr. Steele and the 'Hilpah and Shalum' of Mr. Addison. The interest of this particular copy is, however, peculiar to itself. It is bound neatly in full mottled calf, with stamped gold roses at the corners of the covers; and at the points of a star in the centre are printed the letters E, G, C, G. An autograph inscription in

the first volume explains this mystery. They are the initials of the 'Twin Sisters

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.