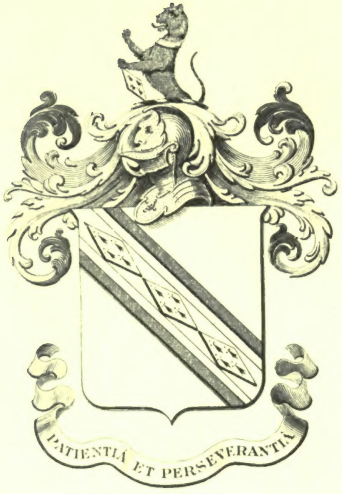
geantry of Life

Charles Whibley



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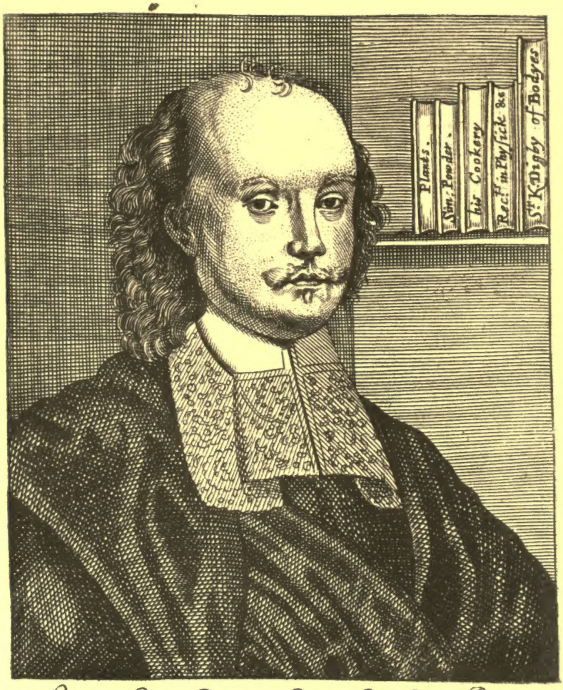

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THE PAGEANTRY OF LIFE

BY

CHARLES WHIBLEY

LONDON
WILLIAM HEINEMANN
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" *Studious they appear*
Of arts that polish life."

MILTON

I desire to thank Mr. William Blackwood for his courteous permission to reprint the chapter—Disraeli the Younger—which appeared in the pages of his Magazine.

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INTRODUCTION

THERE is an Art of Life, as there are arts of colour, form, and speech; and what a material is theirs who practise it! The poet or painter is perforce engrossed with a momentary aspect of this one or that; he finds an inspiration in a passing thought or in the outward seeming of man or mountain: the cataract may haunt him like a passion, or he may attempt to simplify the mysteries of the sea. But his motive is still fragmentary; his subject is expressed in a passing, imperfect symbol. The Artist in Life, on the other hand, need recognise no limit save death. He takes his days with all their delicate variety, and cuts them into what form he will. His smallest action is an added touch, a fresh detail in the vast design. Life is his material, enjoyment his medium, and to enhance the effect of his single masterpiece he may employ the manifold resources of gaiety and splendour. Rare wines flatter his delicate palate; his ingenuity designs a new cravat or a coat of unwonted elegance; wit and beauty are his constant companions; and whate'er befall he never knows the shame of vulgar commonplace or dismal routine. Concerned only with

his own perfection, he is a miracle of selfishness: that is the first condition of success; and it is not surprising that he too often escapes the sympathy of his fellows.

For it is no part of his design to be a good citizen, and if he do deserve well of his country, he claims her gratitude in an interval snatched from his more serious enterprise The common ambitions are incidental to his nature, when they are not abhorrent from it. He neither controls governments nor wins battles. He despises the glory which follows a popular triumph, and he professes no greater interest in the secrets of philosophy than is becoming to a person of wit. Nor is he a shining example of the homely virtues; with him a sense of the picturesque is more vivid than the sense of morality. He does not cut his life into a sermon; rather he shapes it into a witty romance. The external world is his province—a dazzling appearance, discreet magnificence, the quick-exchanged repartee. Yet by a nonchalance of manner, by a proper pride of conduct, he guards his superiority over those whom the world esteems more valiant heroes; and since he makes the rarest appearance upon the world's stage, his claim to a unique grandeur is not extravagant. There are ten generals, twenty statesmen, to balance one hero who has conquered life; and if we may judge by results it is easier to discover a savage country or to sing an unheard melody than to design a new coat or to invent a dish untasted before. Above all the true artist in life must climb the frozen altitude of self-consciousness, a more difficult peak to scale than Chimborazo; he must

"live and sleep," as one said who knew him well, "before a mirror."

What then makes the artist, whose portrait is here attempted? It is not profession, nor birth, nor manners, nor knowledge, nor success, though all these are invaluable accessories. It is temperament, it is life. The priest need not lag behind the courtier. Whoever had a finer sense of grandeur than Wolsey? and was not Pascal famous for his six horses? Nor need poverty disturb a skilful exercise of the art. Burns had a glimpse into its possibilities when he sported the only tie wig in the parish, and the simple propriety of a graceful dinner is beyond the pocket of no man who can afford clean linen and a cheese. Again, the coat depends for its effect less upon the reckless use of velvet or satin than upon the bravery wherewith it is worn. But an inapposite assumption of birth, a clumsy show of riches, are the worst foes of elegance: without the true temperament the resources of Golconda will avail nothing. When Byron said he would rather be Brummel than Napoleon, he did not merely pay a deserved tribute to the genius of dandyism; he acknowledged that the Dandy was distinguished by rarer qualities than those which achieve the conquest of the world. Yet Brummel could dazzle his rivals neither by exalted birth nor by lavish dislay. He was gifted with nothing save the sublime talent of his craft, and he triumphed.

But the artist, alas! cannot always take a serene pleasure in his perfected work. Though his is ever the

joy of creation, he is not permitted to contemplate the result with appreciative impartiality. For life generally unveils itself to him who lives it as a panorama. Now fortune overcomes the design, now the unexpected imposes a sudden change. And he who, unconsciously maybe, was aiming at a complete harmony, is compelled to content himself with a set of brilliant, discursive images. Still, there have been men of so strong a nature that they have themselves put the last touch to life, and forced the picture to justify the sketch. So Disraeli, if we forget his politics, remained until the last hour within the same frame whose four corners bounded his youthful design and boyish ambition.

Yet a greater grief than unfulfilled purpose pursues the artist. Declining grandeur is, save for the rare and happy few, touched with regret. The egoist is sad at last. So long has he stared at himself in the mirror, that others refrain from contemplation. Or a change of fashion overwhelms the memory of his brilliant youth. So Bassompierre found himself dismoded when he left the Bastille, and Brummel died at Caen in broken imbecility. But ultimate failure does not impair the splendour of their achievement: reverses are the fate of all great men. No real hero ever lived from youth to age without a check upon his happiness; indeed, he who boasts an unbroken triumph convicts himself of insensibility. Even Cæsar, with the world at his feet, bewailed a bald head.

Life, like all the arts, obeys its own rules; since life without rules is, like language without grammar, inar-

ticulate and absurd. The first article in the code is that wayward body of antique tradition, called honour, which, by enforcing the subtler rules of conduct, checks the noisy spirit of the brawler and renders altercation a disgrace. Next in order come dignity and restraint, without which magnificence is common and splendour a vain show. A perfect fitness, indeed, is embarrassment's only antidote, and he who is embarrassed must needs cure his malady, or crawl through his years in the asylum of a decent obscurity. But there are many who, falsely claiming to practise the art of life, reverence no laws, and so make a travesty of elegance. Every generation is troubled by a rabble of curiosity-mongers, who feign an exquisite sensibility to such impressions as escape them, and whose appreciation of unnumbered sights and sounds is the more loudly expressed as it is felt the less sincerely. These gentry, robbed of gaiety and courage, can make nothing of their wizened careers, for all their proud ambition ; wherefore they convert their vile bodies into hoardings, and advertise by the effrontery of foolish clothes the tastes after which they impotently hanker. So they gather the indiscriminate spoils of all countries, and by their lack of choice render even the rare and beautiful of no effect.

Worse still are those merry blades, the roysterers, who mistake squalor for gaiety, and who think a loud licence the best mark of a gentleman. But they, knowing nought of a more gracious world, dwell in the dark suburb of Bohemia, where they delight in false

freedom, tempered by compulsory poverty. The man of sense, driven perchance into this gipsyland, passes through it hastily, regretting his sojourn, and shaking off as soon as maybe the memory of its thickened atmosphere. For he, at once the art and artist, inhabits a fairer province, where the trees are not smoke-begrimed, and where the voice of music is still heard.

The most self-conscious of craftsmen, he is unselfish in his outlook upon posterity. He does not work for fame ; he raises no monument *ære perennius*. For him, indeed, his art is its own reward, since it enhances the pleasures of every hour, and is perfected too often without a record. So it is that his achievement is generally ephemeral, and affects few beyond the reach of his intimate friendship. But now and again, if he be gifted with sincerity, he sends himself down the ages in his own despite ; sometimes, even, tradition preserves, in an imperishable sketch, the memory of his triumph. Scrope Davies, for instance, the near rival of Brummel, is well-nigh forgotten. His conversation glittered only in the ears of those who heard him, and we are none the wiser for knowing that Bryon found him "always ready, and often witty." His quiet manners, his discreet attire are famous, but they merely give him a place beside Alvanley and the best of his contemporaries. We are nearer to the truth when Byron tells us that he dined *tête-à-tête* at the "Cocoa with Scrope Davies—sat from six till midnight—drank between us one bottle of champagne and six of claret. . . . Offered to take Scrope home in my carriage ; but

he was tipsy and pious, and I was obliged to leave him on his knees praying to I know not what purpose or pagod."

Yet neither tipsiness nor piety mark out Davies from his contemporaries. It is only when we see him in old age that his real character is revealed. Overtaken by poverty this admirable scholar, wit, and gamester lived at Paris in a single room, which no intimate ever penetrated. But every day he would sit in the garden of the Tuileries, and there, bowed down by poverty and years, he would receive his friends with the Dandy's own imperial manner. Thus he preserved untouched the genius of his youth ; and Scrope Davies, on the seat of the Tuileries, scrupulous in adversity, is as genuine a creation as a canto of *Don Juan* (let us say), or the "Ode to the Skylark." Not even Old Q., ruffian that he was, need fear oblivion, for he too has left an immortal sketch. There he will remain, sinister and contemptuous, beneath the shadow of an umbrella, ogling the passers-by from his renowned balcony, so long as the memory of man lingers upon the picturesque.

The art has not been practised in all ages with equal success ; the artist himself has varied with the period. Of Greek life, in the elegant sense, we know as little as we know of Greek painting. And we regret our ignorance the more because we are confident that the Greek was supreme at all points. Such intimate records as might reveal the accomplishments of the men about Athens are unhappily lacking. Plutarch

gives us just a glimpse of Alcibiades, who, like Lord Chesterfield, thought the flute an instrument unworthy the lips of a gentleman ; but the biographer is far more interested in Alcibiades the politician than in Alcibiades the beau, and Alcibiades the politician was a secondary personage. When the Roman Emperors sat upon their throne the opportunity is less, though the records are more eloquent. But the men of that age were tainted with the taint of the amateur, and the artistry of Herodes Atticus (for instance) was a thing of wealth rather than of talent.

Throughout the Middle Ages life was so hard to live that ornament was impossible. You cannot imagine a primitive Briton embellished with the manners of the Macaronis. Even the savage who decorates his canoe or polishes his kava-bowl approaches nearer to delicacy than did our woaded, touzle-headed ancestor. And chivalry introduced no easier refinement. The Knight in Armour was too heavily clad for dandyism. It is true that he devoted a certain coquetry to his coat of mail, which he chased and chiselled, polished and inlaid. But he drank deep stoups, and made love with shrewd blows ; nor was he ever really himself, either as hero or lover, until his squire had hoisted him on to a horse, heavily encumbered as himself. Now and again, as the years roll on, there are signs to detect of awakening splendour. Even in the grim reign of Louis XI. the Dukes of Berry and Brittany showed themselves men of fashion by their love of useless magnificence. After the battle

of Montlhéry, when they should have been equipped to fight the foe, they rode forth "mounted upon small ambling nags, and armed with slight brigandines, light and thin, yea, and some said they were not plated, but studded only with a few gilt nails upon the satin for the less weight." Thus, animated by a spirit which Brummel himself might have admired, they defied the rules of war. It was grace whereat they aimed, not valiance, and they cared little with what weapons they assailed their enemies, so they cut a brave and dashing figure before their friends.

But if wealth is not necessary for the embellishment of life, leisure is indispensable ; and it was only when tranquillity was assured the world that men had time to adorn themselves and to glorify their environment. The rare revelations of the fifteenth century still suggest a grim struggle and a stern debauch. He whose land was not safe from his neighbours' aggression, whose house must be in very truth his castle, needed a recreation as violent as his duty. Arms were his playthings, a fortress was his library. He was forced to ponder so deeply of his foes, that he had scarce a thought to waste upon himself. There is little gaiety, for instance, in that storehouse of domestic history—the "Paston Letters." Who should be gay with savage intruders knocking at the door? And Margaret Paston, most admirable of wives, proved herself the just child of her age, when instead of jewels she begs of her husband crossbows, wyndocs, and quarrels. Yet, though crossbows were first in her

thought as in her letter, even she at times remembered the trivialities of life, and would have sent in the same packet with the munitions of war a pound of almonds, a pound of sugar, and "some friese to make of our child his gouns."

But with the contemporaries of Mistress Paston triviality was an interlude, and it was only with the sixteenth century that a delicate frivolity smiled on the renascent world. Now, at last, life was pursued with a fierce zest and for its own sake. On either side the Channel, the beau plumed himself upon his attire, upon his reckless gaming, upon the wrested favours of women. The Field of the Golden Cloth was, so to say, a symbol of revived magnificence and high spirits. Henry, young and handsome, was a fitting rival for his cousin of France, nor would the courtiers yield to their monarchs in such sports as became a gentleman. Henceforth, then, the world was prepared for the last extravagance, and the most daring ruffler might find a theatre worthy his exploits.

But it was the Restoration which heralded the golden age of life. For once sentiment and opportunity were perfectly matched. On the throne a King who preferred wit to wisdom, and who ruled a country eager to react. For a while patriotism slept, save in half a dozen wakeful hearts, and the glory of grave enterprises was obscured; yet regret for duties unaccomplished need not blind us to the glamour of this wayward reign, which at least was inexorably hostile to dulness and stupidity. Curiosity triumphed every-

where; life was radiant because a radiant Court was determined to enjoy it. The theatre echoed to a wit which, for all its freedom, was never disreputable, because it was neither senseless nor vulgar. And beauty was omnipotent over King and Court. Manners alone made man, and unkempt virtue had little chance of sympathy or admiration. Nobody curtailed his pleasure for the narrow scruples which before, as since, have controlled society; another standard of morals invaded the town with a more exclusive ambition: an ill-cut coat became a cardinal sin, while vice lay not in the intrigue, but in its misconduct.

Happily the age was garrulous as well as gay. Its exploits, which shook footstools if they left thrones secure, have been set forth with the careful fidelity of eye-witnesses. Our own Pepys had not only the quickest vision but the lightest hand of them all. Moreover, to him no world came amiss. He was at home at Whitehall or in the City. Wherever he went he saw what was best worth the seeing, and he chronicled it with a simple truth, which no other artist has ever surpassed. Grammont, on the other hand, is far more pompous and less supple than his English rival, and for once the light-fingered wit is on our side the Channel. Antony Hamilton, the exquisite's biographer, himself an exquisite, was inspired by a literary ambition. He would have made Grammont play the part of Achilles in an Epic of frivolity; he would have fashioned him into the hero of a new

"Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles." So that while Pepys is the friend of us all, Grammont is a personage in a drama. And he is a personage, whose indomitably high spirits atoned for many of the meaner vices. His spiteful tongue gave him a licence, which not even the Great King dared to dispute. "All was permitted him," says Saint-Simon, "and he permitted himself all." In truth, had not gaiety and elegance kept him afloat, he would have sunk in youth beneath the waves of cowardice and dishonour. But a mastery of life confers distinction upon the arrantest knave, and Grammont kept the favour of the Court a lively cavalier of eighty-six summers. Unhappily he did not compose his own memoirs. While he smiled, Hamilton held the pen, and the demure Hamilton did not possess his hero's reckless spirit. None the less he paid him the loftiest compliment known to literature. "Il cherchait," says the biographer, "et portait partout la joie." *La joie!* that was the end of Grammont's palatial ambition, as it was the end of Pepys's ambling curiosity, and, alas! it is an ambition which in these days has yielded to the harder lust of gold, the keener pleasure of advancement.

Grammont, then, sought in London the joy which he had forfeited at the Court of France, and he played his game bravely, in accordance with the prevailing rules. A magnificent egoist, he never spared his nearest friend either in love or at the dice-board. His career was like a Restoration comedy—vivid, irresponsible, and monotonous. Variety was unknown to those seekers after pleasure; they took no interest in the

Dancing Mare, and even Jacob Hall, the Rope-walker, left them indifferent. No, the advent of a fresh Maid of Honour alone availed to quicken their pulses, and since even Maids of Honour sometimes lack invention, Grammont and his colleagues ran the risk of staling their enjoyment by too zealous a repetition.

But the succeeding age, while it lost in gaiety, gained nothing in discretion. France declined upon the worship of etiquette and the royal wig. England, after an interlude, bowed her face to the insolence of Beau Nash, under whose sovereignty pleasure became general and democratic. No man who travelled to Bath need despair of elegance. For elegance, when Nash was Master of the Ceremonies, was sold over the counter: you paid your subscription to the band, and henceforth you were a man of fashion; you might walk a minuet in the Pump Room with the best of society; and so long as you did not infringe the tyrant's laws you might believe yourself the legitimate successor of Grammont and Rochester. It was droll, this assumption of a rare quality by a mob which had not the slenderest pretension to true elegance. Yet to purchase genius with a guinea seemed not impossible to the eye of optimism, and at Bath beaux grew common as poets in a country newspaper. And Nash himself was the strangest figure of them all. He was shrewd, he was impudent, he was successful. He saw clearly that the reputation for fashion, sincerely prized when the Second Charles was King, might profitably flatter the general vanity. So he sold a title, which

was not his to bestow, and the world bought it without perceiving the folly of its bargain. Thus a talent, above all exclusive, was triumphantly vulgarised for the unique glory and profit of Richard Nash.

To judge his clients it is sufficient to read the rules devised by the Beau for the better conduct of the Pump Room. To judge the Beau, it is enough to consider the clumsy wit wherewith these rules are framed. Gentlemen are requested to give their tickets for the balls to none but gentlewomen. "N.B. Unless they have none of their acquaintance." The wit in the "N.B." is characteristic, as it were a kind of horseplay in words. Again, "gentlemen" are reminded that if they crowd before ladies at a ball "they shew ill manners;" after which caution you are not surprised that stern measures were taken to exclude riding-boots from the assembly. Nash, indeed, had a ragged team to drive, and he drove it with a curb. For himself, he was less a beau than any of his contemporaries. Two qualities he shared with many a man of fashion—he was lazy and a gambler; but the genius which would have made his laziness a virtue and would have condoned his love of hazard were wholly lacking. A brusque tyranny did duty for humour, and at the last he was free to insult whom he would. So, for instance, he stripped the Duchess of Q—— of a white apron, exclaiming that only Abigails were thus attired, and none was brave enough to resent his impertinence. Moreover he played all the foolish tricks of his time: for a wager he even

rode naked on a cow. But he ruled Bath like a king, and passed his laws with an imperial assurance.

A professed Master of the Ceremonies, a Monarch of the back-shop, he won his supremacy by the till, and he allowed none to infringe his laws. At eleven gaiety ceased in his Pump Room, even if a Royal Prince would prolong a dance. In the magniloquent phrase of Oliver Goldsmith, who wrote his biography: "Regularity repressed pride, and that lessened, people of fortune became fit for society." Fit for their own, perhaps: but it may be doubted whether Nash introduced into his world a single habit of elegance. In his own person display usurped the place of taste. His dress was tawdry and of a mixed fashion; the only mark of individuality was a white hat, though his chariot and six greys won him some notoriety. Yet he watched the decline of many reputations, the defeat of unnumbered modes. "He had seen flaxen bobs succeeded by majors" (so says his biographer), "which in their turn gave way to negligents, which were at last totally routed by bags and ramilies." But not even this vast experience availed to save him from penury and disgrace. His end was squalid, and the squalor was not undeserved; yet he interpreted life to thousands of his countrymen, and he was called a Beau by the generation which had witnessed the splendour of Bolingbroke.

So life became the popular art of the Eighteenth Century, practised by many with knowledge, by few with eminent success. Now, a grandiose manner was

esteemed by such heroes as Chesterfield as the one and only aim of existence, and he was abundantly justified of his opinion. But not content with action, Chesterfield was impelled to preach; and so he stands forth as the supreme critic of his craft, whose ambition it was to convert a delicate art into an austere science. Nash thought to make the first-comer a gentleman by asking him for a subscription; Chesterfield hoped that the grand manner might be imparted by a treatise. And Chesterfield failed, as Nash failed, as all fail who believe that artifice will supply gifts denied by nature. Philip Stanhope died a worthy young man, who had never learnt (in shame be it spoken) to enter a room with dignity. His father was abashed at the failure, but he was forgiving all the same, and his forgiveness might be remembered by those angry moralists who have chosen Chesterfield as a pack-horse for all the vices. Indeed, never had nobleman been more unfortunate. Resolved upon the education of his son, he sacrificed those hours of leisure which might have been engrossed by the dice-box, that Philip Stanhope should learn to speak and to bear himself with something of his father's splendour. Pedant as he was, he might have remembered the Latin adage—*nascitur non fit*—and refrained from his Sisyphean labour. He might also have reflected that some secrets are valuable only to those who discover them, and left his son to grow up the good-hearted churl that he was.

But with Chesterfield zeal outran discretion; and we, at any rate, should be grateful for the zeal. For if

Chesterfield failed at one point, at another he achieved a splendid triumph. He set out to educate his son, and he revealed himself, so that we know him better than any of his contemporaries. His ideal of a man was "a Corinthian edifice upon a Tuscan foundation;" and it must be confessed that the foundation was in his eyes far less important than the edifice. In other words, he was a true Corinthian, who worshipped the Graces, those accessories of manner and presentation which exert more influence in the world than mere intellect. As he would base his own actions upon self-love, as he boldly declared that "he who loves himself best is the honestest man," so he would win the approval of other men, and he would win that approval by an elegance of bearing, an invariable dignity of conduct. "The Graces, the Graces," he writes to his son: "remember the Graces!" And that cry from the heart represents his philosophy. To these mysterious qualities he attributes the success of the Duke of Marlborough. "Of all the men that ever I knew in my life," says he, "the late Duke of Marlborough possessed the Graces in the highest degree, not to say engrossed them." So the conqueror of Blenheim atoned for all his manifold faults of English spelling, and intelligence. He had the Graces! Wherefore Europe fell before him, and poor Philip Stanhope perhaps dreamt in his exile that when once he could sit down and rise up like a gentleman the most brilliant victories were also within his reach.

Yet Chesterfield's theory was indubitably sound.

Whatever was awkward, either in gesture or in speech, was distasteful to him ; he shrank in horror from failure, and would attempt nothing which could not be achieved with simplicity and elegance. He too, like Alcibiades, condemned the flute as an instrument which no self-respecting man could play ; only to the flute he added the fiddle. He detested laughter as bitterly as Philip IV. or Spain, and he declared with pride that none had seen him express his hilarity by aught more violent than a smile. The same sense of proportion made him conceal his knowledge with a rare modesty. "Wear your learning," said he in an admirable phrase, "like your watch, in a private pocket." Similarly, like the Dandies of another generation, he preached a perfect simplicity in dress. "Let your dress be never spoken of," he urged, "as either too negligent or too much studied." Horseplay and pleasure—that is, pleasure as it was interpreted by the Macaronis—were alike distasteful to him ; on the other hand, he was never averse from gallantry, and he welcomed all such recreation as could be pursued with dignity. Not unnaturally he hated the country, and he loathed field-sports. His will imposed a fine upon his heir should he frequent Newmarket, and shooting he condemned in a characteristic phrase. "Eat game," said he, "but do not be your own butcher and kill it." In brief, his hobbies were conversation and fine company ; therefore he loved capitals, and it was not until deafness overtook him that he settled down at Blackheath to solitude and the cultivation of his garden.

Such was his admirable ideal of life, more Corinthian than Tuscan maybe, but always dignified and ornate. He was a sort of Louis XIV. tempered by Voltaire's restrained veracity. He adored wit, but no wit would persuade him to be seen without his wig. He was worldly, of course ; but then he lived in the world, and thought that retirement meant death. "Tyrawley and I," said he in a pretty epigram, "have been dead these two years, but we do not want it known." Yet he has acquired, in his own despite, a reputation for villany, which, though it would not vex him, would certainly astonish him. His detractors are annoyed that he did not applaud the practice of the homely virtues. In his own phrase he left that to the excellent Mr. Haste or to Dr. Dodd. And his detractors display a lamentable lack of humour when they ask this worldling to mount the pulpit. Would they expect a lecture on the Graces from their favourite preacher ?

Chesterfield, then, was an artist for whom life was an affair of external accomplishment and scrupulous restraint. And in his own kind he remains without a rival. Horace Walpole, who stretches an accidental hand from Chesterfield to the Dandies, was less happily inspired. For he was an amateur even in his life ; he was so refined a dilettante that even his enjoyment smacks of insincerity. The multiplicity of his interests imperilled them all. He must needs print little books at his little press, and exalt the literary indiscretions of kings. When his friends visited him he would fire

off a popgun, as it were a royal salute of welcome. But for all his wit and amiability he was a coxcomb rather than a beau ; he was too careless of his appearances ; he looked upon life more lightly than he looked upon literature ; his manners were marked by an easy familiarity, as far removed from the dignity of Chesterfield as from the stern inflexibility of Brummel. Yet he forms a pleasant interlude in the history of manners, and gives us a momentary pause before we consider the marvellous achievement of the greatest artist among them all—George Brummel.

Other heroes have wasted their powers in uncertain experiment ; they have fumbled uselessly in the search after their true talent. But George Brummel came into his inheritance while still a boy ; he never for a moment was anything but a Dandy. In truth he has made the title his own, and other men claim it merely because they believe themselves illuminated by a spark of Brummel's genius. He might have been a soldier or a politician ; he might, perchance, have been a wit ; but war was as distasteful to him as affairs, and with that perfect consistency which marks only the greatest of men, he devoted himself to the unique cultivation of himself. The sole end and aim of his career was to present George Brummel to the world as the type of grandeur and superiority. His biographer, the best that hero was ever blessed withal, puts him in a niche apart, because he never complicated his vanity by the larger ambition which animates kings and rulers. Richelieu, says Barbey d'Aurevilly,

might have been a Dandy, and was not, because he was also a statesman. Maybe, the paradox is pressed too far ; the greatest Minister might, perchance, be a Dandy in his hours of ease ; but we will not quarrel with a paradox which exalts thus magnificently the throne of Brummel.

Brummel, then, was to himself a work of art, which should be embellished by perfect manners, perfect taste, and a cunning tailor ; nor is it surprising that the finished work inspired the whole of English society with an admiring awe. Moreover, he was no mere theorist, he was an inventor as well. In the matter of clothes, he was what the Germans would call epoch-making. He arrived at the moment when the democratic spirit had killed elegance. The Revolution had done its work, and Charles Fox, himself a Dandy of the second class, had preached the doctrine of equality. The old picturesqueness was dead ; the cocked hat had been vanquished by the topper ; and Brummel had no less a task than to construct a noble costume from this wreckage of republican principles. And what a poor material had he whereon to work ! A coat, a waistcoat, and a pair of trousers ! Yet he was no fanatic to restore the ancient mode ; his greatness consisted in the proper adaptation of the poor materials left to his hand. He did not neglect their shape and contour ; but that their poverty of design might be less noticed, he drew off the attention to the cravat.

This, indeed, was the masterpiece of his invention.

The cravat of Brummel was the envy of crowned heads ; yet nothing could have been more simple. It was half-starched, and it went twice round ; its glory began and ended in the perfect arrangement of its folds ; and Brummel was so delicate an artist that he discarded a cravat which was not flawless at the first attempt. He would insult neither himself nor his cravat by a second trial, and the famous story is a proper index of his greatness. A friend one day encountered his valet on the stairs carrying with him a tray-full of discarded cravats. "What are these ?" asked the eager friend, with half a hope that he might penetrate a long-kept secret. "These," replied the valet, "are some of our failures." And in that simple phrase did Brummel reveal his true, imperishable temperament.

The hours which other men devote to aimless politics and irrelevant intrigue Brummel devoted fearlessly to himself and his mirror. His ingenuity and sense of elegance were concentrated upon himself. His person was the field of battle where he, the general, routed his adversaries—bad taste and awkwardness. His costume, devised by himself, was invariable and worthy of exact record. In the morning, then, he wore Hessians and pantaloons, or top-boots and buckskins, and a light or buff-coloured waistcoat. His evening dress was a blue coat and a white waistcoat, black pantaloons which buttoned tight to the ankles, striped silk stockings, and opera-hat. His greatest pride was the tight pantaloons which displayed

at night the shapeliness of his leg. These, indeed, were cut to his own design, and it is not remarkable that the Regent followed the Dandy's mode in this and other particulars. "The finest gentleman in Europe" would sit for hours and hours in Chesterfield Street, watching the peerless Brummel at work ; yet all the watching in the world could not teach the elegances, and the Regent never legitimately rivalled the Dandy, at whose ruin he jealously connived.

Now, Brummel was the direct descendant from Chesterfield in the line of beaux, and it is not remarkable that his slender library contained a copy of the Earl's Letters. He, too, might have exclaimed, "the Graces, the Graces, remember the Graces!" For his days were loyally given to their worship, and no man ever practised more sedulously what Chesterfield preached. His two ambitions were cleanliness and correction ; and he was so finished a master of his craft that he could always elude notice between Chesterfield Street and White's. And he eluded notice because he fitted the landscape with delicate exactitude. In Regent Street his pantaloons might have cried aloud. They belonged to the scenery of Piccadilly.

So it is that Byron, a lifelong worshipper, spoke the truth when he said that there was nothing remarkable in Brummel's appearance save its "exquisite propriety." Starched cravats and varnished boots might seem to be within the reach of all men ; yet in these accomplishments Brummel was

without a rival. His cravat was perfect because he touched it with his own magic fingers. His boots were perfect because, like the statues in a Greek pediment, they were as highly finished where they were not seen as on their polished surface. But the smallest detail was so nicely calculated that a mistake was impossible. The foolish man reproached Brummel with a lack of manners because he found it impossible to doff his hat to a lady. But it was the work of many minutes and much thought with the Dandy to pose his hat at the right angle ; and who so vain as to demand its removal when once it was set as a crown upon those auburn locks ? To some the head is a receptacle of intelligence ; for Brummel it was a block to sustain the perfect hat.

The world has misjudged Brummel, as it misjudged Chesterfield, because it has sought qualities which were alien to his character. He was heartless, perhaps ; but, then, he was not concerned with affairs of the heart. Women hated him, especially such women as Harriett Wilson, because, as Captain Jesse says in a solitary moment of insight, "he must have inspired her with *une jalousie de femme à femme*—a woman can hardly be expected to forgive a man for being more elegant than herself." Moreover, it was his business to inspire admiration rather than friendship, and for this reason there was none—not even the admirable Scrope —who would break his fall. But if he had no heart, and not too much of the discursive talent called intelligence, he was gifted with a sturdy wit—not too

refined, it is true, but effective enough against the stupidity of his foes. Outside his personal decoration the one achievement of his life was the question he put to Alvanley when the Regent cut him at the Dandies' Ball. "Who's your fat friend?" he demanded in an immortal phrase—a phrase for which it was worth while to live and die.

But in all encounters, he had a natural superiority, which depended not upon judgment or wit or the faculty of repartee. He was great because he had the supreme gift of presentation; he stood before society so exactly poised, so marvellously apparelled, that power and intellect shrank before his gaze. He shared the worst vice of his time: he was a gambler; or his magnificence might have appeared inhuman; and it is very certain that, if his flight to Calais had not been imperative, he would still have braved London in security, even in triumph. But you must seek the course of his success in such details as do not crush empires or exalt kings. The memory of Napoleon suggests the glory of the Italian Campaign. It is an important event in the career of Brummel that he polished his teeth with red root.

Yet the journey to Calais was but a crown to the Dandy's greatness. He had already proved how much might be achieved by the grand manner, for, being a Dandy, he had taken snuff; and no man ever dared to say that he inelegantly besmirched himself. But then he had framed rules for the management of a snuff-box, as he had framed rules for the architecture of a

cravat. The box, said he, must be held and opened in the same hand; and the box must change with the season. Though a trifle in blue Sevres was admirable for the summer, it would make a chilly appearance in December, and could not then be tolerated. However, Brummel cut a magnificent figure when London was at his feet, and he displayed in adversity a loftiness of soul for which none of his few friends gave him credit. Poor and forsaken, he proved that a Dandy may be a hero even in the common sense of the word.

The Regent deserted him in a fit of bitter jealousy, and the snobs of London followed the Regent; but Brummel, still unabashed, did the honours of Great Britain in a modest hotel at Calais. He received exalted visitors with the condescension of an ambassador; he deigned to embellish a tranquil life with the charity of acquaintances. Greville, who had little sympathy with what Barbey d' Aurevilly calls Brummel's majestic frivolity, sketched him as truthfully as he could. "I found him," said the Clerk of the Council, "in his old lodging, dressing; some pretty pieces of old furniture in the room, an entire toilet of silver, and a large green macaw perched on the back of a tattered silk chair with faded gilding, full of gaiety, impudence, and misery."

It is a fine picture of heroism; yet at Calais Brummel was on the mere threshold of misfortune, and it is to his eternal glory that neither an empty pocket nor a failing mind destroyed his gaiety or his

impudence. His flight from Calais is like the retreat of a general overcome by superior odds. When once he was at Caen, defeat was inevitable and bravely borne. That which to another was a light affront was for Brummel a blow dealt to his shaken pride. Poverty robbed him of all the delicacies which made life a reality. He was like a soldier debarred from the battle-field, like a poet deprived of solitude, ink and paper. Yet he fought for his dignity unto the last ditch, and he endured defeat with the imperturbability wherewith he had smiled on victory. He still spent several hours at his toilet, though a provincial town of France was a poor opportunity of display, but thus, as always, he pursued his art, with little thought of the world's opinion. He seldom complained, and even when he did he complained with a touch of the ancient grandeur. "My old friend, King Allen," he writes to Alvanley, "has promised to send me some habiliments for my body, denuded like a new-born infant—and what a Beau I once was!" That is a note of sorrow, bravely sounded; and it is only the first note of his sorrow. When charity came it came in so harsh a guise that it hurt his pride and wrought no benefit. At the last gasp for the necessities of life, he asked for a shawl dressing-gown. They gave him a gown of cotton. What could he but fling it out of window?

1835 was his Waterloo. In that year he was arrested, and, worse still, obliged to dress before the police. This might have seemed the last insult to

one who had never revealed the secrets of his toilet to any save his own Prince Regent. For a moment even his courage failed, but he speedily recovered himself, and he had not been many hours under lock and key when he "descended into the debtor's court," to quote Jesse, "with his neckcloth as white and well tied, his hat smoothed to a hair, and his whole exterior as perfect as if he had been going to pay a morning visit." Did Napoleon show a grander spirit than that when he threw himself, proud and imperial, upon the mercy of his enemies? But Brummel's Waterloo was the prelude to a bitter series of defeats. True, his liberation was a triumph, which restored for a day all the wonderful gaiety of the past. "C'est aujourd'hui," he wrote to a friend, "le plus heureux jour de ma vie, car je suis sorti de prison, et j'ai mangé du saumon." The happiness, however, was an interlude, and soon broken. The monsters who dispensed the charity of his friends were cruel and close-fisted. Piece by piece they deprived him of all the simple frivolities, which meant nothing to their drab souls, but which to poor Brummel were the salt of life. One day we find him writing to his hard-hearted paymaster: "I have never trespassed upon the rules of economy which you have dictated to me, except in one instance, and that has been that damned, execrable blacking. I have now relinquished it for ever." Poor devil! what was Brummel without the blacking, which had made his boots the wonder of Europe? And a yet bitterer humiliation was in store for him. Hard, grinding poverty compelled him to

exchange the white tie which was his own invention, and had been his greatest glory, for a black silk cravat! Yet he did not falter; he made a masterpiece of black silk and for a while was content with his handiwork. Then came the crowning dishonour. As a symbol of elegance, he had still cherished a passion for maraschino and *biscuits de Rheims*. Maybe he cared little for the sweetmeats; but they represented a vanished luxury, and to satisfy this whimsical taste he pawned his jewels; and when all the jewels were pawned, he surrendered the last poor embellishment of a tragic career, and sank to the miserable slovenliness of an imbecile. It is a heart-breaking end, only relieved by the fashion of the beau's madness. In imbecility Brummel was still grandiose, and during his last days he would light candles in his desert room, and hold phantom receptions to all the great personages who once begged his favour. So he lived, great in courage, as he was great in elegance, the martyr to an unkind society. The man who invents a new screw or a fancy piston is secured against poverty. Brummel's service to the cravat could be translated into no reward of money. And he died without a pension, without the humble solace of *biscuits de Rheims* and maraschino.

Brummel's was so masterful a type that in his single person he included all the Dandies. Yet, if he knew no rivals, he was at least followed by a mob of imitators, who exaggerated his qualities into vice. And they are not too amiable, these other Dandies of the Regency. But they retained the friendship of the Prince, who

had gladly suffered Brummel's exile, and at last they pretended to a political influence. When George IV. found that his coronation would be disturbed by riot, his first care, says Lord Lamington, was to discover what was the feeling of the Dandies. Hearing it was against him, "I care nothing for the mob," he exclaimed, "but I do for the Dandies!" Wherefore he entertained them at breakfast, and so recovered their friendship. But this anecdote reveals the Dandies' decadence. You cannot imagine Brummel seduced by an invitation, which his arrogance would probably have declined. Moreover, Brummel's successors, as Gronow tells us, were guilty of three faults: they loved snuff, puns, and practical jokes. Their lack of ingenuity is abundantly proved by Whites' Betting Book, and if they had hazarded fifty pounds upon the death or marriage of a friend they thought they had achieved a masterpiece of humour. The man who had known Brummel grew into a bore, and, what is worse, a solemn bore, who cursed more than he laughed, and who cultivated the obsolete slang of his master. So that when the incomparable D'Orsay introduced a more humane artifice of life, the world was reasonably content. For D'Orsay was a Dandy among Dandies, but he was besides a gentleman of incomparable wit and fancy, and it was the good fortune of another man of genius, Benjamin Disraeli, that he learnt the first lessons of life from the lively lover of Lady Blessington.

Indeed, D'Orsay occupies a separate throne, which he claims not only by elegance, but by artistry. His

sympathies were as wide as his famous shirt-front, and had he not professed to glitter as a man of fashion, he might have come down the ages as a poet or sculptor. Yet his preference was justified, and we can spare many blocks of unhewn marble for the vision of D'Orsay upon his well-bred steed. Above all he had the genius of appreciation. None of his friends ever won a trivial success without the reward of a just and deftly turned compliment. His achievement, then, was broader, less concentrated than Brummel's. And when defeat came upon him—defeat less bitter than that which overwhelmed the great Dandy—he endured it with all his old serenity and light-heartedness. He even found a certain drollery in the siege of Gore House, when all the week his creditors kept him a close prisoner. But as the clock struck midnight on Saturday he would go forth to Crockford's in his bravery, throwing a brilliant smile or a word of flattery to the least and greatest of his friends. And when at last grief and old age vanquished him, he accepted the inevitable as a man should. Lord Lamington gives us a glimpse of the hero's declining days. He found his room draped with black, his bed and window shrouded with curtains of the same sable hue, and all about him souvenirs of the lady whom he loved and mourned. That is not the end of the true Dandy, who, in defeat as in prosperity, should remain an egoist.

D'Orsay was but a figure of accident in a sentimental age, and after the flight of Brummel elegance was a rare and furtive virtue. Under George IV., the

smartest of Regents and vulgarest of monarchs, under William IV., the shrewdest of sea-captains and not quite the stupidest of kings, life was cultivated less ardently than politics. Reform cast a shadow upon gaiety and imagination ; men like Greville, born for Newmarket and frivolity, were driven down the back-stairs of political intrigue, and though we may be certain that the Duke of York did his best to uphold the honourable tradition, there was no industrious historian to record the prowess of his light-hearted companions.

And to-day is Dandyism dead ? Has it perished beneath the weight of uniformity ? Is it eclipsed by the brilliant light which beats upon its throne from a thousand newspaper offices ? Maybe it is not dead ; most assuredly it is obscured. It faces a harder task than that which confronted Brummel. A common frock coat is a more stubborn material than the blue coat and Hessians which distinguished the greatest of all Dandies. Moreover, it is difficult to shine with an exclusive radiance in a world where nothing is hidden from the vulgar gaze. A modern interviewer would look down Brummel's chimney for the secret of his incomparable cravat. If D'Orsay were alive to-day he could not leave Kensington Gore without being tracked by a hundred eager spies. His dress and occupations would be noted in so common a phrase that he would straightway be driven to self-consciousness and concealment. But there is no need to despair ; there may still be heroes left to respect the grandiose conventions of life, and if we know nothing of their exploits,

if their sense of refinement has enabled them to escape the scrutiny of the journal, some cunning Greville or industrious Pepys may be in their midst, composing an immortal diary, which shall hand down to our children's children a picture of our vague, yet rarely secret time.

But the supremacy of the Beaux is as transient as the conversation of the *Salon*. Where the effect depends upon the set of the coat, the glint of an eye, the tone of a voice, the effect dies with death, and it is a mere reflection of the past that is flashed upon us. One poor shadow is cast by the ancient handbooks to the Court, which begin with Castiglione's enchanting masterpiece and end with Chesterfield's monument of good breeding. But with a few exceptions these learned treatises are not illuminating. In the first place they are but the application of science to art; in the second place they echo from one to the other a kind of bland cynicism. As Macchiavelli taught the lesson of worldly cunning to his Prince, so the many imitators of Castiglione were less anxious to make their courtiers elegant than shrewd. The Courtier's speediest road of advance, says one, "is to insinuate himself into the pleasures of his Prince." And again: "It is a prudent part in a Courtier to lose sometimes at play on purpose, to put his Master in a good humour." In the matter of dress they are unanimous, these instructors of deportment. "A gentleman is fine enough when he is black, new, and neat." That maxim may be found in all the treatises from Castiglione to Chesterfield. But Baltazzar Castiglione is incomparably the

wisest and the most amiable. His declaration is as clear and lucid as may be: "The manners and carriage of a man, which I here distinguish from his deeds, give us in a great measure a good idea of him." Of course he insists upon grace and skill in arms. Of course he inculcates that negligence or concealment of art, which has always seemed the mark of a gentleman. He, too, declares that the Courtier should "adore the Prince, whose service is his great engagement." But he is too decorous and too humane to urge the petty means of cajolery, upon which his successors unscrupulously insist. For his Courtier must be polished, as well as successful. He must accept the teaching of Plato, and study music. Yet he should sternly despise the bold front of the professed musician. "He should perform," in fact, "as a matter of diversion, and be brought to it, as it were, by constraint." For the rest Castiglione is a profound philosopher, with views not merely upon behaviour, but upon the virtues of a literary style. And the setting of his argument is as romantic as Boccaccio's own garden; in brief, he is as gay and cultivated a companion as man can wish to have, and if he cannot teach the impossible, that is not his fault, but the fault of his aspiration.

Less entertaining and far more practical is Francis Osborne's *Advice to a Son*, which holds a middle place between Castiglione and Chesterfield. Now Francis Osborne was half a moralist, and wholly a man of the world. Yet he aims less at grace than at seemly conduct. He would have his son neatly

habited, "exceeding rather than coming short of others of like fortune"; he would have him always pay with ready money, and "be drawn rather where you find things cheap and good than for friendship or acquaintance." That is worldly wisdom, in truth, nor will his maxim be disputed that "next to clothes a good horse becomes a gentleman." And here again he adds a warning against being cozened for the profit of a friend. But his fiercest displeasure is reserved for sportsmen. "Who can put too great a scorn upon their folly," says he, "that to bring home a rascal deer, or a few rotten conies, submit their lives to the will or passion of such as may take them?" In this passage of humorous contempt he agrees with the great Lord Chesterfield, whom he rivals in prudence, but whose worship of the Graces he could never have appreciated.

Another and a more vivid reflection is flashed upon us by the "Memoirs," which fix the character of the time in a faded photograph. The newspapers also fix it, after their fashion, like a dead butterfly with the pin of scandal through its back. However, as the solemn documents, stored in the public offices, reveal the serious progress of history, so irresponsible diaries and reminiscences give us some poor image of life's passing pageant. And it is by the accident of genius that we know one period, while another is hidden from our view; since we can best understand a period, if we know one man who played a part in it. Our knowledge of the Restoration is due, for instance, to the incomparable Pepys, that man of genius who added a perfect

sincerity to a perfect knowledge of himself. And thus we arrive at the first qualification of him who would keep a diary. He must know himself before he knows his world; and to know oneself is the most difficult of all accomplishments. *Caelo descendit*, γνῶθι σεαυτὸν, said the satirist, and certainly it was from heaven that the maxim should have descended. Alas! it descends but seldom. To the mass of men *know yourself* is a counsel of unrealised perfection. For he who knows himself knows all things; he has learnt the value of that mysterious *x*, which shall solve the equation of life. But how shall we, creatures of passing moods, catch each mood as it passes? Death and the lapse of time allow our friends a casual comprehension of our waywardness. But we never get far enough from our own images for a sincere judgment, and we generally die in complete ignorance of that which lies nearest to us. The history of the world, in brief, is the history of failure induced by the lack or self-knowledge, and we cannot but believe that the ancient philosopher who grimly looked out at his fellows from his attic window, murmuring γνῶθι σεαυτὸν, was a humorist in disguise. Yet now and again the philosopher who knows himself takes pen in hand, and then he pierces other mysteries than that of his own character.

So Pepys and Bassompierre triumphed where Charles Greville, most zealous of diarists, failed. And Greville failed not through ignorance but by half-knowledge. He is always on the edge of success, and at any moment he might have drawn a true and stirring picture. But

a kind of hesitancy, a false pride in his own seriousness, which was of no account, stayed his hand, and he fell back on the gossip of the clubs. He exaggerates the importance of politics, as Grammont exaggerates the importance of Maids of Honour, while Pepys holds the divine balance by seeing the value of all things. Again, Greville never gives you the aspect and gesture of his informant; to him the subtle drama of gossip is lacking; while Pepys, by setting before you the last man or woman with whom he spoke, always guards the sympathy of his reader. Worse still, Greville fails in sincerity: he is desperately anxious to conceal his true character, not only from his reader, but from himself. In truth, it is chiefly by regrets that the true Greville is revealed, but his repentance is never grimly humorous like the repentance of Pepys; rather it is marked by a sadness which utterly destroys the picturesque effect.

For instance, the real business of Greville's life was gambling; he lived for and upon Newmarket; he knew the world of trainers and jockeys as few men in his time knew that droll and entertaining world. But does he tell you one secret of the turf, does he reveal one characteristic of the shady sportsman? Not a bit of it. The Reform Bill chokes him, and then he falls back upon a dull remorse. "All last week at Epsom," says he; "and now, thank God, all these races are over. Nothing but the hope of gain would induce me to go through this demoralising drudgery, which I am conscious reduces me to the level of all that is most disrespectable and despicable, for my thoughts are eternally

absorbed by it. Jockeys, trainers, and blacklegs are my companions, and it is like dram-drinking ; having once entered upon it I cannot leave it off, though I am disgusted by the occupation all the time." Of course he could not leave it off; of course his thoughts were eternally absorbed. But why did he not tell us all about it ? Why did he not sketch for us the trainers and blacklegs, as Pepys would have sketched them ? Then he too would have given us a real page from the art of life. But his insincerity barred the road of truth. He believed himself a politician, when he was something far rarer, a man living in accord with his own character.

So Boccaccio set vast store by his treatise *De Genealogia Deorum*, and believed that no man would ever remember his marvellous tales. So the excellent musician, sketched by Castiglione, laid aside his instrument and gave himself up to poetry, until all the world laughed at him, and his very music was quite forgot. And so Greville with an equal contempt of himself has told us many things which we might have found out elsewhere, and has left untold that strange record of pleasure and remorse which none of his age had the courage to relate. He was, in brief, a man of the world masquerading as a prig ; he always wanted to be another man, and it is of the other man that he is commonly eloquent. His touches of intimacy are so rare that they have a strangely vivid effect in his sombre history. " Dined with the Duke of Wellington yesterday ; thirty-one people, very

handsome, and the Styrian Minstrels playing and singing all dinner-time, a thing I never saw before." It is not much; yet we would not exchange it for a wilderness of political intrigue and Reform Bills. Greville, in fact, had many amiable gifts, and he has bequeathed us a valuable book. But he knew so little of himself that the rest of the world was blurred to his vision, and he is not a rival near the throne of Pepys. Yet he is the last of his race, the last gossip, who believed that life was the material of a cunning art. And has he left a successor? We hope so, and with a fervent unselfishness. For whoever he be that shall act the part of Pepys to our own generation, we shall never contemplate his achievements, since it is the Beau's penalty that he shall be understood only when the smile is dead upon his face, and the sparkling jest is silent upon his withered tongue.

YOUNG WESTON

YOUNG WESTON

THE King, missing his stroke, stumbled clumsily upon the tennis-court; and, gathering up his heavy frame with difficulty, strode sullenly within. "Your Grace," cried Young Weston, chuckling that another game was his, "Your Grace shall take your revenge with the dice-box." But Henry, enraged no less at his waning skill than at the loss of his money, threw not a word at his smiling favourite, who gazed imperturbable at the retreating corpulency.

Young Weston chuckled again. Though scarce sixteen he rode upon the full tide of fortune. Admitted, at an age when most boys linger at school, to the friendship of his Sovereign, he was secure that neither extravagance nor indiscretion could check his progress. A hundred advantages were his: his open brow, his clear blue eye, his burnished hair compelled admiration, and at Court he was already a famous breaker of hearts. His loose-knit frame united the suppleness of youth with the assured strength of manhood; and, as no exertion seemed too great for him, he undertook the most desperate adventure with a light heart and a lighter hand. He was an easy master of all sports,

nor was there a single game of chance whereat his golden luck did not pursue him. To see him on horseback was to think of Alexander and Bucephalus, and though neither his weight nor his lack of judgment permitted him at a single chase to tire ten steeds, he rode as hard and as straight as the King himself. At tennis he knew not his equal in Europe, and, as he never played without backing his skill, a comfortable income was assured him in a world of gamblers. A courtier born, he assumed that all the elegances of a refined life were his proper birth-right, and he was already an exquisite, when he left Surrey, under the Cardinal's august protection, to take office in the King's household. A ribbon awry, an ill-cut doublet were a lasting offence to him ; the taste and ambition of childhood had taught him to be dainty in his dress ; and he was a leader of fashion when most of his fellows were content with the fusty uniform of school or college.

No wonder, then, he dreamed his career a march of triumph ; no wonder he believed his charm invincible. Mine, said he to himself, is the genius of success. He would royster and gamble through life, winning all those hearts which he chose to assail, and as much money as should equip him nobly for the most gallant enterprise. His childish vanity persuaded him to hope that he would bend even the stubborn King to his will, and the monarch's displeasure at another lost game irked him not a whit. The scene of the tennis-court was as common as sunrise, and the revenge with the

dice-box ever doubled the debt. For all his extravagance, for all his ambition or beautiful things, of jewels, books, and pictures, he had small fear of an empty pocket, and he sunned himself in the favour of heaven with the pride and carelessness of some bright-plumaged bird. Moreover, he accepted his happiness without the least touch of vulgar surprise: after all he enjoyed no more splendour than that for which his childhood had prepared him.

His father, as became a travelled gentleman who had witnessed the brilliancy of the Cloth of Gold, was familiar with the art and luxury of France and of that fair country which lay beyond the Alps. He had even built amid the hills of Surrey a mansion which would not have outraged the taste of an Italian nobleman. And Francis, for all his sixteen years, could carry back his memory to the growing magnificence of Sutton Place. He had seen the doorways framed with their dainty pilasters; he had seen the delicate *amorini* chiselled upon the lintels; he had witnessed the honour that attends the acquisition of a treasure which is not only beautiful but fashionable. To Sutton had thronged the great nobles of England; there they had marvelled at the fantasy of Sir Richard Weston; there they had applauded his cultured, exotic taste. They had even condescended, while acclaiming the courage of the innovator, to steal the design for the enlargement of their own glory. The King himself had honoured the new house with his presence and approval; there

was no courtier whom Wolsey had destined more generously for distinction than the master of Sutton. And young Weston left his home to assume the duties of a Royal Page with no danger of the ruin that follows a sudden aggrandisement.

When the boy arrived in London—it was in 1526—Henry was no longer the handsomest monarch in Europe. Not even the most genial Ambassador, in that spirit of content which is bred of a good dinner and 8000 ducats won in a day, could assert that his play at tennis was "the prettiest thing in the world to see." His encroaching corpulency was fast driving him to the familiar aspect of a fat man with a small mouth. His plumped cheeks were thrusting his bead-like eyes still further into his head. Though yet an ardent sportsman, he sat heavily upon his horse, and was rather a spectator than a combatant at joust and tourney. His thirty-six years had impaired neither his learning nor his courage, but, in the words of the historian, his accomplishment soon become cunning, his bravery fell into cruelty. Though his wolfish character had not yet declared itself, though he had not yet come forth a Sadic monster with an immitigable taste for matrimony, a Gilles de Rais with a quenchless passion for another lawful spouse, he was already deeply committed to the cruel intrigue which was the tardy undoing of the blameless, foolish Catharine. The Bishops of England were even now busy with argument and excuse; the Cardinal's devotion was engaged in the persuasion of Rome; and Henry's

own casuistical brain had at last discovered, by the light of Anne Boleyn's eyes, "a certain scrupulosity that pricked his conscience." He was Bluebeard, indeed, employing hypocrisy for bloodshed, but resolved, if the simpler method failed, not to shrink from the headsman's axe.

Such was the monster against whose will and cunning young Weston pitted his boyish intelligence. And the boy's charm and skill gave him an immediate advantage. For Henry was a tireless gambler ; even in that distant time, when his father destined him for an archbishopric, and it was his amiable custom to say five masses in a day, he could resist neither the card-table nor the dice-box, and in Francis Weston he met an opponent whose skill was as great as his recklessness. There was no game at which this cynic of sixteen would not encounter his Sovereign, and so expert were his hand and eye that he ever came off victorious. Yesterday it was tennis, to-morrow it might be bowls, every day it was dice or imperial. And extravagant as Weston was in dress and finery, in all the luxury which belongs to the life of palaces, fot a while he had small difficulty in making the King pay for his magnificence. Henry, moreover, despite his brutality, loved or feared a successful antagonist. Just as he reverenced Wolsey for the astuteness and obstinacy which outwitted his master, so he admired the stripling who defeated him in the tennis-court, and won his money across the table, to the rattle of the dice. In truth, the King was

never tired of rewarding the boy's superiority; he would lend him money at the slightest embarrassment, he would give him presents in recompense for his sport and energy, and for ten years he was resolute to procure him profit and advancement. Thus Young Weston passed from London to Greenwich, from Greenwich to Hampton, enjoying whatever there was of splendour and gaiety in life, a favoured guest at the twin Courts of Cardinal and King.

His father had sent him to London with a headful of worldly precepts, which Francis was astute enough never to forget. Now, Sir Richard Weston, an ancient intriguer, and friend of Wolsey, was among the first to foresee the rise of the Boleyns, and to the Boleyns, cunning and ambitious, he commended his cunning and ambitious son. Sir Thomas Boleyn's grandfather, a Lord Mayor, had gifted him with the comfort of wealth, and distinguished connections had insisted that for him a brilliant career would be crowned with a peerage. There was nothing he would not sacrifice for the honour and advancement of an upstart house, and he had the wit to perceive the value of culture in the unequal battle. Culture, he recognised, is seldom so seductive as when it is exalted by the patronage of fashion, and learning had never been more fashionable than under the Eighth Henry. Thus were politics and intelligence inextricably mixed, as in our own day, and though the more ancient houses still reserved an exclusive respect for their horses and dogs, those with a keener eye upon their immediate advance-

ment were quick to approve the newly discovered classics, and to babble of ancient Greece with a kind familiarity.

To his children it was then that Sir Thomas looked for his own advancement. One and all, they were accomplished in the sport and knowledge of the day. If they were rather fashionable than erudite, they were scrupulously and intelligently in the movement, and they possessed the dash and assurance which proceed from a not too sensitive superiority. With them the revival of learning was a commonplace: they had dipped into *Utopia;* they appraised the achievement of Erasmus and Colet with a glib counterfeit of scholarship. The vogue of the minute compelled a knowledge of Latin and French, and at all points they thought themselves the King's equals, and the Cardinal's masters. Their wealth and confidence procured them an obedient following; every licence was granted to their pride and learning; and before long there grew up a tiny Court within the Court, wherein Anne Boleyn was a mimic queen, and all her friends and worshippers paid a willing reverence. Already the young Lord Percy had been disinherited for venturing upon an adoration, which she, not foreseeing the King's pleasure, had more than half reciprocated; and Henry, thus forced into an admission of his love, had declared his passion, proclaiming—after his wont—his motive honourable. Nor need the proudest Sovereign have shrunk from paying her homage, for Anne Boleyn was the most accomplished woman of her age:

she had spent five years in the Court of the Reine Claude ; she had learned all the wit and sprightliness that Marguerite of Valois had to teach ; with an intellectual courage, rare even at this epoch of revolution, she had mastered the theological speculation of her time, and she would confute the most erudite of prelates and cardinals with a bland smile of innocence.

Henry, then, whose love of casuistry was irresistible, found a perpetual delight in the society of this lady, whose stockings were at least stained with blue, and who, while she captivated him with her wit, dazzled him with her person. For her beauty, though it might elude the passer-by, was none the less seductive. A delicate brunette, she charmed rather by life and expression than by any formal regularity of feature. "Briefly," says Lord Herbert of Cherbury, "it seems the most attractive perfections were eminent in her." And if she sat her down to music, there was none so insensible, he would withhold a willing worship. "When she composed her hands to play," again it is the historian who speaks, "and voice to sing, it was joined with that sweetness of countenance that three harmonies concurred." The King, at any rate, fell a ready victim to her "perfections"; and when, echoing Elizabeth Woodville, she declared that, if she were not of birth high enough to be his Queen, she was still too well born to be his mistress, he redoubled the ardour of his suit, addressed her letters of passionate regret—which, forgetful of his middle-class ferocity, he signed

with a heart—and urged his Cardinal to hasten the divorce.

Thus Anne Boleyn was a Queen in reverence, ir not in name, and it was to her fortunes that young Weston attached himself. In her circle he, too, babbled of the learning that was new, and openly defied the tyranny of Popes and Legates. Ever hopeful of Catharine's downfall, her friends looked to the time when Anne should sit upon the throne, and when Wolsey, who had prospered them all, should be stripped of a power that grew impertinent. Thus they clutched the wine-cup of life with both hands, and left not a few poor dregs to attest their draught. They gambled and spent the gold their luck brought them with an extravagance which terrified those for whom Henry VII. was yet a tradition ; they talked with a daring and a certainty which appeared infamous to a society educated in the strictest obedience to authority ; they rode, they jousted, they killed the hart with a skill which lent a glory to their courage and their pride. Living on terms of perfect familiarity with the tyrant who frowned upon them all, they treated him with a monstrous levity, and won his money or witnessed his discomfiture in happy disregard of his Sadic temper.

Of this society Francis Weston was instantly a leader : his father's taste in architecture had placed him on a pinnacle ; the quickness of his own talent had confirmed the distinction. There was no pleasure whereto he was not impelled by his joyous

temperament: not even the philosophy of Anne Boleyn's salon checked his enthusiasm for sport, and the King continued to pay dearly for his favourite's skill. But with the years his extravagance increased; a scanty patrimony hardly supported the necessities of life, and even his unrivalled luck was insufficient to support a growing weight of debt. No resource was left but a wealthy marriage, and he was scarce twenty when he entered upon a tiresome and profitable alliance. The King smiled approval, and for a demure present gave the bridegroom £6 13*s.* 4*d.* handsomely tied up, one supposes, in red tape. But before long Weston found the heiress a hindrance to his preferment at Court, and, with the cynical indifference that was his characteristic, he banished her to Sutton, and pursued afresh his career in that brilliant world of wit and extravagance, wherein the lightest bond was unendurable.

His moment of triumph arrived when the King proclaimed the marriage with Catharine a blasphemy, and crowned Anne Boleyn with so reckless a splendour as should atone for her years of equivocal sovereignty. On all sides were heard the sound of cannonades, the fountains ran wine, "white, claret, and red"; wherever the progress was stayed, there was prepared a lordly pageant. At Gracechurch Apollo and the Muses Nine, sitting upon Mount Parnassus, were appropriately revealed to the learned Queen; at the Conduit a sumptuous show of the Three Graces flattered the royal beauty. Nor did this memorable day end with

an empty spectacle: there was none of the circle that was not instantly advanced; titles were freely distributed among the Boleyns, and Young Weston became—at twenty-two—a Knight of the Bath. Wolsey was dead, killed by an implacable intrigue, and Weston and his friends believed that, with Cromwell to aid, the King would prove the willing slave of their greed and ambition. The Court, freed from the frowning tragedy of Catharine, became yet gayer and more refined; and, if the King glutted his taste for blood, if the head of Sir Thomas More fell under the axe, the favourites thought their own necks safe, and still enjoyed the fruits of a fashionable culture.

But Weston and the Queen, in their hatred of Wolsey had removed the single statesman who might have controlled the savagery of the King, and it was this treachery that, at last, ensured their ruin. Meantime, a bitter quarrel divided the Queen's own family: my Lord of Norfolk was indignant that Anne's father, a new-made Earl, should be preferred before himself in the King's counsels, while the wife of George Boleyn, the most cultured wit and poet of them all, hated her sister-in-law as fiercely as she despised her elegant husband.

So the dissension became noisier and more vulgar; the restraints of prudence and learning were flung aside, and the Court was troubled perpetually by the paltry jealousies of angry women. Weston, less from loyalty, one is sure, than from an imperfect foresight, espoused the cause of the Queen, and thus unwittingly

prepared his own death. The King, tired of wit, wearied, maybe, with the unprofitable sports of dice and tennis, determined that he would endure no longer the domination of the party his inclination had created. Anne, thought he, had proved somewhat amiable in her favours; and, though no breath of scandal touched her character, she amused herself too freely, for the taste of the British Bluebeard, with the attentions of the troubadours who thronged the Court. Moreover the King had fallen virtuously in love with Jane Seymour, and, since he preferred murder before the mere suspicion of adultery, he had determined, at a single blow, to rid himself of a wife who no longer pleased him, and to save the money which he daily squandered in the tennis-court.

But even he, though no restraint fettered his will, must find an occasion for this fresh brutality. He could not in cold blood kill a virtuous and accomplished lady, whom he had loved through years of wooing and honoured with a share of his throne. Yet the desire of Jane Seymour was not to be denied, and this prim and bloodthirsty husband eagerly watched his opportunity. The opportunity came at a tourney; the Queen's brother and Young Weston were in the lists, and the Queen, in the innocence of her heart, and careless with the excitement of the joust, let her handkerchief flutter down between the combatants. One of them, said the King, picked it up and pressed it to his guilty lips, and on the morrow the Queen and her friends were involved in an infamous charge of adultery. Murder

should have been enough to satisfy the dour temper of the corpulent monster, but he preferred to invent, in hypocritical self-justification, an array of shameful accusations. The trial was proclaimed with an indecent haste; the Queen's own uncle presided to ensure his niece's punishment; and, though to flatter the King even at the moment of death one miscreant pleaded guilty, six heads fell that Henry might satisfy his lust without infringing the first law of domestic respectability.

Francis Weston was involved in the common ruin of his cultured set, though the evidence, furnished forth by an interested prosecution, was sufficient for acquittal. The Queen, said the youth's detractors, had reproached him with paying too instant a suit to Margaret Shelton, a Maid of Honour, and with neglecting the poor heiress whom he had made his wife. "He replied," urged the voice of malice, "that he loved one in her house better than both. And the Queen said: 'Who is that?' 'It is yourself.' And she defyed him." There is the simple statement, and it was for this, guiltless and uncorroborated, that the most brilliant courtier of his age died a disgraceful death. As in life he had borne himself with a gay lightheartedness, so he gave his head with complete dignity and a noble reserve. He incriminated none; he spoke no word of praise or blame; he asserted his innocence, and after condemnation declined to part his lips in protest or confession; he even forbore to add one word in favour of the pardon which was asked;

and he died owing the butcher who had slain him forty-six pounds, so that even from beyond the grave he won a last victory over his Royal master.

His debts amounted to the goodly sum of £925 7*s.* 2*d.* and with the gambler's thrift he made his last petition for their discharge. "Father and mother and wyfe," he wrote with a pathetic dignity, "I shall humbly desyre you for the salvacyon of my sowle to dyschardge me of this bill, and to forgyve me of all the offences that I have done to you. And in especyall to my wyfe, whiche I desyre for the love of God to forgive me, and to pray for me, for I beleve prayer wyll do me good. Goddys blessing have my chylderne and meyne. By me a great offender to God." The schedule which then follows, the last document written by the courtier's hand, is a fitting farewell to a life of pleasure. To Browne, the draper, he owed fifty pounds; to "my lorde of Wylshyre," the father of the murdered Queen, forty pounds in angels; to Bridges, "my taylor," twenty-six pounds; to "parson Robynson" (the sporting parson existed even in the sixteenth century), sixty-six pounds; and most moving of all, "to a pooer woman at the Tennes play for bawles I cannot tell howe muche."

"To a pooer woman at the Tennes play for bawles I cannot telle how muche." Where shall one find a dying speech so eloquent and appropriate? After this forethought, you are not surprised to know, on the faith of an eye-witness, that "he died very charitably."

And if no better sportsman ever held a racket, so no more careless a gentleman was ever sacrificed to the lust and intrigue of a virtuous monarch. Truly his memory was writ in water. No sooner had his head fallen from his shoulders than he was forgotten of his friends. The King wore white for a day, and on the morrow married Jane Seymour, whose beauty had been the death-warrant of all. And Sir Richard Weston showed so chivalrous a contempt for his son's martydom that he did not for a single hour interrupt his obsequious friendship for the King. But his century knew no courtier so picturesque as Francis Weston, and you contemplate his career with the satisfaction that, if he lost his head, he yet compelled his patron and his murderer to pay handsomely for a pitiful lack of skill at "tennes, dyce, and imperiall."

A MARSHAL OF FRANCE

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TO be great and yet intimate is the heritage of few. Kings and warriors play their part upon the larger stage of life, and urge us to forget that passion, jealousy, and private malice were ever among their qualities. It is the field of battle, not the gaming table, that seems to befit the masters of the world, and in the clash of states the whisper of love is too often silenced by the blare of the trumpet. Wherefore, your admiration is the greater when one of the immortal heroes descends to a confidence, and gossips (so to say) at your fireside of triumph or defeat, vaunting the smiles of fair women and the favour of kings. Thus it is that Francois de Bassompierre lives in our memory : if the statelier records proclaim his prowess and fidelity, his *Memoirs* reveal an accomplished and debonair gentleman, with whom his own candour invites you to make acquaintance across the disparting centuries.

His family was German and of immemorial nobility. The County of Ravelstein, the Barony of Bestein, were the heritage of unnumbered ancestors, who since time began had been accustomed to the service of

emperors and of kings. So that when he was born, on April 12, 1579, at four o'clock in the morning, at the Chateau of Harouel, a life of splendour and magnificence was already prepared him. His childhood was spent in the seclusion of Lorraine, and he set forth upon the grand tour with a conscious pride in his destiny and lineage. Everywhere he was received with the honour which is paid to illustrious descent, and under the auspices of mighty princes he became accomplished in all the learning and elegance of the age. If in Germany he pursued the study of Aristotle with a dangerous zeal, Italy provided a gracious diversion, and at Naples he perfected himself in those knightly exercises which won him instant glory at the Court of France. The august Pignatelle was his riding-master, until old age set its seal upon a distinguished career; he learnt the art of dancing, wherein he excelled all his contemporaries, from Agostino himself, while Marquino taught him the use of lance and rapier. Thus he returned to Harouel at all points a proper gentleman, and when at nineteen he set out for Paris, accompanied by his mother and sisters, the equipage was no more brilliant than his reasonable hopes. The capital, indeed, was the scene of his immediate triumph; he began the career of courtier under kingly patronage and with universal admiration. Young, handsome, accomplished, he had nothing to fear, save the jealousy of the inexpert, and for thirty years his invincible tact preserved him even from the assaults of malice.

Nor was the occasion unworthy the young courtier's enterprise and audacity. France had settled into the semblance of a peace, and Henry, her King—that Polichinelle of genius—knew no other care than joyousness. Before the Court passed a gorgeous procession of dances and masquerades; the King's mistresses were the most beautiful in Europe; his warriors the most valiantly equipped. The card-table had brought oblivion of the religious wars, and not even the sorrows of the Huguenots had driven the smile of merriment from his face. Moreover, he was loyal, frank, simple, and just such a monarch as would entice the devotion and dazzle the fancy of a careless soldier, in whose eyes pleasure was a distinction and warfare an easy pastime. It was an age, indeed, of love and war, of strong passion and hot temper, when a man's hand was ready at his sword-hilt, and the tourney was practised in the courtyard of the Louvre.

Nor could ingenuity have devised a more suitable appearance than Bassompierre's: a dinner at Monsieur le Grand's, whither the Comte de Grammont had conducted him, made him acquainted with the gallants of the Court who presently proposed to beguile the King's malady with a ballet. Straightway Bassompierre was bidden of the number, and when he pleaded reluctantly that he had not yet done reverence to his Majesty, the excuse was brushed aside and he set out with the rest for Monceaux. No sooner was the ballet finished, and the masks removed, than the King called for Bassompierre, treated him with a generous

amiability, presented him to his mistress, the Duchess of Beaufort, the famous Gabrielle herself, and bade him henceforth be counted among his friends. The young soldier was eager to seize the advantage; like many another gentleman adventurer, he increased his patron's consideration by his reckless gambling; and in a few weeks he had won so goodly a sum of money from the King, that Henry could no longer endure to think of his departure. But Bassompierre received the King's offer of service with characteristic independence. "I had not yet intended," said he, "to resolve upon the future. I came to France for amusement's sake, and designed to visit Spain before devoting my hand and my sword to the welfare of a king. Yet on this short voyage I have found a master whom I can serve until death, and to you I dedicate my life and courage." Henceforth he esteemed himself a Frenchman; henceforth he defended the interests of his master with a foresight and a valiance which nothing save an agreeable intrigue could interrupt. Though he won Henry's money, though once even he stole Henry's mistress, he lived with the King upon terms of equal cordiality until Ravaillac's knife deprived him of a gracious friend, and the hawthorn that grew in the Court of the Louvre fell on a windless day; nor did the death of his patron weaken for an instant his honourable regard for France.

He was the gallantest lover of a gallant age, and he professed unto the end a joyful pride in his conquests. With a very gentlemanly frankness he has told the

story of his loves, and the simplicity wherewith he records his triumph is worthy of our own Pepys. *Le jeudi* 22, he writes, *j'eus une bonne fortune.* The statement can neither be bettered nor translated, and for many a year there are few days whereon the boast is not justified. A generous admirer of beauty, he was always ready to accept complacency in return for his admiration, and it was his unchanging ambition to break no heart—not even his own. Like all strong men, he knew the joy of life; like all wise ones, he was ashamed to discard it. While his adoration of Mademoiselle d'Entragues is yet fresh, he interrupts the recital of his triumphs at lansquenet and in the hunting-field with this rhapsody: "I was in love with d'Entragues and with another beautiful lady. I was also in the flower of my youth, and well-made, and gay." What a delightful memory wherewith to break the pitiless monotony of the Bastille!

And the beautiful women of France love him in spite (or on account) of his inconstancy. When he is sent on a mission to Lorraine, they pursue him with messengers, with letters, with presents even; and when the news is brought of his return, they set forth in their carriages that he may make his entry with a proper guard of honour. Sometimes he excuses his popularity with an unbecoming modesty. Thus, he would belittle his success when he brings back a treaty from Spain: "There were few gallants in Paris, and all the ladies assembled at the Tuileries. I was in vast esteem, and was in love with divers of them. Besides,

I had spent twenty thousand crowns upon Spanish curiosities, and these procured me an excellent reception." But the modesty is insincere, and the real Bassompierre is rather he who boasts on another occasion: "I was well both with the Court and with the ladies; I had a host of beautiful mistresses." In truth they loved their Bassompierre better than all the treasures of Spain, nor was it to receive his gifts that they flocked in eager emulation to the deserted Tuileries.

He changed his mistresses as easily as he put off a worn-out coat. "I started this year"—such is the plain record of 1608—"with a fair lady." And the colour was fashionable, for on the next page you read of an exquisite comedy performed by a flaxen-haired troop for the King's pleasure. But presently it is a Greek beauty, who haunts the theatre for his sake, and you readily believe his confidence that *les soirs et les nuits m'étaient belles*. And yet for many years he kept one separate corner in his heart for Mademoiselle d'Entragues. Though she never gained a complete ascendency over his affection, though even at her zenith she must share her lover with the world, yet he adored her with a tempered constancy, and his attention persuaded her to demand marriage of the law. At the outset she was the toast of the Court—the mistress of the King; and doubtless the young Bassompierre was proud enough to poach upon his master. Besides, the intrigue was carried on with all the romance of a guilty love. An upper chamber

was discovered, which the lady might reach through a door concealed in her wardrobe; it was adorned with silver plaques and silver torches, and its furniture was the furniture of Zammer.

Such was the meeting-place of Bassompierre and Mlle. d'Entragues, and all might have been well had not the King and M. de Guise been seized with jealousy. Their suspicion fell easily enough upon M. le Grand, whom they hated like the plague, and presently they warned the lady's mother of his design. Madame d'Entragues, determined upon discovery, rose hastily one night, found her daughter's room empty, and the door open which led to the hidden staircase. The poor girl was soundly thrashed for her pains; her lover was with difficulty restored to favour; and, for a while at least, they feared the King's resentment so bitterly that they spoke only in secret. "However," says Bassompierre, "lovers are always ingenious enough to find some rare means of intercourse;" and doubtless the intimacy was more frequent even after disclosure than the King suspected or than Bassompierre chose to reveal.

But, alas! the intrigue became notorious. While he was too young for discretion, she was resolved upon marriage and respectability. So they still appeared together at Fontainebleau, and they still met in the secret chamber, which lay behind the hidden door, and was approached by a forgotten staircase. And one night, some worthless ruffian, surprised in a house hard by, was bastinadoed and flung, with scanty covering, into the street, where presently he died.

And the mob, seeing a lifeless body at the door of Madame d'Entragues' house, was not slow to spread the report of Bassompierre's death. Straightway his friends flocked for news to his lodging, and, finding him absent on another quest, gave the comedy a tragic complexion, until the town believed the courtier was no more. The mystery was easily pierced; but the tongues of the gossips were already on the wag, and Bassompierre, who liked not a serious scandal, began to tire of d'Entragues' advertised affection. The lady, however, was resolute, and for eight years she threatened her reluctant lover with a lawsuit. The squalid conclusion to what should have been a very pretty drama inspires a regret. For the lady was beautiful and her lover had once been ardent, but the law declined to aid her, and the Court knew her presence no more. Once, in her discredited years, she encountered her ancient lover. He was in the Queen's carriage, and as they passed, the Queen exclaimed, with a laugh: "There goes Madame de Bassompierre." "That is only her *nom de guerre*," said Bassompierre. The unhappy lady overheard the taunt; and denounced her ancient lover as *le plus sot des hommes*. "Ah, madam," he replied, "what would you have said had you married me?"

His most romantic adventure had a still more sinister conclusion. It chanced—in the year 1606—that as often as he passed over the Petit-Pont, a beautiful washer-girl, at the Sign of the Two Angels, made him her courtesy, and followed him with her eyes

until he was out of sight. Now, one day when he crossed the bridge on his road from Fontainebleau, the girl stood at her shop door and murmured as he passed: "Sir, I am your servant." He saluted her with reverence, and turning his head from time to time, he saw that she looked after him as long as she could. Forthwith he bade his lackey dismount, and so sent word to the girl, that in return for her flattering curiosity he would be pleased to give her an interview. She told the lackey that he had brought her the best news he could, and she came to the meeting-place in all joyousness of heart.

Bassompierre, the liberal lover of the Court, was enchanted with her amiable simplicity, and implored her to see him once more. Wishing nothing more ardently she yet strenuously declined to re-enter the none too honourable place which the lackey had prepared for their reception. "I know well," said she, with perfect tact, "the character of the house wherein we are met. Hither I have come for my love of you, and because you dignify even this infamous meeting-place; but once is not custom, and though I would do much for one I loved, and for a Bassompierre, to return to this house would expose me to a just reproach. Wherefore you must see me the next time at the house of my aunt, who lives in the Rue Bourg l'Abbé, not far from the market, and close to the Rue aux Ours. Her door is the third on the side next the Rue St. Martin; and there I shall await you from ten o'clock to midnight, and afterwards I will leave the door open. At the entrance

is a small alley, which you must pass in haste, for there is my aunt's chamber, and then you will find a staircase, which will lead you to the second storey."

Bassompierre accepted the conditions, and on Sunday night, crossing the Petit-Pont, he made his way along the Rue St. Denis and past the market, until he came to the Rue aux Ours. The Rue Bourg l'Abbé faced him, and at ten o'clock he stood outside the house which the washer-girl had described. But the girl, alas! was not there to bid him welcome. The door was closed, and every floor was ominously illuminated. He knocked, and heard no answer but only the voice of a man, who brusquely demanded his business. Thereon he retreated to the Rue aux Ours, and coming again he found the door open, and so ascended to the second storey. Instantly he knew the cause of the light, for the straw of the bed was burning, and two naked bodies lay stretched upon the table.

"I retired," thus he continues the narrative, "much astonished, and as I went out I met two plague-buryers, who asked me what I sought, and I, to clear them from my way, took sword in hand, and passed into the street, and so returned to my lodging, not a little disturbed at this unexpected vision." Here he drank two or three glasses of pure wine, which was the German remedy against the plague, and after an unbroken sleep he set out next morning for Lorraine. But on his return to Paris he was determined to discover the poor girl, whose beauty still dazzled his memory. His search was vain. She had vanished as

suddenly as the charred straw of the plague-stricken room ; she was forgotten even at the Sign of the Two Angels, where less romantic hands held the wash-tub, and Bassompierre could only regret a lost love and find consolation in a flippant Court.

Such is the story which has contributed more to Bassompierre's immortality than his embassy to England or the Siege of Rochelle. Nor has the beauty of the Two Angels lacked lovers since her death. So captivated was Chateaubriand with her story that he paid a pious pilgrimage to the Rue Bourg l'Abbé. But he found no washer-girl to do him reverence ; no woman, frank and fair, "with her hair done for the night, wearing a very fine shift, a green petticoat, and slippers on her feet." There was instead an old beldame, whose teeth were soon to meet in the tomb, and who threatened violence with her crutch. "Perhaps," thought he, "it is the aunt of the meeting-place." The house itself was no longer the shrine of this vanished tragedy. The front was new ; and neither on the first, nor the second, nor the third storey did the windows glimmer with light. Only the attic, under the roof, was bright with a garland of nasturtiums and sweet peas.

On the ground-floor a barber plied his trade, and Chateaubriand, still under the spell, asked him with diffidence: "Have you, perchance, bought the hair of a young washer-girl, who once lived at the sign of the Two Angels, near the Petit-Pont!" But the astonished barber gasped inarticulate, and we shall never unravel the

secret already tangled for Bassompierre. Was it the girl's body which lay stark in the chamber of death? Or was the aunt the sudden victim of the plague? The idle may fit the story with a dozen conclusions, yet never better its solemn mystery. And we of to-day are even less fortunate than was Chateaubriand. For the Rue aux Ours has begun to fall beneath the pitiless pick of "improvement," and the famous meeting-place of love and death is lost for ever. The name, "Bourg l'Abbé," remains to mark another obscure and desolate street, and this is the sole, unconscious witness to a perished yet imperishable romance.

But his adventures were not all so grim, and there is small wonder that Carmail, Termes, and he were known at Court as *les dangereux*. Indeed, so general was his passion and so nice his discretion that on the morning of the day when he was dragged to the Bastille he burned more than six thousand love-letters. Nor did he ever, save once, strive to embark upon the sea of marriage, and this single enterprise was foiled by the intrigue of his King. Yet it was commenced with a favourable augury, and though Bassompierre escaped with an unbroken heart, his vanity received a grievous wound, which only a sense of humour could have cured. The honour paid him was conspicuous, for it was no less a personage than the Constable of France who offered him his daughter's hand, and Bassompierre, who had already admired the beauty of Mademoiselle de Montmorency, was infinitely flattered by the proposal. The Constable delivered a speech

which brought tears to the eyes of his friends, and Bassompierre, whose eloquence was never at a loss, accepted the father's compliment and the daughter's hand with becoming diffidence. On either side there was reason to rejoice, until the Court expressed its disapproval, and rumours were heard of a broken contract.

At first Bassompierre refused to surrender his promised bride, and the Constable set his face sternly against the Prince de Condé, who was now forced upon his daughter's acceptance. But the King's will was unconquerable, and the sequel was so delightful a comedy of manners, that the victim himself could not have forborne to smile. When the intrigue was at its keenest, and the Prince's insolence intolerable, the King sent for Bassompierre, and assured him that he thought continually of his marriage. The Knight answered that had it not been for the Constable's gout, the ceremony would have already been performed. "No," interposed the King, "I was thinking of your marriage with Mademoiselle d'Aumale." And when Bassompierre would have expostulated, the King heaved a deep sigh, and thus continued: "Bassompierre," he murmured, "I would speak to you as a friend. I love Mademoiselle de Montmorency madly and desperately. If you marry her, and she loves you, I shall hate you; if she loves me, you will hate me. And I would have nothing break our ancient friendship and good understanding. Therefore, I intend to marry her to my

nephew, who likes the chase a thousand times better than woman, and thus to keep her near my house. So I shall find consolation and entertainment for the old age which is creeping upon me."

To this appeal no reply was possible ; the King and his servant mingled their tears and congratulations ; to Bassompierre there remained the gaming-table and unnumbered intrigues, so that he could but wish his monarch happiness and desist from his suit. The last act of comedy turned to farce, for the nephew, basely ungrateful for the King's thoughtfulness and generosity, took the money, and fled from France with his bride. Henry was transported to the very madness of rage. He stormed, he raved, he asked advice of all his councillors, and as instantly rejected it. At last he sent for Sully. "What can I do to recover the fugitives?" he asked. "Let me sup," said Sully, "and sleep upon the matter, and I will give you my counsel to-morrow." "No," clamoured the King, "you must tell me on the spot." "Then," demurred Sully, "I must think." So he walked to the window, and there beat a tattoo upon the glass with his fingers. And when he turned to the King, and the King demanded eagerly — "What can be done?" — "Nothing," he replied, and so ended the whimsical farce, which was Bassompierre's solitary attempt at matrimony.

No sport at the time came anywise amiss to him, and as he won his place by his love of gambling, so it was with the cards that he retained the affection of the

King and maintained his own extravagance. Trictrac, lansquenet, and *la prime* were his favourite games, and good luck rarely deserted him. "I won this year," says he, on the very top of the wave, "more than five hundred thousand francs at play, though I was distracted by a thousand follies of youth and love." Another time he records that the stakes at Fontainebleau were the highest he had ever known. "No day passed," he writes, "without the loss or gain of twenty thousand pistoles. The smallest stake was fifty pistoles, and they ran so fast that they were called *quinterottes*, after the incomparable speed of the English horses lately introduced into France by Quinterot." The delay of two days on a journey once cost him twenty-five thousand crowns, but, in revenge, there were few years wherein he did not come off with a handsome balance. So, also, he was an accomplished dancer, and in taste and fancy his ballets were unsurpassed. Their motives were varied and ingenious: now it was Turks, now Sea-gods, now even Washerwomen, that Bassompierre and his fellow courtiers represented before the King.

With M. de Guise, too, he revived, for the moment, the fashion of the tourney, and broke a lance in the courtyard of the Louvre, half in jest, half for the favour of Mademoiselle d'Entragues. The combat was conducted with order and magnificence. Bassompierre and his friends carried arms plated with silver; and their plumes were flesh-colour and white, which colours were echoed in their silken

hose. M. de Guise, on the other side, was in mourning for Madame de Verneuil, at that moment a prisoner in the Bastille, and he wore neither arms nor habiliments which were not black and gold. The battle took place before a splendid assembly, and the result was not long in doubt. For M. de Guise rode a small horse, and charged from the lower end, while Bassompierre descended upon his opponent with the speed of a gallant courser of Spain. So that M. de Guise broke his lance not upon his adversary's helmet, but upon his tasses, and inflicted such a wound as only a hero could endure. The Court was in despair at its favourite's mischance, but Bassompierre was ever confident of recovery, and no sooner was the wound healed than he set out for Plombières to take the waters. Even his sickness turned to gaiety ; a crowd of nobles followed him to the baths ; he took a band of fiddlers in his retinue ; and despite his wound he enjoyed all "the diversion which a young man, rich, debauched, and thriftless, could desire."

He spent his money with a regal magnificence, which no wealth could withstand, and, despite his appointments and the King's generosity, he was always embarrassed. Yet his good humour made light of all difficulties, and there was no pass from which he did not emerge with credit. Once upon a time, returning from Lorraine, he was bidden to a Royal christening, and found in his wardrobe nothing worthy so great an occasion. The tailors of Paris, however, were reluctant to increase their promises of apparel, and

Bassompierre, with a slender pocket, feared that he could not make a fitting appearance. But he ordered his tailor and embroiderer to attend his pleasure, and was told that a merchant had just arrived from Antwerp with a load of pearls, wherewith, said the embroiderer, you could make such a coat as should surpass all others at the ceremony. And for the making he asked a poor six hundred crowns. It was cloth of gold and purple, with interlacing palm-leaves; and when this was chosen there remained only to purchase the pearls, and pay the bill of fourteen thousand crowns.

Now, Bassompierre had but seven hundred crowns in the world, and the jeweller demanded four thousand as earnest. The Knight could but put him off to the morrow, and rely upon Providence. That evening M. d'Espernon bade him to supper, and with his seven hundred crowns he won five thousand. Thus he satisfied the jeweller, and after another night's play he not only paid for his miraculous coat, but purchased a diamond-hilted sword, and still had five thousand crowns in his pocket. But he always came off triumphant from an embarrassment, and both the Kings whom he served were inclined to humour his extravagance. On one occasion, Louis XIII., knowing him to be hard pressed for money, begged a gift of the cider which he received every year from Normandy. Bassompierre sent the King a dozen bottles, and received in exchange twelve thousand crowns. "Sire," said the Marshal, with a twinkle, "I have a hogshead

at my lodging, which I am willing to sell on the same terms." But the King was satisfied with his dozen bottles, and Bassompierre with the King's liberality. Nor did his thrift increase with years, and perhaps he reflected with a glimmer of satisfaction that when he entered the Bastille he owed without its inhospitable walls no less than one million six hundred thousand francs.

But much as he loved gaiety and beautiful women and splendid clothes, much as he esteemed wit and devilry, he was no mere gallant. He played an active part in the war and diplomacy of his time, nor did he yield to one of his contemporaries in courage or address. He was, moreover, a single-minded gentleman living among the astute professors of intrigue, and he looked no further beyond his duty than the service of his King. But he treated nobody, not even the King his master, with more submission than became a man of honour, nor did he ever scruple to condemn a policy which he deemed unprofitable to France. In truth, so long as Henry IV. was alive, Bassompierre was safe to enjoy the best things of an amiable life, since even the King's foibles won the sympathy of his friend, and "intrigue" had not yet acquired a sinister meaning. But the Regency of Marie de Medicis, and the supremacy of the King's favourites, crushed the gaiety from Bassompierre's heart. Too honest, too independent to fight the Duc de Luynes (for instance) with his own weapons, he was very often in disgrace, and even in danger.

Thus it was that he turned Ambassador, and travelled to Spain or to England, that he might gain a respite from the suspicions of the King's advisers. But once abroad, he made the very best of his voyage, and proved a model diplomatist. In tact and firmness he was a match for the cleverest, and while Charles I. shuddered at his persistence, Buckingham recognised his worth, and helped him to a solution. And if his despatches from the Courts of London and Madrid are admirable State papers, his *Memoirs* prove that his curiosity was still insatiable, that his zest for life was as keen as when he first travelled to Paris from his distant Lorraine. He reached Madrid in time to see the King die of etiquette, but already he had rejoiced in the dances of the Basques and in many a pleasant comedy. With the adaptability which was always his, he wore Spanish mourning, and won more honour and glory among the Spaniards than he could claim in the country of his adoption. For with all his clevernsss and tact he was unable to overcome the wiles of his adversaries. Louis XIII., accustomed to flattery, tired of the plain speaking of this valiant soldier. He liked not that this soldier should decline to take further part in the siege of Rochelle, unless he had a separate army, separate stores, and a separate exchequer ; and he resented the straightforward eloquence which hindered him—before Chastillon—from an act of bad faith. Nor had Schomberg and Richelieu cause to love the resolute Marshal of France. More than once he had spurred Louis on to acts of insubordination, and on one occasion he had

heartened the King to decline their informal visit. Moreover, he was a noble who favoured his own order, and the Bastille was his sad, inevitable goal.

For once his "good fortune" failed him—that good fortune, in which Schomberg believed so loyally that he sent him upon many a forlorn hope—and he was Richelieu's prisoner. But he entered his dungeon with a light heart and a good courage. Not only did he decline flight; he accepted his fate with a brave resignation, which turned to sadness rather than to complaint when grief lay too heavy a hand upon him. At last he had hung his harp upon the wall; no more might he know the pleasures of which not even years had robbed him. Perhaps the treachery of the King irked him—of the King whom he had loyally served and who two days since had promised that nothing should be done against his liberty. But he accepted his fate with courage, and believed devoutly that freedom was at hand. Moreover the Cardinal's assurance was never lacking. Day after day, year after year, he received promises of liberty, until at last he resolved to listen no more to the voice of falsehood. And no sooner was he behind the walls of the Bastille than disaster added to disaster shook his fortitude. Not only were his appointments taken from him, but presently his estates were stolen through the faithlessness of his enemies. The Château of Bassompierre was destroyed, the profit of his crops was turned to an alien channel, while his nephew lost his honourable position in the army and saw his own Château de Dammartin burned

by order of the King. Nor did he escape the lesser miseries of life: the coach which was bringing him money and clothes from Nancy was held up by highwaymen, and plundered. In brief he saw himself slipping into poverty, and thus, said he, with a grim humour, "thus I kept my jubilee."

But the gloom grew only deeper as the chance of freedom lessened. "I passed the whole month of January," he wrote after some years of captivity, "without hope of liberty, and with infinite sadness." And while he lost hope, and money, and houses, and crops, he was soon to mourn the greater sadness of death. First, the Princess de Conti died, killed it is said by the disgrace of his imprisonment, and in her he lost the closest friend that remained in the world. Then, one after another his relatives died, and left him, forsaken and miserable, in the Bastille. So he sat in a solitude as bitter as Job's, until the last affront was put upon his pride by an insolent gaoler. So for ten years he suffered from the resentment or the caution of Richelieu, nor was it until the death of the Cardinal that he breathed the larger air of liberty.

And then too late was he restored to his places of honour and profit; too late did the King smile again upon his ancient favourite. He was out of fashion; his wit appeared slow-footed to the waterflies of the Court; he brought from the Bastille a leisurely arrogance which was ill understood in a busy, progressive age. But, in revenge, he might plume himself

upon a strangely rotund and finished career—a career which was not only brilliant, but also was brilliantly modulated. No experience had escaped him: a youth of pleasure, a middle-life of war and diplomacy, an age of bitter imprisonment and ultimate respect—he had known them all, and had accepted each in a spirit of valiance. Moreover, the ten years' captivity had not dulled his wit, and he was ready on the instant with a dignified reproof. "How old are you?" asked the King on the Marshal's enlargement. "Fifty years, sire," was the reply. And when the King seemed incredulous, he added: "I discard the years which were not spent in your service."

His book approaches most nearly to the *Diary* of our own Pepys, but it seldom attains the engaging candour of that masterpiece. Compiled when imprisonment had forced him to an unwelcome leisure, it is an effort rather of memory than of observation. It was not his happiness to fix the fleeting indiscretion by a timely phrase; rather, he is driven to the fading tablets of his mind even for the record of his *bonnes fortunes*. Again, while the Englishman only remembers that he is a man, Bassompierre never forgets that he is a Marshal of France. He approaches himself in full uniform, and he dares not be as intimate with his own actions as the merest stranger may be with the peccadilloes of Pepys. He does not let you glance over his shoulder as he writes; his very dignity keeps you at a distance, and reminds you (what Pepys bids you forget) that there are privacies into which

curiosity should not intrude. From the point of view of style, his was incomparably the higher ambition. He was anxious to embellish his narrative with set speeches, in accordance with the artifice of Thucydides and Livy; and, while Pepys is content to be witty or scandalous in a line, he would at times sustain the dignity of his prose for a dozen pages.

But he displayed as much truth and sincerity as may be expected from a warrior and statesman; and it is not strange if, greater in all else, he fell, in candour, below the splendid genius of Samuel Pepys. "I shall make an ample discourse of my life," he declares, "without affectation or vanity . . . . and you will not find it strange if I tell all things in detail." The detail it is that makes the book a masterpiece: that he saw a comet in 1608, that the floor of the Queen's *salon* collapsed, save the plank whereon her Majesty was standing, that outside Agen a cannon carried off the four arms of the four soldiers who carried the flags of Navarre, that the Lord Mayor's Show of 1626 was the finest spectacle that ever he saw—these are the details which give life and vividness to the book. And you lay it down with the pleasant assurance that, if you may not claim Bassompierre for a friend, you have lived for a week upon amiable terms with a great man.

THEAGENES

THEAGENES

WHEN Sir Kenelm Digby confronted his audience at Montpellier, there shone upon his face the pleasant assurance and self-content which had carried him triumphantly through half a century of adventure. It irked him little that he mounted his hobbyhorse at so great a distance from his native London, for here the course was open, and a fervid applause encouraged his management of the ancient steed. None enjoyed more keenly than he the appreciation bestowed upon a prophet in a strange land, and for a while at least he was secure from the glacial incredulity of John Evelyn and the sceptics. Besides, the soft air of the South had tempered the winter unto gentleness, and Sir Kenelm knew that supreme satisfaction which comes of an abated malady.

His subject was old and familiar—the Powder of Sympathy, and he handled it in the old and familiar style. With a flourish of pride he vaunted his prowess, and explained for the hundredth time the approval of King James. Well might Montpellier express her astonishment! Well might her men of science marvel at the miracle! But Sir Kenelm was stern in

his conviction, and he permitted not the shadow of a doubt to be cast upon the clear page of his achievement. There was no wound, he declared in the voice of certainty, that he could not cure, and he was ready on the instant with his renowned example. It was no less a personage, said he, than James Howell, the famous author of *Dendrologia*, whose injury had yielded to his discreet and superstitious remedy. Upon a generous impulse, he who afterwards became King Charles's Historiographer had attempted to part the swords and check the embroilment of two friends, and the officious hand had naturally been cut to the bone.

The doctors feared gangrene, and Howard appealed for aid to Sir Kenelm, with the proverb of doubtful compliment upon his lips: "Let the miracle be done, though Mahomet do it." Nor was Mahomet slothful to perform the wonder. He did but call for a basin of water, sprinkle therein a handful of powder of vitriol, and immerse a garter stained with the blood of the victim. Instantly Howell was free from the pain; a feeling of composure crept over the wounded hand, and though Sir Kenelm, for experiment's sake, might now and again remove the garter from the sovereign cure, and so rack his friend with torture, five days' immersion of the blood-stained silk was sufficient to heal the hand, and to bruit Sir Kenelm's miracle about the Court. Buckingham first was devoured by curiosity, and then the King, always avid of novelty, must be informed of the circumstance. So that Howell and Sir Kenelm were united in a common

fame, and the Powder of Sympathy was the wide-mouthed wonder of a day. Thus, to his own glory and to the bedevilment of Montpellier, did Sir Kenelm Digby extol his skill, thus did he infect the learned South with the fever of his own credulity.

Nor did he abate one jot of his vanity, though he carried a solid weight of years upon his back. In his own eyes he was still the noble, brave, persuasive Theagenes, who with peerless eloquence had wooed Stelliana, the hapless and irresistible. The admiration of his own beauty, which was the reasonable comfort of his youth, remained the solace of his riper age. Even yet he recalled with satisfaction the panegyric his own modesty had composed, even yet he wondered which were the more remarkable: "the great strength and framing of his body," or "the noble temper of his mind." Despite the growing bulk, which turned his giant stature to unwieldiness, he was still assured that in his single person were united the attributes of Apollo and of Hercules. And he smiled the sunny smile of boastfulness upon the scholars of Montpellier, who rivalled the more deeply instructed in their obedience to Sir Kenelm's will. For, pedant as he was, he was quick to catch the breath of sympathy, and in defiance of his pragmatical habit, he had determined at the first to take the froth off the bowl of life. The rest might drink the lees, if they would; he only knew the sparkle of the wine as it leapt against his palate, for in the glass of his career every draught, of love and war, of scholarship and

intrigue, had been turned to the lively champagne of adventure.

Fate favoured him in the cradle, and though he was unconscious of his first tragedy, it was already far removed from the commonplace. His father, Sir Everard, as brave a gentleman as ever died a rebel's death, suffered on Tower Hill when Kenelm was no more than two years old. And the manner of his capture was as splendid as the legend of his death. Had he sacrificed his servants after the Gunpowder Plot, he might have escaped pursuit, but preferring to face his assailants, he surrendered with a noble serenity. And when, saith rumour, he climbed Tower Hill, there happened to the father just such a miracle as the fancy of the son would have delighted to invent. The executioner, dragging out Sir Everard's heart, lifted it to the people's gaze and declared that it was the heart of a traitor; whereupon the victim protested, as life flickered at his ashen lips, that he was no traitor, and thus died.

With so marvellous a legend the young Kenelm might have pampered his early pride, and in order not to break with tradition he was but a boy when he encountered the serious drama of his life. To the dispassionate mind there seems no obstacle which should have divided the valiant Digby from Venetia Stanley. Equal in birth and affluence, they passed their childhood in a paradise of love. His boyish constancy was more than rewarded by her magnanimous fidelity; and if in a handsome body he carried a

marvellously instructed mind, she was already a beauty of the Court before she had turned her fifteenth year. How then devise a properer match? Naught seemed necessary to happiness, save a brief span of patience, but it was Kenelm's fate to enjoy romance, and fate would have been outraged had he ridden, at twenty, upon the level tide of marriage. Wherefore every hindrance, which a malevolent ingenuity could invent, was put in the way of his happiness. Poor Venetia must endure all the pains and more than the dishonour which are wont to perplex the Princesses of Fairyland. Truly, for many a year "the sun of her beauty" was doomed to shine "through the clouds of sadness," and for no cause, save that her Kenelm should know the cruel joy of uncertainty, and should cultivate the stilted eloquence of a foiled, yet ever devoted, lover.

His own mother was the bitterest enemy of this celestial alliance, and, like many another, she believed the grand tour the easiest cure for a wayward fancy. And so, while Venetia pined at home, Kenelm set forth to see the world, and to correct by dissipation the passion of a virtuous heart. He knew strange Courts and distant cities; wherever he travelled he was received with the courtesy which follows distinguished birth and noble connections; if we may believe him, the ladies of Europe were at his feet, and even the Queen of France disdained not to confuse his virgin heart by the reckless ardour of her suit. But never for an instant did he forget his Venetia: neither the beauty of his suitors nor the taunts of his

companions availed to shake his superhuman constancy; and though his poor frame might wander in the centre of France, or in remoter Spain, his soul was still in the English countryside where dwelt Venetia, faithful and unconsoled.

Meanwhile treachery had laid its plots of ruin and of spite. In her lover's absence, the stainless heroine was assailed with all the weapons of devilish intrigue. Not only were Kenelm's letters suppressed, but a villainous report of his death was most sedulously spread abroad; and, as though this mystification were not enough, Venetia was offended by the gross addresses of unscrupulous lovers. Her ancient nurse was as eager for betrayal as the nurse of immemorial comedy, and no incident was lacking to this pre-ordained embroilment. The assailant's name is happily forgotten, but Sir Kenelm dubbed him Ursatius, not without an etymological propriety, and so eagerly did he play the part of Lovelace, that he might have sat for that gentleman's portrait. Believing that his honourable suit was hopeless, and spurred to villainy by the avaricious nurse, Ursatius resolved to kidnap the virtuous Venetia, who was easily beguiled by a false report of Theagenes's return. Thus she was decoyed to a coach and four; she was carried off by hirelings to the mansion of Ursatius; and thus she would have suffered the unkind fate of Clarissa, had not her own courage and the burnt ashes of Ursatius's honour prevented her undoing.

He, at any rate, played his part with a broken spirit.

His resolution, inspired by the falsehood of the nurse, wavered at the first sight of the adored Venetia, and he accepted his dismissal with the obedience of a crushed and lawful suitor. But the lady was none the less compromised, and at midnight she crept from the alien house, and letting herself down into the garden upon an improvised rope, she fled to the woods, where she lay hid until morning, and where, as romance would suggest, she was attacked by a wolf. Nor would she ever have looked again into the eyes of her Kenelm, had not a young nobleman, who lived hard by, come sudden to her rescue. The rest is a veritable fairy-tale. Mardontius—for thus the nobleman is called—not content with falling desperately in love at first sight, tells her that her kinswoman lives hard by, and Venetia is presently under a friendly roof, safe, though soiled.

But another love was thus added to her discomfiture; and as time brought no news of the ever faithful Digby, Venetia, listening at last to the addresses of Mardontius, gave him her portrait as a pledge of a tempered gratitude rather than of affection. And even now misfortune pursued her, for Mardontius, as though secure of his enchanting mistress, turned aside for a while to woo a rustic beauty, until Venetia, furious at the slight, banished him from her presence. But this misfortune changed to happiness; for when the truant returned, the dismissal of Mardontius made easier the reconciliation of the parted lovers, who expressed their adoration in the stateliest periods, pro-

testing the while that upon so high a theme "neither wit nor study can have any share in the contexture of what one saith." Yet, once again, scandal interrupted the course of passion, and saved Sir Kenelm—for by this he had been knighted—from the suspicion of a too easily acquired security. The busybodies of the Court, eager in the dispraise of Venetia, assured the traveller that during his absence she had carried on a disgraceful intrigue with a notorious nobleman; they whispered venomously in his ear that Mardontius still treasured the lady's portrait; and, though Sir Kenelm, upon the threat of a duel, won an apology from his repentant rival, his soul was yet unpurged of jealousy. Though his provocation was great, his lack of courage was unpardonable, and when he should publicly have avowed his loyalty, he shuffled, he hesitated, he aped the base tactics of Ursatius, he pleaded the cause of another. At last, however, his own love and the devotion of Venetia, who pawned her jewels in his service, silenced the hoarse voice of falsehood. With a secrecy, which was a proper climax to this whimsical series of misadventures, the lovers were at last united, and henceforth Sir Kenelm had nought to regret save the deceit of his friends and his own timidity.

For Venetia was not only the most accomplished, but the most beautiful, woman of her age. A famous toast, she is still celebrated in the ardent verse of Ben Jonson. Her dark hair crowned a delicately perfect oval; her brown eyes shone irresistible from beneath their gently opening lids. She was no taller than

became a woman; yet there was an heroical dignity in all her movements, and it is no wonder that she was unsurpassed in the art of conquest. Her devotion to Sir Kenelm knew no abatement after marriage, and it is a plain discredit that for two years he kept this honourable alliance secret. But he would have been miserable had conscience forced him to accept a common situation, and it was not until he set out for Scanderoon with letters of marque that he paid a tardy justice to the fairest dame in England. Henceforth he proved himself a husband who was still a lover, and when she died—in 1633—he was inconsolable.

But even in the moment of her death the harsh croaking of scandal was heard. She was poisoned, said this one, because jealousy had turned her husband's heart to hatred. She died, said that, from a draught of viper-wine, given her by Digby to preserve her waning beauty. But Sir Kenelm, wisely listening neither to malice nor envy, retired in sad silence to Gresham College, where he sought forgetfulness in the study of chemistry and the other sciences. Even in his dress he shadowed forth his intolerable grief. For two years he wore a mourning cloak and a high-cornered hat; his unshorn beard and hair unkempt gave him the appearance of a hermit; and he who, while she lived, had always treasured a cast of her dainty hand and daintier foot, set up, at her death, a monument worthy her beauty and his affection.

Fortunate in his marriage, Kenelm Digby was also fortunate in his career. As he was adventurous in his youth, so he might have boasted in his age that he had never shirked a combat nor receded from an argument. A determined duellist, he fought his way across Europe with a courage and address which the Admirable Crichton might have envied, and never once was he worsted in the fray. His most celebrated battle was fought at Madrid, whither he had attended his Prince questing after a Spanish marriage; and of the distinguished company gathered at the southern capital, none was more highly distinguished than the youthful Digby. In his own eyes the mirror of knighthood, he imposed by his wit and courage upon all the gallants, who marvelled at the demure elegance of Charles, or shrank from Buckingham's unscrupulous intrigue. No sooner had he reached Madrid than his bravery found a splendid occasion. Truly, in one night he lived through a whole Spanish romance, and Cervantes himself would not have disdained to tell the story of an adventure to which no element of picturesque surprise was lacking.

'Twas the first evening he had spent in the southern city, and with his kinsman John Dive and another he was returning to his lodging from the Ambassador's house, when the sound of music and singing struck upon his ear. The evening had turned the heat of the day to a pleasant coolness, and the three Englishmen loitered on their homeward way, enjoying the pleasant breeze and marvelling at the sweetness of the strange song. Presently they discovered the wandering

voice, and beheld upon a trellised balcony a fair lady with her lute. But admiration changed instantly to dismay, for no sooner had they gazed with reverence upon her beauty than fifteen armed men rushed from the shadow into the moonlight, intent upon the murder of Dive, their ancient enemy. He, on the impulse of passion, drew his sword and struck the first comer so terrible a blow upon the head, that he had fallen dead on the spot had he not been protected with a goodly cap of steel. But so well was he covered, that Dive's blade was shattered to a hundred pieces; and, his friend's sword suffering a like fate, he knew no other course than to run for aid, and to leave his kinsman to his own defence.

Here, indeed, was such an occasion as delighted the fervent courage of Kenelm Digby. On the one side fifteen armed men, bent upon vengeance, on the other himself and his single blade. Nor was his task lightened by the fitful moonlight, which cast ghostly shadows in every corner, obscuring far more than it revealed. His opponents, moreover, by a devilish contrivance, had fixed lanthorns upon their bucklers, and the light being thus cast forward, they remained in darkness, while he trembled in the dazzling glare. On all sides of him flitted the Spaniards, yet never for an instant was his courage daunted. A wiser man had taken to his heels, but Digby valued fearlessness far above agility, and he was prepared to thrust and parry against the fifteen armed and covered lanthorns.

Once only did he attempt to parley, when, singling

out the master of them all, who wore over his jack of mail a gold-embroidered cassock, he asked what injury he had done that he should sustain so vigorous an attack. But the Spanish lord giving an insolent retort, Kenelm set upon his enemies with doubled strength, and when two traitors crept behind to perplex him, he resolved to fight his way through his assailants unto safety. And so stoutly did he lay about him, that he cut one man's head in two, and running another through the belly he bade him also render up his life. Thus, with his face to the foe, he retreated to the Ambassador's house, and reached the haven triumphant and unscathed. To the sceptic the fifteen men in bucklers and coats of mail might suggest those other heroes in buckram; but to appreciate Sir Kenelm you must needs be credulous, and who knows but he would have withstood the whole Spanish army arrayed against him?

No less glorious was the combat wherein he maintained his honour in the teeth of that infamous swashbuckler, Lord Mount le Ros. It was during the knight's unhappy exile that the encounter took place, and at every point Sir Kenelm proved himself the more valiant gentleman. The provocation was given at the French lord's house, where, after a banquet, they fell to the drinking of healths. Thus they toasted the King of France and divers others, and Digby lagged no whit behind the rest in loyal enthusiasm. At last, Mount le Ros, with the presumption of a wineskin, clamoured for the health of

the arrantest coward in Europe. And when Sir Kenelm asked to whom he should raise his glass, "Drink," cried the Frenchman, "and when you have pledged you shall know." Sir Kenelm, innocent of suspicion, emptied his glass, whereupon answered Lord Mount le Ros: "I meant your King of England."

The next day the French lord dined with Sir Kenelm, and being provoked by another toast he repeated the same insult, and Digby was instant with a challenge. "Twice," said he, "you have reviled the best King in the world in the hearing of me, his faithful subject, wherefore I demand the satisfaction of a single combat, where either you shall pay your life for your sauciness or I will give mine for my King." Now, the French lord, though a braggart, was a man of courage, and after dinner they went incontinent upon the field, and, plucking off their doublets, made ready for the fight. But Digby, fearing an ambush, hastened the onset, and at the fourth bout ran his sword so hard through the Frenchman's breast that it came out at his throat, and drove before it the last insolent breath of Mount le Ros. The French King did not lose this occasion of magnanimity. "Not the proudest lord of France," said he, "shall cast a slur upon my brother of England." And so he pardoned Sir Kenelm his violence, and gave him an honourable escort into Flanders.

"The Magazine of all the Arts." Thus it is that a contemporary described the peerless Digby. And, truly, he was no less famous for his eloquence and

erudition than for his bodily strength and prowess. Having spent many years in foreign travel, he was as familiar with French and Spanish as with his own English, and not a little proud of the accomplishment. Indeed, said an admirer, had he been dropped from the clouds upon any corner of the globe, he would have won obedience and respect. But, added his detractors, he must not stay there above six weeks. Not only was he master of strange tongues : he wrote his own with surpassing elegance, and cultivated the ornate style of his epoch with conspicuous success. The *Private Memoirs*, upon which his fame is solidly established, are so ingeniously packed with self-adulation, that they were certainly designed for the prying eye of the public, and they will ever remain the noblest monument of his skill. With a characteristic mystification, he tells the story of his courtship, giving his personages high-sounding, inappropriate names. Under the mask of Theagenes he lays himself at the feet of an imagined Stelliana, who is pestered by the loathed addresses of Ursatius and Mardontius. In this fairyland, Madrid is transformed to Alexandria, and Paris, not Edinburgh, masquerades as the modern Athens. But the colour of the narrative is beyond praise, and surely autobiography never took on so strange a complexion.

After the fashion of his age, he was a pedant rather than a scholar. There was no superstition he would not invest with a spurious importance, and he would have accepted as indisputable truth the most monstrous

of Sir Thomas Browne's Popular Errors. For him Aristotle was the last of the wise men, and yet his noble allegiance to the past did not hinder his insatiable curiosity. It was at Oxford, and at the inspiration of Thomas Allen, who recognised his pupil for the Mirandola of his age, that he acquired an insatiable taste for astrology. To the end he remained a zealous student of the occult ; the notorious Evans was among his friends ; and many were the experiments he witnessed in the half-guilty seclusion of Gunpowder Alley. He vaunted, in fact, the coxcombry of scholarship. In learning, as in love, he treasured romance before all things, and he demanded that the dish of research should always be flavoured with the spice of charlatanry. He could not make his famous journey to Madrid without turning aside to converse with a profound and cunning Brahmin, who laid bare to him those secrets of Theosophism which have since become vulgar, and who imposed upon his faith by a vision of Venetia bathed in tears.

Thus it was that he won the reputation of a guileless believer, if not of a deliberate impostor. Evelyn, for instance, after a visit to his laboratory in Paris, condemned him as an arrant mountebank, and Stubbs in his fury called him the Pliny of his age for lying. But these zealots of truth misunderstood Digby's fantastic humour. It was not merely that he was credulous ; he delighted to measure the credulity of others, and when he declared that in Tripolis he had seen a city turned to stone, he knew, as well as the

rest, the extravagance of his fiction. But the *Mercurius Politicus* printed the fable; and Sir Kenelm enjoyed the wondering folly of the dolt, no less than the genuine tribulation of the patient historian.

In all things he would appear distinguished or at least notorious. To be in the mouths of men, to be pointed at with the finger of admiration, were compliments essential to his happiness. It flattered him to be thought the strongest man of his age, and he never wearied of boasting that he could pick up the Earl of Bristol, his chair and all, with one arm. Thus he would acclaim the discoveries of his intellect, preferring even ridicule to forgetfulness. His vanity, in truth, was superb; and he hymned his own praises with a tireless industry. In his own eyes he is perfect, and he prophesies the highest attainment for himself, "if a lazy desire of ease or some other disturbance do not interrupt him." His *Memoirs* are written with an eloquence and energy which nothing would justify, save the glory of Kenelm Digby. "I am the greatest man of my age," he says in effect, "and if no biographer be found to rejoice in my qualities, I disdain to deceive the world."

Though he remained constant to Venetia, he suffered his life long from the importunity of amorous ladies. The Queen of France created a scandal by her shameless courtship, and his success in Spain was little less brilliant. At Madrid the Captain of the King's Guard rallied him on his prudery. "Your mind," said he to the constant Digby, "has been trained up

continually in scholastical speculations and hath always conversed with books at such times as you have not exercised your body in the use of arms and managing of horses. Why, then, do you pass by the fairest faces in daily indifference?" And so Kenelm, unwilling to confess that any excellence was lacking to him, made a wager with the Grandee that he would estrange the love of the peerless Donna Anna Maria Manrique. He was the more eager for the enterprise because his noble heart whispered that he had already lost the bet. "How should I capture the lady's affection," thought he, "when my love is feigned?" But, alas! he forgot for a moment the invincibility of his charm. Donna Anna surrendered at the first assault; she flung herself in a whirlpool of passion at his feet; and when her suit was refused in a spirit of virtuous fidelity to another, she straightway renounced the world, and concealed her inauspicious beauty within the walls of a convent.

Courtier, scholar, warrior, politician, Sir Kenelm Digby filled his life with a thousand triumphs. He united the braggart bravery of Cellini with the cunning of an ancient philosopher. And he owed his success in no small part to his indefatigable aptitude. "No man knew better how to abound and to be abased," says Aubrey, and every turn of fortune was welcome to him. If circumstances smiled, he accepted their favour without a hint of surprise; and if to-morrow his household were reduced to a single lackey, he laughed at a humiliation which his vanity

found incongruous. After a boyhood spent in dignified obscurity, he set out upon an august mission without the slightest trepidation. "Henceforward," he observes with a colossal simplicity, "my fortunes mingled themselves with, and had a part in, the actions of great princes." His self-esteem was delighted whatever befell him, and if he had no better audience than the scholars of Montpellier, he transformed their mediocrity by the mere contact of his wit into the sublimated genius of the universe. Even when the Pope despised his intervention and pronounced him mad, he did but "huff" his Holiness, and leave Rome in a fit of generous lamentation.

When the learned laughed at his Chemistry, and flouted his discourse upon the Body and the Soul, when they condemned his premature reply to *Religio Medici* as an act of bad faith, he folded his giant hands in pity, and recommended them to study Mr. White's *Dialogue of the World*. But in one field he won universal glory. His single experiment in serious warfare was a perfect masterpiece. Undertaken with the lightest heart, because it was necessary to employ himself in some generous action, it was carried out with a good luck and determination, which made light of disease and of contrary winds. The Battle of Scanderoon, fought by a civilian of twenty-five, was an instant victory. Not only did he decline the shameful peace offered by the Venetians, but he straightway attacked, and sank, the French ships. Thus he earned the tribute of two doggerel lines from

Ben Jonson, and if his prowess could not increase his own self-esteem, at least his grandeur was proved to a doubtful world.

But he lived in an age of treachery and deceit, and it is political intrigue that put the solitary blot upon his respectable career. A Royalist in person and in mind, he valiantly espoused the cause of the Prince he had served so faithfully and so long. And yet after Charles had laid his head upon the block, Sir Kenelm is found living upon friendly terms with the usurping Cromwell. Nay, worse, he appears to have accepted the patronage of the Protector as the iniquitous price of a return from exile. And though, maybe, he coquetted with his enemies, that the Catholics might profit by his subtlety, though he retained until the end the friendship of Henrietta Maria, none the less he profited by his defection, and only his own casuistry could justify the lapse. But you remember him as a colossus of vanity, who would have smiled upon the blackest vice, if it were but his own, until it seemed the only virtue; as a pedant, who corrected a priggish scholarship with a sense of romance; as a writer, who handled the English language with a judicious pomp; as a lover, who remained constant to Venetia, even when scandal had besmirched her fame. And if these glories be not enough to win commendation, the most obdurate must still respect the only inventor of the Sympathetic Powder, the valiant and thrice-fortunate victor of Scanderoon.

THE REAL PEPYS

THE REAL PEPYS

THERE are many books to which habit and perversion have given an entirely false character. We arrive at them through an irresponsible interpreter, who has clipped or embellished his original in accordance with some personal whim. When Galland published his *Thousand and One Nights*, he revealed a world of phantasy and delight, which pornographic pedantry will never abolish. Here, indeed, is an enchantment far gayer than the truth; and none, with the memory of childhood clear and strong, will appreciate the dismal accuracy of the Benares Press. So, too, we who know not Omar Khayyám in his native tongue, may rejoice at the freedom of Edward Fitzgerald, condemning neither adornment nor inaccuracy. Whether Moore and Murray did good or ill by the world, when they destroyed Byron's own *Memoirs*, is still matter for conjecture and controversy. But Pepys's *Diary*, edited by Mr. Wheatley, has afforded us an indirect opportunity of seeing the bowdleriser at work, and it is proved that in one instance at least the go-between took a narrow view of his proper duty.

Now, when the transcription of Pepys's *Diary* came into the hands of Lord Braybrooke, the Editor had a unique occasion. For more than a century and a half this priceless record had remained undeciphered. Had he chosen, he might have displayed Pepys's own incomparable portrait. But the time (1825) was not favourable to daring enterprise, and Lord Braybrooke daubed and slashed the picture, until the Secretary to the Admiralty, the most many-sided of men, was presented only in one or two aspects. All that is most joyous and intimate was ruthlessly torn away without warning or explanation. "As he was in the habit of recording the most trifling occurrences of his life, it became absolutely necessary to curtail the MS. materially." So said the Editor, in complete misunderstanding of the truth that that which seems most trifling is commonly most valuable. Nor did Lord Braybrooke explain even by a hint the real cause of suppression. He does not acknowledge the fear of alarming the Philistines. From his confession you might believe that all the sprightliest passages of Pepys's life were duly transcribed, and that you lost nothing save the duller details of an official career. And presently you discover that not only has he omitted every syllable that could offend the chaste ear of a schoolgirl, but he has also sacrificed a hundred delightfully innocent passages. In truth, he had a feeble discernment of his hero's qualities. He even forewarns his readers that they may not expect in the *Diary* "accuracy of style or finished composition." As though Pepys's own

dressing-gown and slippers were not better fitted for their purpose than the gorgeous satin of full dress!

And yet, if Lord Braybrooke fell below the Editor's opportunity, he followed the craft of the eminent Bowdler with some success. His sin was less than the man's who laid a heavy hand upon Shakespeare, and at least he had a chance to escape detection. Samuel Pepys had not then grown into a classic; the sacrilege was less public, less wanton. And accordingly, there being none to find him out, Lord Braybrooke invented a Pepys of his own. He was not the real Samuel; not only was he capable of misunderstanding, he was generally misunderstood. It was with a certain justification that he was denounced as a mean-souled, pedantic miser. His sterner foibles were displayed to the world's wonderment; his more genial traits were concealed without apology. One thing only was realised even in Lord Braybrooke's mutilation: the man's quaint and incomparably appropriate style. That became a model and a heritage to generations that knew but a fragment of the *Diary*. But it was Pepys's appointed destiny to smile from the locked bookcase. And Lord Braybrooke, stepping between Providence and the world, laid the *Diary* upon the drawing-room table. Not a mean achievement, and not wholly unworthy. For Samuel Pepys is now a universal possession. The child may read him (in the timid pages of Braybrooke) and profit thereby, while for the scholar is there not the freer version

of Mr. Mynors Bright, and now the yet more liberal edition of Mr. Wheatley?

But even Mr. Wheatley, though he took his courage in both hands, has fallen thirty pages short of perfection. We are still cheated of the complete Pepys, and the sin is the worse because it is without reason. Mr. Wheatley asks you to have faith in his judgment, and you cannot. He has printed so much that it is difficult to explain why he has omitted a line. The prude will find his edition abominable, not only for coarseness of speech, but for coarseness of fact. With an admirable bravery, the editor has put down upon the page the words which are heard at the street corner, but are banished from literature; nor has he scrupled to record the lightest of the diarist's frailties. To those who are not impure with the higher purity, there is no offence in this frankness, and since this latest edition is properly hedged about from popularity by its price, there was no need of reticence. But Mr. Wheatley has omitted thirty pages, and it is impossible to withhold this single complaint, for the very reason that Mr. Wheatley has come so near to perfection. In all other respects the edition is secure from reproach: the notes are miracles of condensed information, and the Editor in suppressing himself has consulted the best interests of his author. Briefly, at last we are face to face with the real Pepys, the most intimate and engaging personality in literature; and Mr. Wheatley's courage has not only given us the most delightful of books, but has

done complete, if tardy, justice to the reputation of Samuel Pepys.

Mr. Lowell once described the author of the *Diary* as a Philistine, and the whole world of criticism does not contain a falser judgment. Doubtless, this particular critic trusted implicitly to his Braybrooke, when the fuller edition of Mr. Mynors Bright should have enlightened him. And thus you may test the infamy of bowdlerising, since no man has ever been more wantonly misrepresented than Pepys. One professional historian of English literature, I believe, has discovered that the Secretary to the Admiralty lacked enthusiasm! But even the edition of 1825 might have corrected this amazing fallacy. From beginning to end Pepys's life was packed with enthusiasm: he wandered from one joyous sensation to another; and he never underrated the pleasure of the moment. None save our professional historian would condemn to a lack of enthusiasm the man who, after an evening passed with Mrs. Pierce, Mrs. Knipp, and his wife, wrote in his journal: "I spent the night in ecstasy almost, the best company for musique I ever was in, and I wish I could live and die in it." Is that the utterance of a cold-blooded cynic?

But Mr. Lowell's folly is yet more monstrous than the professional historian's. The charge of Philistinism has not the smallest warrant. A Philistine has been defined as one insensible to the finer flavours of life; and surely he must needs be narrow-minded, prudish, pedantic, hide-bound and impossible. Now, Pepys

was as free from the grimmer sins as any roysterer that ever kissed a woman or pledged his King in a glass of sack. No man was ever born into England with so complete a disregard for those depressing virtues bequeathed us by the Puritans. In only one point could Mr. Lowell make good his charge: it is obvious that Pepys was thrifty; he was penurious even in his amours. But though the love of money may be the root of all evil, it is not the inevitable result of Philistinism; and nothing but ignorance or a love of paradox could call this most liberal lover, this keenest observer, this fiercest glutton of pleasure, a Philistine. When critics play such pranks as this, you doubt they have mastered the art and science of reading. Here is the gayest, most wayward of men exulting through eight volumes in the lust of the eye and the glorification of the senses; and, while one pedant damns him for a Philistine, another declares that he wants enthusiasm!

But Lord Braybrooke, in his respect for the drawing-room table, emphasised the few faults and minimised the abundant virtues of this perfect worldling. And the critics have been at small pains to correct their childish impression by recent studies: the disjointed fragments of the earlier editions persuaded the pedants to laugh in their sleeve at the man they were not allowed to understand. But misconception is no longer excusable, and with Mr. Wheatley's aid you may know Pepys better than you know yourself or your most intimate friend. For Pepys is the one

familiar man in history: he knew himself, and more, he knew how to reveal himself to others. He approached his subject in no mean spirit of analysis; he did not whittle away his emotions in psychological anatomy. He kept a journal, but he did not live up to it. Now such amateurs of autobiography as Mary Bashkirtseff never forget the diary: they spend their days and their nights in making "copy" for their own record. They smirk and squirm and posture that one more folly may be written down at the day's end. But Pepys did not sparkle through the day with his eye upon a note-book. He went about his business, and he rejoiced in his pleasure, without pose or forethought, and when it was over, he found an added delight in describing for his own eye the triumphs or failures of the hour.

Above all, he is the frankest man in history: he is frank even to himself. The veriest fool, the commonest knave can cultivate an appearance of frankness to the world. But Pepys's achievement was far higher and less simple. He looked at himself with absolute straightforwardness, and could understand his own vanities — could measure his own vices without difficulty. He never seeks a fantastic motive; he never excuses the grossest wantonness. He extenuates nothing—not even the faults of his friends. Here, then, is the one man we have been permitted to know, as we shall never know ourselves. Let us, then, make the most

of him: let us do homage to the one master of self-revelation that history can furnish forth.

A lust of being and moving, of exercising his senses to their utmost, governed his existence. Unnumbered and innumerable are his crowded hours of glorious life. The man who "is with child to see any strange thing" is neither cynic nor Philistine. Nothing came amiss to him. He was as pleased with Sir George Ent's discourse upon "Respiration" as he was with the peerless beauty of Lady Castlemaine. Only he must always be doing, or hearing, or seeing some new thing. To-day he is singing with Knipp, and listening with a hungry ear to the praise of his famous song, "Beauty, Retire;" to-morrow he is discussing with Dr. Whistler whether masts should be kept dry or damp. Now he goes to Will's to meet "Dryden the poet (I knew at Cambridge)"; now he is chaffering for cloves with some poor seamen in a "blind alehouse." And all the while he is drinking in life at its abundant source. His zest is almost too violent, and you wonder how he could have sustained, through many years of suffering, this ferocious energy of enjoyment; how he remained firm in this dogged determination to miss no minute of lapsing time. But to his industry no transition seemed abrupt: he turned from his mistress to his accounts without weariness or regret, and no sooner had he found an end of his figures than he was ready to play again with all the spirit of a released schoolboy. His philosophy was the most arrogant that ever a man about town imagined. "Read every book," he said in

effect, "see every play, empty every wine-cup, kiss every woman." And when he died, in all piety he might have owned that he never missed an opportunity. Alexander conquered the world; but Pepys, with a keener, more selfish understanding of life, conquered a world for every sense. He could not take a boat without singing to the "skuller"; he could not meet a Dutch bellman without taking his clapper in his hand, without noting that "it is just like the clapper that our boys frighten the birds away from the corn with in summer time in England."

But in all his research, in all his desire to penetrate the mysteries of science, there is no touch of pedantry. He was not one to encumber himself with the impediments of useless knowledge. He learnt all that he could with the lightest heart and the merriest smile. For he had but two motives in his life: pleasure and self-advancement. Mr. R. L. Stevenson, the most valiant champion of Pepys and his Diary, wrote, maybe in a moment of morbid self-consciousness, that he was happy but once. Samuel Pepys knew only the briefest interludes of displeasure. For ten years he screamed aloud with happiness, in so confident a tone that you wonder that he was not always trying to dodge the nemesis of his own pleasures. "In this humour we sat till about ten at night," he writes, of himself, and Evelyn, and Sir J. Minnes, and my Lord Bruncker—"and so my Lord and his mistress home, and we to bed, it being one of the times of my life wherein I was the fullest of true sense of joy." "True sense of joy"

—is it not magnificent? And the phrase may be matched upon every page. Yet says the professional historian of literature: "Pepys lacked enthusiasm"!

Nor was it part of his creed to put off till to-morrow what might be enjoyed to-day. His was the Epicureanism of Horace. "*Carpe diem*" he shouted in his joyous voice. "I do indulge myself a little the more in pleasure," said he by way of excuse to himself, "knowing that this is the proper age of my life to do it; and out of my observation that most men that do thrive in the world, do forget to take pleasure during the time that they are getting their estate, but reserve that till they have got one, and then it is too late for them to enjoy it with any pleasure." So Pepys let not an hour pass unchallenged, and by a youth of pleasure prepared an old age of happiness.

He loved the amenities of life: art, music, a new coat, the songs of birds, the river, the open air were his perpetual delight. But before all things he loved a pretty woman. At the outset he was but a modest wooer. He once—it was on his return from Delft—sat side by side with "a pretty sober Dutch lass," and "I could not fasten any discourse upon her," he declares in a bland confession of failure. During the same journey to Holland he found "a pretty Dutch woman in bed alone," and, "though he had a month's mind, he had not the boldness to go to her." But in a year's space his boldness was invincible. And the *Diary*, as we know it at last, is a pæan to the triumph of love.

He might have said with truth that he never saw a pretty woman that he did not salute. A bright eye lit up for him the darkest sermon. The austerity of Church was but an occasion for the ogling of beauty. For every woman he has a magnificent phrase. "Our noble, brave, fat lady," he calls Madame Lethulier, when he saw her at church. Not even his bitterest enemy could call his patriotism in question, and yet hot upon the defeat of the Dutch fleet he writes: "that which pleased me as much as the newes was to have the fair Mrs. Middleton at our church, who indeed is a very beautiful lady." Two qualities only did he abhor in woman: avarice and that immodesty which sets no barriers in the path of love. So he hated Mrs. Lane with a freely expressed cordiality. For not only was she a too easy mistress, but she borrowed £5 upon the firm security of £4 10s. in gold—a transaction whereat the business habits of the excellent Pepys most properly revolted.

To kiss and tell is righteously esteemed the unpardonable sin. Yet Pepys kissed every day, and confided the exploit to his Diary. But by the wittiest inspiration of genius he made this ultimate confidence, not in bald English, but in an infantile jargon, wherein French and Spanish and Latin are unequally blended. And you think that he employed this artifice, lest the secret journal, conscious of his shame, should change its ink to a blushing scarlet. Nowhere else does he reveal so openly the master frailty of his temperament. The record was (let us assume) for himself alone

His vanity insisted that he should remind himself that he passed the evening with Mrs. Bagwell or with Mrs. Martin ; his honour whispered that it was monstrous to tell the truth, intended only for his single eye, in plain English. Wherefore he invented a lingo of his own to salve a callous conscience. The contradiction is exquisite and characteristic. In these poor phrases of illegitimate French, you seem to catch the cunning casuistical brain of Samuel Pepys in perfect action. Upon every page he reveals himself with obvious intent ; here he lays bare his conscience with an inadvertent subtlety. And the effect is almost too acute. You are not merely looking over his shoulder ; you seem to be guiding the hand that writes.

By his own account a more general lover never lived. He made his conquests on the highway or in the kitchen. That he may dally with the wife, he sends the husband forth to purchase wine, and presently offers him a purser's place. When his sister Pall would marry, he recommends Mr. Harman, the upholsterer, "to whom I have a great love, and did heretofore love his former wife." But to be found out was in his eyes a cardinal sin. And when Creed disgraced himself at Oxford, Pepys was the first to condemn his indiscretion. Now and again a wave of penitence swept over the golden sands of his complacency. "Musique and women," he acknowledges, with regret, "I cannot but give way to, whatever my business is." And again : "I observe the folly of my

mind that cannot refrain from pleasure." Even his good resolutions are made but to be broken. "I have made an oathe," says he one day, "for the drinking of no wine, &c., on such penalties till I have passed my accounts and cleared all." And in a week he confesses that he has broken his oath "without pleasure." "Without pleasure"—that is the one phrase in the book that one is persuaded to mistrust. For the first and last time Pepys seems to be posing, to be cutting an antic before a mirror. Had he said the wine was bad, you had understood him. But were the wine good, you know that, oath or no oath, Pepys would have delighted in it.

Yet amidst all the frivolity and selfishness of his time, Pepys remained a patriot. While the Dutch were threatening our coasts, the Secretary's mind was troubled the more if it rained, "to think what the sailors would do on board in all this weather." When the Plague drove all save heroes and paupers from London, Pepys remained at his post in the very best of good humours, serving his country with unbated zeal. In a hopelessly corrupt age, he took no more commissions than should satisfy his necessities; and the glory of the British fleet overcame in his regard the plumpest cheek, the most provoking eye. But his services to his country—are they not told in Lord Braybrooke's chastened page, and heightened by many an entertaining contrast in Mr. Wheatley's more spirited version?

Was Pepys an artist? This is the question which

has grimly agitated the critics. Yet the answer seems easy: assuredly he was. He understood the art of life incomparably well. He never opposed his absorbing greed of sensation; he bent all the sterner considerations of time to the full enjoyment of the moment. And the severest critic will hardly detect a single fault in the interpretation of his wishes. He was an artist also in frankness, in that rare quality which, despite (or on account of) its simplicity, is far more difficult of attainment than the highest heaven. The artistic result of which is that he has given us such a picture of a man as is approached nowhere else than in Boswell's *Life of Johnson*. Once it was fashionable to believe, with Macaulay, that Boswell's was an idiot grinning through a horse-collar. It is still popular to assert that Pepys is a garrulous braggart, who has amused the nineteenth century by accident. But in the world of art accidents do not happen, and the peculiar excellence of the *Diary* is as firmly intentioned as a play by Shakespeare or a lyric by Tennyson.

Pepys set out to give himself a finished record of his life, and while his modesty shrank from immediate publication, he doubtless intended posterity to enjoy the fruit of his ceaseless labour. That the manuscript, with its cipher explained, should have been carefully and generously bequeathed to Magdalene College is proof positive that Pepys had a certain conscious respect for his own work. Had the journal been the idle, lazy vapourings of an amiable loafer, it

would have been destroyed before its indiscretions could have annoyed a wondering world. But the journal was the one, long, deliberate effort of Pepys's life, and it is idle to deny the title of artist to the man who has drawn the living portrait of a living man.

Even by his style, Samuel Pepys may claim the august title. For its very looseness is perfectly appropriate. He had already made an experiment in literature when, at Cambridge, he began his romance *Love a Cheate*. And if, as he said, he had lost one vein, most assuredly he found another. His mannerisms, his monotony, his constant use of the stereotyped phrases of the day, give to his *Diary* an air of reality which a more deliberate method would have missed. And, as I have said, it is the fuller edition which has displayed his art in the strongest light. Nor has the candour of Mr. Wheatley deprived a single human being of legitimate pleasure. Though for us the old Pepys is dead, though not even a professor will ever dare again to call him either Philistine or cold-blooded, the scrappy broken transcription of Lord Braybrooke may still adorn the schoolroom and the home. But at last the locked bookcase is the richer by a genuine and deathless version of an incomparable classic.

SAINT-SIMON

I

SAINT-SIMON

I.—Himself.

LOUIS DE ROUVROY, Duc de Saint-Simon, was born old, the son of an old father. His earliest years were devoted less to the trivial sports of childhood than to the study of science and history, and when at the age of sixteen he put on the uniform of the Grey Musketeers he was not only a scholar but a man of the world. He records his presentation to the King with his habitual irony and circumspection. It was at half-past twelve on the day of Saint Simon and Saint Jude, in 1691, that he made his first bow. The King, finding him small and delicate, objected that he was still very young. "He will serve your Majesty the longer," replied his father with an old-fashioned loyalty to which the more punctilious and wayward son never attained. And, though his service was neither long nor constant, he advanced rapidly in the Royal favour. Three months after he was admitted Musketeer he mounted guard at Compiègne; he was equipped with thirty-five horses, innumerable servants, and as much money as he cared

to spend; while his rank admitted him instantly to the narrow circle of the Court. So that at seventeen he had danced his first step before a brilliant assembly in the King's palace with the accomplished Mademoiselle de Sourches for a partner, and he had already mastered the recondite secrets of etiquette and genealogy.

His character and career show no progress, or rather his youth was never immature. What he was at forty, that he was already at nineteen—set, hard-witted, and bitter-tongued. So long as he remained a soldier his courage and energy were unquestioned. He distinguished himself by five dashing charges at Neerwinden, where he not only outstripped his escort but tired two horses. Nevertheless he speedily discovered that warfare was not his profession. The long idleness of a dragging campaign was insupportable to his restless spirit. He found his brother soldiers coarse and slatternly; they understood his ambitions as little as they respected his serene arrogance; and though he was a captain at eighteen, and a year later had purchased a regiment of cavalry, his curiosity drove him rather to the Court than to the field.

Indeed, his first campaign was no sooner over than he was ambitious of a distinguished alliance, and he set about marrying himself with the cold blood of a professional matchmaker and the cunning of an ancient diplomatist. He went forth upon his love-making without excitement and without passion.

His terrific precocity put pleasure and sentiment far from him. The wooing well became one who had never sown a handful of wild oats, and who would never be influenced by any tenderer emotion than pride and expedience. He began, in fact, by selecting his father-in-law, and so far he could not have been more wisely guided. For the Duc de Beauvilliers was a Marshal of France and governor of the Duc de Bourgogne, so that he would possess not only the will but the power to help a favoured son-in-law. Saint-Simon instantly realised the advantage, and there is not the smallest hint that he was swayed by affection, admiration, or the desire of happiness. He was a duke; he was wealthy; he was out of debt. He expected no dowry, and he was indifferent to beauty. But he would marry into a powerful family; upon that he was resolved at nineteen; wherefore he boldly waited upon M. de Beauvilliers, and exposed his ambition without phrase or hesitation.

The father was flattered by the attention thus paid to his daughter and to his house, and if only he had had a marriageable daughter all would have been well. But Saint-Simon, in spite of his circumspection, had aspired to the unattainable. For the eldest girl—she was but fourteen—had already determined to espouse the Church; the second was deformed; the third was a child of twelve. But the young Saint-Simon was unabashed: if the eldest were vowed to religion, he would content himself with the third. After all age was of little

account, and did not the late Duc de Martemont marry the sister-in-law of M. de Beauvilliers himself when she had not turned her thirteenth year? So he had a precedent ready for the most desperate emergency, and it was not his fault that M. de Beauvilliers dismissed him with a courtly acknowledgment of gratitude. Moreover, Saint-Simon had won his end. If he could not espouse Mademoiselle de Beauvilliers, he had won the family; his handsome compliment had attached the friendship of her father, and thus he was free to marry Mademoiselle de Lorges without sacrificing the support of a great soldier and a Royal favourite.

A boy who could thus formulate his opinion of life was evidently devoid neither of cynicism nor conceit, and his second exploit immensely increased his fame. M. de Luxembourg, returning to Paris flushed with victory, claimed to be placed over the heads of seventeen dukes, who hitherto had taken precedence of him. Here was a crisis, which instantly attracted the energies of Saint-Simon, who, young as he was, felt that the privileges of his order were attacked. Without pity or fatigue he flouted the pretentions of M. de Luxembourg, and in thus early leading the opposition he buckled to himself a band of enemies who never forgot nor forgave. But the young Quixote was unabashed: he saw his order affronted, and a passionate admiration of the ducal body was as strong in his heart as the love of the Church. He fought the fight against the superior odds of King and Parlia-

ment, and he lost. But the failure did not abate his sense of honour and well-doing: he never was reconciled to M. de Luxembourg, and his first experiment in militant egoism gave him that eager taste for the fray which he only lost with death.

Meanwhile, his fortunate alliance with the family of the Maréchal de Lorges had bettered his position at Court, and it was already the part of envious intrigue to oppose his advance. The narrow world in which he had elected to live resented his assumption of superior pride as bitterly as they feared the sting of his malignant tongue. Before long he saw all hopes of military advancement eclipsed. His own regiment was taken from him, and his juniors placed unscrupulously over his head. Now, no man ever sat down less lightly under an injury than Saint-Simon. Was he not a duke, who conferred a glory upon the army by his presence? None the less, he hesitated many a weary month, lamenting the prospect of enforced laziness, and those long summers of inactivity, when all men should speak of war, glory, and promotion. Besides, he declares that he had caught the enthusiasm of his trade, that he already dreamt of victory and fame; and though, perhaps, he was here guilty of self-deception, he determined to resign only after long and mature reflection.

The occasion, in truth, was not one for haste. The Duc de Saint-Simon proposed to resign his commission, and surely so vast a decision could not be easily framed. With all his own incomparable

sense of dignity, he appointed a board of reference (so to say), which, consisting of three marshals and three eminent courtiers, was capable of passing an honourable sentence. With no dissentient voice they agreed that Saint-Simon should leave the service, which had failed to treat him with becoming respect. A duke and peer, well established in the world, as was Saint-Simon, could not condescend to serve like a common runaway, and to see a riff-raff mob put over his head. Wherefore, said his friends, he owed to his order an instant resignation. Still he wavered: *j'ai besoin*, says he, *de ma colère et de mon dépit*, qualities which never failed him, and he realised with regret that the King's fury was inevitable.

At length, however, the letter was written, which ascribed his resignation to ill-health, and a multitude of friends was set to discover the attitude of the King. Louis, who was never so magnificent as when he accepted a blow attracted by his own imprudence, spoke of it but once. *Eh*, *bien*, *monsieur*, said he to Chamillart, *voilà encore un homme qui nous quitte.* With this superb reticence there was no argument, and Saint-Simon was driven to a false position. Nor did the King pause on the road of humiliation. He overwhelmed Saint-Simon by a single act of politeness, and then left him in silence for two years. Now, the King possessed before all men the art of giving importance to trifles, and he was wont to show his esteem by permitting a favoured courtier to hold his candle as he went to bed. Only those of the

highest rank were chosen to perform this intimate service. Ambassadors, save the Papal Nuncio, were rarely thus flattered, and it was with astonishment that Saint-Simon, purposely retired to the background, heard his name pronounced on the eve of his retirement. But he held the candle, and henceforth endured the displeasure of the King, who would neither address him nor, save by accident, cast even a casual glance upon him.

Retired from the army, Saint-Simon had no resource but the Court, and at the Court he was received with declared chagrin. The King no longer bade him to Marly, and even at Versailles encountered him unwillingly. But it was only in the close air of the Court that Saint-Simon could breathe, and, despite his monarch's displeasure, he did not begin the real work of his life until he had laid aside his captain's uniform. Moreover, by degrees the King's anger abated; and his wife's tact, together with his own intrigue, recaptured him a semblance at least of the Royal favour.

Now, Saint-Simon was born into the world an animated peerage. For him a knowledge of ceremony and precedence was the essential of a duke's career, while there was nobody of distinction either above or below his own rank. The throne was useful as the expression of the ducal power; the people was useful because it could work for the ducal pleasure. But the one and the other were but complements, and the smallest infraction of the ducal dignity was a danger to the State. To preserve this dignity in its becoming

place the most punctilious diligence was necessary, and Saint-Simon worshipped the forms of ceremonial life with a keener devotion than Amadis de Gaul brought to the cult of chivalry. He forgot that the pomp of the Court did but facilitate the progress of the kingly chariot, and in this forgetfulness he esteemed it a separate and necessary enterprise.

So in his eyes the Court existed for pageantry's sake; so in the enthusiasm of a courtier he valued the means above the end. With all sincerity he believed that the set of a wig or the colour of a hat was of more importance than policy or valour. When Lauzun persuaded the Maréchal de Tessé to appear before his monarch in a grey hat, Saint-Simon is no less indignant at the outrage than his monarch. The folly of a Master of the Ceremonies who permitted a *débutante* to kiss the Duchesse de Bourgoyne's cheek aroused a fiercer anger in his breast than Marlborough's most brilliant victory The appointment of a maid of honour was to him of far higher interest than the generalship of a campaign. But it were foolish and unjust to reproach Saint-Simon with the loyal pursuit of his duty. Narrow as was his ideal, he worshipped it with a fidelity and a courage which make ridicule unjust and contempt impossible. He discussed the one burning question of his life, whether he should or should not leave Court, with the same contracted persistence which Panurge brought to the subject of marriage. But his persistence was honourable and wise. At Court he could exercise

his best gifts, his most brilliant talents ; away from the Court he was a musician deprived of his instrument, a knight stripped for ever of the accoutrements of war.

But not merely did he cherish a lofty ideal. He was born into the world with a perfect knowledge of his art. There was no question of etiquette or propriety which he could not decide at a first hearing, and so faithfully did he follow his conviction that he would never permit an infraction of the law he knew so well. Hence was derived much of his inevitable unpopularity. He was infallible, and the world—even the world of Louis XIV.—hates infallibility. The traps laid to foil his knowledge were innumerable, and never once was he caught by the jester. On the day of his reception by Parliament he was purposely misinformed as to his costume. But the *greffier* wasted his breath. Saint-Simon could not have been deceived even in his cradle by the most accomplished student of etiquette. Thus he lived in the proud consciousness of infallibility—the one courtier of France, from whom no detail of genealogy, procedure, or precedent could ever be concealed. And his pride is pardonable for its splendid sincerity. Some there are who devote themselves to sport or literature. Others can quicken a sluggish interest only in a tumult of affairs. Saint-Simon, the secret of his *Memoirs* being kept, posed before the world for a touchstone of correctness. Nor may the most censorious do more than lift his hat in the presence of a master, and acknowledge that in one

corner of human intelligence Saint-Simon was, and will always remain, unrivalled.

Of course his superiority procured him enemies, and even had he not angered the King by his early retirement from the army he could not have lived on terms of constant amity with *le Roi Soleil*. While his knowledge and independence made him a bad subject, he was incapable of the flattery which could alone have won for him the esteem of his Sovereign, and his active life is a record of quarrel and dispute. He stood, the personification of ducal rectitude against the world. And ducal rectitude persuaded him to hate the King, Madame de Maintenon (*cette vielle fée* he calls Her Solidity), and all the race of Royal bastards. In truth, there was nothing in the wide world that he hated so bitterly as a bastard, and if his heart had become the slate of destiny, there is no doubt what word would have been inscribed thereon. Thus his quarrel with the King grew apace, and a hundred attempts at reconciliation were thwarted by the intrigue of Madame de Maintenon. Yet Saint-Simon never lost courage; again and again he would have compelled an understanding by a personal interview. And when you remember the terrifying eye and the awful majesty of the Great King, you can appreciate the intrepidity of this insolent duke. "Since you left my service," said the King, "you think of nothing but studying ranks and of bringing actions against all the world. If I were wise, I would see you so far off that you would not worry me for a long time."

But Saint-Simon stood even against this pitiless rebuke. Rather he took it to his own glory that he had protected the rank of his peers; he raised his voice against the King's, that all the Court might hear, and he had the satisfaction of knowing that the King felt the rectitude of his argument. For a while his position was easier, but the cabal of the Lorraines and the bastards would not grant him peace, and every year he is found appealing to the King's justice. And the King each time resents the duke's "attachment to his dignity," and each time grants him a reluctant reconciliation. "It is your own fault," he said on another occasion, "you talk and you blame, and that is the reason why all the world speaks against you. If you had never occupied yourself with rank, there would have been nothing to say."

But Saint-Simon did occupy himself with rank, and he would have sacrificed the King's favour to his never-failing sense of duty. However, the service which he rendered to the realm by separating the Duc d'Orléans from Madame d'Argenton helped to make a final peace, and Saint-Simon returned to Court with all the air of an injured hero. Yet he did not attribute the glory of his return to his own tact. His generosity gave the credit, where it was due, to his wife, whose popularity had never been dimmed even by her husband's petulance. "What a treasure," he exclaims, "is a sensible and virtuous wife!" But his restoration to Court abated his hostility to the bastards not a whit. Asked to accept the friendship

of M. du Maine, he was virtuously indignant. "Never will I shake their hand," he replied with fervour; "I hate them, and I hate their rank."

Even when the sons of M. du Maine received the crowning honour of their father's rank, he offered the necessary congratulations with a breaking heart. "This scene," he confesses, "was the most novel and singular of the whole reign for those who knew the King and his intoxication of omnipotence. Entering his *cabinet* at Versailles, and the order given as usual, he advanced gravely into his second *cabinet*, and placed himself near his arm-chair without sitting down, slowly passed his eyes over the whole company, and, without addressing any one, declared that he gave to the children of M. du Maine the same rank and the same honours as M. du Maine himself possessed; and without a moment's interval he marched to the furthest end of the *cabinet*, calling to himself Monseigneur and the Duc de Bourgogne. There, for the first time in his life, this proud monarch, this severe and masterful father, humiliated himself before his son and his grandson. He implored them, as they were both to reign after him, to grant the rank to the children of the Duc du Maine which he had given them, and to pay this tribute to the tenderness which he flattered himself they felt for him, and which he felt both for the father and the children." Thus the King drank the dregs of humiliation to the hushed silence of his son and grandson; thus Saint-Simon enjoyed the secret pleasure of his Sovereign's

sole discomfiture, a pleasure tempered by the subsequent compliment extorted from his ducal majesty. But his hatred knew no abatement, and even when he had helped to compass the bastards' ruin, he still hardened this heart mercilessly against them.

Meanwhile he had won the friendship of the Duc d'Orléans, a friendship which contrived his solitary appearance upon the active stage of politics, and which gave him at last a recognised position. His influence over this self-indulgent prince is as undoubted as his fidelity, and a fleeting admiration for the Duc de Bourgogne did not break the bond which united Philip and the courtier. Doubtless, had the Duc de Bourgogne lived to succeed his grandfather, Saint-Simon would have become famous as the framer of a constitution. For his confessed hobby was politics, and, had he possessed the power, he would have reformed the whole realm of France to suit the legitimate ambition of her dukes. But the Duc de Bourgogne died, and France was allowed to drift into the Revolution without the check which Saint-Simon might have set upon her progress. None the less, the death of Louis XIV. gave him his supreme opportunity. With his aid the King's testament was set aside, the bastards at last suffered a merited disgrace, and the Duc d'Orléans was proclaimed Regent. Such was the moment of Saint-Simon's triumph. For this he had endured the ill-will of the Great King, and tolerated the insolence of Madame de Maintenon ; for this he had borne the impertinence of courtiers, who

would still chaff him concerning order and precedence. At last he saw the illegitimate children of his King driven into obscurity, and was content.

It was a brilliant victory, which soon put him out of conceit with a public life. He, who had the right to ask so much, asked nothing; he refused the guardianship of the infant King, and, doubtless with a swift recollection of that embassy to Rome from which he had been jockeyed by Madame de Maintenon's intrigue, he accepted the one serious employment of his life—a mission to Madrid. There he acquitted himself with the tact and intelligence expected of an accomplished courtier, and there he drew that series of vivid pictures which are a title to immortality. But with his embassy to Madrid his public life was finished. The death of the Regent drove him from the Court, and henceforth he devoted himself to a country life and the preparation of his renowned *Memoirs*. Moreover, the life of Paris had no longer an interest for him. He belonged to the ancient France of Henry IV. and Louis XIII. The brilliance of Louis XIV., which he witnessed himself, was but an interlude, and he had little sympathy with the age of reason heralded by Voltaire and Diderot.

Indeed his hasty references to Voltaire are sufficient to demonstrate the spirit of intolerance wherewith he approached the newest literature of his age. "Arouet, the son of a notary who served my father and myself until his death, was exiled and sent to Tulle for a set

of verses very satirical and very impudent. I would not amuse myself by recording this trifle had not this same Arouet, now grand poet and Academician, under the name of Voltaire, become, in consequence of many tragic adventures, a kind of personage in the republic of letters, and even a kind of somebody in a certain society." Such is his reference to Voltaire—twice made. But this intolerance did not proceed from a lack of literary appreciation. It merely meant that an aged courtier did not understand the wit and intelligence of a strange world, into which he had wandered by the accident of a long life. Thus he tottered towards the grave in the retirement of his country seat, so little mindful of his former dignity that (says rumour) he sat without his wig because "his head smoked." But those *Memoirs* were already written which were destined to make his character and genius a part of the world's inheritance.

His character, which we know as intimately as if he had sketched it in a page of his own mordant prose, was shaped by his age. Saint-Simon, as he reveals himself, could only have flourished at the Court of Louis XIV. He needed an atmosphere of sumptuous frivolity for the proper development of his qualities ; and it is his noblest distinction that in his eyes the prevailing frivolity, sumptuous as it was, always escaped the reproach of folly and irrelevance. When the King died, his historian has scarce a word to say of his policy or prowess. But he devotes all his eloquence to the proper description of the Royal up-

rising, the putting on of the Royal boots, the Royal supper-table, and the Royal retirement to rest. Even patriotism is merged in the pious observation of a courtly manner, and you feel that it matters not a jot that M. du Maine shows the white feather at the head of the army so long as the *Roi Soleil* sinks to the west in august magnificence. A single custom of the Court — the distinction of the *pour* — gives us an insight into the dominant *punctilio*. Over the apartment of the Princes of the Blood, the Cardinals, and foreign Princes was written *pour M. un Tel.* Over the apartments of lesser personages stood the bald legend *M. un Tel*, and this simple word *pour* was responsible for many an argument and much ill-humour. The distinction could not have survived without the support of an invincible tradition, and the wisest courtier may be pardoned if he saw all things in a whimsical relation. But Saint-Simon outstripped the vainest of his contemporaries. For him nothing was unimportant that had its sanction in the habit of princes.

Above all, he was a man of principle. For his precedence before the Duc de Richelieu, for the exclusion of Capitaine de Rouvroy from his family, for the proper service of the King's Commission, he would willingly have sacrificed his life. Never once in his blameless career did he give ground on the field of ceremony, and it was this peculiar sense of devotion that made him the best-hated man of his time. The staunch champion of his order, he won the dislike of high and low. Madame de Maintenon denounced

him for a *frondeur*, full of views. Madame, bolder than the rest, turned him to public ridicule. Once when he was taking his seat at dinner before the Prince de Deux-Ponts, she said aloud: "How is it that M. de Saint-Simon presses the Prince des Deux-Ponts so close? Would he beg him to take one of his sons for his page?" D'Argenson, more violent still, called him *ce petit devôt sans génie*, and in a fury denounced "his odious, unjust, anthropophagous character." But Saint-Simon was indifferent to censure. The best hater of his time, he paid all such insolence with contempt, and quickly added another portrait to his incomparable gallery.

So loyal was he to the principle of his life that vice was as remote from his character as gaiety. How should he be gay in a Court devoted to pomp—a Court which found its solitary relief in indelicate horseplay? And of vice he was intolerant even in others. So virtuous was he, in brief, that he seems almost too good; and the supreme gravity of his demeanour, his perpetual ambition to win the friendship of older men than himself, might have involved him in the reproach of priggishness. But his talent saved him from this last disgrace, and his unfailing tact, his perfect discretion, forced respect even from his enemies. He was, moreover, a gentleman of perfect courage, who never feared to face the anger of his Sovereign, and so vast was his capacity for righteous indignation, that he was never known to excuse a friend or forgive an enemy.

Yet where he loved, he loved with a loyal generosity which was not common in his world of cynicism and selfishness. He would have laid down his life for Beauvilliers; he clung to Chamillart, even in his disgrace; and he mourned Rancé, the sincere admiration of his youth, with a simple pathos, which dignity almost withheld from expression. Moreover, his honesty was beyond question. He confesses that he has a horror of making money at Court, and with all his opportunity of gain he lived and died with hands unsullied by avarice. His wisdom matched his virtue. He was born with a perfect knowledge of mankind. At nineteen he had mastered all the mysteries of conduct and intrigue, and throughout his career he never made a mistake through lack of foresight or intelligence.

In brief, he was a virtuous, fantastic, proud, intolerant, lettered, upright, courageous, cynical, implacable, pious gentleman, who would have fought king or devil in defence of his Church or his order. Had he been ever placed near the throne he would have clipped the sovereign power for the glory of the dukes, since, with all his contempt of the people, he was in a sense the enemy of the Crown; and it is common to assert that his policy of ducal aggrandisement prepared the way for the downfall of kings and the advent of democracy. Yet, maybe, he was prophet enough to see that the power of the great families might stem the tide of revolution in France, as in England, and

at least he fought the battle of his order with a constancy none the less admirable for its conspicuous egoism.

He left the army too early for the display of his skill, and the death of the Duc de Bourgogne took from him his one chance of political experiment. So that he lives neither as soldier nor as statesman. But he has a far better title to immortality: he was a man of genius. Though his contemporaries knew it not, he was preparing an ample revenge for their neglect and antipathy. In brief, he was writing the history of himself and his age, as no man ever wrote it before or since. From his earliest youth he had been attached to the study of *Memoirs*, and it was Bassompierre whose example first spurred him to emulation. His resolve was taken at Gaw-Boecklheim, and it was to solace the tedium of a long campaign that he first sat him down to relate whatever was memorable in his life. With characteristic precocity, he began the real work of his life at the age of nineteen, and for thirty years there is scarce a day without its record.

The result is a piece of history and biography unexampled in the world's literature. It is impossible adequately to praise this vast canvas with its crowd of figures, each one outlined by the firm hand of a master. Saint-Simon was not a mere autobiographer. He was determined to give the world something else than the revelation of a personage, and so he painted the grandiose Court of Louis XIV. with all its splendour and all its vanity. He has spared nobody, least

of all himself; he has displayed his hatreds and contempts in the most vivid colours, and as he hated like a strong man his picture is never in monotone; but, on the other hand, he has sketched, not always with a light hand, his own follies and foibles, and though he bitterly resented the reproof of others, it is plain that he kept an open eye upon his passion for rank and dignity. In brief, he will always remain the most candid historian of his epoch, and no other epoch has ever found so brilliant a commentator. His grasp of detail is miraculous; nothing escapes his all-seeing eye; and he seems to have understood the motives as as well as the actions of men.

He worked, he said in a letter to Rancé, only for himself, for a few of his friends during his life, and for whomsoever would after his death, so that he determined to spare nobody on any consideration whatever. He believed that his struggle against the pretension of M. de Luxembourg would be the bitterest chapter in his book; but he had not then felt the whole strength of his reproof, and he assuredly surpassed his earliest invective in vigour and magnificence. Before all things he claims in his epilogue the merit of truth. The love of truth, he avows, has ruined his career, and he claims to pursue it with doubled ardour in his *Memoirs*. On the score of impartiality he is far less arrogant. "The Stoic," says he, "is a fine and noble chimera." Wherefore he does not boast an impartial temper. "I should do it in vain," he confesses with excellent sense, and when this fierce contemner of his

fellows is moved by prejudice or drawn by admiration, he tells you his predilection. Even when he has thrown his affection into one scale, he levels the balance by weighting the other with his conspicuous honesty.

He has achieved the greatest triumph of the writer: he has produced a true and large effect by a multiplicity of details. But the details never disturb a prolonged contemplation, because they are kept most scrupulously in their place. His method was rather that of the historian than of the biographer. He does not, after the fashion of Pepys, attempt to render the sights and sounds of the day. Where vision is defective, he supplements it by inquiry and imagination. Nor does he attempt to render the gradual development of his character and inclination. A serious historian set down to the deliberate production of a masterpiece, he has given to his work a consistent and homogeneous quality. His notes were taken day by day, but the finished work was produced after the stress of long study and consideration. So sternly does he eliminate what he thought trivial that he tells you nothing of those intimacies which delight you in the page of Bassompierre. You never hear how he was troubled to procure a coat or to woo a lady. On the other hand, you watch the great panorama of empire as it unrolls itself with splendour and ceremony. The amplitude of the impression never contracts. You are face to face with the *majesté effrayante* of the Great King; you shudder at the "false prudery" of

Madame de Maintenon ; you share the author's disgust at the intolerable viciousness of M. de Vendôme ; and all the while you appreciate the perfect conscience, the inspired intuition of the man, who saw even that which was closest to him.

His own pride was that his *Memoirs* were first hand, and *de source ;* and his pride was justified. As to their reception he was indifferent. "It matters nothing to me," he wrote ; "I shall see nothing of it"—but he anticipated an outburst of indignation, and it was only their tardy appearance which saved their author from an idle expression of rage. They came so late into the world that they could be viewed dispassionately as a work of art. And even as a work of art they were misunderstood. Madame du Deffand, who first admired them, deplores their style (in a letter to Walpole), and, though amused by their anecdote, she condemns their portraiture. Yet, after the perfection of their portraiture, it is the style which keeps the *Memoirs* of Saint-Simon ever fresh. For Saint-Simon was a master of French apart and by himself ; he derives from none ; and when the complete work saw the light in 1829 the condemnation of Madame du Deffand was instantly reversed.

His style, vigorous, involved, and inflected as it is, varies with the occasion, and is everything save pedantic. The conversations keep the very impress of the speaking characters ; the narrative pauses or quickens with the necessity of quietude or speed. But the phrase is always personal, and though Saint-

Simon was a purist in life, most assuredly he was never a purist in speech. He sprinkles his colour with a free hand, and throws into his phrase a vigour that is all his own. He wrote French with something of the fulness and variety which the great Elizabethans imposed upon English. The style was licentious perhaps, but how supple, diverse, colloquial, stately, and impressive! To the eighteenth century, accustomed to a timid accuracy, his style might well seem an outrage. But for us, who know that a strict adherence to a set of wiredrawn rules is not the first duty of art, the style of Saint-Simon has an abounding life and a vivid energy.

To its shortcomings none was more alive than himself. He recognised his negligence, his vain repetitions of the same words, his too lavish use of multiplied synonyms, his constant obscurity, now born of repetition, now of long and tortuous sentences. He felt his defects, but could not correct them. Always carried away by the subject, he was too little attentive, he confesses, to the method of expression. But, says this most punctilious of courtiers, with an irresistible irony, "I never was an Academic subject, and I could never cure myself of writing rapidly." His only thought was of truth and exactitude, and he made bold to declare that these were the soul and law of his *Memoirs*, meanwhile asking a benign indulgence for their style. But the style, which needs no indulgence, is still an influence. The lofty intelligence, which took in at a glance the grandeur of the Great

King and his Court, did not shrink from expressing itself in a separate and individual language, while the gallery of portraits, which Madame du Deffand condemned, is unique in the literary experience of the world.

SAINT-SIMON

II

SAINT-SIMON

II.—His Gallery.

WHEN M. de la Trappe declined to sit for his portrait, Saint-Simon introduced Rigault by stealth, that the painter might make the necessary notes of his unconscious victim ; and for thirty years this cunning courtier himself pursued a similar policy. No man passed before his eyes unnoticed: a line jotted down here, a feature recorded there, ensured that a perfect presentment should be transmitted to posterity. His contemporaries, in perfect ignorance of their doom, met his cold, seeing eye without a tremor ; nor did they know, when they encountered the obdurate Saint-Simon in the King's cabinet, that their characteristics were pitilessly marked and treasured for the note-book. But he spared the world as little as he respected it, and kept the secret inviolate until his gallery was complete.

He was born with the genius of portraiture, and he is still without a rival in the delicate art of bringing back the bodily, or rather the moral, presence of the dead. To read his book is to wander in a vast gallery

hung with unnumbered portraits of scheming courtiers and intriguing ladies, of valiant captains and well-skilled diplomatists. His style he varies at will: now he paints with an ample brush upon a vast canvas; now he suggests a figure in half a dozen strokes; or, again, he bites a mordant outline as upon copper. By habit serious, he does not disdain caricature, and he can twist the features of his model when an inherent grotesquery suggests the perversion. While he was happy in his art, he was fortunate also in his sitters. His was an Augustan age, as he proudly confesses; and there was no distinguished contemporary with whose aspect and character he was not familiar. Yet he laid certain restrictions upon himself. He would paint none whose qualities or pursuits were beyond his sympathy. Admirable writer though he was, he approached literature with a certain diffidence. He who had every opportunity of observing Racine, sketches him merely as the man who in Madame de Maintenon's presence attributed the collapse of comedy to the revival of such poor, foolish pieces as Scarron's. But no courtier escaped his rapid vision; and he has left us a picture, unsurpassed and unsurpassable, of all those who gossiped in the secluded defiles of Marly or took their pleasure in the cool glades of Fontainebleau.

In one other direction his talent was severely limited. He painted always without accessories. His figures stand out bare and bold upon his canvas; but they have no proper background, nor are their qualities and

occupations ever explained by the accompaniment of inanimate details. He will not symbolise a huntsman by a hound or a surgeon by a scalpel. Though he was a perfect clairvoyant of character, though he looked right into the heart and brain of man, he was deaf to the sounds and blind to the sights of existence. His kings and nobles might have lived in vacancy and clothed themselves in rags. Versailles might have been a barn stripped of furniture and beggared of elegance. Life, it is true, was his material: life as it is lived amid the intrigue and etiquette of Courts; but it is the life of the mind, not of the body, which engrosses him, and into the mind of man he looked as an astronomer gazes at the stars. Always sensitive to an encounter of wits or an interchange of incivilities, he ignores the environment of cultured society. Fine houses, noble furniture, dainty ornaments—all things that give an outward splendour to the pomp and dignity of Courts—never touch him to eloquence. Maybe, he took it for granted that dukes and gentlemen, who alone were of consequence in the world, should surround themselves with whatever was grandiose and decorative. But, none the less, he pleads guilty to a strange insensitiveness, since a sincere admiration of life's adornments would have expressed itself in spite of his theories.

With a similar obstinacy, he professes no interest in clothes. Himself a beau, he pictured the beaux of his time, yet always with so profound a disregard of their aspect that not one of them need have

been at the pains to dress. When the colour of a general's hat appears a breach of etiquette to the King, Saint-Simon is quick to note the outrage; but this vigilance proceeds not from an interest in the fripperies of life, but from a devotion to the strict, unwritten code of courtliness. So far his portraits catch a glint of his own personality. With all his passion for what was actual and vivid — he was, indeed, a god among society journalists writing for posterity—he pictured his models as so many collections of intellectual qualities or defects; and he bent his intelligence to consider the triviality of serious minds, until at times he appears nonchalant or inhuman. You acknowledge the truth of his presentation; yet, now and again you sigh for the breath of frivolity which might inspire with gaiety those strange processes of demeanour which to the courtier are the most poignant anxiety, and to the democrat an occasion of easy ridicule.

None the less, this insensibility to physical impressions heightens his few passages of description. Thus he sketches a review whereat the King, according to his wont, follows the carriage of Madame de Maintenon with a blind devotion. The Royal eyes are all for "the old witch," the Royal tongue is more eager to explain than to command. Her Solidity, ever anxious for adulation, still respects herself so far as to keep the window of her carriage shut. Yet, the window falls as the Royal hat is doffed, and this process, indefinitely repeated, impresses upon us

the carriage and its window, concerning whose existence scepticism might otherwise have been justified.

But elsewhere his "world" is never "visible." A crowd of courtiers, dressed you know not how, wanders about in a palace built of you know not what; but each man or woman of the crowd is quick with intelligence or alive with vice. The intellectual portraits, at least, are drawn with a sure hand, though the artist shirks the method of the great masters. Velasquez gave Philip his gun or set him down to his devotions; Rembrandt surrounded his Doctor with colleagues, or showed the youthful Burgomaster a connoisseur by a statuette held daintily in his hand. Vandyke could not imagine his most dignified patron apart from the clothes imposed by an extravagant fashion. But Saint-Simon closes his eyes to all accessories; sterner even than Holbein, he suppresses backgrounds, and puts a bare intelligence upon his paper.

At the head of his gallery hang two portraits, elaborate to the last detail, yet broad in the simplicity of a general aspect: Louis XIV. and his consort Madame de Maintenon. Upon their portraiture he has exhausted the utmost resources of his art. Scarce a day passes but he adds a touch or heightens a tint; and, since he is disturbed neither by loyalty nor by affection, his presentment is brutal in its sincerity. He at least is determined to show the Great King without his wig, to display to the world *le Roi Soleil* with his beams dimmed to insignificance. And the picture, coloured by his own malevolence, is not

pleasant to contemplate. A small man, shrunk in body and withered in mind, the keynote of whose character is mediocrity, most carefully cherished—that is the Sovereign of the World. A coward abroad, a busybody at home, he is yet determined to be "great"; and if he cannot achieve his end he must persuade himself of his grandeur and hire others to say that they believe him. Therefore the first necessity of his life is to surround himself with bastards and sycophants. He hates nothing more bitterly than noble birth, save sprightly intelligence. He asks at his Court neither character nor wit. Praise he must have at any cost; and though he understands no music, and was never endowed with a voice, he will sing his foolish songs night after night that he may exult in hired applause. Though innocent of taste, he must build and build and build to prove his magnificence, and he must hire architects who dare all things save to do their duty and to speak the truth.

In war a poltroon and a novice, he must yet see his armies ever in the field, as though to assure himself of his own valiance, while his timid ambition drives him so far that he listens contentedly to the casual ridicule of his own exploits, if only his consort and her toadies esteem him a model of courage. Thus his historian, in cold blood, dubs him a king of reviews, holding his cheap bravery up to eternal ridicule. In brief, says Saint-Simon, he was fit only for display, and yet was aghast at his own extravagance.

Overtaken by remorse, he urged the Dauphin to avoid a worthless example. "My child," said he on his death-bed, "you are going to be a great king; do not emulate the taste which I have had for buildings, nor the taste which I have had for war; try, on the contrary, to live in peace with your neighbours. Render to God that which you owe Him, recognise your obligations to Him, and compel your subjects to do Him honour. Follow always good counsels; try to solace your people, that which I have been miserable enough not to have done." That is a cry from a disappointed heart, and Saint-Simon echoes it cheerfully, that the right touch be not lacking to his portrait.

Thereafter he proceeds to prove that all the King's actions derived from a petty spirit of jealousy. Louis, in fact, was determined to govern for himself, yet had not the wit. But his lack of spirit checked not his ambition. He was merely driven into an insane hatred of those better gifted than himself. Thus circumscribed, he reigned perforce on a small scale: he could never attain to a large effect, and even in the petty corners of his wilful indiscretion he was more often than not over-persuaded. However, with good guidance he might, perhaps, have come to success. For his impoverished intelligence was capable of discipline. He loved glory, and order, and good government. He was born prudent, moderate, secret, master of himself and of his speech. He was even born—though this is incredible—honest and just, and

God had given him enough qualities to be a good and even a passably great King. But his early education was so monstrously neglected that none dared approach his apartment; and all the bitterness, which he professed unto the end for these early days, could not atone for the indignity of the neglect. In revenge, his natural pride was so vast that, had it not been for the fear of the devil which God had implanted in him, he would have had himself worshipped, nor would there have been any difficulty in finding adorers. So fantastic, indeed, was his vanity that he took pleasure in the ridiculous monuments set up to his honour; he smiled with approval at the pagan statue of the Place des Victoires; and he contemplated every stupidity with a serene arrogance which made his folly almost heroic.

Thus it was that he hated the Dukes, the only loyal supporters of France. Thus it was that he made way for the supremacy of the people by his ill-considered tyranny. But, in private as in public, he lived a miserable, even a squalid, life, which not even the reckless magnificence of the Court was enough to palliate. His love affairs were the open scandal of Europe; and, when at last he had sown his wild oats, it was but to reap them in the hard, chaste bosom of Madame de Maintenon! So, says his biographer, he lived dishonoured by all save worthless women and unscrupulous bastards. His sentiment of paternity spent itself upon an unrequited love for the abandoned children of long-forgotten mistresses. Truly as dismal

a picture as history has to show! Yet even Saint-Simon would soften the harsh effect. Two conspicuous virtues the Great King retained until his death—the virtues of majesty and grace: virtues so foreign to his nature that he had acquired them by a painful and a constant effort. But his majesty, acquired as it was, was still *effrayante*, and it was not merely the dignity of his position which inspired him with the power to strike terror into others. Doubtless the habit of years and the weight of uncontrolled authority are strong enough to bear down the heaviest antipathy; yet there have been many bad and foolish kings since the world began, and there has been but one whose majesty was proclaimed a terror by his bitterest antagonist. Wherefore we must view the portrait of Saint-Simon through coloured spectacles, and attribute the violent colours to the outraged sense of a displaced, dishonoured Duke.

The companion portrait—of the half-royal consort—is yet more ignoble. In Saint-Simon's eyes Madame de Maintenon was wholly black, without one single touch of amiable light or dainty colour to relieve the indistinguishable opacity. An adventuress, who first appeared before the world as the wife of a *cul-de-jatte*, she cheerfully endured the direst insults, the most equivocal positions, to arrive at the empire of the world. The governess of the Royal bastards, whose mother she easily and remorselessly supplanted, she won her place by no charm of person, by no elegance of manner. The King, who set out to hate her, was

seduced by the intelligence of her letters, presently submitted to her faculty of intrigue, installed her at his side, made her his secret wife, and finally placed the governance of France in her adroit, unscrupulous hands.

A false prude, she upheld a morality to which she was a perfect stranger, yet worshipped the idea of bastardy because she knew the way to the Royal heart. After the manner of abandoned women, who scrub churches to atone for the forgotten past, she devoted herself with the air of a Sainte-Nitouche to the glory of religion. She built convents; she patronised ancient foundations; she devoted her fullest ingenuity to ecclesiastical intrigue. By dint of a vain cunning she contrived to hold herself a kind of universal abbess, and she undertook the details of all the dioceses. For, like Louis himself, she possessed a talent so closely wedded to detail that it could not compass a general effect. Thus, the ambitions of bishops were her most engaging interest, and she ended in believing herself the mother of the Church.

Meanwhile she passed through every degradation to the throne of honour. Her apartments were almost next to the King's, and the country was governed from the privacy of her *salon*. The Minister who would have his way might leave the King severely alone, so long as he gained the ear of this ancient intriguer. Her own meanness was matched only by the Royal subservience. Unattractive, intolerable as she was, she received the adoration of a King, who

never addressed her without uncovering, and only replaced his hat when she had vouchsafed an answer. Her one merit—and that wholly unsympathetic—was to enhance rather than to decrease her age, lest her hold over the King should be established upon the quicksand of vanity rather than upon the solid rock of interest. She undertook no enterprise that was not disgraceful, she gave no advice that was not disastrous; yet she ruled France without sentiment, without affection, during the lifetime of the King, whose last days she rendered miserable by neglect, and whose death was too long lingered for her august endurance. The King, with the lovesick enthusiasm of an old man, prayed that God might be pleased ere long to take his consort too; but she, who had been more than Queen, desired also to be immortal, and so bitterly resented his pious wish that she retired in dudgeon to St. Cyr.

So Saint-Simon sums up her achievements: "Success, entire confidence, rare dependence, omnipotence, public and universal adoration, the whole world at her feet —Ministers, Generals, the Royal Family; all good and well by her, all at fault without her; men, affairs, things; elections, justice, pardons, religion, all, without exception, in her hand; the King and the State her victims; such was this incredible witch, and thus she governed without a break, without an obstacle, without the slightest cloud for more than thirty years, the incomparable spectacle of all Europe!" But at least she was incomparable

for all her baseness and self-seeking, and Saint-Simon, had not policy and tradition blinded his judgment, might, one thinks, have taken a more cynically favourable view of her achievement.

These are the two masterpieces of the portrait-painter—masterpieces which engrossed the whole of his life and talent. Yet they are but two among many hundreds, and, though elaborated with a devotion and an energy which are not elsewhere revealed, they are a mere corner in Saint-Simon's claim to immortality. For this incomparable draughtsman had many methods of work, and more often he rejected the vast canvas for the smaller space and closer craftsmanship. Now he would clarify the impression by an array of epithets, now he would suggest a character by a jaunty anecdote. For instance, you might read a dozen characters of Peter the Great, yet miss the essential quality presented by Saint-Simon in half a page. Peter, says the chronicler, indignant at England's lassitude in sending him an embassy, displayed no anxiety to receive William's representatives. From day to day he put off the audience, and at last declared that he would receive them on board a Dutch man-of-war which it was his pleasure to inspect. The Ambassadors complained of the informality of the reception; but they complained far more bitterly when the Emperor sent word that he was at the masthead, and would see them there. The Englishmen, not sailors enough to mount the rigging, excused themselves with what timid grace they might. But

the Emperor insisted that he would entertain them there or not at all; and after many parleyings, they submitted to his caprice, and laboriously, foot by foot, they climbed the rigging. Upon this narrow and aerial ground the Czar received them with the same majesty wherewith he would have bidden them approach his throne. He listened to their speech; gave a favourable answer to the King and the nation; laughed at the fear depicted upon their faces; and explained with a smile that it was the punishment of a too tardy arrival.

But Saint-Simon's most renowned achievement is to etch a portrait with a handful of bitter phrases, and none ever suffered so acutely at his hands as the President Harlay, who had dared to support the pretension of M. de Luxembourg. "This issue of great magistrates," wrote the Duke, "had all their gravity, which he carried even to cynicism; he affected their disinterestedness and modesty, and dishonoured these qualities, the one by his conduct, the other by a refined but extreme pride, which, in spite of himself, leapt to discovery. He plumed himself above all upon his probity and justice, but the mask soon fell. Between John Doe and Richard Roe he preserved the utmost rectitude; but no sooner did he perceive an interest to flatter or a favour to gain than he instantly found his price. . . . He was learned in public law; he had a firm hold upon the principles of jurisprudence; in literature he equalled the most accomplished; he had a perfect knowledge of history; he

knew how to control his company with an authority which endured no repartee, and which no other President had ever attained. A pharisaical austerity rendered him terrible by the license of that public reproof which he administered to litigants, advocates, and magistrates, so that none had business before him without a shudder. Moreover, supported in all points by the Court, of which he was the slave, the most humble servant of whatever was in favour there, a fine courtier, a strangely cunning politician, he turned all his brilliant talents to domination and success, determined before all things to make the reputation of a great man. Without honour, with no private morals, with none save an outward probity, even without humanity—in a word, a perfect hypocrite, without faith, law, God, or soul, a cruel husband, a barbarous father, a tyrannical brother, a friend only of himself, malicious by nature, delighting in insult, outrage, and impertinence, he never once in his life lost an opportunity of evil. . . . Outwardly he was a little man, vigorous and thin, with a diamond-shaped face, a large aquiline nose, fine, speaking, piercing eyes, which looked only by stealth, but which, fixed upon a client, or a magistrate, sufficed to drive him into the earth. He wore a not very ample coat, clerical bands and flat cuffs, a brown wig mixed with white, bushy but short, and over all a big coif. He held himself, even when he walked, slightly bent, with a false air of humility rather than of modesty, and he always shaved the walls so as to make room for himself with as much noise as

possible, and at Versailles he never moved a step without respectful and even shameful bows to right and left."

That is a portrait which Tacitus himself, Saint-Simon's one rival in the art of literary portraiture, might have drawn without shame or regret. It is bitter enough, yet it reveals a man and not a monster, an individual, not a type ; and even if Saint-Simon did his enemy an injustice, he was just to himself and to his craft. For the Harlay, drawn in this memorable passage, is a living, breathing personage, softened into life by certain traits of talent and amiability. But Saint-Simon is not always thus severe upon his contemporaries. He praises the Duc d'Orléans and Monseigneur with a loyalty that nothing can blunt. He approaches Beauvilliers and Rancé in the silent attitude of hero-worship. From the time when he first linked the bonds of friendship he never wavered for a moment in his loyalty to the Duc d'Orléans, and the death of the Regent inspired him to a panegyric the more notable for the general hatred and distrust. He praises his talents without stint or hesitation, and he is silent concerning those indiscretions which might have brought discredit upon the Regent's memory.

His foibles, the Duke confesses, were known to all ; but it was abroad, rather than at home, that his brilliant qualities were recognised. Not even his bitterest enemies could belittle his experience, his liberal and just wisdom, the grandeur of his genius and his views, his singular penetration, his resourcefulness

and fertility in expedient, his dexterity of conduct under all changes, circumstances, and events; the charity wherewith he considered and combined all things; his superiority over his own Ministers and those sent by foreign Powers; his exquisite discernment in the unravelling of affairs; and, finally, the learned ease with which he replied on the spot, whenever he chose. These qualities, thought Saint-Simon, were sufficient to distinguish the loftiest prince, and to counterbalance a transitory feebleness of life and conduct.

But, honourably as he admired the Duc d'Orléans, it was the Duc de Bourgogne who had won Saint-Simon's tenderest regard. Not only was his respect for this prince profound: his knowledge was deep as his respect. The portrait of the Dauphin, in fact, is drawn with the sympathy which comes of life-long intimacy; but it was not easy to draw, and Saint-Simon, in painting this complex character, shows himself once more a master of mankind. The Duc de Bourgogne, then, was born with all the passions and all the vices that could beset a prince. He was arrogant, passionate, and of a surpassing obstinacy. He could not endure the interference even of times or seasons, and a shower of rain was enough to throw him into a fury. So high was he above the rest of the world, that the utmost of his condescension was to believe his brothers a feeble link between himself and the human race. As he grew up he devoted himself with a fierce energy to all the pleasures that were

possible to his rank. He surrounded himself with mistresses, he played, he drank, he was transported with rage at the smallest check of fortune.

His infirmities did but accentuate his excesses. Lame and hunchbacked, he was prevented from the sports and exercises he loved so well. His pride, moreover, was hourly shocked by the deformity which all his ingenuity could do no more than palliate. But at the same time he was gifted with an intelligence which set him far above his family and his Court. There was no branch of science which he had not studied, and he was born with an instinctive understanding of politics. Had he lived, the destiny of France might have been changed, for he was incapable of the suicidal blindness which encouraged the Revolution. Moreover, with years came discretion, and this marvel of restless dissipation was suddenly chastened by a fervent piety from the follies which had disgraced his first youth. Henceforth he devoted himself with a whole heart to literature and affairs. Alive and alert to the destiny which he believed to await him, he conferred with ministers, he made himself indispensable to the army, he proved in a thousand ways his perfect fitness to govern France. "The King," said he, "is made for the people, not the people for the King:" thereby explaining his distrust of Louis XIV. and his keen perception of France's real necessities.

Above all—and here he touched Saint-Simon in his most delicate point—he deplored the collapse of the

nobles, and in the many discourses wherein he opened his heart to his favourite Duke, he declared that once upon the Throne he would ensure the safety of his country by readjusting the balance of the powers. His conviction that the people were the real masters of the Throne persuaded him to detest warfare and luxury, the two methods employed by his grandfather to exaggerate the grandeur of which he was never certain. But none the less, he maintained an inalterable loyalty: he treated the King with a more than filial respect, and he never approached Madame de Maintenon without the submission due to her pomp and influence. His converse was amiable, weighty, and reasoned. Avid of knowledge, he always sought the counsel of such as were specially informed, and he had no taste for the mediocrities which surrounded the Throne. His virtue was the more solid because it was established upon a knowledge of vice, and this prince, who had known all things, and had drunk the very dregs of life, had yet preserved energy enough to be a great ruler.

But he died young, perhaps of poison, and left Saint-Simon, who might have proved his colleague, to indite his panegyric. "France," says the courtier, "fell under this last punishment. God showed her a prince whom she did not deserve. The earth was not worthy of him: he was already ripe for eternal happiness."

On occasion he can be even gay, and his picture of d'Aubigné, the drunken, reckless brother of Madame

de Maintenon, is nothing less than a light-hearted caricature. "He was called," says the historian, "the Comte d'Aubigné; he had never been anything but a captain of infantry, yet he spoke of the old wars as a man who had deserved everything, and who had suffered the most egregious wrong in not having been made a Marshal of France long ago; at other times he would say, with a grin, that he had taken his *bâton* in money. He attacked Madame de Maintenon after the most terrible fashion that she had not made him a duke and a peer. . . . . Of money he was a perfect sieve, impossible to close; but he was endowed with a pretty wit for such sallies and repartees as were wholly unexpected. Withal a good fellow and an honest man, polite, and free from the vanity which the situation of his sister might have made impertinent. None the less he was marvellously impertinent, and it was a pleasure you might often experience to hear him discourse on the times of Scarron, in the Hôtel d'Albret, or on times even before that. Now and again nothing would restrain him from discoursing upon his sister's gallantries, from comparing her devotion and present situation to her ancient adventures, and from expressing his surprise at her monstrous good fortune. All this was bad enough, but it was not the end of the rascal's pleasantry. For at times he would sit upon a bench in the Tuileries, and entertain the world with the most flippant discourse, calling the King his brother-in-law." No wonder d'Aubigné was banished to a retreat, and bidden to spend the rest of a droll life in

religious exercises. But he lived long enough in the world for Saint-Simon to know and understand him, and to leave us a sketch which is none the less amusing for the gentle malice which inspires it.

Yet Saint-Simon had a thousand friends, and it is to the glory of England and of Dutch William that the Earl of Portland is among his heroes. Of this nobleman he paints what is perhaps the most amiable portrait in all his vast gallery, though his appreciation, maybe, was heightened by Louis XIV.'s hatred of the British King, who had declined without parley to marry a Royal bastard. But whatever the motive, the portrait is there—sketched with an undeniable loyalty and admiration. Bentinck, says he, was discreet, secret, polite, faithful, and adroit. A perfect sportsman, and a lofty gentleman, he had not only accompanied his own Prince in all his enterprises, but had even won over the French Court, and was singled out by the reluctant Louis for special favour. Louis, in fact, advertised his admiration of the dignified Ambassador, and conferred upon him the last favour in permitting him to hold his candlestick as he retired to rest. Monsieur, on the other hand, found him the best companion in the chase, and was never so happy hunting the wolf at Marly as when Bentinck was by his side. His appearance at Court was overwhelming. "He had a personal *éclat*," says Saint-Simon, "a politeness, an air of the world and of the Court, a gallantry, and a grace which surprised everybody. With that, much dignity, much haughtiness even, but tempered

by discernment, and a prompt judgment, which left nothing to chance."

Thus Saint-Simon suggests, with kindliness and grace, the amiable traits of his friends. Whomever he pictures he marks off from all his fellows. The zeal of precision never flags, and the least of his models has henceforth a separate and distinct existence. The epithets are always felt, the traits essential to the character. Here, for instance, is a thumb-nail sketch of Chamilly, the hero or villain of the *Portuguese Letters*, upon whom sentimentality has emptied the whole cruse of its venom. "He was a tall, fat man," writes the biographer, "but very well made, extremely distinguished for his valour in several actions, and celebrated by his defence of Grave. He was a gentleman of honesty and worth, who lived everywhere most honourably; but he had so little wit, that the world was continually surprised, and his wife, who had much, often embarrassed. As a youth he had served in Portugal, and it was to him that the *Portuguese Letters* were addressed by a nun whom he had known, and who had gone mad for love of him."

So, while the partisans of the lovesick nun have told you without ceasing that Chamilly was a miracle of heartless cynicism, Saint-Simon explains no more than that he was tall, fat, brave, honest, and witless. The soldier, in brief, obscures the Don Juan, and there is no doubt which is the truer portrait. Again, he sketches Law, the Scottish banker, with the humour of condescension, and the contempt due to inferior

origin. Yet he liked the man, and cherished a genuine admiration of his buoyant, kindly, modest, gallant disposition. He absolves him entirely from avarice and dishonesty, and finds him, in fact, a fanatic rather than a swindler, unspoilt by fortune, and superior to ruin. Mrs. Law did not meet with equal favour in Saint-Simon's judgment. To begin with, she was not Law's wife at all, but an English lady of good family, who had followed him for love, and who bore his name without the ceremony of marriage. None the less, she was haughty, even insolent in her manners. She received homage in her own house, but she rarely paid visits, and was rewarded for her pride and fidelity by the constant care and respect of her husband.

Very different in style is the character of Fénélon, which is drawn with a firmer hand, and with the august dignity which became the subject. "This prelate," writes Saint-Simon in his most renowned passage, "was a tall thin man, well made, and pale, with a big nose, eyes whose fire and spirit leaped forth like a torrent, and a physiognomy whose like I have never seen, and which none could forget who once had seen it. It contained everything, yet there was no strife of opposites upon it. There gravity and gallantry, seriousness and gaiety were depicted; there were suggested at once the man of learning, the bishop, and the *grand seigneur*. But the air which was breathed, not only from his face but from his whole person, was an air of delicacy, wit, the graces,

seemliness, and, above all, nobility. It required an effort to cease from looking at him. His manners corresponded to this aspect. He had an ease which he imparted to others, and a good taste which comes only from familiarity with the best company and the great world. Withal he possessed a natural, soft, and ornate eloquence, a politeness which, if insinuating, was always noble and suited to the occasion, an easy, smooth, agreeable elocution, and an air of clearness and lucidity which made him intelligible in the most difficult and complicated discourses.

"Moreover, he was a man who never cared to have more wit than those with whom he spoke, who set himself within the reach of all without making the condescension felt, whose charm put every one at his ease, so that it was impossible to leave him, or to refrain from him, or not to try to meet him again. In fact, he possessed this rare talent in so remarkable a degree that, despite his fall, he attached his friends to him for their whole lives, and, even after their dispersion, reunited them to talk of him, to regret him, to desire his presence, to cling to him more and more, as the Jews to Jerusalem, to sigh after his return and to hope it always, as this wretched people awaits and sighs after its Messiah. It is also by this authority of prophet acquired over his friends, that he was used to a domination which, for all its mildness, would not brook resistance. Had he returned to the Court and taken his seat upon the Council, which was his great ambition, he would have

endured no rival: once he was anchored and independent of others, it would have been dangerous, not only to oppose him, but not to have supported him always with compliance and admiration." This, indeed, is the true eloquence of panegyric, phrased and balanced with a care which Fénélon himself would have approved. And if you would find an adequate contrast, turn at once to the few lines of contumely which Saint-Simon devotes to the despicable M. du Maine—that man of mud, who sought refuge in the darkness, and whom even the darkness threw up.

But, in truth, he never writes without the distinction which comes of understanding and courage: and while his judgments are coloured by the animosities of his nature, they are never marred by timidity or lack of frankness. He is, indeed, an historian who dared to paint all his fellows as they appeared to his honest yet partial eye; and, while he is never a match in concision for Tacitus, he emulates that writer of genius in a dozen other qualities. At any rate, one court is revealed to us by the clairvoyance and daring of a single man; and if we assume to know the men and women of Louis XIV.'s time, it is to the surpassing talent of Saint-Simon that we must give thanks for our intimacy and appreciation.

A FRIEND OF KINGS

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CHARLES JOSEPH, prince de Ligne, was born in 1735, at the Castle of Beloeil. His family, the most highly distinguished in the Low Countries, possessed such wealth and titles as make success a commonplace and grandeur a necessity. A Field-Marshal's *bâton* lay in his cradle ; he was a grandee of Spain before he could speak ; and, at his birth, some fairy godmother hid beneath his pillow the priceless gifts of undying childhood and eternal gaiety. That he flashed his first smile upon Belgium is strange enough ; it is still stranger that this miracle of joyousness was the son of a joyless, stern, fantastic old warrior. He who was destined to be an amiable lover encountered in his youth nothing save hate. His father, frank and liberal in his detestation, left his education to a pack of tutors, only one of whom, said the ingenuous victim, believed in a God. Nor did the paternal fury decrease with years. When the young Prince was made colonel—at twenty-three—in the regiment of the family, his father congratulated him in a masterpiece of contempt. "Next to the unhappiness of having you for a son," wrote the

Field-Marshal, "I know none more acute than the unhappiness of having you for a colonel." But the Prince cared as little for his father's malevolence as for the brutality of the pedants who pretended to direct his studies. And no misfortune availed to stem the full tide of his talent and ambition.

He dreamed away his boyhood in visions of military glory; even the fresh slumber of fifteen was disturbed by the haunting prowess of Charles XII. and the great Condé, while the stately gardens of Beloeil were the theatre of a hundred imagined exploits. At sixteen he wore the uniform of Austria, and, received at Court with every mark of favour and distinction, he presently began that career of frolic prodigality and splendid abandonment which death alone interrupted. His father, who had long since lost the habit of smiling, frowned upon his excesses in cold displeasure, shuddered at his triumphs, and determined to put an end to the enchanting, extravagant romance by an uncongenial marriage. It was not his wont to take counsel with his son, even where the boy's heart was concerned, and, once the resolution framed, he neither expected nor encountered opposition. The young Prince had returned to Beloeil with an astounding array of debts, and the father's grim and only comment was to order his departure on the morrow. He accompanied his son without a word, and without a word they arrived in Vienna. They took up their abode at a house thronged with pretty women, married or marriageable. The son was set at dinner next to

the youngest; but as no word of warning had been spoken, he knew nought of the drama wherein he was playing the principal part. At last his valet whispered him what was the rumour, yet left him in doubt whether it was his mother-in-law, an aunt, or the lady herself that was his destined bride. However, he was married in a week to a Princess of Lichtenstein, to whom he had spoken scarce a word, and who remained unto the end a reverenced and charming stranger. "I found her amusing for a fortnight," said he, "and afterwards indifferent." But not for a moment did he demur to the fate prepared by his father. He accepted it, as he accepted whatever was serious in life, with an easy jest, and a perfect assurance that nothing could mar the prevailing happiness. If he could not give love, he was very generous of courtesy, but he resolved never to surrender to a Belgian home the talents which were meant for the crowned heads of Europe. "Are you married?" asked a courtier many years afterwards. *Oui, mais si peu*, smiled the Prince de Ligne, who continued his brilliant Odyssey unperturbed.

He had been a bridegroom but a few months when the Seven Years' War gave him that chance of glory for which his ardent soul was thirsting. Though the better part of his life was spent in a frivolous diplomacy, he was soldier first, and gallant afterwards. Indeed, it was but for lack of opportunity that his sword was ever sheathed, and the feud between Frederic and Maria Theresa was the first fuel to the

fire of his military ambition. He was a soldier of the ancient type, to whom the whistle of the bullets was the sweetest music, and who esteemed personal valour more highly than the defter arts of war. Not for him to revolutionise tactics, or to trap his opponent by months of patient watchfulness. He loved fighting for its own sake, and was always ready to give his life in exchange for a brilliant action. Nowhere was his gaiety so remarkable as in the field. He charged the enemy in a fury of good spirits, and was never so happy as when the first to enter a beleaguered fort.

That his carelessness escaped the proper reward of death is but a part of that astounding luck which never deserted him. There was no risk of war which he did not invite, yet he survived years of serene courage and reckless intrepidity. Had his skill been equal to his enthusiasm, he might have left us a perfect description of war. Yet his pen limped long behind his intention, and, for all his protestation, the field, and not the study, was his rightful province. However, he compels the world to share such a vague excitement as inspired his own breast in the very heat of action. "To speak well of a battle," says he, "you must know such a moment of drunkenness as comes to you when a battle is won. For a battle is like an ode of Pindar: you must bring to it an enthusiasm which almost touches delirium. . . . Here there is no servile march to follow. The first calculations are upset by circumstances impossible to foresee. . . . Who, indeed, shall prophesy all the imbecili-

ties, all the hazards? A mere nothing decides the fate of a day, which decides the fate of an empire; and it is by the event that you appear an Achilles or Thersites. I am astonished that a single soul survives a battle. How shall you not die of grief if you lose, and of joy if you win?"

In this temper, then, he fought through the Seven Years' War, rejoicing always in the stress of combat and in the abounding vigour of his blood. But he was little less apt for the elegance of Courts, and Maria Theresa showed her knowledge of men when, after Marxen, she sent him with the news of victory to Versailles. Here his triumph was conspicuous, as, indeed, it might be, since he had all the qualities which compel success. Young, handsome, with a very riot of spirits, which, says the Comte de Ségur, came near to madness, how should he fail at a Court which set gaiety high among the virtues? Moreover, though he was not rich, yet he was a spendthrift, and lack of money was no bar either to his happiness or his magnificence. Even with an empty pocket he would travel in state, and the direst poverty gave no flutter to the heart of this imperturbable gambler. But if Versailles received him with acclamation, he returned her worship with the courtliest disdain. He despised the King, he flouted the reigning favourite. He detected everywhere a meanness and stupidity, which he was at no pains to palliate or condone. Nor did his contempt spring from prejudice, since France was and remained until his death the country of his choice.

Though the Low Countries gave him birth, though he exulted in the Austrian uniform, though for a while he was Catherine's obedient servant, his wit was French, his talent was French, his desires, where war was not in question, never strayed far from Paris.

But dulness was inexcusable, even though it were French; and he recoiled in horror from the stupidities of Louis XV. and the insolent patronage of Madame de Pompadour. The King (said he) asked the silliest questions, discussing the weather of Vienna with Stahremberg, and bidding the Papal Nuncio describe after what fashion the Pope dressed his pages. The favourite was more serious and less discreet. In an instant she was lost in the clouds of politics and war. For the benefit of the Prince she sketched half a dozen plans of campaign, and then with an august wave of the hand declared "we are selling our plate to carry on your war." And as though this condescension were not enough, she proceeded to reprove the ladies of Prague, to which folly the Prince found no reply. But the King atoned for his stupidity by the gift of a superb ring, which De Ligne pawned the next day with the facile conscience of youth and health. "In those days," wrote he, "I cared for nothing. I was only anxious to live, knowing that war was still waging, and being afraid that I should not get enough pleasure before I died." He need not have feared; his sincere desire of life and pleasure was matched by the good fortune which made all pleasure easy, and let him live out all his days. He loved, he

laughed, he gambled, he read, he wrote—and all with a zest and curiosity which, while they kept him ever young, exacted an amazed acquiescence from all the world.

At Versailles, then, he was accepted as a master of the elegances. Foreigner though he was, he enjoyed the unique experience of imposing his tastes upon a cultivated Court. He did not accept the fashion of the moment; he transformed it in an instant, and kept it for thirty years as his whim would have it. His wit and gallantry were alike irreproachable. His brilliant conversation, though it enforced respect, was seldom bitter enough to make him enemies. But again, after his first pacific conquest, the war summoned him; and though he made many a sojourn in France, it was not until the accession of Louis XVI. that he found his home at Versailles. His hatred of Louis XV. had driven him from the Court to the Salons, whose intrigues were little more to his taste than the commonplaces of the King. Yet the patronage of Marie Antoinette made all things a delight, and in the few years which preceded the revolution the Prince de Ligne was supreme in Paris as at the Trianon.

He had changed, moreover, since his first appearance before the French King. His style had broadened with experience, and he was at last a perfect master of himself and of society. Once he was no more than a man of fashion, now he was a fashionable philosopher to boot, and there was no Court in Europe whereat the philosophy of the hour was not a potent influence.

The intervening years he had spent in the laborious idleness of travelling; yet his idlest journey had not been aimless, and he knew men and cities more intimately than any of his contemporaries. The death of his father—in 1767—had given him command of a princely fortune, which he spent with more than a princely extravagance; and since the peace had enforced leisure, he made the best of it, enjoyed life with every nerve and fibre, and traversed Europe up and down in sheer lightness of heart.

But France was still the country of his predilection, and Marie Antoinette the Queen to whom he preferred to pay homage. Never for a moment did he falter in his loyalty to his unhappy lady, who rewarded his devotion by a frank and gracious amiability. He accompanied her upon her rides in the Bois; when there was a spectacle at Versailles, he was privileged to stand beneath her box, and comment upon the piece with his nimble wit and high spirits; he was always present at the concerts given under the trees of the Orangery; and it was even his lot to counsel prudence at the masked balls. But the Court had its absurdities, and only the unruffled temper of the Prince de Ligne could preserve an even tranquillity. Though he remained ostensibly upon cordial terms with the King, he confesses that he approached him with an air of patronage. He would protect him against his favourites, and even attempt to improve his mind with conversation that was not wholly devoted to sport and folly.

The Duc d'Artois and his practical jokes were more difficult of endurance; yet the Prince was never betrayed into a look or a word of ill-temper. On one occasion he had promised to accompany the Queen upon her ride, while D'Artois insisted that he should hunt the boar; and the result was a comedy, or rather a farce, from which only the Prince emerged with credit. At six in the morning D'Artois with a troop of companions thundered at his door, which was already barricaded for the siege. The attacking party won the first advantage; breaking into the stronghold, they dragged De Ligne, the most dignified courtier in Europe, from his bed; they hustled him into his clothes, and carried him on to the horse that awaited him. But he was too quick for his assailants. No sooner was he on horseback, than his foot slipped the stirrup, and he had fled into the King's kitchen. Pursued thence by twenty scullions, he took refuge in the theatre, from which he was dislodged without his boots and with a scarred face. The sight of blood brought his opponents to reason. Instantly they ceased their noisy song of triumph, and left De Ligne to bathe his wound, and meet the Queen upon the terrace. But he would support the most ribald of practical jokes for the sake of Marie Antoinette, and as he was her docile slave while she lived, so after her death he was her most eloquent panegyrist.

He collected monarchs (so to say) as the modern interviewer collects celebrities. But with a motive infinitely more honourable. It was only among the

great that he could find such society as befitted his magnanimity, and he took the place which belonged to him without a trace of snobbery or obsequiousness. To Joseph II. he dedicated his sword, and Joseph II. rewarded him with a constant admiration. He was present at the Emperor's coronation; he witnessed his dignified and uncomplaining death; he was one of the four who carried his body to its last resting-place at the Capucines; and he described him to Catherine, in a masterpiece of measured grief, as "the Prince who did honour to man—the man who did the greatest honour to Princes."

But if he loved the Emperor Joseph more, it was the great Frederic who ranked higher in his regard. To this hero alone he paid the tribute of timidity: short-lived, indeed, yet none the less sincere. He was wont to compare him to Henry IV., in his eyes the supreme hero of all time; to Louis XI.; to Francis I. "An old wizard who divined all things, and whose tact was the finest I have ever seen"—that was his opinion, based upon a ripe experience; but for all the King's grandeur, De Ligne was prepared, once he had conquered his shyness, to fight him on politics, or to chatter encyclopædias. And then, as if to prove his catholicity, he gave a liberal share of the heart, already claimed by Marie Antoinette, to Catherine le Grand, the invincible, august, unscrupulous Empress of All the Russias. She, who had never seen his like, declared that he thought profoundly and behaved like a child;

and he attended the orgies of her half-savage, wholly splendid Court with a zest which appeared a kind of madness to the most flippant of her Ambassadors.

He witnessed, said he, the last magnificence of Europe, when the Empress, despite her glacial climate, wedded Asiatic luxury to the splendour of Louis XIV., of the Greeks, of the Romans, of the *Thousand Nights and a Night*. For her he acted the spy upon Potiamkin ; for her he put off his own uniform to assume the uniform of Russia. He was one of those who followed her to the Crimea, on that exultant journey which was half-campaign, half-picnic. Though the grandeur was little to his taste, "though" (in his own words) "the carriages were full of peaches and oranges, though the valets were drunk with champagne, though he died of hunger, and found nothing warm, save the drinking water," yet his curiosity never slept, and he spent the days in a marvelling enjoyment. And well he might, for the Empress set out in a chariot, drawn by thirty horses, containing room to seat eight persons, with a card-table and library by way of distraction. The diplomacy consisted in a free exchange of *bouts rimés* and epigrams. When once they had left their chariots for the barges which carried them down the Dnieper, he awoke De Ségur every morning by shouting impromptus through the dividing wall of their cabins, he carried on an elaborate correspondence at ten paces, and in his assumed character of "diplomatic jockey" he discussed politics after the frivolous fashion which endeared him for ever to the Empress Catherine.

Thus he spent his life, in unbroken merriment, seeing all, and flashing upon all that amazing wit which, without gesture and glance, is the shadow of a shade. Thus he knew Maurocordato, the tyrant of Moldavia, whose harem was an open house, and whose kingly ideal was universal happiness. Thus he knew Casanova, whom he hated, and whom he described with more than his wonted venom as proud, because "he was nobody, and had nothing." And wherever he went, whomsoever he saw, he was happy; not because he sought happiness, but because no other temper was possible to him.

Never idle, never listless, he must always inaugurate a new enterprise, invent a new idea, or visit a new country. And as adventures are for those who seek them, his life was packed with surprise. Avid of all things save money, he was never a fortune-hunter. He avoided diplomacy, because he would not be a shopman of intrigue; and when peace compelled him to sheathe his sword, he always found a fresh project to engross him. "I never reflect," he boasted; "either I am busy, or I fall into a suave idleness." Yet, so lofty was his ideal of happiness, that he confesses—this courtier who never knew chagrin—that only four days of his life were truly and completely happy: the day when first he put on his uniform, the day before his first battle, the day that he first knew that he was loved, and the day that he got over the small-pox. These very exceptions to years of unbroken happiness prove him incapable of fatigue, and

give him the right to call his career the most joyous that he knew.

But with the burden of time even his activity decreased, or rather it was diverted from the field and the high road into the study. If he had not squandered his life in laboriousness, he had not suffered the ignominy of rest ; and at last he retired to Vienna and the softer toil of literature, but not without adding up, in a spirit of genial boastfulness, the sum of his achievements. "I will bet," said he, "I have spent three years of my life and more than one hundred and fifty thousand florins in carriages alone ; and an equal sum in gambling. My campaigns have cost me more than five hundred thousand, and above that I have given two hundred thousand to my regiment and to the other troops I have had under my command. I have spent an equal sum in fêtes, reviews, and manœuvres. In fact, I reckon that my expenditure, since I have been in the world, has been six or seven millions of florins." And for this he had seen whatever was most amiable and attractive in Europe ; but he had, alas ! also witnessed the squalid encroachment of revolution, and the consequent decay of all the Courts.

Wherefore he retired to Vienna, broken in fortune, yet gallant as in his splendid youth, and cultivated the muses with the same energy and zeal with which aforetime he had pursued pleasure. Had he been a modern Englishman he might, perhaps, have contented himself with golf and an occasional article furtively contributed to a magazine ; but being a true child of his

age he was determined, like his betters, to shine in philosophy. At a time when literature was as steadfast a necessity of the Court as gambling, how should the Prince de Ligne escape the contagion, especially when he was gifted with a ready tongue and never-failing repartee? So he committed the one indiscretion of his life: he became a literary fop, like Frederic the Great, whom he pronounced in all seriousness more of a man of letters than Catherine!

And as nothing came amiss to his talent, he wrote all things, prose and verse, history and romance, comedies and characters. He would reach the confines of human knowledge, like M. de Voltaire; or with Jean-Jacques he would go beyond the distant horizon, anxious for a precipitate return to nature —he for whom nature was nothing and the foibles of men an absorbing interest. But at any risk he must be in the movement; and the movement of his day was to be not an artist in words, a pretty juggler of phrases, but a resolute collector of facts, an ambulatory encyclopædia. And the knowledge which he had gathered in every corner of Europe could not be collected in less than forty volumes! That the publisher who produced this forgotten library went bankrupt is not surprising; the marvel is that the author survived; and, indeed, so vast a baggage were enough to undo the reputation even of the Prince de Ligne had any one been intrepid enough to unpack it.

For the ironical truth is that he—the nobleman

and courtier—was rather a journalist than a man of letters. He recorded the foibles of his time with a pretty wit; his visit to Spa might have made the fortune of a society paper; he could sketch a portrait in a page and a half with more penetration and justness than the most of his fellows: and when he condescends to autobiography, he is uniformly enchanting. But his solemn treatises are unread and unreadable; his forty volumes are but quarries, wherefrom the literary stone-breaker may collect a few blocks of genuine marble. And the literary stone-breakers, with Madame de Staël at their head, have done the best for his reputation. His weakness is amiable, and he shared it with the best of his contemporaries, whose indiscreet love of letters is the strangest feature in a strange epoch. A race of heroes, to which the battlefield was a delight and a necessity, was bitten with an ambition to ape Voltaire! And there is more danger in this defection from an heroic ideal than appears at the first glance. For when kings would become journalists, then the people would become kings, and in this universal fever of dulness you may detect revolution in the making.

But the Prince de Ligne was always quick to correct the habit of pedantry by a stern observation. When Frederic was agog to dig and plant with Virgil in his hand, the Prince was instant in discouragement. "Sire," said he, "Virgil was a great poet, but a very bad gardener;" and here the Prince's judgment was infallible, for he had his favourite subject at his finger's

end, and has left us as wise a treatise as exists upon the art and science of gardens. Nor did his literary vanity seduce him to pretentiousness. He was always conscious of his limitation and recognised that it was the pruning-knife of Madame de Staël, who cut forty volumes into two, that revealed his slender talent to the world. Above all, he was incapable of patronage. He valued the friendship of Voltaire, the acquaintance of Rousseau, as highly as he esteemed the amiability of Marie Antoinette; he approached them with the deference that was due to the masters of their craft, and with so sensitive a freedom from egoism that, when he visited Rousseau, he did not think it necessary to reveal his name. And, if his complete works were never vivified, he wrote pages not a few which, frozen as they are in the coldness of type, give a hint at least of the warmth and brilliance of his conversation.

But apart from his experiments in literature, necessary to subdue his restless activity, he spent his last years in a retirement which was an honourable conclusion to an honourable career. Not even his straitened means conquered his vanity and love of display. Though his house upon the ramparts of Vienna was small, it was illustrious, and was dignified by the style and title of the Hôtel de Ligne. His salon was narrow as a corridor; yet here stood the most distinguished statesmen of Europe, proud only to have gained admittance, and thither came—in 1807—Madame de Staël, with profound humility and perfect

acquiescence in the temper of the man who despised her.

And at seventy-two he was still a fop and still a gallant. "His delicately malicious and gaily ironic wit," wrote Count Ouvaroff, who knew him only in old age, "was allied with a sweetness of character and an equality of temper that were unparalleled." Gravity only was distasteful to him, and he would always turn the conversation with a word or a nod from too serious a topic. His pride was flattered by the eagerness wherewith the curious pointed their finger at him in the street, and he was yet anxious to attract the attention which was his due. He would walk abroad in the Field-Marshal's cloak which became his youthful figure, or, still more splendid, he would drive in his grey coach, whose white horses were the wonder of all Vienna. His happiness had suffered no eclipse; his talk was as marvellous as when he astonished the Court of Versailles, and not even his wrinkles obscured the dazzle of his smile. The best of life had been his, and he waited the end in placid content, and it is in his triumph in Vienna, rather than in his cumbrous books, that you catch the last glimpse of the Prince de Ligne.

In brief, the grey coach was a clearer revelation of his spirit than his treatise on the Thirty Years' War, and it was with a justified pride that—in 1815—he did the honours of Vienna to the whole of Europe. He died, as he would have wished to die, with all men's eyes upon him, and amid the gaieties of the

Congress. "Le Congrès ne marche pas; il danse," these were his parting words, and his last epigram. And thus in the victory of a great man, who played the most elegant part in the drama of his time, is Belgium avenged for a century of affronts.

THE CALIPH OF FONTHILL

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WILLIAM BECKFORD, torn by misfortune from the palace of Fonthill, restricted, yet did not lose, his unbroken ambition of pomp and magnificence. His collection at Bath was all the choicer for an enforced economy; the new tower which rose upon Lansdown Hill was at once more stable and more elegant than Wyatt's shattered unsightliness. Though no park separated his windows from the world's eye, the door was opened to his rare visitants by a Spanish dwarf, broad-faced, shapeless, and flat-footed. Here on the threshold was a symbol of his distinction; throughout a long life—and he preserved his youth for fourscore years—he never stooped to common surroundings, nor accepted the drab superstition of his meaner contemporaries.

The son of a Lord Mayor, he was yet a child of genius; and being debarred the University by his mother's whim, he was educated under the watchful eye of Lord Chatham, who declared he was "all air and fire." His guardians, designing him for a political career, had set him down sternly to the study of Greek and Latin. But it was the pictured East that

engrossed his boyish imagination; under the tutelage of Zenir, the Turk, he had translated the manuscripts of that other mystification, Wortley Montagu; and (may be) his fancy had already Orientalised old Fonthill into the Hall of Eblis. Nor should the taste have been unforeseen: a love of the East was in his blood, and he had a genuine pride in his kinship with the author of *Les Quatre Facardins*. "I think Count Hamilton will smile on me," he wrote to Henley, "when we are introduced to each other in Paradise." But his family imposed discipline, and an exemplary tutor, one Lettice, who never forgot to address his pupil and patron in the proper terms of adulation, presented him to the cultured society of Geneva, trained him in the polite learning of the day, and led him to Ferney, that he might pay homage to the aged Voltaire.

Thus he was a scholar in his teens, and when, at twenty-one, he inherited a colossal fortune, he was already master of that knowledge and experience which should distinguish luxury from dissipation. Handsome, with a fearless eye and the lofty mien of aristocracy, he made the tour of Europe with unparalleled splendour; the quickness of his imagination enabled him to see all things in a strangely personal light; and he was still a boy when he printed his *Dreams, Waking Thoughts, and Incidents*, the first vivid hint of the fancies and opinions which remained with him till his death. "I am a fervent classic," he wrote, in complete unconsciousness of his

genuine instinct. For he was no classic at all, but an unbridled romantic : a prophet of that nascent school which Gray and Bishop Percy had inaugurated. Nature was his goddess, not Art, and Nature not trimmed and clipped by the dainty hand of man, but rough and unkempt, with tumbled flowers and hurtling rocks.

Through whatever land he passed, it was always his pleasure to separate himself from his companions, and to commune with trees and mountains in a spirit that Wordsworth might have envied. The discovery of myrtle in bloom throws him into an ecstasy ; at Florence he is more constant to the adoration of an old crooked ilex than to the treasures of the Uffizi. He would sit for hours, he says, in the woods of the Cascini, "hear, without feeling, the showers trickling above my head, and see the cattle browsing peacefully in their pastures, which hazel copses, Italian pines, and groves of cypress enclose." So he would wander, drunk with the dews of the morning, passing his delicate fingers through his jet-black hair, rejoicing in the music of the birds, plucking flowers with fresh-hearted devotion, and quoting Theocritus that the classics might not be wholly forgotten. So, with half-sincerity, he would imagine himself a child of Sylvanus, forget that London is peopled with prowling savages, and believe that the sounds and sights of the country are sufficient for the aspirations of mankind.

This sense of romance perplexed his judgment, and

at times made blind his eyes. The discreet beauty of Holland, the well ordered perfection of her cities, the exquisite fashion of her houses meant nothing to him. He still sighed for rocks and waterfalls, and affected to miss the exotic foliage of the South. Insensible to the charm of space and light, blinded by poetic reminiscences to the golden atmosphere of the dunes, he shudders at Amsterdam, and tells you at Haarlem that "all his dislike of the walking filth of the Low Countries had returned."

But this love of romanticism is not without its compensation. It imparts to his travels a note of lyric jubilation hitherto unknown in English literature. If his book is not good prose, it might have been admirable verse, and he who contained so many prophecies in his brain was thus an inventor of the prose poem. Moreover, a quick response to the aspect of streams and flowers and trees saved him from that obliquity which overtakes the lettered antiquary, and enabled him to look upon Rome (for instance) with clear and steadfast vision. Unmercifully does he belabour the archæologist, who tells him that five years would not reveal to him half that Rome contains, and instantly going forth to condemn the Coliseum, he is inspired with "a vehement desire to break down and pulverise the whole circle of saints' nests and chapels, which disgrace the arena."

His enthusiasm is as enchanting as the movement and energy of his style. He cannot sit in Petrarch's chair without bestirring himself with vivid imagin-

ings. It is only with a timid reverence that he places himself upon it, and he is "pensive" (you may be sure) when he reflects that, sitting in the same chair, Petrarch was found dead. But still he tempers his romance with a respect for old masters, and intensifies his piety with a loyal admiration of music. Even the horror of the Lowlands is mitigated by Corelli's symphonies, and at Antwerp, the organ "transported him to Italian climes." Wherefore you are not surprised to detect in these early impressions a suspicion of that artificiality which fought against the fashionable romanticism, and presently dominated him. The conflict is brusque, but reasonable. The young Beckford, in his own despite, was already half in love with the fantastic, and would forget at times the grosser glories of nature in the more refined ingenuities of mankind.

Perhaps he remembered the eloquence of Sir Thomas Browne, and reflected, lounging beneath a twisted ilex, that were the world now as on the Sixth Day, there were yet a chaos. At any rate, he is sometimes seduced into admiration of extravagant artifice. Now he recalls with delight the festival given at Venice to Henri III. of France, when the ancient square was turned by an awning, brilliant with artificial stars, into a vast saloon, and carpeted with the matchless tapestries of Persia. Now he envies the supreme illusion of Gualbertus, who from his rocky cell saw saints and martyrs sweep across the sky, and read his missal by the light of opening

Heaven. This love of the artificial and the bizarre encroached with encroaching years, until the whole world believed him a mystery; but he first visited Italy in a spirit of frank, ingenuous romanticism; and Apuleius is the Latin writer who for the moment exercised the weightiest influence upon his mind and vision.

As he approached the bleak hamlet of Lognone, he was confronted upon a mountain path by two hags, who stepped straight from the pages of *The Golden Ass*. They were, in truth, shaped less by nature than by literary reminiscence, and they could never have scowled upon a traveller whose eyesight had not been informed by study. In their hands were ominous lanterns, and it was with a sinister grin that they offered the strangers a dish of mustard and crows' gizzards, cooked, no doubt, in printer's ink, and served upon an ancient quarto. And Beckford, remembering the source of his observation, declined the banquet in terror, lest he should be changed forthwith to a bird of darkness, and sit till doomsday upon the roof of a smoke-grimed cottage. In brief, he coloured the present in the romantic hues of the past, and learned from books to be the fervent child of Nature.

But the *Excursion to the Monasteries of Alcobaça and Batalha* is the masterpiece of his experience, and is so far embellished by memory and invention as to seem a work of pure imagination. Grandeur is its motive, and Petronius its model, though the travellers set forth with a splendid retinue, and are the very inverse

of the immortal beggars. It was the Regent of Portugal who ordered the expedition, and the preparation was worthy this princely patronage. At last—it was in 1794—Beckford had learnt how to live: he knew the triumphs which money might buy; and a French cook added no less to the dignity of his retinue than a German physician. "Depart from thy palace surrounded by all the pageants of majesty—thy most faithful slaves, thy best beloved wives, thy most magnificent litters, thy richest loaden camels—and set forward on thy way to Istakar." Such the command given to Vathek, when he quested the treasures of the Preadamite Sultans; and in a spirit of equal magnificence did Vathek's creator leave his *quinta* of San José.

The travellers are idealised as frankly as the adventure. The author himself is drawn in the true heroic style, while his companions—the Grand Prior of Aviz and the Prior of St. Vincent's—are admirably imagined, the one the laziest, the other the most complaisant, prelate that ever did honour to a sumptuous and exclusive Church. The narrative glitters with sunlight and magnificence, and the orange-orchards of Portugal are an appropriate background. The evenings passed like the mornings in a perfection of indolence—"all warmth, chat, and idleness." Yet every stage had its surprise, and Beckford's excitement flags as little as his unwearying commentary upon life and art. An accidental encounter with a Chinese missionary throws him into an ecstasy, and his enthusiasm leaps

at the wonders of Pekin. In the Emperor's garden this wayward apostle of artifice might have realised his ideal. For even in winter, said the Padre, the walks were warmed with scented vapour; the season was forgotten in the silken leaves which peopled the trees; while gaily enamelled ducks quacked automatically as they took the food flung by the eunuchs into their mouths of brass. "Dreadful!" exclaimed the Grand Prior; "I wonder the Emperor has not shared the fate of Nebuchadnezzar." But Beckford smiled, and thought prophetically of Fonthill.

The reception at Alcobaça is a veritable page from an aristocratic *Satyricon*. No sooner were the "coo-ings and comfortings" of the Lord Abbots suitably performed than a shout arose: "To the kitchen! To the kitchen!" And there were such preparations for the feast as Trimalchio could not have surpassed, and only Beckford imagined. "Through the centre of the immense and nobly groined hall"—to change a word were to spoil a masterpiece—"not less than sixty feet in diameter, ran a brisk rivulet of the clearest water, flowing through pierced wooden reservoirs, containing every sort and size of the finest river-fish. On one side, loads of game and venison were heaped up; on the other, vegetables and fruit in endless variety. Beyond a long line of stoves extended a row of ovens, and close to them, hillocks of wheaten flour whiter than snow, rocks of sugar, jars of the purest oil, and pastry in vast abundance, which a numerous tribe of lay-brothers and their attendants

were rolling out and puffing up into a hundred different shapes, singing all the while as blithely as larks in a corn-field." What a noble sense is here of wealth and gluttony, of recklessness and splendour, suitable alike to ancient Portugal and to "England's wealthiest son"!

And so the royal progress continued: the never-ending banquets were enriched by delicacies from China and Brazil; a lay-brother was in attendance to dress shark-fins; and the "divine, perfumed, ethereal Aljubarota" assuaged the mightiest thirst. Nor did the French cook fall below this great occasion: his *macédoine*, murmured the Lord Abbot, was worthy Alexander the Great, while his omelettes were safe from oblivion so long as Portugal frowned upon the sea. At night the romance ceased not; it became grave; and the monastery of Batalha awoke to the awful imprecation of a mad priest. "Judgment! judgment!" he cried; "tremble at the anger of an offended God." Then by a changing whim, Beckford would affect his old love of solitude, and, mounting his Arabian, would seek the distant tranquillity of river banks, or haply espy behind a convent lattice the adorable Francisca. But the plump, round-bellied abbots were jealous of his absence, and presently he returns to marvel at the excruciating tragedy of Donna Inez de Castro, and to hear the heartrending tag, "Perish they shall," echoed from a ladder-top by an aged monk.

The monks were not the only fantastic inhabitants

of Portugal. Still more grotesque is the bird-queen, that lady of august lineage, who had caged within her garden half the birds of the country—parrots, araras, and screeching cockatoos. Trimmed hedges and spruce parterres formed an amiable avenue to this Paradise, or Inferno, of birds; and the lady's retinue, which was composed of three sleek and sallow nephews, habited in faded court-suits of blue and silver, a dwarf, an ex-Jesuit, and a half-crazed buffoon, is little less terrific than the bevy of black-bearded and forbidding hags which surrounded her. No wonder Beckford was disconcerted by this "ugly display of living tapestry," but when her Excellency from her high-backed seat put the question: "Most estimable Englishman, have you any native birds in your island?" Beckford's reply was triumphant. "Yes, madam," said he, "we have; one in particular—seldom seen, but often heard—the cuckoo." And to complete the absurdity of the situation, Franchi and the buffoon imitated the well-known note, until her ladyship was dismayed, and the hags shuddered.

But the Englishman's fame had reached the Court, and the Infanta imperiously commanded an audience. Report pictured him a miracle of fleetness, and she asked forthwith that he should show his paces in a grove of catalpas and orange trees. Being a hero, and an Englishman, he gave his companions a liberal start of ten paces, but left them instantly behind, and reached the goal, a marble statue dimly illuminated by transparent lamps, an easy and graceful winner. The

Infanta was enchanted, but unsatisfied. "Now let me see," she exclaimed, "whether he can dance a bolero; if he can, and I abhor unsuccessful enterprises, Antonita shall be his partner." Now Beckford yielded to none in his abhorrence of unsuccessful enterprises: wherefore Antonita *was* his partner, and they glided along in a "delirium of romantic delight." His progress through Portugal, then, was an unbroken glory. With his French cook to aid, he captivated the country; the Court, the Nobles, and the Church paid him extravagant honour; and he carried back to England a memory which, though merged in imagination, still flattered his vanity after fifty years.

After fifty years! Half a century did his impressions of Portugal mature, and they were better tenfold for the keeping. The book, which opens with the condescension of the Prince Regent, and breaks off (for it does not end) with a queenly scream, is even more characteristic of its author than *Vathek* itself. If the old house at Fonthill suggested the Eastern romance, the romance, in revenge, was the inspiration of every subsequent enterprise. But in the interval Beckford had grown into the mystification which has become notorious. He had realised that his genius would find expression in life rather than literature. The double repute of *Vathek*—in France and England—had given him that touch with the arts which was necessary to the perfection of his ideal. At last he was secure in his own, if not in the world's, admira-

tion, and henceforth he was free to resume in his life the manifold fancies of his works.

He never tired of telling the stranger that he composed his famous Eastern fantasy in three days and two nights, that during this strenuous period he never took off his clothes, and that he hastened himself into a sickness by heroic pertinacity. Though the fable is not strictly accurate, truth lies in exaggeration, and this imagined hurry best represents the sudden forcibleness of the sublimely humorous fable which is *Vathek*. But the time had come to represent in a reasoned existence his ironic and capricious temperament. Spurning politics, for which his contempt was always sincere, he retired to Fonthill, where he merged a vague past in a vaguer future. Fortunate in the wealth which enabled him to realise the manifold dreams of his youth, he set the dramas of his imagination upon a vast stage, which he alone might contemplate. Imagine Shakespeare, in retirement at Stratford, acting now *Hamlet*, now *Romeo*, in his own park with irreproachable trappings, and you may form an opinion of Beckford's sojourn at Fonthill. Himself the actor, himself the audience, he knew no check to his performance, he groaned at no adverse criticism.

His Abbey was for him what the Palaces of the Five Senses were for Vathek. A love of animals, which rendered all field sports abominable, separated him completely from the country gentlemen, his neighbours. He was still better at home (in spirit) with indulgent priests, spendthrift hidalgoes, and distorted

dwarfs than with the strenuous fox-hunters of England. His seat in Parliament did not mitigate in the slightest his hatred of public life. Once—in Portugal—he had looked with complacency at tables whereon "no newspaper had ever been thrown"; he had lain his head "on neat, white pillows, guiltless of propping up the heads of those assassins of real prosperity—political adventurers."

But he did not, like Byron, defy the world: he lived outside it. If in his childhood he had been spoilt by adulation, a jealous antipathy frowned upon his manhood. The sentiment and freedom of his *Waking Thoughts* inspired his friends with an inveterate suspicion. "Neither Orlando nor Brandimarte," he wrote to Henley, "was ever more tormented by daemons and spectres in an enchanted castle than William Beckford in his own hall by his nearest relations." His pride begot misunderstanding, misunderstanding created hate, and hate found expression in groundless slander, until in revenge he framed a theory of solitude, and elevated it into a practice. He was among the first to formulate the doctrine of individual effort. "All important truths," he said with astonishing clairvoyance, "have been the result of solitary effort. None have been discovered by masses of people—it is fair to suppose they never will." And heartened by a proper arrogance, he built a wall twelve feet high round the park of Fonthill, and set himself to resume in a sedentary life the conclusions of his years of travel.

The Wiltshire Downs provided the natural solace for which his romanticism still pined. There he might listen to the music of running water, or throw himself impulsive under the trees. There, too, he planted exotics of every shape and kind, that the genial South might not be forgotten: thus, thought he, he could put Portugal in his garden, and capture Spain beneath the leaden panes of his glass-house. A thousand strange dishes, innumerable wines, availed to transport his fancy wherever it would travel, and within the circuit of his own domain he might enjoy voyages as fantastic as the famous excursion to the Monasteries of Alcobaça and Batalha. The atmosphere, which he changed at will and without regard to the shifting seasons, was his own, and under the sky of an English autumn he might mimic the sultry heat of an Italian summer.

His years of solitary confinement at Fonthill increased that love of artificiality which was already alive when he made the tour of Europe, and not only did his silk blossoms rival the ingenuity of the Chinese Emperor, but he devised a painted tree that should be independent of winter or summer, of sunshine or rain. But all this was insufficient for his boundless energy. Like Vathek, he must always be building towers or bidding palaces rise to the heaven. The old house, in which the Lord Mayor had expressed his modest taste, was too small and ill situated to fit the ambition of the son. So Wyatt, the Destroyer, was ordered to build the monstrous Abbey,

an orgy of reckless Gothic, and to surmount the imposing edifice with a far-seen, gigantic tower. The tower, built upon the sand, most righteously collapsed, but not until death had removed its architect beyond the reach of rumour and reproach. Otherwise how just had been the retribution! Even after death must Wyatt continue the work of destruction. Unable longer to desecrate churches, or to tear down abbeys, he left his own creations upon foundations so insecure that time and the winds of heaven were sufficient to perfect his work, and Beckford's folly crumbled harmlessly to the ground.

Insensate grandeur was the characteristic of Fonthill. This wing was an imitation of Canterbury; there a church tower was parcelled out in dwelling-rooms; and the whole was in accord with the flagrant taste of Wyatt and his time. Doubtless Beckford remembered the ill-fated Fonthill, when in his Portuguese *Excursion* he wondered "how persons of correct taste" could tolerate Norman arches or the horseshoes of the Moors, "when they might enjoy the lovely Ionic so prevalent in Greece, the Doric grandeur of the Parthenon, and the Corinthian magnificence of Balbec and Palmyra." How, indeed? And yet this miracle of taste conspired with Wyatt to achieve a monster, to which Time and Decay were kind beyond its desert.

But none the less Fonthill was sumptuous and immense, the proper scene of pageantry and display. And even Beckford would interrupt the solitude he loved so well, if there offered the opportunity of a

spectacle. To the Abbey came Nelson, accompanied by Sir William and Lady Hamilton, to receive the homage paid by genius to bravery. The splendour of the festival was assured, though the guard of Volunteers seems a reminiscence of the city, and though the brass band must have struck stridently on Beckford's cultured ear. The Abbey, still incomplete, wore the casual beauty of a ruin, and there the most brilliant banquet was given. The entertainment was certainly more barbarous, and perhaps less amusing, than that afforded by the monks of Batalha; but Lady Hamilton seized the opportunity most effectively, and appeared before Nelson in the garb of Agrippina, carrying in a golden urn the ashes of Germanicus.

At times, indeed, Beckford would play the part of a *grand seigneur*. But to the world he remained an impenetrable mystery, fearful to those who knew him not, yet quick to capture the devotion he was steadfast to retain. Against the idle curiosity of strangers his door was honourably closed, and when a too zealous traveller did succeed in climbing the twelve feet of wall, he was received with so cold a civility as was a patent discouragement to his kind. One tourist, more valiant than the rest, found himself in the park, and, taking Beckford for the gardener, followed him complacently into every nook and cranny, until at last the master showed him to the dining-room, and, revealing himself, insisted that the stranger should remain to lunch. The poor tourist, overcome by terror and even touched by shame, knew that escape was hopeless,

and there he must sit a weary hour under the cold, disdainful eye of the man upon whose privacy he had intruded. He went off, did this tripper, to complain of his patron's ill-usage; but surely man-trap was never so adroitly set! surely spring-gun was never so quietly discharged!

Beckford, in fact, never performed an awkward duty awkwardly. Everything that he ventured was sudden, distinguished, unexpected. The world, jealous of his wealth, recoiled also before the bitterness of his tongue, the imperiousness of his vengeance. When a certain duchess would have sought his hand for her daughter, he gave her such a lesson as avarice and ill-breeding have seldom received. He invited her to Fonthill and put everything in order as for a royal visit. He dazzled her cupidity by an extravagant display, and determined that she should never set eyes upon him. The servants treated her with an eager obsequiousness, yet gave uncertain replies to her constant query: "Shall I see Mr. Beckford to-day?" Ever hopeful, ever greedy, the duchess remained six or seven days in the hospitable, tenantless mansion, and returned to London furious against the man who, without a word spoken, had foiled her enterprise. Thus you account for his unpopularity; thus explain the constant calumnies which an ignorant, suspicious world uttered against him.

He lived his whole life amiable and aloof. His house was his distraction, his collection society. To his eager interest nothing came amiss, and he packed

his vast rooms with pictures, books, and curiosities, purchased perhaps with more courage than discretion. His love of art was fashionable, despite its ardour ; and his frequent criticism of paintings belongs rather to his time than to himself. Though in his *Biographical Memoirs of Extraordinary Painters* he flagellates the follies of others, he yet praises Poussin for his subjects, and blames Rubens for the selection of his models. None the less he was the fortunate possessor of countless treasures, from the best of which not even disaster could separate him, and it is recorded to his credit that, though necessity forced him to sell his pictures, he never till his death parted with a book.

When Fonthill was taken from him, he shrugged his shoulders, and bought prints instead of oil-paintings. Even at eighty his zest had no way diminished, and on the brink of the grave he confessed to a dealer that he was still "all agog, all ardour, all intrepidity." Nor did he ever show more conspicuously honourable than at the moment of ruin. The scholar, who had never known a moment's boredom in his life, found as much pleasure in Bath as at Fonthill. Miserable without a tower, he instantly commenced the edifice that looks down to-day from Lansdown Hill. This, said he, was a necessity, since his slender house afforded no prospect ; and so genuinely disgusted was he with Wyatt's ill-fated Gothic that a model of the Lysicratean temple—in iron—surmounted the newer pillar. His ancient collection gone, he was no whit disheartened, and the sale-rooms were still the theatre

of his enterprise and courage. There were still left enough retainers for the alternate exercise of wit and kindness; and surely no man who shunned the world treated his household with a more generous friendship, no man was ever so ingenious in reproving disobedience by a jest.

He left no other biographer than a vulgar gossip, and you are apt from his books to view his life in a wrong proportion. His youth was spent in a fever of travel and composition. If *Vathek* do not rank among the greatest works of the world, it is still a miracle of grim wit, caustic humour, contemptuous irony; and once more Beckford distinguished himself—an Englishman—from all his fellows by giving a masterpiece to the literature of France. Some few burlesques, now sliding into forgetfulness, were dictated by the same spirit of careless satire, and if the earliest book of travel be a lyric expression of himself, the latest is a reasoned expression of his art. But his real life lay as far apart from literature as from Spain. Fonthill was Beckford made concrete. There he attempted to create a false world, to translate into practice an imaginative ideal. That he failed was his loss rather than ours. The twelve-foot wall shuts out the Abbey from prying eyes as sternly to-day as it did near a century ago. We can only catch sight at a distance of the Gothic tower, and marvel that his vast resources of wealth and taste could produce no better effect. We can but attribute a furtive confusion between Wardour Street and the perfect collection to the

influence of his generation, which, despite his own valiant theory, warped his judgment. But without reserve may we admire a courteous gentleman, splendid in prosperity, brave in adversity, who hated the world's interruption as heartily as he despised its malice, and who, notwithstanding the load of wealth and sycophancy, yet carved his life into a definite and a personal shape.

BARBEY D'AUREVILLY

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"IN life," said Barbey d'Aurevilly, "we are strangled between two doors, of which the one is labelled *Too Soon*, the other *Too Late*." And assuredly none was ever born at so untoward a time as the author of *Les Diaboliques*. It was not the world that was out of joint: that ancient machine obeyed the fortuitous touch of fate with as idle a patience in 1810—the year of Barbey d'Aurevilly's birth—as in the callow childhood of Eden. And had its wheels perchance been clogged, he was no Hamlet, foredoomed against his will to set them right. But what should this Merovingian have schemed in the nineteenth century? His was not the imbecile temperament which could take a pleasure in the progress of the age; he could not dishonour his nature so far as to seek a kinship with the century yet unborn. No, without deceit or circumstance he knew himself a stranger in a strange epoch; and while he acknowledged the misfortune, he repudiated indignantly the disgrace of his inapposite appearance.

Nor was his profession more happily chosen than his epoch. Action was the primal necessity of his

being. His hand was fashioned to hold a sword ; yet fate thrust a pen into his fingers, and he must needs be content with the less dangerous, more formidable weapon. He belonged to the race of those who are tricked by their talent as by their circumstances into a career of irksome tranquillity. He was fit for every stalwart enterprise. Had he found a Sovereign worthy his allegiance, he would have dedicated his life and courage to the welcome service ; had he lived (as he should have lived) in the age of chivalry, he would have battered the stubbornest castle for the sake of Beauty, he would have endured the fiercest onset for a smile. But why should he draw blade from scabbard to defend a Republic which he despised, and for which (said he) no artist could ever strike a blow ? Why should he surrender the lust of words, the glory of a coined phrase, for an ignoble cause ? Thus, like Carlyle, like FitzGerald, like many another valiant warrior, he was betrayed by the exaction of literature, his imperious mistress, into a life of inactivity. Once more Art conquered predilection, and Art, as always, was justified of her victory. Stripped of intelligence he would have led a forlorn hope, or driven back his country's enemies. But a restless brain compelled him to avoid the profession which his ingenuity continued to glorify, and a hostile environment deprived the inevitable defection of remorse.

Barbey d'Aurevilly, then, was a mediæval knight driven by a destiny, hapless for himself, thrice blessed for us, into the literary life of the nineteenth century.

But not even his talent persuaded him to accept the conventions of his fellows, and he passed his years in an arrogant isolation from which he has never emerged. For curiosity has not yet prompted his friends to scandal, nor has the prattling tongue of truth attempted to warp our judgment. His love affairs are unrevealed; his dignity remains unsoiled by the prying industry of the pamphleteer. Hence we are free to fashion his portrait, as he would have it fashioned, from his own books and scanty confessions. And hence we approach far nearer reality than we could were we perplexed by the patient research and hasty discoveries of the literary rag-picker. For, like all writers of strong temperament, he surrendered to his theories without a struggle, and he was incapable of excluding either himself or his convictions from his romances. Not only does he speak in his characters, he comes behind them with a sudden comment; and while you contemplate the fate of *Le Chevalier des Touches* or *L'Ensorcelée* with interest, you are really enlarging your acquaintance with their creator. Moreover, he is so near to us that the legend, born of his mysterious life, is still fresh; nor has it yet become, as it will by lapse of time, a problem for the serious historian.

Born in Normandy, at St. Sauveur-le-Vicomte, he was endowed with the martial ardour of his father, an ancient Chouan. It was his own boast that, like Aphrodite, he came from the waves, and was nurtured in the foam of the sea. There flowed in his veins the

blood of fishermen and corsairs, and he describes his uncle, a great drover, as the Rob Roy of Cotentin. Such was the ancestry, in which he preserved a legitimate pride, and whose ferocity of action he translated into a ferocity of style. To the end of his life he was loyal to his country, its tradition and memories; and the type of his choice was the old sea-wolf. "I love these men," he wrote, "these old gulls, disfeathered by the storms which they have resisted." And again he recalls the translator of Omar, who knew no worthier rival to Tennyson than the captain of his fishing-smack.

In after years he enveloped his childhood in an atmosphere of romance, not unbecoming one whose whole existence was a magnificent and troubled dream. To his imagination his father's house wore a stern, Jansenist aspect. His education was entrusted, he would declare, to a grave, fantastic Abbé, while horsemanship and the sword were among his earliest accomplishments. To foster his skill his father would place a *louis* on the saddle, and the *louis* was his if he leapt over the horse's back without dislodging it. But an end soon came to this amiable ease, and his father, who hated Paris with a hatred as keen as his son's love of Normandy, sent him to Caen to study law—to Caen, where he watched the decline of Brummel and which he afterwards described with the tact of sympathy in his *Memorandum*.

An inveterate warrior, he could not long remain on terms of amity with that other warrior, his father: at

seventeen the breach was complete, and, forced to sacrifice his ideal of splendid leisure, Barbey d'Aurevilly presently sought Paris and the combat of letters. The combat once engaged, he fought to the end. The greatest men, he held with his Norman pertinacity, are those that yield last; and he retired, at death, from the unequal battle, without surrendering an inch of ground. He wrote a series of incomparable romances, which, in their rapidity of thought and style, suggest the flash of the foil, and into every one of which he threw himself and his prejudices. He contributed to the journals, which he hated, and which he once called "the railroads of falsehood," without committing a single act of disloyalty to his inflexible ideals. He fought, pen in hand, against what he believed the follies and vulgarities of the age, and, since he was a solitary conservative among the devotees of progress and revolution, he fought alone.

It is this fight which is the true history of his life. Apart from his intellect and ambition, he engaged in no enterprise. He did not travel, for the hustling of railroads and of chance companions annoyed him. "There is something democratic in travelling," he said, "a secret love of majorities, which should be despised." And though there are others to whom a solitary voyage is the sternest seclusion, he was sincere in his opinion and stayed at home. But if he has no adventures to record, he reveals again and again in a parenthesis the tastes which help an appreciation of his character.

With the instinct of an artist he hated mountains. "Am I descended of the Titans," he asked, "upon whom they were hurled?" And above all sounds he loved the music of bells. "The voices of bronze," said he, "do not change like the voices of men." One single episode, which reveals his inherited disposition, is still memorable. When *L'Ensorcelée* was published, his father recalled him in two words: "Revenez, Monsieur." And you know not which to admire the more, the grandeur of the father or the pride of the exiled son.

He came to a Paris agog with the Romantic Movement; yet to him the Romantic Movement said nothing. He was alone in a hostile world with his dreams of the past, and he could not contemplate the universal innovation without horror. On all sides he saw desolation and decay. The death of politeness sensibly afflicted him, to whom politeness was not only the supreme elegance but the trustiest weapon of life. "Of what use is it," he asked, "in this reasonable and utilitarian age?" Time was, it seemed, the best rod to keep fools at a distance—a rod that spared you the trouble of striking. But it was lost in the prevailing insolence, lost with dancing, which was degraded to the polka, with horsemanship, which was mere jockeydom—"the monkey on horseback"—with fencing, which had degenerated into the art of giving blows.

Deploring thus the decadence of manners, he found a yet worse terror in politics. He saw encroaching "the boundless folly of universal suffrage," and was con-

vinced that had Judas been alive to-day he would have been a minister. Of equality he had as fierce a horror as Carlyle, and yet knew its inevitableness. "Equality in vice," he said, "makes speedier progress than equality in politics, which advances well enough. Where in the world shall we end?" And already he foresaw—in 1847—that terrific uniformity, misbegotten child of Democracy, which should suppress costume as vainglorious, and convert mankind into a brood of indistinguishable vermin. Hating the Age of Lead, he was the resolute champion of "great men." He believed only in what was rare: great men, great wit, great character. "The highest praise," he wrote, "that you can give to a diamond is to say that it is alone," and it was this devotion to the noble and distinguished which shaped his opinions and controlled his life. For him, then, there was no resource but battle: wherefore he unsheathed his pen, fought with fury, and never outstepped in the bitterest combat that boundary of convention which it was his contemporaries' habit to transgress.

He opposed the Radicals with a confirmed hatred; and, being a Catholic in the world of sceptics, he was set aside by the undiscerning as a *farceur*. His sense of logic induced him to approve the Spanish Inquisition, and to applaud his country for the murder of the Huguenots. Yet, after all, it was only the other side of the medal, and far more dignified than the "free-thinker's" smug delight in the triumph of his open mind. He contemned the very memory of Luther,

and it was his constant regret that that Reformer was not burnt, instead of his books. His criticism, then, is too deeply preoccupied with self to be valuable, but its prejudice makes it the more interesting. For, if it puts the victim in a false light, it reveals Barbey d'Aurevilly in all his brilliant fantasy, and becomes in a sense creative. His decisions proceed from false premises, carried to extravagant conclusions. He was never capable of isolating the art of literature from his manifold creeds and superstitions. A poet who did not agree with him upon a question of politics was no poet at all, and he was prepared to riddle him through and through with the sharpest of swords dipped in the bitterest of acids. But he directed his campaign with so obvious a sincerity, with so nonchalant a disregard for the views of the other side, that even his enemies smiled at the onslaught, while they recognised the honourable and courageous talent which inspired it.

For he was not of those who conceal their opinions for the sake of a shuffling amiability, and his mordant wit gave him a palpable advantage in the many controversies wherein he was engaged. He judged rather by intuition than by argument, and he was quicker to declare his taste than to explain it. In brief, he was not endowed with the critical spirit, and therefore his criticisms have outlived half a library of painful analyses. He cared neither to weigh rival mediocrities in the balance, nor to establish his predilection upon an everlasting foundation. It was combat that he loved, and if he were sometimes a rash judge, he

was always a brilliant advocate. Thus he ridiculed Renan, he despised Michelet, he hated Victor Hugo, whose *Misérables* gave his polished invective its finest opportunity. And one and all have triumphed over the attack. But the critic was as incapable of uprooting his prejudice as of changing his faith, and at least he was guiltless of falsifying his impressions.

Moreover, he was a fine scholar, profoundly versed in many languages. His Norman blood gave him a keen sympathy with English literature, which he read with a closer insight than any of his countrymen. His admiration of Shakespeare was loyal and discerning; while alone of his generation he had a sane appreciation of Byron's poetry and temperament. For the Germans, if you except Heine, he cherished a frank antipathy. "They do not write books," he said; "they only prepare them." And where will you find a briefer definition of the Teutonic talent? But what he most urgently demanded of literature was distinction: imagination and fancy were as nothing to him without the tact of selection, without the perfect architecture of phrase. And like all those to whom the battle is a necessity, he championed his heroes as vigorously as he attacked his foes. The men whose superiority won his esteem were incapable of wrong. Even when they were deceived, they overtopped the rest of the world, for their vision was more false, and their fault more splendid, than the vision and virtue of pigmies. Hence, also, said he, with excellent understanding they must necessarily

appear spiteful, since their implacable eye discovers folly and vice invisible to the less highly gifted. And what he said of others may be said, with double truth, of himself.

He tilted at windmills, but at windmills which often demanded demolition, and his age, had it cared to understand him, would have recognised a Don Quixote, inspired to sanity. But his age did not understand him, and he was far too proud to supply the key to his intelligibility. He lived his own life in the remote fastnesses of the Rue de Sèvres, in a vain solitude. He would imitate the ambition of the Persian kings, and enjoy the majesty of the invisible. It was not for him to seek a cheap romance at the edge of an Italian lake. Paris and his own province gave him all that he lacked. If he could not realise his own ideal of splendour, yet he could dream it. And so he created out of the poor materials at his hand a regal magnificence, and living in a world of ideas glorified his modest apartment into a Venetian palace.

His aspect was worthy his ambition; the martial insolence of his bearing was mitigated by the keen, bitter refinement of the inexorable artist. The handsome features, depicted in his portraits, display that nobility, which is Norman and aristocratic, transformed by the vague reflectiveness of the poet. The embarrassment of poverty never persuaded him to forego the hope of wealth and splendour, nor could he regard himself in other than a grandiose environ-

ment. The pride and aristocracy of his sentiments set him above the trivial annoyances of the moment. Were he in debt, he compelled his creditors to admiration, and bestowed upon them a friendly patronage, which made light of obligations. He would rather dine meagrely at the Maison Dorée than gorge in a tavern, which would have disgusted his refinement; and Rumour is busy concerning the demands made upon his purse by the costly cutlets which his noble vanity compelled him to eat in fitting company.

His costume, too, was remarkable and his own. Hating the colourlessness of modern life, he adopted the guise of his youth, whereto he always remained faithful. His trousers of grey-pearl or white are a part of folk-lore, and the full-skirted, tight-waisted frock-coat has been celebrated by Goncourt and a hundred others. Such was the fashion of his attire, adopted with deliberation and worn without the smallest suspicion of false conceit. It was as intimate a part of himself as his Catholicism or his inexorable contempt of all Republics. And if for seventy years he never changed it, so, too, he preserved his opinions inalterable. By temperament a soldier and a nobleman, he should have controlled limitless wealth, and been given a constant opportunity of honourable display. But destiny opposed his temperament, and it is to his lasting glory that not even destiny compelled submission. Age might have touched the seams of his coat, yet he wore it with a courage and a vanity

which the longest purse and the costliest tailor were insufficient to impart.

Knowing his own foibles, he reverenced the foibles of others. "I have never hated," said he, "a spice of foppery in a man when lack of wit does not compromise him," and it was one of his dreams to write a treatise on the follies of great men. That lack of wit never compromised him needs not to be said, and it was his triumph to have brought a flash of colour into a life which circumstances might have condemned to dulness. Whatever was his must be exclusive and apart. His manuscripts, says an enthusiast, were illuminated like missals; his handwriting was as fine as Richelieu's, and it was his amiable whim to write his romance in inks of different colour, which might respond to his fancy or to the character of the work.

"I have seen Brummel mad and D'Orsay dying," he once wrote with a certain pride; and it is his peculiar glory to have written the epic of Dandyism and of Brummel. This masterpiece is more intimately his own than the best of his romances, the fiercest of his criticisms. For not only in his life, but in his art, dandyism was a constant obsession. Again and again he recurs to his favourite theme, and this immortal treatise is the best commentary on his works as on his career. Dandyism he defines as the fruit of vanity, but of vanity which has naught to do with the conquest of women. And he esteems it the exclusive product of England, and of England under the

Regency. The word is as foreign to France as that which it expresses, and France, he thinks, will never share this vanity with England. "We may reflect all colours, but the chameleon cannot reflect white, and white, for peoples, is the force of their originality." And again: "It is the force of English originality impressing itself upon human vanity—that vanity anchored even to the heart of scullions, compared to which the contempt of Pascal is but a blind insolence —which produces that which is called Dandyism."

And thereafter he analyses the quality with a fineness of perception and closeness of argument which are incomparable. Richelieu was not a dandy, since his prowess in the field, his astuteness in the council, modified his vanity. Even Pascal, his favourite Pascal, was separated by his qualities from the majesty of Brummel. The nearest rival to the Englishman's throne is the Prince de Kaunitz, whose "majestic frivolity and fierce egotism" almost equalled Brummel's, and who boasted that he had no friend. But even Kaunitz knew moments of failure. He was not a dandy, says Barbey d'Aurevilly, when he wore a corset of satin; but he was a dandy when, to give his hair the exact shade, he walked through a suite of rooms, whose length and number he had reckoned, while valets, armed with powder-puffs, sprinkled him as he passed. No, all fail to fit the definition save Brummel himself; and "take away the dandy from him, and what remains?"

Moreover, Barbey d'Aurevilly frees his favourite

quality from many a misapprehension. "You can be a dandy in a ragged coat," he says; "it is not the coat which walks alone! it is a certain manner of wearing it which makes the dandy." And here you might be persuaded to believe the panegyrist himself first cousin of Brummel. For if ever a man knew how to glorify a coat by the noble wearing of it, it was he. But you remember that the vanity of apparel and aspect was never sufficient for him. He was a fighter, a philosopher, a creator of fantastic types, and if for a moment we pronounced him a dandy, we must pronounce him a dandy modified by a dozen accomplishments. Yet he, too, like Brummel, glorified a fashion, and if his capacity was not limited "to the brutal art of putting on a cravat," it is certain that under other circumstances and with a restricted talent he might have attained what he proclaims impossible, and acclimatised in France that dandyism which Johnson's Dictionary knew not, and which needed for its invention the special circumstances of the Regency.

At any rate it is his treatise, *Du Dandysme et de Georges Brummel*, which best defines the talent of Barbey d'Aurevilly. It bears to his life the same relation which *Vathek* bore to the career of Beckford. It is echoed in his romances, it influences his criticism. The least suspicion of the dandy awakens all his enthusiasm; and, though he would have refused the title to Lord Byron, you are sure that a part of his admiration for the master of Newstead Abbey was reserved for the Man about Town, for the bosom

friend of Scrope Davies, for the extravagant who vowed he would rather be Brummel than Napoleon. Thus, also, he reverenced D'Orsay, whose nature he finds far ampler and more human than the dandyism of Brummel. And yet in his own despite it is D'Orsay the dandy which claims his enthusiasm. This "King of amiable benevolence" would have smiled in vain upon the world; in vain would he have thrown his napkin at the officer who spoke evil of the Virgin Mary, and fastened a quarrel upon him because he would not have a woman insulted in his presence; in vain would he have displayed his amazing sympathy; Barbey d'Aurevilly at least would have withheld his worship, had there not been added to his benevolence the talent of fashion, the genius even of tying a cravat.

These then were Barbey d'Aurevilly's heroes, Byron and D'Orsay, Pascal, who drove six horses in his carriage, and Joseph de Maistre. Thus you may measure the taste of a keen critic and finished gentleman, to whom combat was a necessity and honour was inevitable, who never wrote a mean line, and who never descended for an instant from his lofty ideal of conservative and Catholic aristocracy. So much you may learn from his books and his predilections. You may reconstruct from legend or history the outward habit of his life and the costume which made him famous. But his greatest gift died with him: his brilliant conversation, the only gift for which he would have sacrificed all. Those that have listened

to it agree in admiration, yet none have been able to define its excellences, to give the most distant echo of its brilliant eloquence. He was a talker, says Rumour, perfect in style, quick in wit, various in colour, quenchless in gaiety, and his talk is varnished with the elegances he loved so well, and the forlorn hopes of faith and fancy he so gallantly led. Yet he has won the fate which before all he desired. It was his ideal to be a man of genius, and unknown. His works remain to attest his genius, and neither in life nor after death was he perplexed by the admiration of the crowd.

DISRAELI THE YOUNGER

DISRAELI THE YOUNGER

A SLENDER figure, elegantly poised in an attitude which betokens at once ambition and security. His right elbow rests lightly on the chimney-piece, and the tips of his delicate jewelled fingers are free to coquet with the glossy ringlets which crown a pensive brow. The rolled collar of his coat is of to-morrow's fashion, and an open waistcoat reveals a cascade of scarf magnificently glorified by brooch and chain. His legs are nonchalantly crossed and encased in creaseless trousers, sternly strapped beneath a pair of dainty pumps. A Turkish chibouque thrown upon a pillowed divan symbolises the grand tour and a half-concealed love of tobacco; while the air of idle luxury is tempered by the beauty of the oval face, and by the imaginative eyes, fixed with bold unconcern upon a triumphant future and the mysterious East. Thus is Disraeli the Younger pictured by Maclise; thus did he appear to the intimates of his romantic youth.

Handsome, extravagant, debonair, Disraeli the Younger was the true-born child of a wayward, irresponsible age, which, with its manifold contradic-

tions, was more interesting than distinguished, more cultured than heroic. It was, indeed, a time of transition, which bridged the distance between the hard disdain of the Regency and the vapid enthusiasm of our Early Victorians. But the old brutality was not forgotten, and the Prize Ring flourished at the Keepsake's side. Though a rout at Almack's was still an end of social ambition, there were certain coteries in Brompton which claimed their devoted slaves, and some thought it more glorious to sip tea in L. E. L.'s parlour than to flaunt it in the presence of a hundred duchesses. For Byronism had achieved its proper result, and the man of fashion was driven perforce into an affectation of romance It was a social duty, eagerly discharged, to stand in attitudes, to cultivate the curling-tongs and the pomatum-pot, to wear extravagant, inharmonious clothes, to flatter blue-stockings, and to end your careless sentences with "and all that." Indeed, 'twas the strangest of mixtures, this age of watered silk and satin waistcoats; and while on the one hand it knew not the roystering dissipation of Carlton House, on the other it had not yet learnt to simper and be afraid. Certain heroes there were, such as the Marquis of Hertford, to keep alive the ancient tradition; but Brummel was in exile, and there was an open revolt against his severe, refining influence.

Doubtless the great Dandy cherished an extravagant taste in snuff-boxes; but the first article of his creed was a scrupulous simplicity of attire, which

Scrope Davies and the more intelligent of his pupils faithfully observed. And when the fourth William sat upon the throne there invaded with softened manners an extravagance of taste. The world, tired of violent debauchery, chose its vices with a better circumspection; but, equally tired of expensive simplicity, it exercised little tact in the selection of its wine or its wardrobe. It became lackadaisical, tired, fantastic. "I rather like bad wine," says Mountchesney in "Sybil," "one gets so bored with good wine"—a characteristic confession of weakness which no Dandy with an essential pride in excellence would have dared to make. It was the boast of the Brummels that they were surprised at nothing; their successors cheapened the faculty of admiration, until they wondered not only at the verse of Bulwer but at the prose of Lady Blessington. But at last the cold impassibility was dead: dead also were the pitiless contempt and the hard desire of perfection which marked the golden age of dandyism. No longer was it bad form to display sentiment or to confess an interest in polite literature, while a sonnet signed with a title was sure of a hearing in the most exclusive drawing-room.

So by degrees elegance ceased to be worshipped for its own sake; the barrier was broken that once separated fashion from culture; while Manchester and the Reform Bill created a tolerant curiosity, unknown before, which opened the door to the most bizarre of talents, to the most reckless of opinions. In truth, where taste and repartee had once been supreme, a half-awakened soul

began to reign, and the courtiers, as if to prove themselves superior to novel sensations and young enthusiasms, dressed themselves with unwonted fancy and extravagance. The bloods of the town were arrayed in such finery as would have shocked the chaster refinement of Brummel. There are vague rumours of green trousers and black satin shirts, while velvet coats gave an air of sumptuous sobriety to the Opera House. No wonder the Marquis of Hertford, who had witnessed the departed glory of the Regency, took refuge from the changing manners in Paris or Rome ; but, in spite of defection, all was not lost, and London was saved from vulgarity by the surpassing genius of Alfred D'Orsay.

Now Alfred D'Orsay rivalled the Dandies in elegance ; in all other respects he was their antithesis. His magnificence was only less than Brummel's own because it lacked that touch of delicacy and restraint which made the greatest of the Georges an exemplar for all time. While Brummel was wont to walk down St. James's unnoticed, D'Orsay could not leave Gore House without making an immediate and brilliant sensation. His satin-lined coat was thrown as far back as possible, his " breastplate of starched cambric " was broader and more luminous than any other in town ; his boot was the smallest and most highly polished that ever was seen upon the foot of man ; his hat was set with a superb jauntiness over an array of curls which rivalled the beard of an Assyrian bull ; his attitude and gestures were the last expression of an

arrogance wherein there was no malice, of a pride wherein there was no disdain.

But it is only at one point that he challenges comparison with Brummel, his manifest superior in the art of adornment. In all other aspects he stands apart. He knew nothing of the frigid heartlessness, the narrow contempt, the "majestic frivolity," which were the essence of Brummel's genius. For while the Dandy occupied but one corner of human activity, D'Orsay put no restraint upon either his heart or his head. He was a man of tact and feeling, always gay, always fresh, always sympathetic. His interests were as wide as his intelligence; he was as fine a judge of horseflesh as of a dinner; an instinctive appreciation of literature and art endeared him to the dilettanti; and a peculiar skill of intimacy turned new acquaintances into old friends. Above all, he was agreeable and enchanting, a fairy-prince, whose delight it was to extricate the luckless from those pitfalls which a profound knowledge of the world had taught him to avoid. An amiable, loyal, pleasure-loving hero, he shared with Lady Blessington the throne of Gore House, and dominated for twenty years that world of fashion which vainly limped after his perfections. Such as he was his contemporaries aspired to be; and, strangely enough, this eloquent Frenchman remains the symbol of that age when men wore Nugee coats and drank Badminton, and when women bared their shoulders and sang tearful ditties to the music of the harp.

It was this world, then, that the young Disraeli

entered with the highest credentials of breeding and intelligence, and under the brilliant auspices of the Count himself, whose generosity he repaid by the sketch of Mirabel, as pretty a gentleman as ever unravelled the plot of a love-story. Few men have made a more splendid appearance on the stage. His swift sword opened the oyster at the first encounter, and before the world knew his name he was a leader of society. His progress was like a fairy tale, or a chapter from Balzac, which you cannot read without a spirited enthusiasm. He was young, he was handsome, he was a fop, he had written a book, and his glory was almost equal to his unparalleled ambition. Strange stories were told of this sallow-faced youth, whose black ringlets were ridiculed by the envious, and the fashion of whose coat is still fabulous. But his tasselled ivory cane, inlaid with gold, his flower-embroidered waistcoat, his chains unnumbered, his priceless ruffles—even these were less remarkable than his mysterious silences, his flashes of eloquence, and the bitter contempt which he cherished for his fellows.

No wonder the world eagerly acknowledged his superiority; no wonder the chariot of his glory was never stayed. What a career was his! What an achievement in fascination! Truly he emptied the bowl of life, and found no poison in the wine. He was witty, accomplished, glorious, and his table was littered with letters; and London was at his feet. And he—he accepted the homage with a grave and grateful smile, and he wandered from

the house of one duchess to the house of another, proud in the conviction that he brought to the smartest party far more than it could yield him. Once upon a time he was mobbed with Bulwer at a ball, and doubtless he took his hustling in the most complaisant of humours. Another night he came late to dinner at Sir Robert Peel's, and found six stealthy politicians eating in silence. Instantly he flung an epigram across the table, dispelled the gravity, and wrung a smile from Peel himself.

When the influenza attacked London, he met it with the smartest remedies and in the best company. "D'Orsay and I," he wrote, "defy the disorder with a first-rate cook, a generous diet, and medicated vapour-baths." To-day he dines with Chandos, the only man in the room not a member of Parliament; to-morrow he sits at another ducal table, proud in the reflection that no commoners are present save himself and Sir William Fremantle. As the season declines, he attends water-parties, devised in the sentimental taste of the time. The guests embarked at five o'clock, "the heavens very favourable, sang all the way, wandered in beautiful gardens worthy of Paul Veronese, full not only of flowers, but fountains and parroquets."

What a picture it is—the titled exquisites dressed a little beyond the limits of good taste and floating down the Thames to the music of a luxurious sentimentality! It was drawn but sixty years ago, yet it seems prehistoric, or if, indeed, it must belong to

time and space, it should suggest that no man's land of ardour and elegance in which is laid the scene of "Henrietta Temple." And Disraeli triumphed over the envy of men and the ridicule of women. True, one murmured that he looked as though he were hanging in chains, while another asked was he in training for the office of Lord Mayor? But he was a man whose gravity checked impertinence, and as he confesses himself, "he made his way easily in the highest set, where they like to admire and be amused." And doubtless they did admire and were amused, until this exquisite had no enemies save the second-rate, and counted among his champions the most beautiful women and the greatest statesmen of his time.

His glory was no surprise, least of all to himself. He had entered the world to conquer, and the victory was his. Nor was there the smallest touch of snobbery in his choice of a battlefield. He deemed his blood the purest in Europe, and himself the equal of the most ancient duke. So that in deserting his father's library for what he would have called "the saloons of the great," he was but obeying a natural and a modest instinct. Being a Jew in all things, in nothing did he prove his descent so clearly as in his love of splendour. Had he commanded the wealth of Contarini Fleming, he, too, would have lived in a "Palladian pile"; he, too, would have enriched his mansion with all "the spoils of the teeming Orient"; his terraces would have sparkled with jasper, porphyry, and onyx; "the gold of Afric, the jewels of Ind, the talismans of Egypt, the

perfumes and manuscripts of Persia, the spices and gems of Araby"—all those mythical glories would have made his castle for all the world like the great Bazaar of Bagdad.

The result, of course, would have been opulent rather than beautiful, for Disraeli's taste was of his time, and took no thought either of classic harmony or of delicate restraint. Nevertheless, he was possessed with an indiscriminate, unquestioning admiration of magnificence, which instantly determined the place he should occupy in the world. Above all things, clothes engrossed his fancy, and from the outset he regarded life as a masquerade. He must always be "dressing-up," as children say, and disguising his origin in the gorgeous trappings of a costume-shop. At Malta he dined with the officers, now as an Andalusian brigand, now as a Greek pirate; and though we know not what the British soldier thought of his display, he himself was abundantly satisfied with the effect he produced. Indeed, throughout his famous tour, which was nothing less than a march of triumph, he pondered deeply of his wardrobe, and not even the difficulties of travel compelled him to appear in disarray.

So he is found lamenting that "the king's death is the destruction of his dress-waistcoats"; so he boasts that a "handkerchief which he brought from Paris is the most successful thing he ever wore, and universally admired." But it was at Gibraltar that he made his proudest conquest, and "maintained his repu-

tation of being a great judge of costume." For not only did the fashion of discarding waistcoats in the morning reveal the beauty of his peerless studs, but, says he, "I have the fame of being the first who ever passed the Straits with two canes—a morning and an evening cane. I change my cane as the gun fires, and hope to carry them both on to Cairo. It is wonderful the effect these magical wands produce. I owe to them even more attention than to being the supposed author of—what is it?—I forget!"

That is a touch of the true Disraeli! He forgot the title of his book; he remembered the proper moment to change his cane; and it was this pleasant mixture of carefulness and nonchalance which gave him his place in the world. It was a pose, of course; but success itself is a pose, which is wholly alien to the natural man. And Disraeli was so little the natural man, that all his actions were the result of forethought, and all his poses were calculated to please his set. For instance, the world was fatigued with action, and here was Disraeli ready to declare that he had never thrown a ball in his life, that it tired him to kill pheasants, that he was indifferent to the pleasures of the chase. Nevertheless, when he did ride to hounds, the spirit of romance seized him, and, "although not in pink, I was the best-mounted man in the field, riding an Arabian mare, which I nearly killed; a run of thirty miles, and I stopped at nothing."

That is a feat that D'Orsay might have accomplished

every week; but it is unique in the experience of Disraeli, and merely accentuated his habit of inaction. It was rather within the key of his character to sit resplendent in a half-light, and to dash out sudden from the gloom with a brilliant epigram or a torrent of eloquence. "I like silent, melancholy men," said Mrs. Wyndham Lewis, at their introduction—and no doubt Disraeli flattered her taste. For though his duty was speech, he could be silent when he pleased—surely the most difficult achievement, for eloquence is not easily chained—while none of his intimates ever heard him laugh, and few they were who saw him smile. Like the Spanish King, he was possessed by a spirit of gravity, which in no way hindered the flash of his scorn or the ripple of his amazing wit. But it made readily possible the most sincere of all his poses—the pose of mystery. If it were his ambition to penetrate the Asian mystery, he himself was a mystery—Asian, too—that defied penetration. When he seemed a fop, then was he most a visionary, and it was always in the Orient that he saw his visions and dreamed his dreams.

It is tempting, indeed, to seize his character in his novels, and perchance there is something of himself in all his heroes. You can imagine him saying with Vivian Grey that guava and liqueurs were the only refreshment he ever took. You can see him in as deadly opposition as Coningsby to the common creeds of a worn-out party; above all, you recognise in the fantasies of Tancred his author's own mysticism, and

surely he is nearer akin to Lord Montacute than to any of his creations. And he wandered London up and down, a kind of unsolved riddle. "What is he?" asked the world of fashion after a certain eminent personage, and Disraeli was far too skilful a tactician to satisfy an idle curiosity.

But he was equipped for the fray with other gifts than melancholy and mysticism. Young in temperament as well as in years, he was of those who keep their youth not only in their own hearts but in the eyes of men; and the author of "Coningsby" was still leading Young England when he had passed his eighth lustre. And what may a man not do with youth—youth untouched of time, the first and last gift of the gods? Alas! we reckon by the clumsy measure of months, condemning boys because they are young and men because they are old, and forget that there are tempers which the passage of time cannot affect. But Disraeli possessed the great gift, and Sidonia's panegyric of youth was doubtless his own. "'Great men never want experience,' said the stranger; 'the history of heroes is the history of youth.'" And Disraeli might have echoed both statements, for the author of "Vivian Grey" was already mature, and though he was Prime Minister for the first time at sixty-two, he had then escaped the approach of age.

Next after youth, it was the faculty of displacement which ensured him the victory. He occupied more space than lesser men, and his presence was sufficient

to overshadow all competitors. Wherever he went, he compelled observation, and he was never without a field to exercise his talents. Moreover, by his grave, sallow face he masked an intrepid determination and a quiet courage. That he should be a great man, that he should lead the great world, was ordained, because his mind was set upon the enterprise. "We make our Fortunes and we call it Fate," he said somewhere; but assuredly if he made his fortune, he never let his fate out of his own hands.

Moreover, he held the place which he had gained by the exercise of the most brilliant talents. His genius of conversation is legendary, and no contemporary was a match for the quickness of his repartee and the ruthlessness of his scorn. Yet how poor a record is there of his wit! With the silence of the voice which instantly hushed the babble of common talk one at least of his qualities vanished irreparably. For his repeated jests have lost their savour, and are remembered rather for their effect than for themselves. If it be rare to encounter a page that will live, it is impossible to fashion a *mot* that will win immortality. And the Disraeli of the drawing-rooms descends to our imagination as a Romantic Movement in person, a hero, maybe, in the vein of Rastignac, whose massy chain and prodigious velvets are infinitely more picturesque than the red waistcoat which inaugurated a revolution across the Channel.

The most of men would have accepted for a career

Disraeli's triumph in the world. He might, indeed, have succeeded to D'Orsay's throne, and been undisputed arbiter of elegances. Yet he was but a sojourner in society, which was to him rather a means of progress than a pursuit, and where he took his unquestioned place unquestioning; nor did he for a moment permit an organised frivolity to interrupt the serious occupation of his life. For, besides being a *flâneur* and a mystic, he was also a man of affairs, whose ambition could only be checked by death itself. And for this he has been called an adventurer, and an adventurer he assuredly is in the sense that every one adventures, be he duke or ploughman, when he leaves his father's hearth. But the baser sense, that by the wiles of the upstart he reached too lofty a position, is wholly inadmissible.

Who, indeed, should be a leader of men if not he? Born in a library, as he said, and nurtured on Voltaire, he leaned upon his father's reputation, and in his childhood knew whomsoever he would. In education, in manners, in habit of the world, he was any man's equal, and though he had a gentlemanly acquaintance with debt, he had never known the sharper twinge of poverty. His own sojourn in a sponging-house, and his salvation by the adroit and charming D'Orsay, are described with admirable humour in "Henrietta Temple"; while in Fakredeen's mouth he has put a panegyric of debts, "the dear companions of my life," which was dictated, doubtless, by a grotesque sincerity. Maybe he

thought as much of himself as of the Emir, when he declared that "among his creditors he had disciplined that diplomatic ability that shall some day confound and control cabinets."

But embarrassment is a common incident of life, and if Disraeli was familiar with disappointment, and "to be disappointed is to be young," he never was familiar with disaster, and he claimed to play a part in politics without effrontery or astonishment. Indeed, long before he asked the voters of High Wycombe for their confidence, he had been entrusted with a mission the mere memory of which might have made the fortune of another man, and which he himself recalled many years after with pride and satisfaction.

Now in 1825, when Disraeli had just turned twenty, John Murray determined to found a daily paper. At the boy's instigation it was to be called the "Representative," and when the great Sir Walter's opinion was asked, who so apt an emissary as Disraeli the Younger? Here was his opportunity, and bravely did he tackle it. He set out for the North with the eager curiosity of untravelled youth, proud in the confidence of an august publisher, and assured that to his persuasion not even Sir Walter could be deaf. He rested his foot at York, was enchanted with the Minster, and whispered to Murray that Froissart was his companion, "just the fellow for a traveller's evening." It is as fresh and buoyant a record as history has to show; it reminds you of Mozart before the French King, of Pope sitting at the feet of Dryden.

But no sooner was he arrived at Chiefswood than disappointment awaited him. For Lockhart, who was there to meet him, expected the father, and not having the gift of prophecy, knew not how far greater and more valiant a man was the son. So that "everything looked as black as possible," and the adventure evoked the very last of Disraeli's talents. He talked, he flattered, he cajoled, he displayed his perfect cunning of management, until "in a few hours we completely understood one another, and were upon the most intimate terms." Here, indeed, you perceive that diplomacy in bud which in blossom was to govern England and to subdue Europe. Between Disraeli and Lockhart there could not have been the link of lasting sympathy. But for the moment it was Disraeli's single-minded endeavour to gain his opponent's intimacy, and it is not surprising that he won an easy victory in this battle of wits. The situation, indeed, was made for him, and after Lockhart's submission the conquest of Sir Walter was assured.

Nor did he for a minute underrate the importance of his mission. He impressed upon Murray not only the magnitude of the stake, but also the sacred necessity of discretion. The love of mystery had already taken hold of him, and for fear of the postman he dared not mention by name the actors in this little drama. No; secrecy must be preserved inviolate, and Sir Walter figures as the Chevalier, while Lockhart is hidden behind an inexpressive M.

And all the time the young Disraeli is conducting the negotiation with irresistible firmness and spirit, convinced that even in Sir Walter's presence the hero of the moment is really himself. Already his sanguine temper detected in the combination a vast opportunity, and he assumed the lead with a certainty and an arrogance which are invincible. Despite Sir Walter, Lockhart is to manage the "Representative"; but, says Disraeli, "it should be impressed upon him that he is coming to town not to be editor of a newspaper, but the director-general of an immense organ, and at the head of a band of high-bred gentlemen and important interests." Thus he had already mastered—this boy of twenty—the art of persuading by a phrase, and with an assurance which the Wizard must have echoed with a laugh, he had even decided which seat in the House should be occupied by the Wizard's son-in-law.

The negotiation, in fact, was brought to a marvellous issue; and, to top all, Disraeli was able to boast that "the Chevalier and M. have unburthened themselves to me in a manner the most confidential that you can possibly conceive." What secrets they were which passed we shall never know, for Disraeli had the fear of the postman in his eye, and Murray preserved an unhappy silence. But it was an astounding trio that sat round the fire at Chiefswood—Sir Walter and Lockhart and Disraeli; and what a priceless document we should possess if only the greatest man of his generation had recorded his im-

pressions of this light-hearted boy, destined not only to usurp the throne of romance, but to govern the country!

Lockhart obeyed the summons; the "Representative" was launched and foundered; and Disraeli, whose memory was always as sanguine as his experience, lived to record, after half a century, Sir Walter's amiable reception. With that touch of exaggeration which kept him a spoilt boy to the last, he described how the author of "Waverley," to humour a lad of twenty, displayed all the glories of Abbotsford, and unlocked the treasures of his mind, until you are half inclined to believe that the Border palace was built to flatter the imagination of this casual visitor, and that Sir Walter had waited for this fitting opportunity to practise the art of conversation. But it was Disraeli's first experience in the management of men, and, though disaster followed, Murray was for the moment enchanted. And as for the hero, he had learnt his lesson; and when he stood before the electors of High Wycombe, he might reflect that he was not wholly unskilled in affairs.

But it was in politics that his alert and vivid genius found its highest expression, and the choice is easily justified. Brilliant as were his gifts in literature, Disraeli was never bound by the slavery of words. He wrote his novels because he craved a popular medium in which to translate his opinions, and the most of his works are rather fanciful expositions of his policy than separate masterpieces. Wherefore

he could never have been content for such poor fame as his readers could give him to forego the frenzy of an active life. His ambition was to govern men, and to feel the impression which his voice, his eye, his gesture made upon the crowd. His success was assured as soon as he stood upon the hustings; and long before he was appointed to lead the House he had turned the current of English opinion. He brought to the solemn task of government all those qualities which made him supreme in the fashionable world, and gave to his novels—dashed off, you may be sure, at a sitting—a corner apart in our English literature. In the first place, he was a born fighter, to whom the interchange of blows was a delight, and who ever scorned to cover his fist with a glove. In the second, he had a perfect talent for stage management. Life for him was a drama, in which he always played the principal part, and he had learnt precisely how and when to bring off his great effects.

The controversy with O'Connell, for instance, was as deftly handled as might be expected from D'Orsay's wisdom and Dizzy's wit. The Count had far too fine a sense of the world to intervene in a political quarrel, but the challenge was sent under his auspices —in fact, as the principal confessed, he took the management of everything. With perfect delicacy Disraeli remained within doors until ten o'clock, when he dressed, doubtless with prodigious magnificence, and went to the opera. Every one allowed "that it was done in first-rate style," and that O'Connell and

all his friends were utterly "squabashed." The violent explosion in the *Times* was variously greeted: some found it coarse, others declared it worthy of Swift. But, as its author remarked with naïve arrogance, "the general effect is the thing, and all men agree that I have shown pluck."

This is but one example of the dramatic instinct which never failed him; and though he had nothing of the mummer's commonness in his nature, he recognised the utility of stage effect. To be powerful is to live in the mouths of men; and when Disraeli stood up to make his maiden speech, he was almost as well known as Sir Robert Peel himself. The moment, of course, was chosen with perfect intelligence, and the subject—Ireland—gave him an opportunity of demolishing his ancient enemy. The House was on the one side expectant, on the other vindictive, but none expected the outburst of ridicule which overwhelmed the speaker. The sallow face of the legend, the glossy curls, the fantastic attire inspired the Opposition at least as much as the hatred of the Repealers. As for the speech itself, it struck the proper note of arrogance: it was, indeed, the trumpet-call to battle sounded by a man who knew neither fear nor failure.

He set himself up, possibly without reason, as "the representative of a considerable number of members." When the House laughed he put it down to envy. With his accustomed love of imagery, abundantly justified by the eye's superiority to the intellect, and by the victory which argument always yields to the

picturesque, he represented O'Connell dangling in one hand the keys of St. Peter, in the other the Cap of Liberty. As the uproar increased, he became defiant, and in the old-fashioned style of rodomontade declared that "he had begun many things, and he had often succeeded at last." Then came the immortal phrase: "I will sit down now, but the time will come when you shall hear me;" and the magnificent conclusion, drowned in a scream, "and when I rise in this Assembly hereafter, a dropped pin shall be heard."

The battle had been fought, and Disraeli had won. When they talked of failure Peel was indignant, and Shiel himself flouted his own supporters. The boast, generously youthful in itself, is sanctified by time, and heightens the fabulous character of the man that uttered it. At any rate, the episode left him "in good spirits," and determined him not to lose his chance. For a while he must subdue his tone, and his next speech was on Copyright; he must show knowledge rather than wit, and he plumped his utterance with hard, unmanageable facts. But the single object was achieved: the orator had captured his audience; his prophecy was fulfilled almost as soon as uttered; and henceforth he would never rise to an empty House nor endure the inattention of the scornful.

Thus, once more, he had turned to triumph what other men had deplored for irretrievable defeat, and proved that Opportunity is the greatest of the gods. Yet, adroit as he was, it was no gift of manner which enabled this Jew of genius to dominate the British House

of Commons. He won his place because he touched English politics with the finger of romance, because he lit up even the dark places of Manchester with the flash of imagination. The world, like the youth of Contarini Fleming, was dominated by words, and Disraeli, indignant at the tyranny of worn-out titles pleaded for the superiority of ideas. Was he Tory or Radical? What mattered the name, so long as he was guiltless of Whiggish autocracy? Wherefore he preached the doctrines of the Pentateuch, with others more popular, and appealed for support to Bolingbroke and Pitt.

It was a strange creed, this mixture of Judaism, the People, and Tory tradition, nor is it surprising that it was misunderstood. The sternly orthodox of all shades were quick to denounce Disraeli for a charlatan, and all the while he was a political philosopher, profoundly inspired. He stood not for a party, but for his opinions, and when once his opinions were shaped he created a party, which should hold them. By a subtle irony he chose for his adherents the nobles and squires of England, and it is small wonder that they looked with suspicion upon his support, which soon grew into dominion. But he was a statesman who could not live from hand to mouth upon political intrigue, which, said he, was the resource of the second-rate. He would sustain himself upon "great truths," and, unpalatable as they were, he forced those "great truths" upon his colleagues.

Therefore he detached himself wholly from the common superstitions, and as Sir Walter leapt back to the past for the material of his romances, so Disraeli would suppress all the history which came between 1688 and the passing of the Reform Bill. The object of the Whigs, said he, was, and had always been, to convert England into a Venetian republic, to turn the monarch into a Doge, and suppress the people. But it was the duty of all patriots to crush the Whigs, whose objects were to establish a tyranny and dismember the empire, and to defeat any party which did not respect the prerogative of the Crown and understand the only object of all government. The theory was admirable, and admirably expressed, but it seemed unintelligible to the true-blue Tory, whose creed was still privilege, though the passing of the Reform Bill had endangered the common liberty.

The Whigs, in exchange for the vote, demanded nothing less than to be masters for life, while the people, said Disraeli, "took reform, as some others took stolen goods, and no questions asked." But he, calling himself a Tory, dared to plead the cause of the mob, and, after the example of Louis XI., he was determined to thwart the reigning oligarchy by an adroit combination of crown and people. To-day, maybe, he would have been called a socialist, for he dreamt of a Ten Hours Bill; he valiantly declared that the rights of labour were as sacred as the rights of property; and he bitterly denounced his

chief enemies, the manufacturers, because, said he, they had created a new wealth, and held themselves responsible to no man. But Socialism was not then invented, and he was vaguely set down as a danger to the State.

To unfold so romantic a creed before the unawakened Tory required a reckless courage, but courage was precisely the quality which Disraeli never lacked. He courted opposition, and smiled at contempt. He knew as surely as on the night of his maiden speech that his own hour was coming, and with an anger of scorn he dismissed the policy of the Conservatives as an organised hypocrisy. Whether or no his demolition of Peel was justified, whether it was he or his Minister who struck the first blow, it is idle to speculate; but it is certain that no party was ever so fiercely demolished by one man as were the Peelites by Disraeli. Young England to-day is a generous dream; but when George Smythe and the author of "Sybil" fought side by side it was a bitter, acrimonious reality. In vain did the magnates of England express their distrust; in vain did the King of Hanover implore Lord Strangford to extricate his son from the clutches of Disraeli; in vain did the Duke of Rutland lament that the admirable character of Lord John Manners exposed him to "the arts of a designing person." The battle still waged, and session after session Disraeli delivered speeches which were masterpieces of invective, brilliant with jibe, and serried with argument.

The worst is, you return to the famous speeches

with regret and disappointment: the well-known scorn is there; once again you recognise the ancient jests—the Whigs are caught bathing and lose their clothes; Hansard, which should be the Delphi, is but the Dunciad of Downing Street; Peel's horror of slavery does not extend to the benches behind him—"there the gang is still assembled, there the thong of the whip still sounds." But for all the deft illustration, for all the jingled alliteration, the splendid effect is gone, and you wonder whether it is not a crime to imprison the spoken word. The orator, like the actor, writes his name in snow, and may only be judged by the effect which his voice, his glance, and the wave of his hand produce upon the opinion of others. Weighed by this standard, Disraeli's victory was complete. Despite his small following, he was already master of the House; his friends belonged to those great houses which it was his pleasure to penetrate and his ambition to control; and surely his irony was never more flattered than at the Manchester Athenæum, when, flanked by Gorge Smythe and Lord John Manners, who appeared by their sires' permission for this occasion only, he pleaded the cause of popular culture in the accent of aristocratic Toryism. He pictured Athens, he quoted Latin, he compared knowledge to Jacob's mystic ladder, whose "base rests on the primeval earth, whose crest is lost in the shadowy splendour of the empyrean." And all the while he knew that the hour of Peel's fall was at hand, and that then nothing could intervene between himself

and the leadership. A rich experience even for this artist in life.

Meanwhile, that no field should be left unturned, he was writing the splendid series of romances which would have kept green his fame had he never entered a drawing-room nor stood upon a platform. It is idle to criticise him who criticised everything, for, in truth, his works defy every sentiment save admiration. They are composed in a hurry, and without the proper sense of literature. When the author of "Alroy" believes he is writing lofty prose, he is only covering his pages with the blankest of verse. The colour is generally as false as the sentiment, and never, save in such dazzling *tours de force* as "Ixion," "Popanilla," and the "Infernal Marriage," wherein the severe influence of Voltaire is still apparent, does the writer consider the claims of grammar or logic. But you forgive the extravagance, the sentiment, the folly of such brilliant experiments as "Tancred," "Sybil," and "Coningsby" for a thousand golden virtues. For here is the real Disraeli revealed—a mixture of romance and reality, scorn and gentleness.

Compare the first volume of "Tancred" with the second, and you shall see the true meeting of East and West. You cannot imagine a greater contrast than glitters between Leander, that king of cooks and Fakredeen, the immortal type of the adroit, unscrupulous, fascinating adventurer. Yet each is drawn with a precision and sympathy which could only proceed from intimate knowledge. Indeed,

Disraeli belonged to many worlds, and he poured pell-mell into his romances his manifold experience. If the blameless young man and the virtuous maid eluded him, as they have eluded the rest, he drew such characters as are outside the common observation with a skill that only can be matched in the great masters of fiction. His Mirabel, his Monmouth, his miraculous Sidonia, the ineffable Rigby, those prodigies of intrigue Taper and Tadpole, who never despaired of the Commonwealth, the Marneys and Bellamonts —where shall you rival them for justice and understanding?

And the wit of his dialogue, the aptness of his satire, the ferocity of his comment upon life, literature, and art—they are all unparalleled and his own. Now instead of appealing from the mediocrity of one to the mediocrity of many, he would hang an architect; now he sings the pæan of intrigue, and declares that youth and debt are the stimulus of action. But wherever you prick him, he sheds the bloods of sincerity to himself. For his novels, if not autobiography, are still a transparent reflection of his moods and opinions. He wrote so rapidly that he had not time to mask his meaning; and he thought so deeply that he repeats himself again and again. If in his novels you find the germs of all his policies, if Cyprus is given to England by Tancred himself, and the Queen is already hailed Empress of India, so his speeches are little else than his romances, shaped for the voice and another audience. But at least this restless spirit had found another

expression, this limitless ambition had won another pasturage.

Once upon a time, before he had taken his seat as member for Maidstone, he announced that if there was anything upon which he piqued himself it was consistency. Now, consistency, if it be the least offensive of the vices, is still the vilest of the virtues, which springs rather from the obstinacy of weakness than from the certainty of strength. But in a sense Disraeli was consistent, and his uniformity of opinion is readily explained. He began life with his career minutely sketched ("I mean to be Prime Minister," he told Lord Melbourne in 1835), and being emancipated from the catch-words of party, he was forced to formulate in his youth the creed of popular Toryism, which guided him until the last. Yet in nothing was he so sincerely consistent as in his devotion to his race. He was a Jew first, an Englishman afterwards, and this whole-hearted loyalty was firmly established upon the rock of pride.

Whether or not he had suffered from persecution, he "never imbibed that dislike for his race which the vain are apt to adopt when they find that they are born to public contempt." He, too, was vain; in truth, he scaled the heights of arrogance, but his vanity assumed another shape. For him the East was a career; his eyes were always turned towards the cradle of his race. Oriental in his taste, as in his lack of it, he believed that the patriarchs had laid down the laws of government for all time, and he

would twist the policy of England until it harmonised with the ideals of the Hebrew kings. His books, his speeches, his life were the acclamation of Jewish wisdom and Jewish grandeur. He pleaded the cause of his people without passion, but rather with that secure valiance which comes from the conscience of a just cause. Tancred's noble fantasy of the East, Alroy's unhappy devotion to a lost people, are but the loftiest expression of his constant dream. To read his eloquent argument is to wonder that in any corner of the world the foolish man should cry "Death" to the Jew. "All is race," says Sidonia; "there is no other truth;" and every race must decay "unless it lives in deserts and never mixes its blood." The Jews, it is certain, do not live in deserts, but they keep their blood pure, and so, for good or evil, they have become the rulers of the world.

In "Coningsby" Sidonia, the concretion of the Hebrew intellect, as fine a gentleman, as adroit a politician, as profound a scholar, as ever stepped into the pages of a novel, would prove by example that the most learned students, the astutest diplomatists, the most powerful Ministers, and even many marshals of France are of Abraham's seed. So far the argument is ornamental and extravagant; but Disraeli insists upon the perfect emancipation of his people upon other and far more practical grounds. All the tendencies of the Jewish race, he declares, are conservative. How should a people, justly proud of its blood, ever patient in its observance of ceremonial, decline

upon so ridiculous a doctrine as the equality of man! In brief, 'the bias of the Jews is to religion, property, and natural aristocracy; and it should be the interest of statesmen that this bias should be encouraged, and their energies and creative powers enlisted in the cause of existing society." As they have lived under a feudal system, so they are born with an understanding of monarchy and submission, and no people in the world is better fitted for patriotism than the people which to-day holds the keys of empire.

Yet a foolish persecution of a great race would deprive Europe of a solidly conservative element, and that this persecution is unnecessary is proved not only by the large tolerance of many generations, but by the supremacy which the most devoted Jew of the century exercised over an aristocracy many centuries younger than his own. The argument is perfect, if you forget the vain prejudice of race, which makes justice a mockery and turns men into beasts of fury. But Disraeli carried his logic a step further, and asked with perfect reason who could "deny that Jesus of Nazareth is the eternal glory of the Jewish race?" In truth, it was his favourite maxim that the complete Jew believed not only in Sinai but in Calvary, and, said he, the Italian who accuses a Christian Jew of perversion has misread history. For the Jew has but fulfilled the Law and the Prophets, and the pagan, turned against his gods, is the true renegade.

But the soundest arguments war vainly with passion,

and Disraeli's career was a finer championship of his race than all his logic. Yet there is one mystery which he cherished himself—the mystery of his character. He achieved so much, and he said so many things, that it has been a favourite pastime to discover inconsistencies in the most consistent hero of the century. He was a Jew and a Christian, a Tory and a Radical, a novelist and an orator. Perhaps there were in him the seeds of many contrary things. But is it not far simpler to confess that he was a man of genius, who fulfilled himself in many ways, a prince of many kingdoms, who came into them all? Mystery was his pose, and yet he was the most candid of men. He could not, if he would, suppress his meaning. What he was in his books that he was in his career; and while romance was his life, his life was a more brilliant romance than his own ironic pen had dared to shape. But time, which spared his genius, indulged not his enemies; and he, who had been content to dream and to fight, was called to government. Henceforth he must desert adventure for accomplishment, romance for the hard dry atmosphere of office. The career of Disraeli the Younger was finished; the novels were written, the satires laid aside; deeds must silence words; and the Cyprus dreamed of in "Tancred" should be ours, and the Queen should in very truth be Empress. For though the statesman of to-morrow must eclipse the enchanted Arabian of to-day, his heart was still faithful to romance, his face was still set towards the immortal East.

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