

maid waited on my wife, but she was never alone in the room from the time I unclasped the diamonds, until the luggage was packed and ready to be carried down stairs. I have wondered if any prowler could have entered whilst my wife lay fainting on the hearthrug." Mr. Fielden no doubt took note of this suggestion, but he did not comment on it. He again asked: "Who packed young Mrs. Beauchamp's clothes? It is obvious she did not."

"She had some help from a young girl sent by Madame Leeson, the milliner in the High Street. Another girl named Fanny Gregg, a former inmate of Castle-mont, was to have come, but she broke down from over-pressure, and madame kindly sent this Miss Martin in her place. She did this in order that my wife's maid might not have the journey to and from Longminster for only an hour's work."

"Ah!" exclaimed the lawyer, and Tom afterwards declared that he seemed to put a whole interjectional volume into a monosyllable, whilst his face assumed an expression of the keenest interest.

"This young person was a stranger to Mrs. Beauchamp, junior, I presume?"

"Yes," replied Tom, "but not to Madame Leeson, or many others. The girl is, in fact, a lady, and we—by we, I mean my wife's aunt and I—believe her

to be utterly incapable of an act of dishonesty."

My husband gave a very ludicrous after account of the examination and cross-examination to which he was subjected by the clever man of law. In a surprisingly short time he had, as Tom expressed it, literally turned him inside out, and left him nothing to tell. He entered the office, intending only to reveal so much about Ellen Martin as referred to her actual ministrations to myself. At the close of it he stood looking ruefully at Mr. Fielden, feeling excessively angry at his own want of power to baffle his questioner, and with absolutely nothing more to tell.

The lawyer, moreover, returned his rueful glance with one of considerable severity, as he said, "Mr. Beauchamp, you ought to have come to me at once. This matter has been trifled with from the beginning. Of course your wife's serious illness—which I deeply regret to hear of—would have been an excuse for neglecting it altogether. But since you did begin inquiry and search with a view to the recovery of the diamonds, why not carry them out thoroughly, and avail yourself of experienced help at the outset? You have made a mistake, Mr. Beauchamp—a grave mistake."

My poor Tom might have been a juvenile delinquent hauled up by his schoolmaster, so small and helpless did

he feel when thus rebuked, and he humbly inquired what would be the best course to take.

"So much time has been lost, that it is very questionable whether the best we can do will be of much avail. What might have been done, I hardly like to think of. I suppose I ought to compliment you on your kind-heartedness and unwillingness to think evil; but I am afraid I cannot. In this present nineteenth century world, those of us who are forced into contact with the darker side of human nature are apt to grow severe in our judgments, and give to some of our neighbours even less credit than they deserve."

Mr. Fielden wasted no more words on his client, but having summoned a clerk, he bade him seek out and bring to the office a certain James Smith.

"Now Mr. Beauchamp," he said, once more addressing Tom, "I must see some of the people who were waiting for me long before we began our talk. I must ask you to get through an hour in the best way you can, and then come back here."

The lawyer turned away in token that he had done with my husband for the present, and another client was at the same instant informed that Mr. Fielden was at liberty to receive him.

(To be continued.)

ODD CHARACTERS.

A GALLERY OF ECCENTRIC WOMEN.

By NANETTE MASON.

II.—SARAH, DUCHESS OF MARLBOROUGH.



It does not sound like an aristocratic name. They called her Sarah Jennings.

She was the daughter of a Hertfordshire squire, one of a family of twenty-three children, so that she came into the world with more than her fair share of uncles and aunts.

Sarah grew up handsome and attractive. Energy characterised her, and ambition; but what showed themselves as early as energy and ambition were a violent, domineering temper and a vigorous tongue. These,

however, were not so noticeable at first as her beautiful hair and fine eyes; for there is a charm in youth that makes people think lightly about defects of either tongue or temper.

When "our good Queen Anne" was but a princess, Sarah Jennings was fortunate enough to be chosen for her particular attendant. Now the princess was as unlike Sarah as anyone could be. She was timid and gentle, "dull,

stout, and crammed with prejudices." Her intellect was sluggish, and no pains had been spent on its cultivation. No one ever heard of her opening a book. Another characteristic to be borne in mind is that when she had once resolved on anything, she was not to be diverted from her purpose—a characteristic which in common clay would be called obstinacy, but in a princess may be allowed to go under a finer name.

It was not long before the princess and Sarah became united in the closest intimacy. It was natural. The princess felt the need of a strongminded friend to lean upon—one who could both think and act for her. The two could hardly live apart, and when separated by chance now and then for a short while, they wrote to each other four times a day.

The princess held, rightly enough, that there can be no satisfactory friendship when a feeling of superiority exists on either one side or the other. With a view, therefore, of dispensing with all ceremony in her intercourse with Sarah, she made an ingenious proposal, by carrying which into execution "Madam," "Your Royal Highness," and suchlike expressions were entirely done away with.

"She grew uneasy," Sarah tells us, "to be treated by me with the form and ceremony due to her rank; nor could she bear from me the sound of words which implied in them distance and superiority. It was this turn of mind which made her one day propose to me that whenever I should happen to be absent from her we might in all our letters write under feigned names, such as would import nothing of distinction or rank between us. Morley and Freeman were the names

her fancy hit upon, and she left me to choose by which of them I would be called. My frank, open temper naturally led me to pitch upon Freeman, and so the princess took the other; and from this time Mrs. Morley and Mrs. Freeman began to converse as equals, made so by affection and friendship."

At Court Sarah fell in with Colonel Churchill, a rising young officer destined to become, to quote the words of the Duke of Wellington, "the greatest man that ever appeared at the head of a British army." Sarah's sagacity and lively manner, combined with her beauty, made a deep impression on the colonel. He fell violently in love.

Sarah accepted him, and the two were married early in 1678. They had not much money between them, but it could hardly be called an imprudent step for a young officer to marry the favourite attendant of a princess.

Churchill—who by the kind influence of the Princess Anne was, after a time, created Earl of Marlborough—proved a faithful and devoted husband. He and his wife had one remarkable feature in common—that was greed for money. They had a positive mania for riches. There was a difference, however: the husband loved to hoard, whilst the wife was not unwilling to spend, especially when it was a case of gratifying animosity.

The friendship of the princess was of incalculable service for enabling the two to rise in the world. Submission to her "dear Mrs. Freeman" became almost a habit with Anne, and Sarah was not likely to let go her hold so long as she could keep open for herself and her husband the fountains of promotion and affluence.

The princess came to the throne in 1702, on the death of William III. "We have lost a great king," said Mr. Granville, "and have got a most gracious queen."

Her Majesty continued to do her best for her favourite and her favourite's husband. Before she had been three days on the throne the knighthood of the Garter was conferred upon Marlborough. Sarah was placed in the courtly offices of Groom of the Stole, Mistress of the Robes, and Keeper of the Privy Seal, which profitable posts—they were worth altogether over five thousand pounds a year—enabled her to continue by the side of the sovereign as closely as she had lived with the princess. She also had the rangership of Windsor Park granted her for life, with the especial object of enabling her to live in the Great Lodge.

The grasping and domineering character of the countess now had a fitting opportunity for display. The sovereign was completely under her dominion, and, through the sovereign, she lorded it over everybody else. "She is," says a writer in the *Quarterly Review*, "the strongest example, perhaps in the history of the world, certainly in the history of this empire, of the abuse of female favouritism; and the most flagrant instance of the incalculable influence of household familiarity over the destinies of mankind."

She did an extensive business in the buying and selling of places in the Queen's household. "Within the palace itself was a busy market of all the offices of government. The Queen's own relations were kept at a distance, and all things were transacted by the sole authority of one woman, to whom there was no access but by the golden road."

Not satisfied with making untold sums by means of her position and influence, she accepted many substantial benefits from the Queen. As a specimen of these, take a portrait of Marlborough which Anne gave her. It was executed in the minutest style of miniature, and instead of being covered with crystal, was protected with a large diamond of the purest water. This artistic present was valued at no less than eight thousand pounds.

Sarah's two daughters, Lady Harriet Godolphin and Lady Spencer, were appointed ladies of the bedchamber. And that reminds us of a bedchamber insurrection which took place in the palace on the subject of old clothes. The royal left-off garments were claimed by the countess as one of her perquisites, but quite another view of the matter was taken by the bedchamber women. They asserted that they had better rights than she, and that they would stand it no longer. To make peace the good-natured Anne promised them five hundred pounds a year, and New Year's gifts besides; but even this liberal dealing does not seem to have calmed the troubled waters.

As actual manager of the royal establishment, Sarah, whilst enriching herself, contrived to keep her mistress ill-supplied with funds. Ready money was a luxury Anne had little acquaintance with. On one occasion, when she wished to give fifty guineas to a Mrs. Dalrymple, who had brought her a fine japanned cabinet from Scotland, it was more than six months before she could lay hands on that sum. Another time we find her borrowing twenty guineas from one of her ladies-in-waiting, to pay the funeral expenses of an unfortunate gentleman who had been totally ruined by his adhesion to her father's fortunes.

It was otherwise with Sarah and her husband. The two ran up their joint income till it reached the respectable figure of ninety-four thousand pounds per annum. In the first year of Anne's reign Marlborough was raised to the highest rank in the peerage; he and Sarah became duke and duchess. After the victory of Blenheim, in 1703, the manor of

Woodstock was transferred by Act of Parliament from the Crown to the duke. "The gift, even in that form, was a noble one, but the Queen heightened it by instructing Sir John Vanbrugh to build a palace in the park at the royal expense, and although the works subsequently caused much anxiety to the duke and duchess, £240,000 of public money was spent on the buildings."

But queens' favourites, especially if they have a domineering temper, do not hold their positions for ever. About 1707 the duchess felt the ground slipping from beneath her feet, and how she unwittingly supplied her enemies with an avenger and herself with a successful rival is a curious story.

She had a full cousin called Abigail Hill, the daughter of a London merchant. Abigail was poor, and Sarah, ready enough to provide for her relations at other people's expense, introduced her to the Queen, and got her an appointment as one of the bedchamber women. In this humble post Abigail had to sleep on the floor, and was looked upon as of no account whatever. She was no beauty; she had poor health, and a very red nose. She was clever, however, well educated, smooth-tongued, and a regular schemer.

This poor relation was to be the cause of the haughty duchess's downfall.

Abigail's first steps in the royal favour were quite unknown to Sarah. She was even kept in ignorance of the fact that one morning her cousin was married, in the presence of the Queen, to a Mr. Samuel Masham. The bridegroom was hit off afterwards by Sarah's descriptive pen as "a soft, good-natured, insignificant man, always making low bows to everybody, and ready to skip to open a door."

The duchess had a suspicion that she was going out of favour, but could not at first imagine why. Then someone gave her a hint that she had a secret enemy in Abigail, and not long after that she made quite sure about the matter. "Being with the Queen," she says, "to whom I had come very privately by a secret passage from my lodging to the royal bedchamber, on a sudden this woman, Abigail, not knowing I was there, came in with the boldest and gayest air possible; but upon the sight of me stopped, and immediately asked, making a most solemn curtsy, 'Did your majesty ring?' and then went out again. This singular behaviour needed no interpreter now to make it understood."

She now found out the fact of the marriage, and discovered to her dismay that Abigail was become "an absolute favourite with the Queen, and the medium of secret communication between Her Majesty and the most dangerous enemies of Marlborough and herself."

"I was struck with astonishment," she says, "at such an instance of ingratitude, and should not have believed it if there had been any room for doubting!"

She wrote to Mrs. Masham, furiously upbraiding her, and Abigail sent her very able letters in reply; so well written indeed were they that the duchess could not believe them written by herself. In one of them Mrs. Masham forwarded a message from the Queen, kindly worded, though whether it was kindly meant is a question. "It was very shocking," Sarah remarks, "to be assured of Her Majesty's favour by one whom I had raised from starving."

The duchess next wrote angry and insolent letters to the Queen. These only served still farther to cool Anne's affection, and make her take a stronger liking for Mrs. Masham. As we have said before, Anne was stubborn, and she showed it in this quarrel with Sarah.

Stormy interviews now took place between the duchess and Her Majesty. After one of these, the duchess in making her exit slammed

the door of the Queen's closet in such a temper that those in waiting several rooms off thought the sound was that of thunder.

Another day she spoke so loud that her shrill voice reached to the bottom of the backstairs, and the footmen in attendance there had the full benefit of her forcible observations. When Anne on this occasion could stand it no longer, she rose to leave the room. At once Sarah made a rush to the door, placed her back against it, and informed her sovereign that "she should hear her out, for that was the least favour she could do her for having put the crown on her head and kept it there!"

She stood and raged there for an hour, and the last words overheard were that "she did not care if she never saw her majesty again."

"The seldomer the better, I think," observed the Queen.

When the duchess afterwards published an "Account of her conduct," an answer to it appeared, evidently inspired, under the title of "The other side of the question." The writer of this answer accounts very justly for the termination of this famous friendship.

"The grand inference," he says, "that your grace draws is, that you were betrayed, but the inferences of the world are such as these: That the Queen was a captive and you her gaoler; that she was neither mistress of her power nor free to express her inclinations; that she was so far overawed by a length of oppression, as to dread the very approach of her tormentress; that she was forced to unbosom herself by stealth, and that she durst not enter upon a contest with your grace, even to set herself free from your insupportable tyranny, a situation so terrible that no private person would for any consideration submit to it, and consequently what a sovereign might justly endeavour, at almost any rate, to be delivered from."

The husband of Queen Anne—George Prince of Denmark, "a dull man," says Macaulay, "whose chief pleasures were derived from his dinner and his bottle"—died in 1708. During the illness which terminated his life the Queen had an anxious time of it, but no allowance was made for her by the duchess. She pursued both her and Mrs. Masham with fiendish malice.

When the prince was in his last agonies she forced herself into his dying chamber, and only withdrew on being ordered out by the now thoroughly-roused Queen. She went, however, only into an adjoining apartment, and continued her persecution of Anne till the funeral was over.

An extraordinary scene had preceded this by about two months. On the 10th of August, 1708, there was a grand service held in St. Paul's Cathedral, to return thanks for the victory of Oudenarde. The Queen went in state, and as Mistress of the Robes the duchess had laid out the jewels she was to wear.

Going up Ludgate Hill, however, Sarah happened to look at Anne's dress, and to her amazement and mortification saw that she had not put on the jewels. At once the thought flashed into her mind that Mrs. Masham was at the bottom of it, and out of pure spite had persuaded Anne to leave the jewels behind.

Without caring anything about the presence of thousands of spectators, she began to vent her rage on the poor Queen. Anne forgot her dignity too, and returned the scolding of the duchess with interest. They quarrelled at the door of the cathedral, and kept up the warfare of words even after Anne had taken her seat. The Queen spoke so loud that many of their fellow-worshippers turned and stared. At last the duchess brought the squabble to a full stop by a piece of unparalleled insolence.

"Hold your tongue," said she to the Queen. "Was there ever," remarks one writer, "such another scene? A Queen and a subject quarrelling like two fishwives, and the Queen ordered by her subject to hold her tongue!"

This piece of audacity secured silence for the moment, but the Queen never forgave it. It was a stroke that no friendship could survive. The duchess, far from apologising, followed up the quarrel by a letter, repeating her suspicions about Mrs. Masham, and saying that "she thought she had chosen a very wrong day on which to mortify her, when they were on the way to return thanks for a victory obtained by my Lord Marlborough." In this epistle she enclosed a letter of the duke's.

Here is the Queen's reply:—"After the command you gave me on the thanksgiving day, of not answering you, I should not have troubled you but to return the Duke of Marlborough's letter safe into your hands, and for the same reason I do not say anything to that, or to yours which enclosed it."

The duchess now had the last word. She wrote again, pretending to explain away the word command, but had the coolness to tell her royal mistress that since she had not answered her observations, she flattered herself she had said several things that were unanswerable.

After this Sarah made many attempts to recover her lost position; but it was hopeless. It occurred to her at last that as insolence and audacity had failed she would try a milder course. She began by telling Her Majesty that before taking the Sacrament at Christmas she ought, if her religion was not make-believe, to dismiss from her mind all enmity and harsh feeling. This good counsel was followed up by her presenting Anne with a handsome Common Prayer Book, in which the Queen found underlined all passages in the service that enjoined forgiveness of injuries. To this was added a copy of Jeremy Taylor's "Holy Living and Dying," with the passages marked and the leaves turned down which recommended the necessary preparation for the Sacrament by casting out all resentment.

When the Queen went to St. James's Chapel to communicate, the duchess placed herself in her path. Anne gave her a gracious nod and smile, and passed on to the altar. No reconciliation followed. "The smile and nod," the mortified duchess remarked afterwards, "were only meant for Jeremy Taylor and the Common Prayer."

Mrs. Masham was now triumphant. She distinguished herself as dispenser of favours, just as the duchess had done. Comfortable berths about the Court were secured through her—for a consideration. If an officer wanted promotion, it was said that he could only secure it by "carrying Mrs. Masham's lapdogs, or putting a heavy purse into the hands of Mrs. Abigail Earwig."

There was a last interview between the duchess and the Queen. The duchess has left an account of it, and though she had brought her troubles on herself, one can hardly read what she says without a feeling of sympathy. With tears, but in vain, she begged—quite unnecessarily, one would think—to be told of any fault she had committed. At last her violent spirit got the better of her, and she predicted that Her Majesty would yet suffer for her inhumanity.

"That will be to myself," replied the Queen.

They parted, to meet no more.

The duchess now dreaded, as something disgraceful, a dismissal from her posts of Groom of the Stole and Mistress of the Robes. The blow came at last. The Queen intimated that she desired her to return the gold keys which were the token of these two offices.

Sarah refused to comply. She sent her

husband to see if prostration and humiliation would serve her ends. On his knees Marlborough entreated for at least delay, so that the blow might be less mortifying. But pathetic appeals from such a quarter were thrown away upon Anne.

To make a long story short, the duke had to tell his wife that she must give up the keys. She refused. They argued the matter. The argument was long and stormy, and it ended, according to Cunningham, by her flinging the keys at his head. "Take them," she cried, "and carry them where you like."

The duke snatched them up, and hurried to the palace, where, says the authority we have just quoted, the Queen received them with far greater pleasure than if he had brought her the spoils of war. "The duchess," he adds, "flew about town in a rage, and with eyes and words full of vengeance."

Her exhibition of temper on this occasion was the delight of all her foes. She gave way to childish resentment. When she quitted her official rooms at St. James's, these looked as if they had been sacked by an enemy. The locks were torn off the doors, the looking-glasses and pictures rent from their panels, and the marble slabs forced out.

After the duchess had been dismissed from her offices, Marlborough himself was permitted to continue in his position for a short time; but his fall was only delayed till the last day of 1711. He took his reverse of fortune with more philosophy than Sarah. In a letter to her we find him hinting at one of the causes of her broken friendship with the Queen. "It has always," he says, "been my observation in disputes, especially in those of kindness and friendship, that all reproaches, though ever so just, serve to no end but making the breach wider."

"I cannot help being of opinion," he adds, "that however insignificant we are, there is a power above that puts a period to our happiness or unhappiness. If anybody had told me eight years ago that after such great success, and after you had been a faithful servant twenty-seven years, we should be obliged to seek happiness in a private life, I could not have believed that possible."

After the death of Anne, the duke resumed his old military posts, but he took little part in public affairs. He died at Cranbourn Lodge, near Windsor, on the morning of the 16th of June, 1722.

The duchess survived her husband for nearly twenty-two years. Widowhood toned down none of her singularities, but rather the reverse. She seemed to delight in being at enmity with all mankind, and in bringing her career to a close in the character of a "malignant old beldame."

The duke had left her an enormous fortune, and she did not spare it in making mischief, and indulging her ill-will. Quarrels with her family, with her servants, with politicians and authors kept her busily occupied. Much of her time and attention was devoted to the vindication of her husband's memory, which is a point in her favour not to be forgotten.

The wealth of which she was possessed brought even at her age many offers of marriage. She declined them all. Amongst her suitors came the Duke of Somerset, and in refusing to accept of his hand she proudly told him that "if she were only thirty instead of threescore, she would not permit even the Emperor of the World to succeed in that heart which had been devoted to John, Duke of Marlborough!"

Of the quarrels of the duchess with her relations Lady Mary Wortley Montague used to tell a funny anecdote. One of the duchess's granddaughters was Lady Anne Egerton, who inherited a good deal of her grandmother's temper. The two came one day to high words, and parted, vowing never to meet again.

Now the duchess had a portrait of Lady Anne in her possession, and she made use of it to gratify her revenge. She did not give it away, nor sell it to a broker, nor send it up to a lumber room, nor even turn its face to the wall. She had the face blackened over, and this sentence inscribed in large letters on the frame:—

"She is far blacker within."

And thus placed in her usual sitting-room it was exhibited to all beholders.

The great Sarah was a good friend to the lawyers. Amongst the advocates whom she honoured with her patronage was the "silver-tongued" William Murray, afterwards the Earl of Mansfield. It was he of whom Colley Cibber wrote:—

"Persuasion tips his tongue when'er he talks,

And he has chambers in the King's Bench Walks."

He was a rising young man when her grace first took notice of him, and sent him a general retainer, with a fee of a thousand guineas, of which he was obliged to return nine hundred and ninety-five, explaining that "the professional fee, with a general retainer, could not be less nor more than five guineas."

She used to call on Murray at most unreasonable hours. One night, on coming home from a supper-party, he found King's Bench Walk in a great state of excitement. The duchess's carriage was there, surrounded by a little army of footmen and linkbearers. He entered his chambers; there sat the duchess. She gave a look of displeasure, and treated him to this piece of advice:—

"Young man, if you mean to rise in the world you must not sup out."

On a subsequent occasion she called without appointment long after business hours, and waited till past midnight in hopes to see him ere she went to bed. But Murray, who does not seem to have followed her counsel, did not return till the small hours of the morning. He found she had left in an overpowering rage.

"I could not make out, sir, who she was," said Murray's clerk, "for she would not tell me her name; but she swore so dreadfully that I am sure she must be a lady of quality!"

In Pope's "Characters of Women" we have the duchess represented under the name of Atossa. Pope has been accused of taking a considerable sum from her grace for suppressing this character, and yet afterwards publishing it; but this has never been proved, and the story, to say the least of it, is not probable.

The poet scornfully depicts her as making life a warfare, and acquiring distinction "in exposing knaves and painting fools," yet being herself everything she hated and turned to ridicule. He gives her no credit for stability of judgment; points out her revengeful disposition, and how with her no passion was gratified except her rage. It was a loveless nature.

"Offend her, and she knows not to forgive;
Oblige her, and she'll hate you while you live!"

Her stormy career lasted a long time. Exhibitions of volcanic temper did not wear out her vigorous constitution till she was nearly ninety. She died on the 18th of October, 1744, having by that time alienated all her friends, and numbered some of her own descendants amongst the most bitter of her foes. She retained the most affection for her dogs, which, she said, had "gratitude, wit, and good sense—things very rare in this country!"