

## AN ALPHABET

OF FAMOUS OR NOTEWORTHY WOMEN, FOR OUR YOUNG FRIENDS TO RECOGNISE.

- A. The gracious wife of an uncouth and churlish spouse,  
Who answered rudely all who dared to say a word;  
He thus the anger of a mountain-chief did rouse,  
Who vowed to put him and his household to the sword.  
Mark the wife's action prompt, her quick and ready thought:  
She rode at once the hostile chief in peace to meet  
And offer him the rich supplies of food she brought,  
Bowing in lowly supplication at his feet.  
Her beauty charmed his eye, her eloquence his ear;  
Her timely intercession saved her husband's life;  
And when soon afterwards he died, the mountaineer  
Besought the lovely widow to become his wife.  
B. To avert her husband's fall, engaged in foreign wars,  
She made an offering of her hair at Venus' shrine;  
Her tresses still are seen amongst the brilliant stars,  
And, emblem of her faithful love, resplendent shine.  
C. There was a period of frenzy, guilt, and fear,  
When no man's life was safe amongst his closest friends;  
Bold demagogues, demanding "Death," went far and near  
And roused the people to the rage that madness lends.  
The stricken nation, paralysed, stood mute and still,  
Till a young girl resolved to act a nobler part;  
She sought the tyrant . . . then, with sudden strength and skill  
She plunged her weapon deep into his murderous heart.  
D. The tender-hearted friend of the bereaved and old,  
Whose ready fingers shaped all garments for their need,  
Was lying dead; and bitter lamentations told  
That she had been a well-beloved friend indeed.  
E. Tired of courts and courtly life, the Saxon Queen  
Desires a home where holy peace and rest shall reign;  
She founds a convent in a stream-encircled scene  
Sequestered from the ravage of the ruthless Dane.  
A century elapsed, then came the savage Dane,  
Whose course was marked by spoliation, fire, and blood;  
But since has risen there our glorious Gothic fane  
Where once the sainted Queen's monastic building stood.  
F. "Halt! who goes there? Your pass, ere you go on!"  
"Here is my passport, signed," the foremost rider said,  
"Made out for me, as well as for my servant John;  
And with him, on the pillion, Betty Burke, my maid."  
They pass the troops unquestioned, but in silent dread  
Lest some untoward chance should stay their progress yet,  
For under Betty Burke's thick muffler was a head  
On which a price of Thirty Thousand Pounds was set.  
The intrepid lady's power to help at length is gone;  
Encompassed by his watchful foes the Wanderer stands;  
Knowing his safety must be gained by him alone,  
She trusts him to the care and faith of stronger hands.  
G. "A vessel wholly wrecked lies yonder! You and I  
Have often faced as rough a sea and felt no fear.  
Father, unmoor the boat, and let us go and try  
To help the suffering sailors and to bring them here!"  
At once the boat is launched: its brave but slender crew  
Dash boldly through the waters of the seething sea;  
Now on the billow's crest, now down and lost to view,  
They struggle on to reach the point where they would be.  
Upon a shelving rock eight shipwrecked men are seen,  
Exhausted, helpless, cold, despairing of all aid,  
And scarce believing that they truly could have been  
Thus rescued by one seaman and a youthful maid.  
H. In ancient history a model wife we see  
Performing willingly the good that she can do;  
Prudent, obedient, patient, as she ought to be;  
Above all, never speaking till she's spoken to!  
I. Ready to listen, charitable, calm, and wise,  
She gave the stranger audience and his project heard;  
Then granted what he craved . . . abundant, full supplies . . .  
Without a further surety than his simple word.  
Months rolled away; she heard of him no more,  
But thought that he was lost, with all his little fleet;  
In triumph he returned from an undreamed-of shore  
To lay a new and richer empire at her feet.  
J. Scarcely emerged from childhood she was made a queen,  
Ignorant of that ambition which had wrought her rise,  
And feeling no regret for what she might have been,  
She, innocent and blameless, on the scaffold dies.  
K. 'Twas known by the conspirators, some days before,  
Where, on a certain night, the King and Court would rest;  
All locks, all bolts, all bars were torn from every door  
So that no hindrance should be given to their quest.  
The journey o'er, the King and Queen arrived, fatigued  
And ready to enjoy the supper their attendants bring,  
Forgetting he has cruel foes against him leagued,  
Till angry voices utter loudly, "Where's the King?"  
Then did a high-born damsel of the Queen's own train  
Cling to the staples of the door to hold it fast.  
Oh, tender arm! weak hand! self-sacrifice how vain!  
Her arm is broken and the murderers rush past.  
L. The fearless, high-souled Queen of an invaded land,  
Forced the invader's insults patiently to bear,  
Into the coffers of the State, with lavish hand,  
She casts the brilliant jewels she is used to wear.  
Winning in voice and manner, beautiful as May,  
Idolised by her people for her courage' sake,  
Which prompts her 'gainst the unjust treaties to inveigh,  
Their timid, hesitating legislators make.  
M. The monarch's only child, acknowledged as the Queen,  
Yet lawless feudatories' faith no longer held;  
A foreign noble claimed the throne where she had been  
Installed, with homage paid, by those who now rebelled.  
Battle succeeded battle with such waste of life,  
That famine followed what the war had thus begun;  
Till, after eight long years of never-ceasing strife,  
A peaceful treaty gave the kingdom to her son.  
N. A strange fantastic notion for a Queen to have—  
She orders, so the old historians narrate,  
Her body should not lie within a common grave,  
But in a marble tomb above the city-gate,  
With this inscription graven: "Here a treasure lies!  
Let no successor seek it, save in direst need."  
A conqueror broke the tomb to seize these great supplies,  
And found a scroll of scornful scathing for his greed.  
O. Beside the Emperor, her brother, she reclines  
To hear the latest poem that the poet wrote;  
She weeps in silence at the sweet but mournful lines  
That strike within her sorrow a responsive note.  
Her son, of many virtues and of promise rare,  
Chosen as the successor to the Imperial throne,  
Is dead; and in her mother-grief and dull despair  
She feels the poet's lamentations as her own.  
The elegy concludes: the poet, at the last,  
Contrasts the youth's bright prospects, his career so brief;  
But when he sadly utters, "Thou Marcellus wast,"  
She swoons in bitter anguish and excessive grief.  
P. The town is won! The victor's wrathful eyes of fire  
Are fixed upon the prisoners before him placed  
To hear their doom—that they like felons shall expire—  
When through the throng a noble lady comes in haste;  
Low kneeling at the conqueror's knee, her voice is heard  
Pleading in earnest accents, "Set thy captives free!"  
By brave men never death, dishonour 'tis that's feared,  
And that dishonour is not theirs but rests on thee.  
Let not vindictive action tarnish thus thy fame,  
These men have fought for freedom, for their homes and wives.  
Surely our English burghers would have done the same?  
Oh, let thy pity rest upon them! Spare their lives!"  
Q. Exemplary in every phase of womanhood—  
As daughter, wife, and mother has she ever been;  
Revered abroad as great, beloved at home as good,  
Welcome rejoicings rise whenever she is seen.  
R. The faithful wife, his only friend in all that Court  
Who dared to aid him in his great and urgent need;  
Near him, with pen in hand, she wrote the full report  
Of witness, counsel, judge—a cruel task indeed.  
S. A celebrated Queen, in very ancient days,  
Whose grace and loveliness were held beyond compare;  
She made her subjects by their skill and labour raise  
One of the wonders of the world—her city fair.  
T. "Do you remember how the soaring eagle swooped  
To snatch the cap from off your head in yonder plain?  
And after bearing it aloft once more he stooped  
To set it in its place upon your head again?  
Husband, this omen is for good and leads you on,  
My every thought for your sake now ambition fills;  
We'll quit this paltry town, where nothing can be done,  
And seek that busy city on the southern hills."  
Wise man—the follows what his wife as law lays down;  
Her enterprise and energy good fortune bring;  
He rises, step by step, to honour and renown,  
Till in that city he is chosen for its king.  
U. A pious Princess, living near St. Michael's Mount,  
Desired to preach the Gospel to a heathen race;  
With many maids-in-waiting (more than I could count),  
She started on her way to find the appointed place.  
Embarking in their summer vessels bright and gay,  
They made a tedious voyage the foreign shore to gain;  
But when the fierce barbarians checked their onward way,  
Alas! the gentle messenger of peace was slain.  
V. A famous poetess, some centuries ago,  
The friend of all the great and learned of her time;  
Widowed, her poems breathe the utterance of her woe,  
Yet softened and inspired by piety sublime.  
Betrothed at four years old, at seventeen a wife,  
Her days of married happiness were early crossed;  
Her husband in a famous battle lost his life,  
That battle where, "excepting honour, all was lost."  
W. Oh, wise and witty wife! did not thy simple wiles  
Work rescue for thy husband from impending doom?  
Softening his guards' rough hearts by gifts and gracious smiles,  
Obtaining free and frequent access to his room.  
Thy tall attendant, Mistress Betty, did her share,  
Providing garments just like those she daily wore;  
So when the day arrived the Earl that dress should wear,  
He passed unnoticed by his barred and guarded door.  
But later on, when evening came and guards were changed,  
The real Mistress Betty issued forth, and said—  
"My lord would sleep, let none go in," 'twas thus arranged,  
So time was gained and his escape securely sped.  
X. For many generations I have been maligned  
Because I disapproved my husband's careless ways;  
'Tis hard a married woman may not speak her mind,  
For if she sometimes blames, yet also she can praise.  
I did my duty, as a wife should ever do—  
Was not extravagant, my house was always clean;  
I loved my husband—in his way he loved me too—  
But yet domesticated he had never been.  
'Tis true my hasty temper may have sometimes flown  
To angry words against his passive nature hurled;  
But is it, therefore, justice that my name goes down  
As vixen, shrew, and scold to all the listening world?  
Z. The lion-hearted Queen, who held her foes at bay,  
She fought for empire, for her people, for her home;  
But, overcome in battle, she was borne away  
To adorn the victor's triumph through the streets of Rome.

like myself. I lost him nine weeks ago."

Elsie gave a little exclamation of dismay. Had the guidance of the vanished hand led only to a disappointment like this?

"I wish you had told us sooner," said Andrew, trying to suppress his indignation.

"The weeks have gone by like a whirlwind, and my head's been in a mist ever since I lost him," Mrs. Penn declared, wiping her eyes.

"Are you sure that your head wasn't in a mist before you lost him?" asked Mrs. Beaton, with unwonted sternness.

Something in the tone of the questioner led Elsie to examine Mrs. Penn with closer attention. She was a woman of sixty, who had evidently been healthy and active in her earlier days, and ought to have been strong and capable still. But there was a redness of the eyes, and a certain pink puffiness of the whole countenance which had a suspicious look.

"My health hasn't been good lately," she said, in her whimpering voice. "No one knows the burden that the boy has been to me, but I couldn't find it in my heart to part with him."

"If you had written to us, as you promised to do, we would have relieved you of the burden," Mrs. Beaton replied.

"I've been going to write hundreds of times, only I'm such a bad letter-writer. And then I've intended to come and see you, but I've put off coming because

things always seemed to prevent me. We stayed at Brighton three months; I don't like Brighton. I was glad to get nearer to London."

"Where did you go when you left Brighton?" Andrew inquired.

"We came up to Lee. My niece Maria is married to a market-gardener there, a Mr. Dennett; he's a most respectable man, and he took quite a fancy to Jamie. But Maria has no children, and she doesn't care for boys; they seem to worry her."

"And between you and Maria the poor little fellow was neglected," cried Mrs. Beaton, in a tremor of anger.

"Don't say so, pray don't say so, it hurts my feelings dreadfully," wailed Mrs. Penn. "I'm sure I paid regularly for him and myself, and he always had enough to eat. But, as Maria has often said, it's a troublesome thing to have a child on your hands."

"How did you lose him?" Mrs. Beaton asked. She steadied her voice as well as she could, but there was an angry light in her kind old eyes.

"I didn't lose him. He lost himself. He must have wandered away somewhere," said this exasperating woman, beginning to cry again. "We went to the police, and did all we could to find him, but we never caught a glimpse of him any more. After wearing myself out for nine weeks, I saw your notice in the *Daily Telegraph*, and then I thought you must have found him. I came here all in a hurry, with my heart full of hope."

There was nothing more to be extracted from her. It was clear that she had told all she could tell.

Elsie turned to Andrew with a look of distress more eloquent than words. As he met the sorrowful gaze of her beautiful dark eyes, a light seemed suddenly to flash from his, and he spoke out in a resolute tone.

"Don't be afraid that I shall let the grass grow under my feet, Miss Kilner. I shall go to Scotland Yard at once," he said, rising, and buttoning his coat.

He merely lingered to ask Mrs. Penn a few rapid questions about the boy's dress and general appearance, and then the door closed behind him, and he was gone.

There was a moment of silence; then Elsie, rising from her chair, went over to Mrs. Beaton and kissed her.

"I am going home now," she whispered. "We won't despair yet. I shall try to be hopeful."

But her attempts at hopefulness were of little avail, and she hurried out of Wardour Street, holding her head down, crying as she went. She walked swiftly, never once slackening her speed till she had gained her own door. And inside the house she seemed to lose all courage and strength and faith, and fell sobbing into Miss Saxon's arms.

"Oh," she said, "it is all in vain! Jamie is lost, utterly lost, and only his angel knows where to find him!"

(To be continued.)

NOTES TO THE ALPHABET OF CELEBRATED WOMEN.

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| <p>A. Abigail. See 1 Samuel, xxv.</p> <p>B. Berenice, wife of Ptolemy Euergetes, King of Egypt. The astrologers paid her the flattery of naming a constellation <i>Coma Berenices</i>, in remembrance of the sacrifice of her beautiful hair.</p> <p>C. Charlotte Corday, who rid France of the bloodthirsty tyrant, Marat, by stabbing him while in his bath, July 14th, 1793. She was guillotined July 17th.</p> <p>D. Dorcas. See Acts ix, 36-39.</p> <p>E. Etheldreda, wife of Oswy, King of Northumbria, founded a monastic building in the Isle of Ely, 673, and became the first Abbess. In 870 it was destroyed by the Danes, and in 970 re-founded as a Benedictine Abbey. The present church was commenced in 1083 and made the cathedral in 1109.</p> <p>F. Flora McDonald, who accomplished the escape of Prince Charles from the island of South Uist, where he was surrounded by the English soldiery seeking him. In Sir Walter Scott's <i>Tales of a Grandfather</i> is a most interesting narrative of the Prince's subsequent wanderings.</p> <p>G. Grace Darling, daughter of the lighthouse keeper on the Longstone, one of the Farne Islands. In September, 1838, the <i>Forfarshire</i>, bound from Hull to Dundee, struck on another of the rocks. Of sixty-three persons on board fifty-five were drowned, and only by the heroic efforts of Darling and his daughter were the other eight saved from the same fate.</p> <p>H. Hadassah (myrtle). See the Book of Esther.</p> | <p>I. Isabella of Castile, wife of Ferdinand of Arragon. By her liberality only was Columbus enabled to discover the New World.</p> <p>J. Lady Jane Grey.</p> <p>K. Katherine Douglas, who thus endeavoured to close the door against the conspirators led by Sir Robert Graham, who had assembled to murder James I. in the Dominican monastery at Perth, February, 1437.</p> <p>L. Louisa, Queen of Prussia during the war against Napoleon. The patriotic gift of her jewels as a contribution towards the national defences was an example followed by all the ladies of Prussia, and led to the manufacture of the artistic ornaments in wrought iron as memorials of their public spirit, which are known as "Berlin ornaments."</p> <p>M. The Empress Maud, or Matilda.</p> <p>N. Nitocris, Queen of Babylon. Herodotus relates that Cyrus caused her tomb to be opened, expecting to find great treasure; he found a scroll bearing these words, "Had not thine avarice been insatiable thou wouldst not have violated the monuments of the dead."</p> <p>O. Octavia, the sister of the Emperor Augustus, and mother of Marcellus.</p> <p>P. Philippa of Hainault, wife of Edward III. before Calais.</p> <p>Q. The Queen.</p> <p>R. Lady Rachel Russell, who acted as secretary to her husband, Lord William Russell, during his trial, falsely accused of being concerned in the Rye House Plot and condemned to death.</p> <p>S. Semiramis.</p> | <p>T. Tanaquil, wife of Lucius Tarquinius Priscus, the fifth King of Rome.</p> <p>U. Saint Ursula and her eleven thousand virgins.</p> <p>V. Vittoria Colonna, the friend of Michael Angelo, admired by Ariosto, and the most famous poetess of Italy.</p> <p>W. Winifred, Countess of Nithsdale, who accomplished her husband's escape from the Tower after the Jacobite rising of 1715. Having chosen the tallest woman of her acquaintance for her attendant, she carried out her plan by familiarising the guards with their appearance, constantly entering the prison or issuing from it, sometimes together, sometimes singly, bestowing large gifts of money among the men and bespeaking their sympathy in her affliction, for the Earl lay under sentence of death. It was therefore only natural when he, disguised as Mrs. Betty Mills, followed the Countess past the guards on the very day previous to that appointed for his execution, they both should cover their faces as if in bitter grief. At the Tower Gate a coach was waiting to convey them to the vessel ready to sail, and on board of her they reached France in safety. Meanwhile Mrs. Betty had not been idle, but, collecting all materials that she could find, she so arranged the bed as to convey to the mind of the officer of the guard, when he made his nightly round, that the prisoner was safely there asleep.</p> <p>X. Xantippe, the wife of Socrates.</p> <p>Z. Zenobia, Queen of Palmyra, conquered by the Emperor Aurelian.</p> |
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