

ure. It is true that she is still doing a work in which absolute perfection ever recedes; but she can make relative attainments far nearer the standard than before.

Lastly, under the head of ideality let us resolve to be satisfied with our own past doings, when at the time of doing we used all the light God gave us and did all in our power.

The backward action of ideality is often full as tormenting as its forward and prospective movements. The moment a thing is done and over, one would think that good sense would lead us to drop it like a stone in the ocean; but the morbid idealist cannot cut loose from the past.

"Was that, after all, the *best* thing? Would it not have been better so or so?" And the self-tormented individual lies wakeful, during weary night-hours, revolving a thousand possibilities, and conjuring up a thousand vague perhapses. "If I had only done so now, perhaps this result would have followed, or that would not"; and as there is never any saying but that so it might have turned out, the labyrinth and the discontent are alike endless.

Now there is grand good sense in the Apostle's direction, "Forgetting the things that are behind, press forward." The idealist should charge himself, as with an oath of God, to let the past alone as an accomplished fact, solely concerning himself with the inquiry,

"Did I not do the best I *then* knew how?"

The maxim of the Quietists is, that, when we have acted according to the best light we have, we have expressed the will of God under those circumstances,—since, had it been otherwise, more and different light would have been given us; and with the will of God done by ourselves as by Himself, it is our duty to be content.

Having written thus far in my article, and finding nothing more at hand to add to it, I went into the parlor to read it to Jennie and Mrs. Crowfield. I found the former engaged in the task of binding sixty yards of quilling, (so I think she called it,) which were absolutely necessary for perfecting a dress; and the latter was braiding one of seven little petticoats, stamped with elaborate patterns, which she had taken from Marianne, because that virtuous matron was ruining her eyes and health in a blind push to get them done before October.

Both approved and admired my piece, and I thought of Saint Anthony's preaching to the fishes:—

The sermon once ended,  
The good man descended,  
And the pikes went on stealing,  
The eels went on celing,  
The crabs were backsliders,  
The stockfish thick-siders:  
Much delighted were they,  
But went on their own way."

## A VISIT TO THE EDGEWORTHS.

JOURNEYING in Ireland, with my husband and a young friend, some thirty years ago, on arriving in Dublin, having a letter of introduction to Miss Edgeworth, we sent it, with a note from myself proposing to spend a day with her, if convenient and agreeable, and shortly received the following very gracious reply:—

"EDGEWORTHTOWN, September 3, 1836.

"DEAR MADAM,—I hasten to assure you and Professor F—— that we feel highly honored and gratified by your kind intention of paying us a visit. Mrs. Edgeworth desires me to say, that we shall be at home all next week, and we shall be most happy to receive you, and your young friend, Mr. W——, any

day after the 5th which may be most convenient to you. We say after the 5th, because on the 5th my sister, (Harriet,) Mrs. Butler, and her husband, the Rev. Mr. Butler, will come to us, and independently of the pleasure they will have, I am sure, in your society, I own I wish that you should become acquainted with them, especially as we are unlucky at this moment in not having any of my brothers at home. My brother-in-law, Mr. Butler, is, as you will find, a man of literature and learning, besides being all that you will like in other respects, from the truth and rectitude and simplicity of his character.

"I am much obliged to you for the letters you were so good as to enclose to me. Of all our friends in Boston and Cambridge, we shall, I hope, have time to inquire further and to converse.

"There was only one thing in your letter which did not give us pleasure; and we trust that after your arrival, and after you have had some hours to reflect, and a night quietly to sleep upon it, you will repent and recant, and give up your *cruel purpose* of giving us only one day. Mrs. Edgeworth will remonstrate with you, I think, more effectually than I can; and in the mean time I promise to allow you till the morning after your arrival to become sufficiently acquainted with the ways of the house and family, before I turn to you, as I shall (I warn you) at breakfast, for your *ultimatum*.

"I am, dear Madam, (for the present.)

"Your much obliged and grateful

MARIA EDGEWORTH.

"P. S. It must increase my interest in making your acquaintance, my dear Mrs. F., to know that you are sister to Mr. Benjamin R., whose talents I with great reason admire, and for whose kindness and agreeable letters I have equally great reason to be grateful."

The cordiality and frankness of this letter made us all desirous of visiting the writer. We were much struck with

the manner in which Mrs. Edgeworth was mentioned and made of importance as the lady of the house, when the whole place was the property of Miss Edgeworth, and she was at least thirty years older than her step-mother. Mr. Edgeworth had been dead several years, and his son had become so embarrassed in his affairs as to be obliged to sell his patrimonial estate; and to prevent its passing into the hands of strangers, Miss Edgeworth had bought it, and made her step-mother mistress of the establishment, whilst she lived with her as a daughter. They were on the very best terms, each admiring and loving the other.

Another member of the family was Mrs. Mary Sneyd, a very aged lady of the old school, and sister to Honora Sneyd, who refused the hand of Major André, and became the wife of Richard Lovell Edgeworth. The unhappy fate of the gallant Major is well known; but few persons now living ever read the monody written on his death by Miss Seward, in which she makes her hero say, —

"Honora lost, I woo a sterner bride;  
The armed Bellona calls me to her side."

It was a great pleasure to me to see the sister of two of Mr. Edgeworth's wives, — one belonging to the same period, and dressed in the same style, as the lovely Honora. She did not appear till lunch-time, when we found her seated at the table, in a wheelchair, on account of her lameness. She reminded me of the pictures of the court beauties of the time of Louis XIV. Her dress was truly elegant and very elaborate. Her white hair had the effect of powder, and the structure on it defies description. A very white throat was set off to advantage by a narrow black velvet ribbon, fastened by a jewel. The finest lace ruffles about her neck and elbows, with a long-waisted silk dress of rich texture and delicate color, produced an effect that was quite bewitching. She was wonderfully well preserved for a lady of over eighty years of age, and it was pleasant to see the great attention paid

to her by all the family. She was rather deaf; so I was seated by her side, and requested to address my conversation to her. When lunch was over, she was wheeled into the library, and occupied herself making a cotton net to put over the wall fruit, to keep it from the birds. It was worth a journey to Edgeworthstown only to see this elegant specimen of old age.

I had heard that Mr. Edgeworth's house was full of his inventions and contrivances, and when shown to our bed-room, we found such an extraordinary lock on the door, that we dared not shut it for fear of not being able to open it again. That room, too, was unlike any other I ever saw. It was very large, with three huge windows, two of them heavily curtained, and the third converted into a small wardrobe, with doors of pink cotton on a wooden frame. It had two very large four-posted bedsteads, with full suits of curtains, and an immense folding-screen that divided the room in two, making each occupant as private as if in a separate room, with a dressing-table and ample washing conveniences on each side. A large grate, filled with turf, and all ready for lighting, with a great basket lined with tin, and also filled with the same fuel, reminded us strongly that we were in Ireland. Large wax candles were on the mantel-piece, and every convenience necessary to our comfort; at the same time the furniture was so very old-fashioned and dilapidated, that no one in this country would think it possible to use it.

We were shown other contrivances of the former owner, such as a door in the entrance hall, (through which the servants were continually passing,) the motion of which wound up a clock, the face being over the sideboard, in the dining-room. Several doors in the house were made double, in a way that I could not see the use of. Two doors were fastened together at the hinge side, making a right angle with each other, so that in opening one door you shut the other, and had to open that before you could enter, and when that

opened, the one behind you shut. Miss Edgeworth said it was for safety in times of danger. She always mentioned her father with great respect, and even reverence, in her manner; but nothing that I saw or heard there raised my opinion of him. I think his never allowing his gifted daughter any retirement, but insisting on her writing all her books in that great library, where he was teaching the children their lessons, and every one occupied in various ways, was a real act of tyranny; but she did not so regard it.

In building his house, Mr. Edgeworth would have no drawing-room, no sitting-room, but the one large library, with numerous windows on one side, some made into alcoves by projecting book-shelves. There were a great many books, some fine engravings, beautiful drawings, and very good oil paintings by Mrs. Edgeworth. It was a very pleasant family-room, fully furnished with tables, sofas, and lounges, a curious clock, and various models. A little old-fashioned work-table, with a small desk on it, was used by Miss Edgeworth for writing all her books.

The fourth wife of Mr. Edgeworth was our hostess, and performed her part charmingly. She must have been very pretty, for, though short, fat, and forty, her appearance was very agreeable. Miss Edgeworth was shorter still, and carried herself very upright, with a dapper figure and quick movements. She was the remains of a blonde, with light eyes and hair; she was now gray, but wore a dark frisette, whilst the gray hair showed through her cap behind. She was so plain that she was never willing to sit for her portrait, and that is the reason why the public has never been made acquainted with her personal appearance.

In conversation we found her delightful. She was full of anecdotes about remarkable people, and often spoke from her personal knowledge of them. Her memory, too, was stored with valuable information, and her manner of narrating was so animated that it was difficult to realize her age. In telling an anecdote

dote of Mirabeau, she stepped out before us, and, extending her arm, spoke a sentence of his in the impassioned manner of a French orator, and did it so admirably that it was quite thrilling.

She told us two speeches of Madame de Staël which are worth remembering. Madame Necker was a harsh mother, and always found a great deal of fault with her daughter; but her husband knew his child's merits, and liked her to have her own way. One day a gentleman entered the room, just as Madame Necker flourished out of it, after reprimanding her daughter, who stood abashed in the middle of the room, with tears on her face. He endeavored to console her by saying that she must not mind her mother's reproofs, as long as her father was satisfied with her, and he told her how much M. Necker admired her. To this the girl replied, "*Mon père pense à mon bonheur présent, ma mère songe à mon avenir.*" I talked with Miss Edgeworth of a work on Progressive Education by Madame Necker de Sausure; she thought it dull and tedious, and said that Madame de Staël had a great admiration of that cousin, and said of her, "*Elle a tous les talens qu'on me suppose, et toutes les vertus qui me manquent.*"

Miss Edgeworth and all her family took the part of the English Government in their treatment of the Irish, and had no sympathy for the wrongs and sufferings of their countrymen. Bigoted Episcopalians, they would grant no rights to the Roman Catholics, and this made them very unpopular in their own neighborhood.

They had been instrumental in establishing a free school for the sons of poor Protestant clergymen in the town which bordered on their grounds, and they took us to see it. It was market-day, so the main street was full of the lower order of Irish, with their horses and carts, asses and panniers, tables and stands full of eatables and articles of clothing. Sometimes the cart or car served as a counter on which to display their goods.

The women in bright-colored cotton gowns and white caps with full double borders, made a very gay appearance. As we all passed through the crowd to the school-house, the enmity of the Papists to Protestant landholders was but too evident.

Though Mrs. Edgeworth had been the Lady Bountiful of the village for many years, there were no bows or smirks for her and her friends, no making way before her, no touching of hats or pleasant looks. A sullen expression and a dogged immovability were on every side of us. Mr. Butler, who had but just arrived in Edgeworthstown, was as much struck with it as we were, and it quite excited him. He remarked upon it as a want of manners in the people, and called them uncivilized; but there was more in it than that. It spoke to us Americans of the long train of oppressive measures under which the Irish had groaned for years; of the Protestant clergy paid by rates levied on the Roman Catholics, and of the tyranny exercised by Protestant landholders. Twenty-nine years have passed since I stood in that Irish crowd, and much has been done to improve their condition; all the political disabilities then complained of by the Papists have been removed, oppressive laws have been done away with, emigration has relieved the land of its surplus population; and were it not for the designs of the Romish Church to wrest the island from the dominion of a Protestant power, that country might now be prosperous and happy.

When we visited Miss Edgeworth, she had published her last work, "Helen," and was writing another to be called "Taking for Granted," but I never heard of its being published. She told me that she meant to show the mischief of taking things for granted, and acting upon them as if they were known facts; and she begged me to send her any instances of the evil consequences of "taking for granted" which fell under my observation.