This was his own private office—by virtue of his occupying the post of head cashier, to which he had been promoted some eighteen months previously.

It was tenanted at present by only one person—a man some twenty-six or seven years of age—who was stooping industriously over a ledger.

"Well, Harry, my boy, how are you?" asked Victor, touching his shoulder.

The other started. He had the misfortune to be somewhat deaf, and had not heard Victor come in.

"Oh! how do you do? I'm extremely glad to see you back!" he exclaimed, grasping Victor's proffered hand in a hearty shake.

Although not the sort of man to be a universal favourite (it is seldom the highest type of men that are), Victor McNicoll was capable of inspiring very warm attachments, both amongst his equals and inferiors. All the clerks, and every workman about the place, respected him, and there were many among them that loved him.

Harry Bentham, his special assistant and sub-cashier, certainly did so, and notwithstanding the fact that they seldom met out of business hours, a real friendship subsisted between the two young men.

"You can't imagine how dismal the office has seemed without you," he subjoined.

"But you have managed splendidly, I hear. I believe, Harry, you could now take my place altogether."

"Well, I suppose I am to have the opportunity of trying. You know, don't you, that I have been offered the post?"

"What—of cashier?" Victor demanded in surprise.

"Yes, with a salary, to begin with, of two hundred and fifty pounds a year, and promises of advance. But Mr. McNicoll says you will continue to take a general supervision of the financial department. And now let me congratulate you with all my heart on——"

"No, Harry; you had better not, please," interposed Victor. "My father has not spoken to me yet about any projected changes. I fancy he wishes to surprise me. I'd rather you didn't say anything more at present. Come, let's have a look at the books." And, mounting a stool, Victor settled to work in silence.

The silence, however, was presently interrupted by the entrance of a gentleman—to wit, Mr. Courteney.

He was a tall, robust man, with light, tow-coloured hair, a broad, flat-nosed, clean-shaven face, and a genial smile.

"Hello! young man—here you are! Back from your racketing and dissipation. Well, you've had a jolly time of it, haven't you? My girl Hester has kept me posted up as to your wanderings. Heard of them from your sisters, I suppose—unless you have been sending her the news direct! If so, the sly puss has kept the secret."

Victor blushed—not with pleasure, but with annoyance at the insinuation; and Mr. Courteney, with a graver air, resumed—

"This is a sad thing that has happened in your absence—isn't it?—about Sir Jonathan. Your father and I are just going off to the funeral in a few moments. You know, of course, that we have been specially invited by Lady Ledsom to attend it, though I should have gone to the church in any case. Poor man! he was always a friendly neighbour, and one is glad to show respect to his memory."

"I intend also to be at the grave," said Victor.

"Yes, do, my lad. And, by the way, I want you to dine with me this evening, if you will. Your father is coming also, and Mr. Trent." (Mr. Trent was the principal solicitor in High Radstow.) "There is a little business that we shall want your assistance about settling. Dinner at seven prompt. You'll come, I suppose?"

"Certainly I will, Mr. Courteney. Thank you."

END OF CHAPTER THE NINTH.

OUR AUTOGRAPH BOOKS.

VOICES FROM THE ICE. IN TWO CHAPTERS.—CHAPTER THE FIRST.

IT is impossible for an autograph collector to produce from his varied treasures handwritings of greater men or of greater interest than those of our Arctic voyagers—men whose names are known all over the world, and whose courage and endurance have placed them, one and all, in the foremost ranks of Great Britain's heroes, and given them a standing-point in history which, as long as the world lasts, cannot be taken from them.

These are the chosen band who, for their country's sake and in the noble cause of science, went forth willingly to suffer and—if need be—to die.

They were all filled, no doubt, at the outset of their journeys with high hope, and for the successful discoverers they knew well there was rich reward and brightest glory to be gained, but they also knew that before them lay hardships innumerable—difficulties, dangers and sufferings too great to be realised beforehand; starvation, disappointments, and, for some, death.

Of this devoted band of warriors we know now, how, in most of their expeditions, their worst anticipations were realised, and although some have lived to snatch the victor's wreath, and have added glory to glory by their discoveries, yet at what a cost! And how the thought of their loved companions must have haunted them in the moment of triumph, those whom they had seen "drop down by the way as they walked"—those who had shared with them the last morsel of food, and

who, incapable of further advance, had fallen back to rest and had risen no more! Here and there along this golden track of victory lies a skeleton—rarely a tomb; a few lines from a journal, penned in uttermost weakness, recording bravely words of hope, but which hope for them was never to be realised; a little garden, neatly shaped and tended; a cairn of stones, ransacked of its treasures by the bears of this desolate region or the faithless hands of Indians and Esquimaux.

Some have recorded their miraculous escapes from such perils as these, and voices from the ice-world tell us, "In this our deep distress we called upon the Lord, and He heard our voices out of His temple, and our cry came before Him"; but others He called to Himself, and gave to them that crown of glory which no man ever can seek to emulate, and which can never be taken from them.

One letter which lies before us now is one full of a special interest, having been written by Sir John Franklin while actually in command of one of these most perilous Arctic expeditions, and is addressed to his devoted friend and companion, Mr., afterwards Sir George, Back, whose name is so well known for his heroic courage and unwavering fidelity to the cause he had taken in hand.

Franklin and Back had in their previous expedition in search of the North-west Passage been companions in misfortune. Together they had endured cold and hunger, and faced death in many and terrible forms. For days they had been without food; or if they had procured any, it had been, perhaps, a feast of old leather torn from the very shoes they wore on their feet, or the acrid marrow of old bones dug with toil and pain from the frozen earth; or perhaps they hailed, with a hideous thrill of joy, the sight of a deer's head, eyeless and tongueless, protruding from the snow, the forsaken relics of some wolfish repast.

The letter which we now publish was written on Franklin's second great expedition in search of a North-west Passage, when, warned by all the previous sufferings and privations of his former journey, he was constantly on the watch, lest through accident or want of forethought the provisions should once more run short, and the same miseries be entailed on the band of trusty followers committed to his charge.

It was written at Pierre au Calumet, and was either sent to Back by the hands of Indians, or was left at the fort for Back, who was following Franklin with Kendall, another of the well-known Arctic voyagers.

It is strange that this letter should have survived all the vicissitudes of so terrible a journey and should still remain in the perfect preservation in which we now possess it, and that we should know beyond a doubt that the hand which penned it was the hand of the great Sir John Franklin, whose ultimate fate was so tragic, and whose death, appalling in the mystery which must ever surround it, sent a thrill of anguish and deepest sympathy through the heart of every civilised human being on the face of the earth, and which elicited sorrow and even tears from the Indians and wild Esquimaux hunters of the North of America, who, during Sir John Franklin's sojourn amongst them, had learned not only to respect but to love him.

"*Pierre au Calumet, 13th July.*

"MY DEAR BACK,

"Mr. Christian informs me that when he left the lake the Fisherman was an invalid, and therefore it is probable he may not be able to provide the large party we shall have, with Fish. I wish, therefore, that you should take as much dried meat as we can spare from hence to feed your men while they remain at Fort Chipewyan.

"I shall wait for you at that fort, but send the boats to Slave Lake the day after their arrival.

"Kind regards to Kendall.

"Yours most truly,

John Franklin

Endorsement on above:

"A note from Sir John Franklin to me during our journey through North America, 1825."

Subjoined is also a letter written by Back himself many years later, but possessing a certain interest of its own:—

"*London, Octr.* 20, 1858.

"SIR,

"In answer to your question I beg to inform you that I have been on five expeditions to the Arctic regions, beginning in 1818 and ending in 1837.

"It may be interesting to you to know that on the 17th January, 1834, at Fort Reliance, Great Slave Lake, the thermometer was 70 below zero, or 102 below freezing point.

"Very truly yours,

Geo Back

Another of the great Arctic explorers, Sir John Richardson, furnishes us with a letter full of the subject which was ever uppermost in his thoughts, even when he himself had ceased to take an active part in these exciting and dangerous expeditions. Perhaps out of all Sir John Franklin's friends, bound to him by the triple cords of mutual expectation, suffering, and high resolve, there was none so beloved by the great chief as Richardson, a true friend, who in all his terrible privations and hardships never failed in his devotion and generous self-sacrifice, risking his life again and again for the sake of those he loved.

On one occasion, when in company with Sir John Franklin, they could find no means to cross a dangerous rapid, having no boat, and the willow raft having proved unmanageable, Richardson, weak from hunger and exhausted with fatigue, actually volunteered to swim over with a line. He had, however, only gone quite a short distance when his arms became numb and he could not use them. Still undaunted he tried to push on, and had nearly reached the opposite shore on his back, when suddenly, to the horror and despair of all on land, he was seen to sink.

He was dragged back through the water, and all means were used to restore him, but, though the heat of a strong fire revived him, he did not fully recover the use of his limbs until the following year.

A few days later we read of Richardson, himself lame and almost powerless, remaining in the rear so as to help on a comrade even weaker than himself. A day or so later comes an ominous entry in their diary: "The whole party ate the remains of old shoes and whatever scraps they had, to strengthen their stomachs for the fatigues of the day."

Again a few days after this a herd of deer was seen, but there was not a man among them strong enough to lift his gun to his shoulder. On one occasion Richardson became so weak that when the track lay through some rough stones he fell more than twenty times, and his life was only saved by the generous effort of a friend who, weak and dazed himself, still found energy enough to light a fire, which had the desired effect of restoring to Richardson his failing strength.

Sir John Richardson afterwards accompanied Sir John Franklin on his expedition in 1825, to which we have already alluded, and though on this occasion their sufferings were not so terrible nor their perils so many in number, they still displayed the same great qualities, and maintained towards each other the same close affection and the same mutual reliance in each other's plans, and were buoyed up by the same enthusiasm and hope.

When Franklin started on his last expedition, in May, 1845, Sir John Richardson was not with him; but when, in the year 1848, people were growing anxious about the fate of the great explorer, and some expeditions had already been fitted out at the public cost, and supplies had been sent out to Behring's Straits in the vain hope of meeting the party there and supplying them with food, Sir John Richardson in the spring of the year 1849 hurried to the shores of the polar sea, in the earnest hope of discovering and rendering assistance to his old friend. He was accompanied by Dr. Rae, who had himself only just returned from an Arctic voyage covered with all the lustre of a successful issue.

But all in vain was their search. An icy silence reigned everywhere; not a clue was to be gained nor a hope to be fanned. The coast between the Mackenzie and Coppermine rivers was all carefully scanned by the searchers; but the sea and the land were alike mute, and Richardson and Rae were obliged to return home without having accomplished the object which was so near their hearts.

Sir James Ross and Captain Bird also in the same year went out in search of Sir John Franklin, and closely examined all the coast by Barrow Strait, but they also were unsuccessful in their search.

THE SECRET OF MAKING CLEAR SOUPS.

IT is quite true that not one person in a score who could turn out a tureen of good thick soup would succeed in producing a passable bowl of the kind known as "clear," as, for one reason, it is seldom wanted at every-day tables, and the making of it is supposed by the uninitiated to be associated with the expenditure of much time, trouble, and money. As, however, it is very useful to know how to make clear soup (and when once the process is understood, a hundred varieties may be made from the same "stock"), I will endeavour to point out the simplest way; and those who read in the pages of this Magazine a recent paper on "The Art of Soup Making"* will do well to refresh their memory as to the details there recommended to be observed if good results were wished for. The same regard must be paid to cleanliness, clear fires, slow simmering, judicious seasoning, and the emptying of the stock-pot. But *one* exception must be made: viz., clear soup proper—that is, bright as sherry—cannot be made from scraps, such as *may* be used for the thick kinds. A *thin* soup can be produced from them: that is to say, an ordinary kind minus the thickening, though that is not clear soup in the strict sense of the word.

* 1884, page 593.

To commence, then, with the stock: once master that preliminary process, and it will be easy to vary the kinds of soup that may owe their foundation to the same source. For a very good stock a pound of meat to a pint of water must be allowed, or rather, I should say, a pound of meat and bones together—shin of beef for a brown soup and knuckle of veal for white. I may add that liquor in which a fowl or rabbit has been boiled will enrich the soup considerably if used instead of water. As much of the meat as possible should be cut off the bone and very finely minced—the finer the better—and the bone itself thoroughly chopped, then the cold water added; and as three pounds of meat will take four or five hours' simmering to bring out all the goodness, an extra pint of water at least must be allowed for wasting, though any liquid that really *does* simmer wastes very little in a long time; it is the "galloping" process that causes the loss. It is a matter of choice whether the vegetables and flavouring are boiled with the meat at first or reserved until next day, when the soup is clarified; in warm weather it is better to omit them the first day, but in cold they may be safely used. But only a portion must be put in—not sufficient to season the soup entirely, for unless some are reserved and boiled in the stock the second day it will not have a fresh taste.

I will presume, then, that your stock was made

TWO MODERN AMERICAN FABLES.

A FASHIONABLE MOUSE.

"We do live in the meanest little hole in the world, mamma," said a young lady mouse. "I really am ashamed of asking my fashionable friends to call." "Well, my dear, I was born in this hole, and it has been the homestead of our family since our remote ancestor came over in a big cheese in the *May Flower*. But times change, and we must change with them." So to please her daughter the good-natured matron had the hole enlarged, and the furniture renovated, and by the addition of a few articles of vertu and bric-à-brac it assumed quite a genteel appearance.

One day, returning from a ramble, they found an old rat had taken possession. They asked him very civilly to leave their hole. "*Your* hole," he exclaimed, "don't tell me this is a mouse-hole. It is a rat-hole. Look at its size. A cousin of mine died in this neighbourhood lately, and this must be his house, and I will keep it."

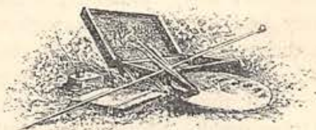
Moral.—Some people go on enlarging their houses, their ideas, and their expenses, till at last too much enlarging bursts up everything. We look for them in vain, and find their luxurious dwellings have passed into other hands.

THE DISGRACED FOX.

A fox, who had dined on a fat goose, preserved the skin and feathers, and put them on for a sly visit to a poultry-yard. He, however, acted his part so badly, running on four legs when he ought to have waddled on two, that he was hissed off the barn-floor by two venerable ganders.

Moral.—Never attempt a *rôle* for which you have no talent. Whatever you do, don't make a goose of yourself.

(*Note.*—The foregoing advice is particularly suited to stage-struck young ladies and gentlemen.)



OUR AUTOGRAPH BOOKS.

VOICES FROM THE ICE. IN TWO CHAPTERS.—CHAPTER THE SECOND.

IN the year 1850 no fewer than twelve ships set sail for the Arctic regions, all with the one aim in view, to discover and, if possible, to bring aid to Sir John Franklin's party.

The *Enterprise* and *Investigator*, this time commanded by Captain McClure and Captain Collinson, set forth again in the same good cause. We cannot do better than transcribe in this place a letter of Sir John Richardson's written at this time to a friend, in which he gives the particulars of this most interesting expedition.

"DEAR SIR,

"As Mrs. G——, your aunt and a friend of my wife's, desires that I should give you some account of the expeditions now about to set out to the Arctic Sea, I have to inform you that the *Enterprise* and *Investigator*, fitted at Woolwich, are to leave that place to-morrow, and to go down the river to have their compasses adjusted and take in their gunpowder. They will then proceed to the Straits of Magelhaens and the Sandwich Islands, and, having refreshed at the latter place and recruited their stock of provisions, will go on to Behring's Straits.

"Captain Collinson, the commanding officer, hopes to reach Behring's Straits by the 1st of August, and will endea-

vour to pass through the barrier of drift-ice between the straits and push on to the eastward. The result must be left to the despatches, which it is expected will reach this country in 1852. In the meantime, the crews of the two vessels have the best wishes and prayers of their countrymen.

I am Dear Sir
Your most obedt. Servt.
John Richardson

But wishes or prayers were alike unavailing to restore those great and good men to their country and their friends. Their suffering bodies were at rest for ever; their haggard eyes had long ceased to watch with a fearful anxiety for the sight of a friendly face, and ears to listen for a footfall, and one can scarcely imagine that some ghastly thrill did not stir the poor whitened bones of the skeletons which lay here and there on the ridges and on the sands, at the first sight and sound of those who had come at last, if it were still possible, to deliver them. But no; not one rose up to say, "Here we perished miserably—our leader dead, our hopes perished, our provisions gone!" Not one lifted his hand to draw aside the curtain of mystery and to tell, "It was thus he died; this was his last message to her who waited for him at home!"

The graves of three men were found, who dying at the beginning of troubles, the survivors had had the strength to give them a decent burial and a name, but the other dead lay here and there in the wood or the ice, and in the caves by the frost-bound river, and there was no one to give them a name.

In one boat were found the portions of two human skeletons. By their side stood loaded guns. One was wrapped in furs; the other, lying in the bow, had already been a portion for wolves. They had evidently intended to pursue their journey on the morrow, but the edict had gone forth: Thus far, and no further. And probably as they slept and dreamed of their far-off home, God took them, and when they awoke they were at rest in the haven where they would be. In this boat were found many religious books, "The Vicar of Wakefield," and many other relics of the past; silver spoons and forks; but who the guardians of these treasures were, must for ever remain unknown.

For years that boat had stood in the silence of the ice-world with its cargo of food, and clothes, and valuables, and the two ghastly figures with their guns loaded keeping a deathly watch, silent and motionless, alike through the sunless winter and under the short summer sun. No Indian had during all this time penetrated to this gloomy spot, nor Esquimaux with greedy hands approached this sinister resting-place to rifle it of its contents.

So thus it came at last to be known that all the brave men who formed the crews of the two vessels had perished miserably.

On June 2nd, 1858, all doubts as to the fate of Sir John Franklin were set at rest. A written paper, or record, was found in a large cairn at Point Victory, mentioning in a few laconic words the fact that the gallant explorer had died on board his ship on June 11th, 1847. For one year more the crews and officers of the two ships remained in the *Erebus* and *Terror*, where already they had been ice-bound since September 12th, 1846; and the record went on to state how the entire party, 104 in number, had landed under the command of Captain Crozier, with the intention of starting for the Great Fish River.

After this all is silence. But it is known that this gallant band never did reach the Great Fish River; not by any written record, but by the testimony of the dead themselves, many of whose bodies were found—some upon islands, some upon the mainland, some in tents, and some under boats; and a few had even come within a day's journey of the river they were seeking to gain.

So the searching party returned home with their disastrous news, and the whole nation mourned to a man for the brave and gallant crews, who would never sail back to their native shores again, and for the noble-hearted leader of the expedition, whose face they now knew they should see no more.

But the money which had been so generously poured out by the English Government, by the English public, and by private individuals to fit out ships to go to the relief of the crews of the *Erebus* and *Terror* had not been thrown away. McClure had discovered the North-west Passage—the goal of all Arctic expeditions; the prize for which Sir John Franklin had so earnestly contended, and which, as a matter of fact, it may be said he had virtually won, as the passage had been actually sighted by one of his officers, but had never been sailed through by himself or any of his crew.

In addition to this great discovery made by Sir J. McClure, much additional information of the greatest value was gleaned by the various ships which sailed hither and thither in search of their lost comrade Continents were discovered, islands named, river-banks and coast-lines explored, and the scientific knowledge of the ice-world was greatly increased by the opportunities afforded for studying geology, botany and other things on land, and in the sky the magnificent Aurora Borealis and the northern lights.

Of the gallant ships the *Erebus* and *Terror*, which had weathered so many storms and accomplished almost miraculous journeys through icebergs, and blinding snow, and chilling fogs, not a vestige was left. A few planks in the possession of some Esquimaux were believed to have belonged to one of the ships, but they could not possibly be identified.

These ships had not only done duty in their time in the Arctic regions, but they had also visited the Antarctic regions in search of the South Pole—one under the command of Sir James Ross, and the other under the command of Francis Crozier, who subsequently perished with Sir John Franklin in the Arctic seas. Never was any expedition fraught with greater danger

than this one. The icebergs of the Antarctic Sea appear to have been perfectly stupendous, while the barriers of glittering ice which guarded the coasts rose in such high and massive walls that no attempt could be made to break through them ; and no harbourage could ever be found for the ships, as each bay and indentation was filled with the snow and ice which drifted from cliff and glacier into the sea itself, choking up all the narrow bays and natural harbours which might otherwise have been available.

Sir James Ross, however, and his companion, under the most incredible difficulties and against dangers that the stoutest heart might have dreaded to encounter, pushed on until they reached a chain of mountains which had never been seen by human eye before, and which Ross called after his friend and companion in former expeditions, Sir J. Parry. Here he and Captain Crozier witnessed a spectacle which sends a thrill even now through the hearts of those who read of it.

Out of this chain of desolate snow-bound mountains, upon whose glittering heights no eye but the eye of God had hitherto looked, rose up a monster volcano, spouting forth fire and smoke and lava, and sending forth volumes of flame into the air two thousand feet high above the mouth of the crater.

One cannot imagine a more appalling spectacle. This monster, spouting forth from its mouth flames and fire amongst the silence of the everlasting snows : this sight alone must have rewarded them in a great measure for their courage in pushing forward on so desperate an undertaking ; but beyond this range of snow-clad mountains they could not force their way. The winter was approaching, and reluctantly they were obliged to return to more favourable quarters.

The following year Sir James Ross again undertook this perilous journey, but this time with less success, as the most fearful storms overtook him. The brave ships were "lifted up to the heavens and carried down to the depths," and it became impossible to steer them. They were dashed hither and thither ; their rigging even became entangled, and on several occasions they gave themselves up for lost ; but a special providence seems to have watched over them, for they appear to have been miraculously helped out of dangers from which no human outlet seemed possible.

The autographs of Sir James Ross and of Sir James Parry, which we append below, are not interesting in themselves, and were written many years subsequent to their brilliant undertakings ; still, they are valuable to a collector, as having been penned by the very hand of the man who first planted our standard on the magnetic Pole, and of the great Parry, whose almost audacious courage grasped at and gained the highest laurels that have been won by any of his fellow explorers. It was he who conceived the stupendous idea of reaching the North Pole by land, and who by this means reached a higher latitude than any one had ever approached before, and it is curious that he gave to this northernmost point of land the name of Ross. Thus did these gallant men seek to associate the names of their companions, rather than their own, with the most brilliant feats of their eventful lives.

The letter of Sir John Ross, the uncle of Sir James Ross, who may almost be looked upon as the pioneer of this century's Arctic voyages, is not only interesting in its contents, but amusing also. One can well imagine how these great men must have wearied in after-life of the constant letters and questions addressed to them, both in season and out of season, on the subject of the North Pole, and how, in the quiet of their homes, they must have sometimes almost wished to forget that in days gone by they had been the greatest heroes of their time.

"*A Paris*, 11 *March*, 1836.

"MY DEAR B——,

"As I did not give you a note of the price of the charts I gave you last, I have annexed one in case you should require it. I have requested Lord Palmerston by letter to give you the former memo, when approved by his Lordship, and when you get the cash, pray pay it in on my acct. to Coutts & Co. Pray give my most respectful compliments and best regards to your sisters, who are, of all the ladies I have been introduced to since my return, the most amiable. During the whole time I had the pleasure of being in their company they never *even mentioned* the *confounded Pole*, about which I have been bothered by every other lady ! ! My wife joins me in every kind wish, and I am ever yours faithfully,

John Ross

"Pray remember to write on Tuesday week."

"MY DEAR LADY R——,

"Mr. Tanner has just been here to tell me he shall soon want a curate, but, as you know, he *must* hold Evangelical Doctrines, or he will not do for St. Matthew's.

"I thought of your friend whom you named to us yesterday. Would St. Matthew's suit *him*, and *he* St. Matthew's?

"Yours sincerely,

"MY DEAR M——,

"I am much obliged to you for the trouble you have taken to make me acquainted with Lord Ripon. I have much pleasure in accepting his Lordship's Invitation, and will leave it to you to make him acquainted with my intentions.

"I will see my Uncle about our going down together. I think it will be very desirable.

"I will let you know in the course of to-morrow what he says to it.

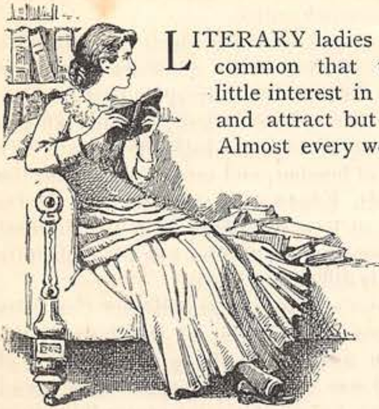
"Yours very sincerely,

"*Wed. morning*,

"13, *Prince's St., Cavendish Square*."

OUR AUTOGRAPH BOOKS.

III.—LITERARY LADIES.



LITERARY ladies are nowadays so common that they excite very little interest in the public mind, and attract but small attention. Almost every woman whom one meets has dabbled in literature of some kind, successfully or unsuccessfully. One writes sentimental poetry, another articles on cookery, another pamphlets on woman's rights. A great many write novels; a very few write really good, clever books.

The sphere for woman's writing of every kind seems to have widened, and now in the literary heavens thousands of these minor stars are twinkling and shining, and giving each their little help to lighten the darkness of the world; but a hundred years ago this was not so. Their subdued light flickered perhaps for a time fitfully, but their rays never reached the earth, to cheer or enlighten it. Thus, in the surrounding darkness, the stars which did appear shone with a wondrous power, and there they have hung ever since as lamps of heaven—fixed stars, whose pure and steady light will continue to the end of the world, undimmed by time or distance, and scarcely affected in their brilliancy by the ever-spreading milky way of feminine pretension.

About a hundred years ago one of these bright and pure lights of literature appeared upon the heavenly background, and took its place there. It did not shine all at once with its full glory; at first its light was so pale as to be almost indiscernible. The publishers, with their great intellectual telescopes, scarcely noticed that another star had entered their field of observation, but for all that, it was there; and now, at the end of a century, it is there still, and its light needs no telescope, but is visible to the naked eye all over the world.

When Jane Austen, in the year 1803, brought her first story, "Northanger Abbey," with nervous hesitation and many doubts as to its intrinsic value, to a publisher in Bath, she received from this great critic and censor the sum of ten pounds—not a large price, certainly, but sufficient to encourage her to go on with her literary work; and we may imagine that she felt elated at the result of her application. The publisher, however, on a re-perusal of the MS., does not seem to have felt either elated or encouraged with the bargain he had so hastily concluded. He grew diffident as to its ultimate success, regretful for the money given, and finally, he came to a decision that the payment for "Northanger Abbey" must be looked on as money lost, and that to undertake all the expenses of bringing out such a work would be throwing good money after bad. And so the MS. was thrown aside in a drawer, and the dust settled down on "Northanger Abbey," and the hero and heroine of this enchanting book slept a sleep which promised to be the sleep of death.

But lo! at the end of years—many long years afterwards—the drawer was opened again. Catharine Morland awoke to life, the Abbey stood up erect and opened its windows to the sun, and all its inhabitants rushed forth to be courted and admired, and to sun themselves in the warmth of a popularity which has never waned, and to show themselves to a public whose admiration has not been for a moment, but for all time.

But it was not the Bath publisher who gave the great work to the world. No; his eye had not yet recognised the lustrous star, the advent of which he might have been the first to announce to the world, and to attach his name with honour to its appearance. His vision must have been faulty, or dimness must have gathered on his lens. He opened his drawer at the end of all these long years, and took out "Northanger Abbey," not to gaze at it with eyes of newly-awakened interest and delight, but to return it to the hands of the author, and to replace in the drawer, in its stead, the ten pounds which he had originally been rash enough to believe it worth.

He had scarcely, however, thus recouped himself for his previous folly, and parted with the MS., than he discovered his terrible mistake. Mr. Henry Austen, Miss Austen's brother, who had called at his office to try and effect this arrangement, had no sooner regained possession of the despised MS. than he made the unhappy publisher acquainted with the fact that the lady who had written "Northanger Abbey," and placed it originally at his disposal, was no other than *the* Miss Austen, author of "Pride and Prejudice," "Sense and Sensibility," and other tales, and with whose name the whole literary world was now ringing; and who, at the zenith of her fame, had not wished to leave one of the greatest efforts of her genius mouldering in a drawer, alike unappreciated by the purchaser and unknown to the public.

So "Northanger Abbey" was at last given to the world, and was read and delighted in by thousands of her compatriots, and will be read and delighted in to the end of all time.

Miss Austen was, as a literary lady, remarkable for one fact. The high place which she gained in the public favour was reached by her without one word or thought being introduced into her writings which could tarnish the mind of her readers or dim the lustre of her own blameless life—

> "Not one corrupted, one immodest thought,
> One line which, dying, she could wish to blot."

She was eminently a pure-minded woman, and she

succeeded in riveting the attention of her readers without deviating from the straight path, narrow though it may be, of virtuous fiction, whose interest is not enhanced by vicious allusions, and where characters full of life and power are not made more seductive by covert suggestions.

Sir Walter Scott had a very high opinion of Miss Austen's talents. In speaking of her, he said: "That young lady has a talent for describing the involvements, feelings, and characters of ordinary life, which is to me the most wonderful I ever met with. The big bow-wow I can do myself like any one going, but the exquisite touch which renders commonplace things and characters interesting from the truth of the description and the sentiment is denied to me."

Miss Austen was beloved by all who knew her. She was distinguished alike for good sense and sweetness of disposition, added to which, she was possessed of great personal attractions.

She died on the 18th of July, 1817, and was buried in the cathedral at Winchester. When asked, when near her end, if she wished for anything, she said, "Nothing but death." These were her last words.

She appears to have published all her works in the last six years of her life, though "Northanger Abbey," written and sold to the Bath publisher in 1803, was not given to the world till the year after her death.

The following letter was written by her four years before her death, and is not interesting in itself, except as an illustration of one peculiarity in her correspondence, namely, that she rarely, if ever, dated her letters, and that she invariably signed them with merely the initials, instead of her name in full. A notice of this curious fact may be found in page 80 of her memoirs, written by her nephew, Mr. Austen Leigh.

"DEAR ——,

"I hope you will be able to send us a good account of yourself, particularly that you did not suffer from your walk on Monday. It has been a disappointment to me that I could not get to Wyards in the course of the last week, but on the only days which were tolerable for walking we were obliged to go to Alton on business of the poor, which could not be put off. I have heard this morning from Hans Place. Your Uncle writes as if he were well. Best love.

Yr. affec: Aunt
J. A.

Miss Edgeworth is another star of the first magnitude, and her books are equally to be admired with Miss Austen's for their purity of style, and the desire manifested in them to improve the tone of the public mind, and to inculcate morality without actually preaching to her readers.

Miss Edgeworth wrote both for the young and old, and all her books, at a time when books such as hers were rare, were greedily devoured both by young and old. Her Irish stories are inimitable, and in the flood of modern novels and stories of Irish life which have lately been produced they have never been excelled. Being Irish herself, and keenly observant of all that went on around her, she wrote of Ireland as it then was with a faithfulness that of itself was sure to create an interest, and both landlord and tenant from her hands at least received justice.

The letter of Miss Edgeworth which we publish in this article is interesting in its allusions to what is known as "The Leadbeater Correspondence." Mrs. Leadbeater was also a literary lady, and her efforts, though not aiming at any very high mark, were very spirited and full of humour, and excited at the time the admiration of Mr. Edgeworth, the father of Maria Edgeworth, and in later days drew forth the warmest praise from Thomas Carlyle, who was pre-eminently a critic sufficiently difficult to please.

Mrs. Leadbeater's father, or grandfather (for Miss Edgeworth in one letter speaks of this lady as the daughter, and in another as the granddaughter, of Mr. Shackleton) was the first preceptor of Edmund Burke, and having known the great orator intimately and for a long time, he had kept up a correspondence with him. He had in his possession a number of highly valuable letters, which afterwards became a kind of family inheritance, and which belonged at the date of Miss Edgeworth's letter to Mrs. Leadbeater.

A bargain had at this time been entered into with this lady for these autograph letters of Burke's, with a view to their publication in the new volumes of Burke's Correspondence which were then being brought out; and from the following letter of Miss Edgeworth's, we see that in the course of this literary arrangement she had been applied to, to give some information on the subject of this correspondence.

"*Edgeworthstown, December* 18, 1813.

"MY DEAR LADY GRANARD,

"We congratulate you with all our hearts upon your having Lord and Lady Rancliffe till after Christmas. I assure you there were general lamentations here, and not only lamentations but self-reproaches, the day we thought they were gone. Our carriage has been broken, it is but just repaired this day, time enough to carry Captain and Mrs. Beaufort to Mullingar. Mrs. Edgeworth is exceedingly obliged to your Ladyship for the thought of coming to see them, but they staid so short a time that this could not be expected from the most obliging politeness.

"As soon as she possibly can Mrs. Edgeworth intends herself the pleasure of paying her compliments at Castle Forbes to Lady Rancliffe and to Lady Levinge, whom we rejoice to hear is as well as the season will permit.

"Mrs. Leadbeater lives at Ballitore, her post town. I never have seen her, and know nothing of her but what I have heard from Mrs. O'Beirne of Ardbracean. I heard from her that the Bishop of Meath had taken pains to make a great bargain for poor Mrs. Leadbeater for some early letters of Burke, which they wanted for the new volumes of Burke's Letters. I am not sure whether they are yet published or not, or whether the bargain was completed.

"Burke was born at Carlow, and his first education was received at Ballitore from Mr. Shackleton, father of Mrs. Leadbeater. I am told she stammers much, therefore your friend must lay his account to wait patiently for verbal information from her.

"Adieu, my dear Lady Granard. I will bring you some lines of Madame de Stael.

"Your Ladyship's obliged and affectionate Servant,

Maria Edgeworth

"I like much what I have read of Mr. Allemagne.

"To the Countess of Granard."

In another letter of Miss Edgeworth's, not in our possession, but published in one of the magazines in May, 1882, she alludes again to the Leadbeater Correspondence. Writing to Mrs. Barbauld, she says:—"I have written a preface with notes—for I, too, would be an editor—for a little book which a very worthy countrywoman of mine is going to publish—Mrs. Leadbeater, granddaughter to Burke's first preceptor. She is poor. She has behaved most handsomely about some letters of Burke's to her grandfather and herself. It would have been advantageous to her to publish them, but as Mrs. Burke, Heaven knows why, objected, she desisted." So the bargain spoken of in Miss Edgeworth's first letter was never completed, and though Mrs. Burke afterwards wrote giving permission to Mrs. Leadbeater to make use of the correspondence, she would not consent to do so, for being a Quaker she would not go back from a promise once made, and would not take upon herself to break her covenant.

Miss Edgeworth lived to a ripe old age, for having been born in 1767, she lived till the year 1849. The owner of the autograph letter given above visited Miss Edgeworth in her own house at Edgeworthstown in the autumn of the year before her death, and found her a charming old lady, still full of life and in entire possession of her faculties.

Treading fast upon the heels of Miss Edgeworth, comes another Irish literary lady, gifted, brilliant, and attractive. Sydney, Lady Morgan, suddenly startled the world with her work entitled "The Wild Irish Girl." She was herself only a girl when she produced this remarkable story. Her father, Mr. Owenson, was an actor and manager of a theatre, and Sydney Owenson had grown up surrounded by all the infectious and fictitious excitements of such a life, and which were all the more certain in her case to give a character to her disposition, which was brilliant, susceptible, and full of natural gifts of intelligence and power.

While still quite young, she entered the family of the then Lord Abercorn as governess, and it was while in this position that she suddenly appeared on the literary horizon. She can scarcely indeed be classed among the stars of literature. She was more like some beautiful brilliant rocket which rushed up into the heavenly firmament with a prodigious noise, remained there a moment, and then breaking into a thousand coloured lights, descended gradually to the earth again. Her works, which created such a noise at the time, are now hardly ever read, and to many they are even unknown. She lives still herself in story, witty and sparkling, but she does not shed the same steady, ever-enduring light over the world as her contemporaries Miss Austen and Miss Edgeworth. Her character was lively, bright, and energetic; her life was made up of a series of scenic effects. In her novel of "The Wild Irish Girl," she depicted her own character and made herself the heroine of the book, and the heroine of the public. She was socially agreeable and able to be all things to all men, and here in Lord Abercorn's family she gained the affections of Mr., afterwards Sir Charles Morgan, who was at the time private physician to Lord Abercorn's family. They were married in Lord Abercorn's house, and the ceremony, which took place in the evening, was arranged so as to produce a scenic and dramatic effect. She afterwards travelled a great deal with her husband on the Continent, where her name became well known, for she viewed all her surroundings with a curious eye, and gave her experiences to the world in a most entertaining and delightful manner.

Being well known as a favourite and distinguished authoress, Lady Morgan did not escape the penalty that falls to the lot of all successful writers, namely, the hosts of fire-flies who, ambitious to shine as stars, buzz and swarm round the larger light, in the vain hope that some day they may themselves shine with an equal if not a greater and more majestic light.

The following letter, written while suffering under attacks of this kind, will speak for itself:—

"MADAM,

"In the present state of literature I really do not know of any publisher in England or Ireland who would give the price of *one guinea* for a MS. novel whose author is 'unknown to fame,' nor who would publish such a book if given for *nothing*. Authors of considerable celebrity have published at their own expense and risk during the last season, an experiment I should be sorry to recommend to a débutant however gifted.

"I was absent from Dublin when the post letter with which you honoured me arrived. I found six other applications of the same nature from young ladies and gentlemen unknown, and I do assure you that were I to answer all who write to me on their own business, I should find life too short for the task.

"Since my return to town I have been severely afflicted with a malady in my eyes from overworking them, and I am not allowed to write, which I do now with pain and difficulty; but as you have requested secrecy, I could not employ an amanuensis.

"I have the honour to be, Madam, with grateful acknowledgments of the kind opinion you have expressed of me,

"Your obliged Servant,

Sydney Morgan

"*Kildare Street, October* 7, 1835."

This letter was certainly not an encouraging one to the would-be author. One feels quite a pang on reading it; a sympathy for the aspirant who had, perhaps,

Miss Mitford presents her
Compliments to Messrs Westly &

FAC-SIMILE OF THE FIRST TWO LINES OF MISS MITFORD'S LETTER.

hoped for better things, and eagerly watched the post for a reply. One almost hears the buzz of this poor fire-fly as she was crushed thus ruthlessly against the window-pane of hope.

We have seen how Miss Austen in the early years of her life was satisfied to accept ten pounds for one of her best books. This is the dark side of the shield, but here we have a letter from a lady authoress who has passed the portal and now dictates her own terms :—

"Miss Mitford presents her compliments to Messrs. Westly & Davis, and begs them to accept her thanks for the present of their new periodical. She regrets that their terms, which are very much indeed below any that have ever been offered to her, will not allow her to be connected on this occasion with persons so respectable, and an undertaking of which the tendency appears to be so excellent.

"*Three Mile Cross, February* 18, 1826."

Miss Mitford was a contemporary of Lady Morgan, and a personal friend of almost all the great writers of the day. Her writings were, as a rule, descriptive of village life and the rural joys and sorrows of the humbler classes, but she had also her triumphs in another style, and her drama of *Rienzi* was considered one of the finest tragedies of the day. She was undeniably a great genius. She seems at home in every rank of life and in every phase of feeling. She was a friend of the Kembles and Kean. Her life and letters have been published within the last few years, and are most interesting, and she well deserves to be classed among the literary ladies of the old and the new century.

THE POSTMEN OF THE WORLD.

BY C. F. GORDON CUMMING, AUTHOR OF "THE NEWSPAPERS OF THE WORLD."

IN TWO PARTS.—PART II.

NUREMBERG POST-RUNNER OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.

WE have recently glanced at a few of the very varied letter - carriers of Asia and America; but without looking further afield than our own shores, we may well find matter for wonder and admiration in the postal system which enfolds us in a network so perfect, that we have learnt to look on its regularity with the same indifference as we breathe the air of heaven, and are only conscious of its existence when some momentary irregularity calls forth our instant blame.

Of the amount of care and mental anxiety whereby our postal punctuality is purchased, we may form some estimate by noting the agreements concerning the contract time allowed for the transport of the mails between the most distant countries, and the penalties exacted for delay. Thus, in the case of the mails from India and China to Brindisi, there is a fine of £200 for every twelve hours in excess of contract time. On the voyage to or from the West Indies, the penalty for over-time is £25 for every twenty-four hours, while between London and Calais it is £5 for fifteen minutes. By another contract, which comes into force this autumn, the City of Dublin Steam Packet Company undertakes thenceforward to convey the mails between Holyhead and Kingstown in fifteen minutes less than the time hitherto allowed ; a fine of £1 14s. to be exacted for each minute in excess of contract time. Such details as these give us a very practical notion of the literal value of time.

Like that of all mighty institutions, the growth of the Post Office has been slow and gradual; and we, in the enjoyment of all our postal privileges, find it hard to realise how our ancestors could have endured their total privation of all such.

The establishment of a commercial postal service seems to have originated in the thirteenth century, to insure facility of communication between the eighty-five cities of Prussia, Livonia, Westphalia, Saxony, the Baltic, and the Netherlands, included in the Hanseatic League.

After this beginning, regular letter posts for the public convenience were established between Austria and Lombardy, and between Vienna and Brussels.