At this period the fungus of poverty struggled so successfully with the pride of birth in me, that I stripped off my social fetters, and, as many a one has had to do before, I went into the arena where all who work for their living meet on the common ground of equality.

My testimonials consisted of two flattering letters from editors of other papers besides our own, a pile of grateful acknowledgments from shops whose novelties I had at various times written up, and copies of all my articles which had ever appeared in print. Armed with these, I intended to commence life over again as a lady journalist.

My first move was to provide myself with a newspaper guide; and I believe I am not exaggerating in saying that I wrote upwards of a hundred and fifty letters to the editors of London and Provincial papers, proprietors of weekly journals, and others, telling them of my varied and all-round experience, and offering them my services in any way they chose, if only they would engage me permanently on their staffs, or failing this, grant me temporary employment.

I must say, from one and all I received the most civil replies, but each answer as it arrived was more discouraging than the last, till at length my heart used literally to sink within me when I heard the postman's knock at our door.

Some editors said they had "no opening at present," others informed me that all their "town gossip and fashionable news came through press agencies," whilst the generality laconically announced that their "staffs were full."

After a time I became convinced there was no opening in these directions, and with the recollection of my one attempt at fiction, which got itself accepted by a sixpenny monthly magazine in the years gone by, I scribbled off a story, which I purposed offering to the editor of some present day periodical.

Need I say that I was again disappointed? That my tale was rejected on all hands, and that in each instance I was informed—although with the utmost courtesy—that the editors were overstocked with matter (some of them still had MSS. lying crowded in the pigeon-holes of their office shelves which had never even been glanced through yet), and it was rather a mark of favour towards me than otherwise that I should be told plain and straight tales of the kind I submitted were simply a drug in the market nowadays. Interest here and there might get one taken, or occasionally a lady with a handle to her name got her stories accepted as she could make their acceptance good; but if you were a nobody, who had never hitherto written anything to attract the notice of the critics and command reviews, you had no chance whatever of getting your stories read, let alone taken.

What was I to do? Journalists are not in the habit of reviewing one another's scissors and paste productions; the most able article, the smartest par, does not live in the memory of press men, in these rapid days, much beyond the week in which it is printed; and the triumph of the greatest leader writer is ephemeral compared to that of the writer of one successful novel.

I was conscious of the need to make money somehow. I knew if only I could tide on, the testimonials I could show, the proofs of my capacity as an experienced journalist which I could produce, would in time enable me to gain a livelihood somehow. But meanwhile? Why, I might starve.

(To be concluded.)

ODD CHARACTERS.

A GALLERY OF ECCENTRIC WOMEN.

By NANETTE MASON.

VI.—LADY HATTON.

ECCENTRICITY in single women is bad enough, but when married women have a turn that way, may providence doubly befriend all who live under the same roof with them! Take the case of the "strange lady," as an old writer calls her, whose story we have now to tell.

About the close of the reign of Queen Elizabeth, one of the interesting figures at Court was a beautiful young widow, about twenty years old, with no children, and possessed of an immense fortune. Her family connections were highly respectable, she being the daughter of Lord Burleigh, afterwards Earl of Exeter. But she was now known as Lady Hatton, her husband having been Sir William Hatton, the nephew of Sir Christopher Hatton, Queen Elizabeth's famous Chancellor. He had died in 1597.

Young, beautiful, and wealthy she certainly was, but it is just as sure that in temper she was a regular vixen. Her "gentle blood," in which she prided herself, never appeared in the softening of her character; she was heartless, overbearing, and vindictive. In the gaieties of the Court—hawking, balls, masques, and such like—she took great pleasure, as was natural at her years, and it was noticed that not only whilst engaging in such amusements, but in everything else, she was greedy of admiration.

The powerful family relations and large fortune of Lady Hatton brought a host of suitors to her feet, all of them so dazzled by her money and good looks that they had no eyes for her mental failings. Amongst them came the illustrious Francis Bacon, then in the beginning of his career, who was assisted in his wooing by his ever faithful friend the unfortunate Earl of Essex.

An old proverb says that "he who would the daughter win must with the mother first begin," so we find Essex exerting his eloquence on Lady Burleigh. "If she were my sister or my daughter," he says in one of his letters, "I protest I would as confidently resolve to further the match as I now persuade you." And in another epistle he adds, "If my faith be anything, I protest if I had one as near me as she is to you, I had rather match her with him than with men of far greater titles."

But Bacon was not to have her. The prize, such as it was, was to fall to Edward Coke, his rival in law as well as in love, who, like him, had cast a longing eye on the widow's great possessions. Coke was one of the most eminent lawyers that ever lived in this country, but he was hardly the husband one would have expected a gay young widow to select. He was fifty years of age, which to twenty usually appears about the number of the years of Methuselah. To his family there was really nothing to object, he being able to trace his ancestors as far back as the twelfth century. But a great deal was to be said against his proving himself a husband who could manage the wayward will of a spoiled, whimsical young woman.

He had an overruling nature to begin with, an arrogant manner, and a bad temper, which showed itself not only at the bar but at his own fireside. For the poetry of life he had no relish, he was seldom enthusiastic about anything, and never showed much sympathy for other people. He was simply a lawyer devoted to his briefs, and heartily detesting all gaiety and expense. His habits were very simple. When the sun set he went to bed, and on most mornings he rose at three o'clock. He took regular exercise, sometimes riding and sometimes walking, and his only amusement was an occasional game at bowls.

This cold-blooded lawyer had been married before. His first wife was an heiress, by whom he had about £30,000, and with her, as she was sensible and affectionate, he had lived happily. She died in 1598, and Coke mourned her loss even more than one would have expected in a man of his peculiar temperament. In a memorandum book kept for his own exclusive use we find this entry on the day of her death:—"Most beloved and most excellent wife, she well and happily lived, and as a true handmaid of the Lord fell asleep in the Lord, and now lives and reigns in heaven." She left ten of a family—seven sons and three daughters.

Before she had been long in the grave her husband set what affections he was possessed of on Lady Hatton, and proposed to enter with her into another matrimonial speculation. How he obtained her consent we do not know, but the probability is she was urged to the match by her relations. No one seemed to see the folly of her marrying a man old enough to be her father and with irreconcilable differences in taste and manners.

The two were married on the 24th of November, 1598. We find an entry of it in the parish register of St. Andrew's, Holborn, as the marriage of Edward Coke, "the Queen's Attorney-General," and "my Lady Elizabeth Hatton." The beginning was singularly unfortunate: for the way in which the wedding ceremony was conducted landed them both in trouble.

Irregular marriages just at that time were being a good deal talked about, but Coke and Lady Hatton, in spite of that, resolved on having the marriage secretly performed. Perhaps it was that they thought themselves above taking notice of such things, or it may be that the lady refused to be paraded in the face of the church as the bride of the wrinkled old Attorney-General. At any rate, they were married in the evening in a private house

without either license or banns, in presence of the lady's father, who gave her away. It was certainly a curious proceeding for the first law officer of the Crown to take a leading part in, especially as he was celebrated for his legal knowledge, and had always professed a profound reverence for ecclesiastical authority.

By this irregular marriage, Coke ran the risk of the "greater excommunication," whereby he would not only be debarred from the sacraments, but from all intercourse with the faithful, and would forfeit his property and be liable to perpetual imprisonment. Whitgift, who was at that time Archbishop, showed himself no respecter of persons. He prosecuted Coke, the newly married lady, the minister who officiated, and Lord Burleigh, who gave the bride away.

Mr. Attorney-General made a humble submission; so did they all; and they escaped punishment on the plea of ignorance of the law—an extraordinary plea to be urged by a party led by the great legal oracle of his time.

This unpleasant incident of the honeymoon being over, Coke and his wife settled down to grow better acquainted with each other, and it cannot have been long before the truth dawned on them that they were in a fair way of adding another example to the numerous list of unfortunate matrimonial alliances of distinguished men. Lady Hatton administered the first snub to her second husband by declining to take his name. By doing so she would have had to be content with plain Mrs. Coke, or Cook, as it was often written in those days. Even when he was knighted in 1603 she adhered to the name of her first partner in life.

Their first years were passed in quiet apathy, uncomfortable and silent. Coke had few minutes to spare from the extensive engagements of his profession, and Lady Hatton kept herself from wearying by playing the part of a woman of the world. A daughter was born within twelve months after the marriage, and after her birth her parents lived little together, though for some time they had the prudence to appear to the public on decent terms. This daughter, known as "the Lady Frances," became in time the subject of an unseemly squabble, as we shall shortly hear.

A subject of quarrel always at hand between Lady Hatton and Sir Edward was her own property. She was very independent of him, for she had purchased the island and castle of Purbeck since her marriage, and owned besides several other estates in different counties. That she asserted her rights over these properties we may infer from the fact that she absolutely prohibited her spouse from entering her house in Holborn except by the back door.

After they had been married fifteen years or so Coke experienced the fickleness of fortune, and fell into disgrace with King James. So long as his fate was uncertain, Lady Hatton exerted herself on his behalf and refused to "sever her interests from his," but whenever his downfall was a certainty, her true character came out. She "divided herself from him," says Chamberlain, "and disfurnished his houses in Holborn and at Stoke of whatever was in them, and carried all the moveables and plate she could come by heaven knows where, and retiring herself into obscure places both in town and country." The henpecked husband and fallen statesman was left to ramble alone about empty dwelling-houses and meditate on a piece of advice given him by King James to "live privately at home, and take into consideration and review his book of Reports, wherein, as his Majesty is informed, be many extravagant and exorbitant opinions set down and published for positive and good law."

Whether this criticism was just or unjust we do not pretend to say, but it is certain that when Sir Edward's temper was roused good law did not from him receive much attention. He forcibly entered Lady Hatton's house in search of his own property, and not only recovered what was his, but helped himself to what was hers.

The two carried their quarrel before the council board, and her ladyship appeared in court, accompanied by an imposing train of noble friends. Sir Edward accused his wife, among other things, of having purloined all his gold and silver plate and substituted for it counterfeited "alkumy," with the intention of cheating him. She had quite as good to say about him. Her story was that "Sir Edward broke into Hatton House, seized upon my coach and coach horses, nay, my apparel, which he detains; thrust all my servants out of doors without wages, and sent down his men to Corfe Castle"—another of her residences—"to inventory, seize, ship, and carry away all the goods. Stop, then," she implored the court, "his high tyrannical courses; for I have suffered beyond the measure of any wife, mother, nay, of any ordinary woman in this kingdom, without respect to my father, my birth, my fortune, with which I have so highly raised him."

The virago won the day, judgment being given against "the oracle of law." A reconciliation took place, and a letter is still in existence in which we find Sir Edward saying that after all "he flatters himself that she will prove a very good wife."

In the following year he changed his opinion, for his wife and he entered then on the extraordinary contest to which we have already alluded. They had one child, a daughter, as we have already told, and when she was about seventeen years old Sir Edward entered into negotiations for her marriage with Sir John Villiers, brother of Buckingham, the king's favourite. He was in hopes, by means of this alliance, to enjoy again the smiles of his Majesty. Previous to discovering that she might be used as an instrument for his political purposes, he seems never to have bestowed on the girl a single thought. His proposal was well received, for Villiers—a man nearly thrice her age—was exceedingly poor, whilst the Lady Frances was a rich heiress, her mother's property being entailed upon her, and she expecting, too, a share of the great wealth of her father. It was the money that attracted Sir John, and made him deaf to the advice of some of his friends, who represented how foolish it was to marry into a "troubled home of man and wife."

One evening Sir Edward introduced this promising scheme to the notice of Lady Hatton and his daughter. There was no "Does it please you?" in the matter; he informed them of his decision as if it had been a decree in a court of justice, when nothing remains but obedience. Lady Hatton at once broke out in a frantic rage, objecting, naturally enough, to his disposing of her daughter without her leave.

After the first burst of resentment she grew more calm. It was a case of dissembling: she had formed a rival plan, which was to carry off her daughter and wed her to another.

Sir Edward went to bed that night at the early hour of nine o'clock. Not so the wife and daughter. They at once began packing up, and soon after ten left the house and entered a coach which they had engaged to be in waiting at a little distance. They took the precaution of driving by unfrequented and circuitous roads, and at last arrived at a house of the Earl of Argyle at Oatlands, then rented by a cousin of Lady Hatton's. Here they took up their abode with as much secrecy as if they had been criminals fleeing from the gallows.

When Sir Edward came to a deserted breakfast-table on the following morning, and found that the birds had flown, his state of mind may be imagined. The first step he took was to apply to the Privy Council for a warrant to search for his daughter, and whilst waiting for it he inquired in every direction as to the whereabouts of the two fugitives. Whilst he was so engaged Lady Hatton in her secure hiding-place was doing everything possible to prejudice her daughter against Sir John Villiers, whom she looked on as an upstart. She also offered her in marriage to the young Earl of Oxford, and actually showed her a forged letter that appeared to come from that nobleman, and in which he was made to vow and protest that he was deeply attached to her, and would do anything and everything to gain her hand.

There was some difficulty about obtaining the warrant, and before it was got Sir Edward discovered where his wife and daughter were. Though it was not at all a proper proceeding for the ex-Chief Justice of England, he took the law into his own hands. He mustered a band of a dozen sturdy armed men, consisting of his sons, his dependents, and his servants, and himself putting on a breastplate with a sword by his side and pistols at his saddlebow, he marched at their head upon Oatlands.

On arriving at the gate leading to the house they found it bolted and barricaded. They had not much trouble, however, in forcing it open; after which they went through the grounds and took up their station at the front door. Here the ex-Chief Justice, with the sturdy men at his back, repeatedly demanded his child in the King's name, and laid it down for law that "if death should ensue it would be justifiable homicide for him, but murder in those who opposed him."

His eloquence made no impression, so the word was given to break down the door. It was so secured that all their efforts for some time were unavailing. At last one of the party got in by a window, and he let in the rest.

Then they swept through the house looking for the bride promised to Sir John. She was found at last, hidden away in a closet. Her father seized her, placed her behind one of her brothers, and rode off with her in triumph to his house at Stoke Poges in Buckinghamshire.

So ended what Lady Hatton afterwards described as "Sir Edward Coke's most notorious riot, committed at my Lord of Arguyl's house, when, without constable or warrant, associated with a dozen fellows well weaponed, without cause being beforehand offered, to have what he would, he took down the doors of the gate-house and of the house itself, and tore the daughter in that barbarous manner from the mother, and would not suffer the mother to come near her."

When they arrived at his house at Stoke, Sir Edward secured his daughter in an upper chamber, and then sat down with the key of her room in his pocket to write to Buckingham, saying that "by God's wonderful providence he had discovered his daughter and recovered her."

The great lawyer had been defeated by his wife in their previous legal proceedings, but this time he was triumphant. To use his own expression, he "had got upon his wings again." The King being now well-disposed, Sir Edward had little difficulty in getting his wife shut up in a public prison for conveying away his daughter, trying to bind her to Lord Oxford without his knowledge and consent, and forging a letter from Lord Oxford offering her marriage.

To these charges Lady Hatton had what read as plausible answers, but the fact is that both she and her husband had spirits too haughty and obstinate to give way to each other in the slightest degree upon any point whatever. He wanted his way, she wanted hers, and the only way to settle the point was to discover which was the stronger.

The "high tyrannical courses" of the furious lawyer were prolonged till a fit of sickness overtook the proud, crestfallen lady. She at

last was forced to promise a legal consent to the marriage, and even went so far as to write to the King, binding herself to provide liberally for the future of her daughter and Sir John Villiers. The daughter also agreed to the match, though, according to her mother's account, she had voluntarily and deliberately protested that "of all men living she would never have him, nor could ever fancy him for a husband."

The marriage of Lady Frances and Sir John Villiers was celebrated with great spirit on Michaelmas Day, 1617, at Hampton Court Palace before the King and Queen, and all the chief nobility of England. As a measure of precaution the mortified mother was kept still in confinement, and Sir Edward had the whole field to himself as he rode with his daughter and his friends to the palace in a gay procession of nine coaches. There was a magnificent bridal banquet, and a masque was performed in the evening.

The subsequent history of this union is a sad story. A marriage entered into by constraint on the one side and from mercenary motives on the other could hardly be expected to turn out well. "Lady Villiers," says one writer, "looked on her husband as the hateful object of a forced union, and nearly drove him mad." After a few years she deserted him, and came to a melancholy end. "Thus a marriage projected by ambition and prosecuted by violent means, closed with that utter misery to the parties with which it had commenced."

Lady Hatton had made a virtue of necessity, and in the marriage of her daughter submitted her will to her husband, but she remained as spiteful against him as ever. Shortly after the wedding she was set at liberty, and one of her earliest proceedings was to give a grand entertainment at Hatton House, which was honoured by the presence of the King and Queen, and at which Sir Edward and all his servants were conspicuous by their absence. "The good man of the house," says a contemporary writer, "was neither invited nor spoken of; he dined that day at the Temple; she is still bent to pull down her husband."

She resided a good deal at Hatton House in Holborn—it stood where Ely Place now stands—and Howell tells an incident he had heard about her relations with one of her neighbours here, which illustrates her peculiar humour, and is a companion anecdote to her forbidding Sir Edward to come in by the front entrance. Howell is speaking of Gondomar, the Spanish Ambassador. "He hath waded already very deep," he says, "and ingratiated himself with divers persons of quality, ladies especially; yet he could do no good upon the Lady Hatton, whom he desired lately that in regard he was her next neighbour he might have the benefit of her back gate to go abroad into the fields, but she put him off with a compliment."

No less a mediator than King James tried to make peace between them, but Coke and his wife were never reconciled; *ill-will* was continually breaking out, and many letters are still in existence, showing a great deal of heat and resentment in both parties. Lady Hatton would not let Sir Edward alone, but pursued him with bitter animosity, spoke of him always with contempt, and openly avowed her impatience for *his death. One* day, it was in June, 1634, a report arrived that he had passed away, and she immediately left the metropolis for Stoke to take possession of his mansion there. On the way down, however, she met one of his physicians coming from him, and he told her that the news was false, for Sir Edward was getting better. Hearing this she turned her horses' heads towards London, evidently much disappointed.

Two months afterwards, however, an end came to all troubles, matrimonial and otherwise, of the great lawyer. He died at Stoke in his eighty-fourth year, clear-headed to the last, on the 3rd of September, 1634. His last hours were, much to her credit, watched over by the daughter whose marriage had occasioned so much heart-burning.

Lady Hatton survived her husband for over eleven years, but after his death we have little information concerning her. She occasionally resided at the manor house at Stoke, but closed her career at her mansion in Holborn, on the 3rd January, 1646.

MISS PRINGLE'S PEARLS.

By Mrs. G. LINNÆUS BANKS, Author of "God's Providence House," "The Manchester Man," "More Than Coronets," etc.

CHAPTER VIII.

FRIENDS.

"ALL through Phillis?" echoed Barbara and Miss Pringle in a breath; but the two excited girls, pressing forward towards their mother seated in her low chair by the broad window, heard nothing of the second voice from the little dark figure in the shadow of the door behind them, a voice that was hushed to silence by the altercation that ensued.

"It was not through me," cried Phillis, in tremulous self-justification, setting down books and slates on the window-seat; "Arthur began it, you know he did."

"Began what?" questioned their mother.

"It was just your silliness starting to cry for a joke, like the baby that you are," retorted Mabel, with an air of superior wisdom.

"It wasn't a joke," asserted Phillis; "it was meant to plague me, and Hubert said it was."

"Will you explain what this is all about?" asked Barbara. "Hold your tongue, Phillis, whilst Mabel is speaking."

"Well, mamma, it was just this. Dr. Marsden's boys were coming out of school when we did, and as we were crossing the green, up came Arthur and Hubert and Bob, and two or three more, and Arthur called out 'Stop, Phillis, I've got something you are fond of——'"

"He didn't call 'Phillis,'—he never does—he called 'P. P.'" interjected the child, whilst behind the open door Miss Pringle shut her lips tightly up.

"Then he held out both his hands, saying, 'Handy-pandy, Jack-a-dandy, which hand will you have?' and when he opened the one Phillis touched, and there was only an open pea-shell with three peas in it, Phillis must say he 'was a rude boy,' and look as if she was dreadfully injured, and then he only said a word or two more, just in fun, and she began to cry."

Miss Pringle came forward. "Pray what were the other words said just in fun that provoked tears from Phillis Penelope?"

"Oh, godmother!" exclaimed the child, rushing up to her as if to a refuge, "I didn't cry until they began to fight—I didn't really, though Arthur did call me back and tell me to take the peas; perhaps they'd turn into pearls some day—Aunt Pringle's pearls; and Bob said I'd better pipe my eye, and called me Phillis Penelope Pump, and the other boys laughed."

"You did cry, for I saw the tears in your eyes before Hubert set on Arthur, or Bob took Arthur's part," jerked out Mabel, with a toss of her head. "And no wonder they call you a pump, you're so ready to cry for nothing. Why, you're crying now."

"Mabel!" exclaimed Barbara, reprovingly, her own colour rising, as she met the steady gaze of her aunt.

"I am sure, godmother," urged Phillis, with a half sob, "I did try to be patient; but they are always teasing me, and I couldn't help crying when I saw them fighting, and Hubert's face bleeding. Gilbert Sheperton said it wasn't fair for two to set on one—and it wasn't."