

spray, she bent down, touching her sister's soft round cheek with her lips.

"Vi, darling, try to hope. Our Father is so loving and so strong. He can still save us. And—and—" the trembling lips almost refused to say anything more.

"If not, Vi, dear Vi, He still loves us, you know. We are still safe."

As the girl spoke she raised her face, shining with a clear and perfect faith, and looked out over the stormy sea. The moment later a cry broke from her—a bursting, sobbing, exultant cry. Steadying herself bravely, she stood firmly forward in the very face of the wind, waving her arm, and raising her voice in a shrill, eager shout.

Vi, still crouching, lifted her right arm feebly.

"Oh, hush, Lil, please hush! No one can come through such a sea to help us without being drowned."

"Yes, they can; oh yes, these can," was the reply in the same high-pitched, eager tones of strong excitement.

"You don't know, Vi, darling. They are the boys—our boys out there!"

"Our boys!" The echoing voice had caught the contagion of excitement now.

With her exclamation Violet was on her feet, clinging to her sister, drawing her breath with heavy gasps, now burning with a crimson glow, and now white as the foam rushing by at her feet.

"Yes, Lil, yes, they are our boys," she sobbed, as she strained her eyes to convince herself of the longed-for fact.

"I do feel now that we shall be saved, for they are so strong, and so brave, and so clever. But oh! Lil, Lil," and she hid her eyes on her sister's shoulder, and shook as if in an ague fit. "Lil, if they should die because of us!"

Lilian strained her sister close. "Hush, dear!" she whispered. "Hush, I cannot bear it! I am praying."

"And I too," came the whisper back.

No other word was spoken by either to the other for several long hours to come.

Of what use is it to attempt to describe the next half-hour, the alternate hopes and efforts and despair? It must suffice to say that all idea had to be abandoned of bringing the boat near enough to the girls' ever increasingly dangerous place of refuge. Each time that the attempt was made proved very nearly fatal.

"We must not all die if we can help, for our mother's sake," muttered Jack at last through clenched teeth, as the trio rested a moment on their oars, after again taking the boat back out of the raging surf.

Harold had been stooping during this pause; he lifted himself up now, kicking off his unfastened boots as he did so.

"No," he said, in tones cold and still from very intensity of emotion; "we must leave father and mother—one of us, at any rate, or it would be too awful. Mother must come before the girls. So whatever happens, Jack, you stay with the boat. If I—I fail—for the girls—Frank must try."

With that he plunged over the side of the boat, while Frank, not waiting for that possible failure of his youngest brother, plunged over the other side into the tumbling waves, and both struck out desperately for the sisters, who even now were quite possibly drowning behind that blinding, ever-thickening shield of spray which now hid them entirely from view.

In after days Jack used to declare most solemnly that when his brothers thus left him in sole charge of the boat, and of prospective

duty to their parents, he fell into a strange kind of trance, in which he was wholly and solely conscious of the flight of time—weeks and months and years went by, and he would point to his head, which as a fact went grey almost immediately after, as half-laughing, half-serious proof that they really did.

When Harold's birthday arrived he had to go to Violet's room to receive her good wishes, for she lay with her sweet face as white as the pillow on which it rested. Frank and Lilian had reached home without material injury, but Harold had been so bruised against the rocks as to lie for some hours in a fainting state when the excitement of his accomplished work was over, and the same rocks had broken poor little Vi's arm. Perhaps, though, we should say happy little Vi, for some souls are spoken to in one way, some in another; and this was the way in which the Spirit spoke to Violet.

"Harold," she said, in low, half-timid tones, "even this time your birthday present was not finished, and now it is drowned, and my arm is useless. But Hal, dear old Hal, though I cannot make you my present, I have prayed God to help me to make Him the thank-offering of growing patient and humble and unselfish, and a comfort in the home instead of a worry."

Harold bowed his head close to her ear, even shyer than his sister, as he answered back: "And I make the thank-offering, Sis, for the blessing of being helped to save you, of getting rid of my idiotic, irritating dogmatism. Whatever you might do or leave undone, I was not constituted your mentor."

Thus out of storm there came forth peace.

[THE END.]

ODD CHARACTERS.

A GALLERY OF ECCENTRIC WOMEN.

By NANETTE MASON.

VII.—NINE ODD WOMEN.



In the preceding articles we have told the story of six outstanding eccentric women. In this, our concluding article, we propose grouping together a few oddities who, though well worth reading about, are

hardly of sufficient importance for each of them to monopolise a whole paper.

It would not be difficult to prove that eccentricities, on the whole, serve a useful purpose. Indeed, if we only exert ourselves to find it out, we may discover something to be said in favour of most things in the world. There is no beauty certainly about eccentricities, but they are picturesque. They supply character and furnish welcome relief after intercourse

with dulness and insipidity. Without odd individuals, who do things in their own way, and care nothing for the criticisms of their neighbours, society would often be a monotonous affair.

At the same time, let no one suppose that we wish to hold up eccentric characters as guiding stars and models for imitation. It is praiseworthy for a girl to have individuality, but not eccentricity, which is nothing but individuality run mad. Individuality is the feature to be cultivated by all sensible girls, for none are more uninteresting than those in whom it is absent, and who look for all the world as if they were made after one pattern, like machine-made toys.

"It is universally admitted," says the author of "The Eccentric Mirror," "that no country in the world produces so many humorists and eccentric characters as the British Islands. This acknowledgment is a direct eulogy on the political constitution and laws under which the English enjoy the happiness of living, and by which each individual is suffered to gratify every whim, fancy, and caprice, provided it be not prejudicial to his fellow-creatures." There is little doubt, however, that eccentric characters are not so common as they used to be. They flourished best when people moved in narrower circles than now, and railways and daily newspapers were unknown.

Eccentricity is more common amongst un-

married women than amongst the married. Married women have their oddities, as a rule, taken out of them by the outspoken criticisms of their husbands. Their unmarried sisters being without these corrective advantages, fall often into strange ways, and become funny old maids without intending it. But, as we have seen from the examples of the Duchess of Marlborough, the Duchess of Newcastle, and Lady Hatton, even husbands sometimes find it beyond hope to reform the singularities of their wives.

We have another example of the eccentric married lady in Catharine, Duchess of Queensberry, whose good looks were celebrated by Pope, and who in her early days was described by Prior as—

"Kitty, beautiful and young,
And wild as colt untamed."

An account of her is given by Dr. Robert Chambers in his "Traditions of Edinburgh," from which it appears that she continued as wild as an untamed colt to the end of her career. "She was," says Dr. Chambers, "in reality, to a certain extent insane, though the politeness of fashionable society, and the flattery of her poetical friends, seem to have succeeded in passing off her extravagances as owing to an agreeable freedom of carriage and vivacity of mind. Her brother was as clever and mad as herself, and used to amuse himself by hiding a book in his library and hunting

for it after he had forgotten where it was deposited."

When she visited Scotland with the Duke, she was struck with horror at Scottish manners. One northern custom in those days she particularly detested—that of eating off the end of a knife. When people came to dine with her and began to lift their food in this way, she used to scream out and implore them not to cut their throats, after which she would put them to shame by sending them a silver spoon or fork upon a salver.

It was a freak of hers when in Scotland to dress always like a peasant girl. Her idea seems to have been to make a fool of the stately dresses and formal ways of the Scottish gentlewomen who came to visit her. One evening some of these prim and precise dames came dressed in all their finery. Her Grace proposed a walk through the woods, and they were, as in duty bound, obliged to troop off, though sorely bewailing the probable destruction of their starched-up frills and flounces. Their hostess, after taking them through hedges, over stone walls, and bypaths thickly planted on both sides with bramble bushes, at last pretended to be tired, and planted herself on the top of a heap of refuse at the end of a farmhouse.

"Pray, ladies, sit down beside me," she said to her poor dragged and torn companions.

They stood so much in awe of her that they did not dare to refuse, and thus her Grace put the finishing touch to the ruin of their ridiculously fine costumes.

If ever she went to an evening entertainment and saw a tea-service paraded which seemed too grand for the rank of the owner, she "intentionally by accident" overturned the table and broke the china. It was evident on such occasions that she took great delight in being politely assured by her hosts that she need not put herself the least about, for the catastrophe "was of no consequence."

A laughable anecdote is told by Dr. Chambers of her Grace as occurring at Court, where she stood in awe of no one, and set an example both of plain-dealing and plain-dressing. "An edict had been issued forbidding the ladies to appear at the drawing-room in aprons. This was disregarded by the Duchess, whose rustic costume would not have been complete without that piece of dress. On approaching the door she was stopped by the Lord-in-Waiting, who told her that he could not possibly give her Grace admission in that guise, when she, without a moment's hesitation, stripped off her apron, threw it in his lordship's face, and walked on, in her brown gown and petticoat, into the brilliant circle."

Another eccentric married woman in high life was the Duchess of Montagu, who died in 1734 at Newcastle House, Clerkenwell. She was heiress of Henry, Duke of Newcastle, and in consequence was a personage of considerable importance in the matrimonial market. Her first husband was General Monk's son, who died young. After his death she was so immensely wealthy that pride crazed her, and she vowed never to marry anyone but a sovereign prince.

The Duke of Montagu, tempted by her property, determined to woo her in that capacity. He assumed the character of the Emperor of China, made love to her, and was accepted. No one will doubt her being out of her mind when one reads that up to the time of her death she insisted on being always approached as Empress, and never served but on bended knee.

Sometimes eccentricity has adopted a life of solitude, and in retirement has found for itself a congenial soil. Amongst many examples, however, of total seclusion from their fellows which have been recorded, there are few cases in which women have been conspicuous. They make worse solitary beings

than men. Their natural timidity and their love of seeing and being seen will always prevent their becoming good hermits. There are exceptions, however, and here is one:—

An extraordinary example of eccentricity in solitude is found in a lady who, in the beginning of this century, lived in the neighbourhood of Salem, in the State of New York. Sarah Bishop was a young lady of considerable beauty, and a competent share of mental endowments and education. She possessed a handsome fortune, but was of a tender and delicate constitution; indeed, her health was so precarious that she could scarcely be comfortable without constant recourse to medicine.

Early in life she seems to have taken a disgust at her fellow-creatures. Very likely an affair of the heart was at the beginning of it. This, indeed, in nine cases out of ten is how an eccentric life has its origin. She resolved to retire from all society, and at the age of twenty-seven resorted to the mountains which divide Salem from North Salem, and there she spent the rest of her days in a cave; or, rather, in the cleft of a rock.

Here she stayed, self-secluded from all human society. She kept no domesticated animal, not even a fowl, a cat, or a dog. A piece of ground beside her hermitage—there was about half an acre of it—she cleared of wood and reduced to grass; but she made little use of it, except that she raised on it a few peach trees, and planted every year a few beans, cucumbers, and potatoes. The whole plot was surrounded by grape vines of luxuriant growth, which overspread all the surrounding wood, and produced grapes in the greatest abundance. On the opposite side of the cave was a fine spring of excellent water, which issued from the side of the mountain.

"At this fountain," says a traveller who went on purpose to visit the spot in the close of 1804, "we found the wonderful woman, whose appearance it is rather difficult to describe. Indeed, like nature in its first state, she was without form; that is, she appeared in no form or position I had ever seen before. Her dress appeared little else but one confused and shapeless mass of rags, patched together without any order, obscuring all appearance of human shape, excepting her head, which was dotted with a luxuriance of lank grey hair, depending on every side just as nature and time had formed it, without any kind of artificial covering or ornament whatever."

"When she had discovered our approach, her manner resembled that of a wild and timid animal. She started, hastened with the utmost precipitation to her cave, in which she took refuge, and barricaded the entrance with old bark, which she had pulled down from the decayed trees. To this humble mansion we approached, and after some conversation with her, obtained permission to remove the pallsades and look in; for we were not able to enter, the room being only able to accommodate a single person."

"We conversed with her a considerable time; found her to be of a sound mind, a religious turn of thought, and entirely happy and contented with her situation; of this she has given repeated demonstrations to others who have in vain solicited her to quit this dreary abode. We saw no utensil, neither for labour or cooking, except an old pewter basin and a gourd shell; no bed but the solid rock, unless it were a few old rags scattered here and there upon it; no bed-clothes of any kind; nor the least appearance of any sort of food, and no fire."

"She had, indeed, a place in one corner of her cell where she kindles a fire at times, but it does not appear that any fire has been kindled there this year. To confirm this opinion, a gentleman says that he passed her cell after a great fall of snow in the beginning of March last, that she had no fire

then, and had not been out of her cave since the snow had fallen. How she subsists during the severe season is all a mystery. She says she eats but little flesh of any kind, and it is difficult to imagine how she is supported through the winter season. In the summer she subsists on the berries, nuts, and roots which the mountains afford. It may be that she secretes her winter store in some other fissure in the rock, more convenient for that purpose than the cell she inhabits."

"She keeps a Bible with her, and says she takes much satisfaction and spends much time in reading and meditating on its pages. It may be this woman is a sincere worshipper of God; if so, she is yet more rich, wise, and happy than thousands in affluence and honour who behold her with astonishment and scorn. At any rate, from this humble yet astonishing page of human nature we read a most interesting lecture on the human heart. It was the peculiar state of this woman's heart which impelled her to forsake the society of mankind, and led her to this solitary mansion. The human heart, under the impulse of any particular propensity, will seek happiness in solitude, deformity, and death itself, while its antipathies, on the contrary, can embitter a paradise of joy."

In 1824 a Miss Elizabeth Balls died at Havering-atte-Bower, in Essex, and was long remembered in that retired hamlet and neighbourhood for her very extraordinary eccentricity of character. Her father was a respectable farmer at Hemel Hempstead, where she was born. Early in life she met with a disappointment in her affections: her lover either died or deserted her, we are not sure which. After that happened she adopted a very whimsical line of conduct, and secluded herself from all human society.

She lived in a cottage near Havering Green, which was her own property, and there passed the greater part of her life all alone, sharing her pittance with a herd of twenty to fifty goats, two sheep, a number of fowls, a dog, and two or three cats. These animals went to and fro in the house just as they pleased, so the state it was in may be imagined.

Curiosity brought to the outer rails of her little courtyard continual visitors, to whom she would come out and hold a conversation about her "dear children" the goats, whom she would call about her, and on general subjects would talk very rationally. In short, she was one of the lions of the neighbourhood, and scarcely anyone came to Havering-atte-Bower without calling at her door. A contemporary account says she was "of middle stature, with a fair, pale complexion and a weak voice; her manners were mild, without any of that vulgarity or ferocity to be expected from a person entirely domesticated with brute animals." Her dress was always squalid in the extreme.

A curious case of eccentricity brought about by disappointment in love is connected with a house in what is now the busy and unromantic thoroughfare of Oxford Street, in London. A certain Miss Mary Lucrine, a maiden of small fortune who resided here and died in 1778, having met with a disappointment in matrimony in early life, vowed that she would never again look on the light of the sun! Accordingly the windows of her apartment were closely shut up for years, and she kept her resolution to her dying day.

Many eccentric women have sustained the character and devoted themselves to the pursuits of men: dressing like men, too. There was Phoebe Hassel, for example. She had a lover, and he was a private in a regiment which was ordered to the West Indies. Phoebe resolved not to stay behind, enlisted in a regiment of foot, and embarked after him. After going through many adventures the two came home and were married, and Phoebe at an advanced

age was one of the characters of Brighton, where she earned a scanty livelihood selling apples and gingerbread on the Marine Parade.

Then there was the case of Mary East, a woman who resolved to live single, and, under the name of James How, played the part of an innkeeper for thirty-six years, after which she retired to enjoy the considerable property she had acquired by fair and honest means, and with an unblemished character. A female friend lived with her, and the two were known in their neighbourhood as man and wife. A writer in the *Gentleman's Magazine* who records the circumstances, says that "both had been crossed in love when young, and had chosen this method to avoid further importunities."

It was more roguery than eccentricity, however, that made a woman, about the close of last century, dress in male attire, and go about captivating her sisters and marrying them. On the 5th of July, 1777, this impostor was tried at a criminal court in London, for thus disguising herself, and it was proved that she had, at different times, been married to three women, and "defrauded them of their money and clothes." "The fair deceiver," says one writer, "was required by the justices to give the daughters of the citizens an opportunity of making themselves acquainted with her features by standing in the pillory of Cheap-side, and after going through this ordeal she was imprisoned for six months."

In the catalogue of eccentric people we must give a place to the strong woman whom William Hutton met at Matlock, in Derbyshire, in July, 1801. Hutton's description of her is worth repeating, if only to let girls see what they might make of themselves by proper training!

After noticing the rocks and caves at Matlock, Hutton says, "The greatest wonder I saw was Miss Phoebe Brown, in person five feet six, about thirty, well-proportioned, round faced and ruddy; a dark, penetrating eye, which, the moment it fixes upon your face, stamps your character, and that with precision. Her step (pardon the Irishism) is more manly than a man's, and can easily cover forty miles a day. Her common dress is a man's hat and coat, with a spencer above it, and men's shoes.

"She can lift one hundredweight with each hand, and carry fourteen score. Can sew, knit, cook, and spin, but hates them all, and every accompaniment to the female character, except that of modesty . . .

"She has strong sense, an excellent judgment, says smart things, and supports an easy freedom in all companies. Her voice is more than masculine, it is deep-toned—the wind in her face she can send it a mile; has no beard; accepts any kind of manual labour, as holding the plough, driving the team, thatching the ricks, etc. But her chief avocation is breaking-in horses, at a guinea a week; always rides

without a saddle, and is supposed the best judge of a horse, cow, etc., in the country, and is frequently requested to purchase for others at the neighbouring fairs.

"She is fond of Milton, Pope, Shakespeare; also of music; is self-taught; performs on several instruments, as the flute, violin, harpsichord, and supports the bass-viol in Matlock church. She is an excellent marksman, and, like her brother-sportsmen, carries her gun upon her shoulder. She eats no beef or pork, and but little mutton; her chief food is milk and also her drink—discarding wine, ale, and spirits."

Amongst eccentric women we may well put many members of that singular class of old Scottish ladies whose peculiarities have been described by such writers as Lord Cockburn and Dean Ramsay—a class that has now passed quite away.

This interesting race, marked by so many oddities, generally lived in provincial towns and never dreamt of going from home. Many of them had never been in London or had even crossed the Tweed. "They were a delightful set," says Lord Cockburn, "strong-headed, warm-hearted, and high-spirited; the fire of their tempers not always latent; merry even in solitude, very resolute; indifferent about the modes and habits of the modern world; and adhering to their own ways, so as to stand out, like primitive rocks, above ordinary society. Their prominent qualities of sense, humour, affection, and spirit were embodied in curious oddities; for they all dressed and spoke and did exactly as they chose; their language like their habits entirely Scotch, but without any other vulgarity than what perfect naturalness is sometimes mistaken for."

As a good example of these Scottish worthies take Miss Menie Trotter, of the Morton Hall family, a rough piece of granite, within which, however, was a well of deep feeling that "would spring up at odd times and flow freely in some eccentric channel, sending fresh soil to the youthful plant, carrying substance to the needy and comfort to the weary heart."

Miss Trotter, Lord Cockburn tells us, was of the agrestic order. Her pleasures lay in the fields and long country walks. Ten miles at a stretch within a few years of her death was nothing to her. Her attire accorded. But her understanding was fully as masculine. Though slenderly endowed, she did, unnoticed, acts of liberality for which most of the rich would expect to be advertised.

Prevailing loneliness gave her some entertaining habits, but never impaired her enjoyment of her friends, for whom she had always diverting talk and occasionally "a bit dinner." Indeed, she generally sacrificed an ox to hospitality every autumn, which, according to a system of her own, she ate regularly from nose to tail.

In small things she was penurious, but her generosity could rise to circumstances. She

had a contempt for securities and would trust no bank with her money, but kept all her bills and bank notes in a green silk bag that hung on her toilet table. On either side the table there was a large white bowl, one of them containing her silver and the other her copper money, the latter as full always as it could hold and accessible to any of the servants in the house. The idea of anyone stealing money seemed never to enter her head. "Indeed," says Miss Grahame, who has given us some interesting particulars regarding this original old lady, "she once sent a present to her niece, Mrs. Cunninghame, of a fifty pound note wrapped up in a cabbage leaf, and entrusted it to the care of a woman who was going with a basket of butter to the Edinburgh market."

Her character comes out beautifully in the following touching incident, after reading which admiration will overlook a thousand eccentricities. One day in the course of conversation she said to her niece—

"Do ye ken, Margaret, that Mrs. Thomas R—— is dead? I was gaun by the door this morning, and thought I wad just look in and speer for her. She was very near her end, but quite sensible, and expressed her gratitude to God for what He had done for her and her fatherless bairns. She said she was leaving a large young family with very small means, but she had trust in Him that they would not be forsaken and that He would provide for them. Now, Margaret, ye'll tell Peggy" (her handmaid) "to bring down the green silk bag that hangs on the corner of my looking-glass, and ye'll take twa thousand pounds out o' it and gie 't to Walter Ferrier for behoof of thae orphan bairns; it will fit out the laddies and be something to the lassies. I want to make good the words 'that God wad provide for them,' for what else was I sent that way this morning but as a humble instrument in His hands?"

In youth she had been attached to a young medical student who afterwards rose to great distinction in his profession. The student, however, was looked down upon by her family, and he and Miss Trotter parted to meet no more. To that incident may be attributed many of the peculiarities of her after life. She tried to console herself with long rural rambles. "I wandered among the hills," she says, "and held communion with Him who is the Father of the afflicted, and when I looked over the varied land and the restless sea, and down upon the broom and the flowers that were offering up their mute praise and incense to their Creator, I found the comfort that passes understanding."

"Mony ane thought when I gaed thae long walks among the mountains that I was alone, but I never was alone, for the Maker of this beautiful world was my constant companion."

Here we lay down the pen, for this old Scottish character makes a good ending.

VARIETIES

WHICH OUGHT TO GIVE UP FIRST?

A young wife, in the midst of her first quarrel, was asked by her husband which ought to give up first—the man who was the head of the woman, or the woman who was created for the man? With a smile and a kiss the wife replied:—

"Neither the stronger nor the weaker, but the one who loves the most."

A HAPPY STATE.—"Social happiness," says Lord Houghton, "consists in being asked everywhere and going nowhere."

A LOVE STORY.

A young lady had an old admirer, who, having found her glove, returned it with the following distich:—

"If from your glove you take the letter G,
Your glove is love, which I devote to thee."

The old gentleman's name was Page, and he received the following unexpected and epigrammatic reply, which chagrined him so much that he left the neighbourhood:—

"If from your Page you take the letter P,
Your Page is age, and that won't do for me."

ABOUT AMUSEMENT.—Never seek for amusement, but be always ready to be amused. The least thing has play in it, the slightest word wit, when your hands are busy and your heart is free. But if you make the aim of your life amusement, the day will come when all the agonies of a pantomime will not bring you an honest laugh.—*Ruskin*.

HOW TO HAVE AN EASY MIND.—Leave to everyone the care of her own affairs, and disturb not thyself with what is said or done in the world.—*St. Thomas Aquinas*.