

MISS EDGEWORTH'S LIFE AND LETTERS.

THE readers of the *Edinburgh Review* have lately enjoyed a treat rarely furnished by journalism. In its columns have appeared large extracts from an unpublished book printed in England for private circulation. The *Memoir and Selected Letters of Miss Edgeworth*, by the late Mrs. Edgeworth, is a title that will excite high expectations among those to whom the fertile invention and keen observation of the Irish novelist have made her name like that of a household friend; and the favored few who had glimpses of the happy and well-ordered family life, whose movement is here displayed, will feel a double pleasure in finding their fragmentary remembrances in harmony with the whole tenor of her days. This volume is one of those rare biographies like Lockhart's "Life of Scott," or Moore's "Letters of Lord Byron;" a biography whose subject is memorable, whose materials are ample, whose execution combines judgment with affection. The charge of concealing or of palliating faults, so often and so justly brought against those who write the lives of their friends, would have no reason here. Miss Edgeworth is before us in her letters just as she must have seemed to those around her—the lively, witty, sensible woman that our fathers found so attractive; a little prosaic, perhaps, never rising above a certain level in her writings, but within her own region thoroughly admirable.

We design to give our readers, in as brief a space as possible, an idea of the contents of this book, especially of the social life described in it. Miss Edgeworth was not only a lion herself, but she was the friend or acquaintance of a great many other lions. Her social position was the best; and at that time almost every literary celebrity belonged either by birth or adoption to the set in which she lived. At home and abroad, she met the people of whom we like to hear. Her letters abound in anecdotes and details of the famous men and women of her time.

She was born in Oxfordshire, January 1, 1767, and was the only daughter of her father's first marriage. He had four wives; and not the least entertaining and remarkable portion of the *Memoir* relates to him and them. His character, as it comes out through the book, is a peculiar one. He was a man of plans and purposes; full of energy and vivacity, and apt to talk of himself; something of a bore, we suppose, in general society, as our first extract will show; but alike agreeable and useful to his family. Lord Byron met him at a company in the later years of his life.

"I have been reading the *Life* by himself and daughter of Mr. R. L. Edgeworth, the father of the Miss Edgeworth. It is altogether a great name. In 1813, I recollect to have met them in

the fashionable world of London, in the assemblies of the hour, and at a breakfast of Sir Humphry and Lady Davy's, to which I was invited for the nonce. I had been the lion of 1812; Miss Edgeworth and Madame de Staël, with the Cossack, towards the end of 1813, were the exhibitions of the succeeding year. I thought Edgeworth a fine old fellow, of a clarety, elderly, red complexion, but active, brisk, and endless. He was seventy, but did not look fifty—no, nor forty-eight, even. I had seen poor Fitzpatrick not very long before—a man of pleasure, wit, eloquence, all things. He tottered—but still talked like a gentleman, though feebly. Edgeworth bounced about, and talked loud and long, but he seemed neither weakly nor decrepit, and hardly old.

"He was not much admired in London, and I remember a 'ryghte merrie' and conceited jest which was rife among the gallants of the day—viz., a paper had been presented for the *recall of Mrs. Siddons to the stage*, to which all men had been called to subscribe. Whereupon Thomas Moore, of profane and poetical memory, did propose that a similar paper should be subscribed and circumscribed for the *recall of Mr. Edgeworth to Ireland*. The fact was everybody cared more about her. She was a nice little unassuming 'Jeannie-Deans-looking body,' as we Scotch say; and if not handsome, certainly not ill-looking. Her conversation was as quiet as herself. One would never have guessed she could write her name; whereas her father talked, not as if he could write nothing else, but as if nothing else was worth writing."

Byron is said to have proposed a Society for the Suppression of Edgeworth; but

"Edgeworth was insuppressible; and, take him for all in all, he was not a man whom it was proper or expedient to suppress. With the simple change of gender, we might apply to him what Talleyrand said of Madame de Staël: '*Elle est vraiment insupportable*;' which he qualified after a short pause by, '*c'est son seul défaut*.'"

Certainly he was not a stupid man; his letters and the anecdotes of him prove the contrary. He came of a stock that had plenty of nerve and wit.

"His maternal grandfather was a Welsh judge, named Lovell, of whom it is related that, travelling over the sands of Beaumaris as he was going circuit, he was overtaken by the tide; the coach stuck fast in a quicksand; the water rose rapidly, and the registrar, who had crept out of the window and taken refuge on the coach-box, whilst the servants clustered on the roof, earnestly entreated the judge to do the same. With the water nearly touching his lips, he gravely replied: 'I will follow your counsel if you can quote any precedent for a judge's mounting a coach-box.'"

Edgeworth himself said, "I am not a man of prejudice; I have had four wives; the second and third were sisters; and I was in love with the second in the lifetime of the first." It came about in this wise: The first Mrs. Edgeworth, Maria's mother, seems to have been neither attractive nor cheerful. In 1770, her husband visited his friend Day, the author of "Sandford and Merton," in Lichfield; then he met Miss Honora Sneyd, and his admiration for her

appears from his Memoirs; but conscious of his weakness, he went abroad with Day.

"He was certainly deeply attached to her; and so was Day, who wrote her an argumentative proposal comprised in several sheets of paper, to which she wrote an equally long and argumentative refusal. The pith of his reasoning was that the best thing for her would be to live with him secluded from what is called the world; the pith of her reply being that she would rather live in it. On receiving this reply he took to his bed and was profusely bled by his friend Dr. Darwin; but speedily thought better of the matter, got up, rejoined the circle, and fell in love with her sister."

This sister had a high esteem for dancing and fencing; and Day went abroad to learn them.

They spent two years in Lyons; Mrs. Edgeworth died in 1773, and shortly afterwards the widower married Miss Sneyd.

"On Mr. Edgeworth's marriage with Honora Sneyd, Maria accompanied them to Ireland. Of this visit she recollected very little, except that she was a mischievous child, amusing herself once at her aunt Fox's when the company were unmindful of her, cutting out the squares in a checked sofa cover, and one day trampling through a number of hot-bed frames that had just been glazed, laid on the grass before the door at Edgeworth-Town. She recollected her delight at the crashing of the glass, but, immorally, did not remember either cutting her feet or how she was punished for this performance."

This step-mother was a most affectionate parent to her; her only printed letter to her daughter-in-law, written in the last year of her life, shows her watchful kindness. She says:—

"It is very agreeable to me to think of conversing with you as my equal in every respect but age, and of my making that inequality of use to you, by giving you the advantage of the experience I have had, and the observations I have been able to make, as these are parts of knowledge which nothing but time can bestow."

Edgeworth himself, in his first letter, says much the same:—

"It would be very agreeable to me, my dear Maria, to have letters from you familiarly; I wish to know what you like and what you dislike; I wish to communicate to you what little knowledge I have acquired, that you may have a tincture of every species of literature, and form your taste by choice and not by chance."

Honora died in 1780, and the next year Edgeworth, in accordance with her dying wish, married her sister Elizabeth, "who had flung over Day after he had undergone a regular gymnastic training for her sake."

After Honora's death, Mr. Edgeworth writes to his daughter:—

"I beg that you will send me a tale about the length of a 'Spectator' upon the subject of Generosity; it must be taken from history or romance, and must be sent the day se'n'night after you receive this, and I beg you will take some pains about it."

"The same subject (we are informed in the Memoir) was given at the same time to a

young gentleman from Oxford, then at Lichfield. When the two stories were completed, they were given to Mr. William Sneyd, Mr. Edgeworth's brother-in-law, to decide on their merits; he pronounced Maria's to be very much the best; 'an excellent story, and extremely well written; but where's the Generosity?' A saying which became a sort of proverb with her afterwards. It was Maria's first story; but it has not been preserved; she used to say that there was in it a sentence of inextricable confusion between a saddle, a man, and his horse."

In this year she was removed from Mrs. Lataffiere's boarding-school to "the fashionable establishment of Mrs. Davis."

"Mrs. Davis, it is stated, treated Maria with kindness and consideration, though she was neither beautiful nor fashionable, and gave her the full benefit of an invention for drawing out young ladies which, we hope, died out with this establishment. 'Excellent masters were in attendance, and Maria went through all the usual torture of back boards, iron collars, and dumb-bells, with the unusual one of being swung by the neck to draw out the muscles and increase the growth, a signal failure in her case.' Did it succeed in any case? There is a story of a wry-necked Prince of Condé falling in the hunting field, and coming to himself just in time to stop the peasants who picked him up in a well-intended effort to pull him straight; but the notion of pulling out a young lady like a telescope was surely peculiar to a 'finishing' school."

Some traits of her school-days are related:—

"She had a great facility for learning languages, and she found her Italian and French exercises so easy that she wrote off those given out for the whole quarter at once, keeping them strung together in her desk, and read for amusement whilst the other girls were laboring at their tasks. Her favorite seat during play-time was under a high ebony cabinet which stood at one end of the school-room; and here she often remained so completely absorbed by the book she was reading as to be perfectly deaf to all the noise around her, only occasionally startled into consciousness of it by some unusual uproar. This early habit of concentrated attention, perhaps inherent in minds of great genius, continued through life.

"She was remembered by her companions, both as Mrs. Lataffiere's and Mrs. Davis's, for her entertaining stories, and she learned with all the tact of an improvisatrice to know which story was most successful by the unmistakable evidence of her hearers' wakefulness, when she narrated at night to those who were in the bedroom with her."

In 1782 she left school and went with the family to Edgeworth-Town, where she had her home for the rest of her life. These are her first impressions of Ireland:—

"I accompanied my father to Ireland. Before this time I had not, except during a few months of my childhood, ever been in that country, therefore everything there was new to me; and though I was then but *twelve years old*, and though such a length of time has since elapsed, I have retained a clear and strong recollection of our arrival at Edgeworth-Town.

"Things and persons are so much improved in Ireland of latter days, that only those who

can remember how they were some thirty or forty years ago, can conceive the variety of domestic grievance, which, in those times, assailed the master of a family, immediately upon his arrival at his Irish home. Wherever he turned his eyes, in or out of his house, damp, dilapidation, waste appeared. Painting, glazing, roofing, fencing, finishing—all were wanting!

"The back yard, and even the front lawn round the windows of the house, were filled with loungers, followers, and petitioners, tenants, undertenants, drivers, subagent and agent were to have audience; and they all had grievances and secret informations, accusations reciprocating, and quarrels each under each interminable."

Of her father she says:—

"I was with him constantly, and I was amused and interested in seeing how he made his way through these complaints, petitions, and grievances, with decision and despatch; he, all the time, in good humor with the people, and they delighted with him; though he often 'rated them roughly,' when they stood before him preverse in litigation, helpless in procrastination, detected in cunning, or convicted of falsehood. They saw into his character, almost as soon as he understood theirs. The first remark which I heard whispered aside among the people, with congratulatory looks at each other, was: 'His honor, any way, is good pay.'

"It was said of the celebrated King of Prussia, that 'he scolded like a trooper, and paid like a prince.' Such a man would be liked in Ireland; but there is a higher description of character, which (give them but time to know it) the Irish would infinitely prefer. One who paid, not like a prince, but like a man of sense and humanity.

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"Some men live with their family, without letting them know their affairs; and however great may be their affection and esteem for their wives and children, think that they have nothing to do with business. This was not my father's way of thinking. On the contrary, not only his wife, but his children knew all his affairs. Whatever business he had to do was done in the midst of his family, usually in the common sitting-room; so that we were intimately acquainted, not only with his general principles of conduct, but with the most minute details of their every-day application. I further enjoyed some peculiar advantages; he kindly wished to give me habits of business; and for this purpose, allowed me during many years to assist him in copying his letters of business, and in receiving his rents."

Her next literary effort was a translation from Madame de Genlis; but neither this, nor any of the tales which from this time she began to compose, were published until 1789. Day had a great dislike of feminine authorship, and from deference to him her father waited till after his old friend's death. No doubt the delay was a real advantage to Maria. She wrote at this time "The Bracelets," and several other short stories; writing them on a slate and reading them to the family, and if they were liked, copying them. Her father was her chief critic:—

"Whenever I thought of writing anything, I always told him my first rough plans; and always, with the instinct of a good critic, he used to fix immediately upon that which would best answer the purpose: '*Sketch that and show it to me.*' These words, from the experience of his sagacity, never failed to inspire me with hope of success. It was then sketched. Sometimes, when I was fond of a particular part, I used to dilate on it in the sketch; but to this he always objected. 'I don't want any of your painting—none of your drapery!—I can imagine all that—let me see the bare skeleton.'

Among their most intimate friends was Dr. Darwin. It was to her father he gave his celebrated definition of a fool: "A fool, you know, Mr. Edgeworth, is a man who never tried an experiment in his life." She writes in 1792:—

"My father has just returned from Dr. Darwin's, where he has been nearly three weeks; they were extremely kind, and pressed him very much to take a house in or near Derby for the summer. He has been, as Dr. Darwin expressed it, 'breathing the breath of life into the brazen lungs of a clock,' which he had made at Edgeworth-Town as a present for him. He saw the first part of Dr. Darwin's '*Botanic Garden*;' 900*l.* was what his bookseller gave him for the whole! On his return from Derby, my father spent a day with Mr. Kier, the great chemist, at Birmingham; he was speaking to him of the late discovery of fulminating silver, with which I suppose your ladyship is well acquainted, though it be new to Henry and me. A lady and gentleman went into a laboratory where a few grains of fulminating silver were lying in a mortar; the gentleman as he was talking happened to stir it with the end of his cane, which was tipped with iron—the fulminating silver exploded instantly, and blew the lady, the gentleman, and the whole laboratory to pieces! Take care how you go into laboratories with gentlemen, unless they are like Sir Plume, skilled in the '*nicer conduct*' of their canes."

Again, in the course of the same letter:—

"Anna was extremely sorry that she could not see you again before she left Ireland; but you will soon be in the same kingdom again, and that is one great point gained, as Mr. Weaver, a travelling astronomical lecturer, who carried the universe about in a box, told us. 'Sir,' said he to my father, 'when you look at a map, do you know that the east is always on your right-hand, and the west on your left?' 'Yes,' replied my father, with a very modest look, 'I believe I do.'" 'Well,' said the man of learning, 'that's one great point gained.'"

Elizabeth Edgeworth died in 1797, and in May of the next year her father married his fourth wife, Miss Beaufort. Miss Edgeworth was blamed at the time for too ready an acquiescence in these speedy unions; but she seems to have done just enough, and yielded gracefully at the right time. She says:—

"When I first knew of this attachment, and before I was well acquainted with her, I own I did not wish for the marriage. I had not my father's quick penetration into character: I did not at first see the superior abilities or qualities which he discovered; nor did I anticipate any of the happy consequences from this union

which he foresaw. All that I thought, I told him. With the most kind patience he bore with me, and instead of withdrawing his affection, honored me the more with his confidence."

"All resistance and repugnance," says the reviewer, "were overcome by his eloquence or pertinacity, and he closes a letter to Day about a bust, the upas tree, frogs, agriculture, a heating apparatus, and a speaking machine, with this passage:—

"And now for my piece of news, which I have kept for the last. I am going to be married to a young lady of small fortune and large accomplishments—compared with my age, much youth (not quite thirty), and more prudence—some beauty, more sense—uncommon talents, more uncommon temper—liked by my family, loved by me. If I can say all this three years hence, shall I not have been a fortunate, not to say a wise man?"

Miss Edgeworth writes to her prospective step-mother, some years younger than herself:—

"I flatter myself that you will find me gratefully exact *en belle fille*. I think there is a great deal of difference between that species of ceremony which exists with acquaintance, and that which should always exist with the best of friends; the one prevents the growth of affection, the other preserves it in youth and age. Many foolish people make fine plantations, and forget to fence them; so the young trees are destroyed by the young cattle, and the bark of the forest trees is sometimes injured. You need not, dear Miss Beaufort, fence yourself round with strong palings in this family, where all have been early accustomed to mind their boundaries. As for me, you see my intentions, or at least my theories, are good enough: if my practice be but half as good, you will be content, will you not? But theory was born in Brobdingnag, and practice in Lilliput. So much the better for me."

In 1798 she and her father published, in joint authorship, "Practical Education," a large and miscellaneous work. The preface states that more than two-thirds of the book is hers. She writes this year:—

"In the *Monthly Review* for October, there is this anecdote. After the King of Denmark, who was somewhat silly, had left Paris, a Frenchman, who was in company with the Danish ambassador, but did not know him, began to ridicule the king—'*Ma foi, il a une tête, une tête*'—'*Couronné*,' replied the ambassador, with presence of mind and politeness. My father, who was much delighted with this answer, asked Lovell, Henry, and Sneyd, without telling the right answer, what they would have said.

Lovell. A head—and a heart, sir.

Henry. A head—upon his shoulders.

Sneyd. A head—of a king.

And adds: 'Tell me which answer you like best.'

"The Parent's Assistant" had been published two years before. Writing of it to her cousin, she says: "I beg, dear Sophy, that you will not call my little stories by the sublime title of my works; I shall else be ashamed when the

little mouse comes forth." The first story in her peculiar vein is "Castle Rackrent," in 1800. The first edition was published without her name, "and its success was so triumphant that some one not only asserted that he was the author, but actually took the trouble to copy out several pages with corrections and erasures as if it was his original MS." In 1802, Maria writes from Paris: "Castle Rackrent has been translated into German, and we saw in a French book an extract from it, giving the wake, the confinement of Lady Cathcart, and *sweeping the stairs with the wig*, as common and universal occurrences in that extraordinary kingdom."

"Belinda" and "Moral Tales" were published in 1801, and the "Essay on Irish Bulls," in conjunction with her father, in 1802. She says of it:—

"After 'Practical Education,' the next book which we published in partnership was the 'Essay on Irish Bulls.' The first design of this essay was his. Under the semblance of attack, he wished to show the English public the eloquence, wit, and talents of the lower classes of people in Ireland. Working zealously upon the ideas which he suggested, sometimes, what was spoken by him, was afterwards written by me; or, when I wrote my first thoughts, they were corrected and improved by him; so that no book was ever written more completely in partnership.

"On this, as on most subjects, whether light or serious, when we wrote together, it would now be difficult, almost impossible, to recollect, which thoughts originally were his, and which were mine. All passages, in which there are Latin quotations or classical allusions, must be his exclusively, *because I am entirely ignorant of the learned languages*. The notes on the Dublin shoeblack's metaphorical language, I recollect, are chiefly his.

"I have heard him tell that story with all the natural, indescribable Irish tones and gestures, of which written language can give but a faint idea. He excelled in imitating the Irish, because he never overstepped the modesty or the assurance of nature. He marked exquisitely the happy confidence, the shrewd wit of the people, without condescending to produce effect by caricature.

"Mrs. Edgeworth relates that a gentleman much interested in improving the breed of Irish cattle, sent, on seeing the advertisement, for the work on Irish bulls: 'He was rather confounded by the appearance of the classical bull at the top of the first page, which I had designed from a gem, and when he began to read the book he threw it away in disgust; he had purchased it as secretary to the Irish Agricultural Society.'"

In the autumn of 1802 the family went to Paris. There "they seem to have known everybody worth knowing." Madame Recamier, La Harpe, Montmorenci, Kosciusko, are a few among many. She says of Madame Oudinot, Rousseau's Julie:—

"Julie is now seventy-two years of age, a thin woman in a little black bonnet. She appeared to me shockingly ugly; she squints so much that it is impossible to tell which way she is looking. But no sooner did I hear her

speaking than I began to like her; and no sooner was I seated beside her, than I began to find in her countenance a most benevolent and agreeable expression. She entered into conversation immediately; her manner invited and could not fail to obtain confidence. She seems as gay and open-hearted as a girl of seventeen. It has been said of her that she not only never did any harm, but never suspected any. . . . I wish I could at seventy-two be such a woman!

"She told me that Rousseau, whilst he was writing so finely on education and leaving his own children in the Foundling Hospital, defended himself with so much eloquence that even those who blamed him in their hearts could not find tongues to answer him. Once at a dinner at Madame d'Oudinot's there was a fine pyramid of fruit. Rousseau, in helping himself, took the peach, which formed the base of the pyramid, and the rest fell immediately. 'Rousseau,' said she, 'that is what you always do with all our systems, you pull down with a single touch, but who will build up what you pull down?' I asked if he was grateful for all the kindness shown to him? 'No; he was ungrateful; he had a thousand bad qualities, but I turned my attention from them to his genius, and the good he had done mankind.'

We quote now from the reviewer:—

"The grand event of her—of every woman's—life came to pass at this period. On quitting Paris in March, 1803, she could say, for the first time, '*Ich habe gelebt und geliebet*' (I have lived and loved). Abruptly closing her catalogue of new acquaintance, she adds:—

"Here, my dear aunt, I was interrupted in a manner that will surprise you as much as it surprised me, by the coming in of Monsieur Edelerantz, a Swedish gentleman, whom we have mentioned to you, of superior understanding and mild manners; he came to offer me his hand and heart!

"My heart, you may suppose, cannot return his attachment, for I have seen but very little of him, and have not had time to have formed any judgment, except that I think nothing could tempt me to leave my own dear friends and my own country to live in Sweden.

"In a letter to her cousin on the eighth of December, 1802 (the proposal was on the first), after explaining that M. Edelerantz was bound to Sweden by ties of duty as strong as those which bound her to Edgeworth-Town, she writes: 'This is all very reasonable, but reasonable for him only, not for me; and I have never felt anything for him but esteem and gratitude.' Commenting on this passage, Mrs. Edgeworth says:—

"Maria was mistaken as to her own feelings. She refused M. Edelerantz, but she felt much more for him than esteem and admiration; she was extremely in love with him. Mr. Edgeworth left her to decide for herself; but she saw too plainly what it would be to us to lose her, and what she would feel at parting from us. She decided rightly for her own future happiness and for that of her family, but she suffered much at the time and long afterwards. While we were at Paris, I remember that in a shop where Charlotte and I were making some purchases, Maria sat apart absorbed in thought, and so deep in reverie, that when her father came in and stood opposite to her she did not see him till he spoke to her, when she started and burst into tears. . . . I do not think she

repented of her refusal, or regretted her decision; she was well aware that she could not have made him happy, that she would not have suited his position at the Court of Stockholm, and that her want of beauty might have diminished his attachment. It was better perhaps that she should think so, as it calmed her mind, but from what I saw of M. Edelerantz, I think he was a man capable of really valuing her. I believe that he was much attached to her, and deeply mortified at her refusal. He continued to reside in Sweden after the abdication of his master, and was always distinguished for his high character and great abilities. He never married. He was, except very fine eyes, remarkably plain."

"This is an interesting and instructive episode. It lets in a flood of light upon those passages of her writings which inculcate the stern control of the feelings, the never-ceasing vigilance with which prudence and duty are to stand sentinel over the heart. So, then, she had actually undergone the hard trials she imposes and describes. They best can paint them who can feel them most. She was no Madame d'Aubray, with 'ideas' of self-sacrifice admirably adapted for others' uses, but disagreeably unfitted for her own; and before setting down her precepts of self-command under temptation, she had tested them. Caroline Percy (in 'Patronage') controlling her love for Count Altenberg, is Maria Edgeworth subduing her love for the Chevalier Edelerantz."

They left Paris in 1803; and the same year she published "Popular Tales," and in 1809 "Tales of Fashionable Life." "Patronage," published in 1813, is the longest of her stories. Its origin is thus described:—

"Among others, written many years ago, was one called 'the History of the Freeman Family.' In 1787, my father, to amuse Mrs. Elizabeth Edgeworth, when she was recovering after the birth of one of my brothers, related to us every evening, when we assembled in her room, part of this story, which I believe he invented as he went on. It was found so interesting by his audience, that they regretted much that it should not be preserved, and I in consequence began to write it from memory. The plan, founded on the story of two families, one making their way in the world by independent efforts, the other by mean acts, and by courting the great, was long afterwards the groundwork of 'Patronage.'"

In 1813 the family went to London. They were people of good birth and fortune, and Maria was a favorite in society. A long letter from her gives an account of her visit. It is full of details of celebrated people. Mrs. Edgeworth says:—

"One day, coming too late to dinner at Mr. Horner's, we found Dr. Parr very angry at our having delayed and then interrupted dinner; but he ended by giving Maria his blessing. * * * We unfortunately missed seeing Madame d'Arblay, and we left London before the arrival of Madame de Staël."

This story falls in with a story printed in Moore's Diary:—

"In talking of getting into awkward scrapes at dinner tables, Lady Dunmore mentioned a circumstance of the kind in which Rogers was

concerned. It was at the time when Madame de Staël was expected in London, and somebody at table (there being a large party) asked when she was likely to arrive. 'Not till Miss Edgeworth is gone,' replied Rogers; 'Madame de Staël would not like two stars shining at the same time.' The words were hardly out of his mouth, when he saw a gentleman rise at the other end of the table and say in a solemn tone: '*Madame la Baronne de Staël est incapable d'une telle bassesse.*' It was Auguste de Staël, her son, whom Rogers had never before seen."

"Harrington," "Ormond," and "Thoughts on Bores" were published in 1817. In June her father died; and Maria's first task was to conclude his "Memoirs," of which she wrote the second volume. For a while she wrote nothing else. She went to Paris in 1820, and her letters from thence are among her best. In France, as in England, she was received everywhere; the main difficulty being to pronounce her name, the nearest approach to which was "Edgeratz."

"At one house, a valet, after Maria had several times repeated 'Edgeworth,' exclaimed, '*Ah, je renonce à ça;* and throwing open the door of the salon, announced, '*Madame Marie et Mesdemoiselles ses sœurs.*' Byron speaks of some Russian or Polish names as 'names that would descend to posterity if posterity could but pronounce them.' Many English names are exposed to the same disadvantage. An English traveller passed the better part of an evening at Tieck's, at Dresden, in 1834, vainly endeavoring to teach some German ladies to pronounce 'Wordsworth.' Few of them got nearer than 'Vudvutt.' The form of the visiting cards of the party, adopted (she says) after due deliberation, was 'Madame Marie Edgeworth et Mesdemoiselles ses sœurs.'

Here are some details of her Parisian life:—

"We have seen Mademoiselle Mars twice, or thrice, rather, in the 'Mariage de Figaro' and in the little pieces of 'Le Jaloux sans Amour,' and 'La Jeunesse de Henri Cinq,' and admire her exceedingly. In petit comité the other night at the Duchesse d'Escars, a discussion took place between the Duchesse de la Force, Marmont, and Pozzo di Borgo, on the *bon et mauvais ton* of different expressions—*bonne société* is an expression *bourgeoise*—you may say *bonne compagnie* or *la haute société*. '*Voilà des nuances,*' as Madame d'Escars said. Such a wonderful jabbering as these grandees made about these small matters. It put me in mind of a conversation in the 'World,' on good company, which we all used to admire."

"She met all the scientific men of note at Cuvier's, who gave a good instance of Bonaparte's insisting on a decided answer. He asked me 'Faut-il introduire le sucre de betterave en France?' 'D'abord, Sire, il faut songer à vos colonies.'—'Faut-il avoir le sucre de betterave en France?' 'Mais, Sire, il faut examiner.'—'Bah! je le demanderai à Berthelot.'

She was very fond of Madame de Staël and Madame de Broglie. Here is an anecdote of the former:—

"One day M. Suard, as he entered the saloon of the hôtel Necker, saw Madame Necker going

out of the room, and Mademoiselle Necker standing in a melancholy attitude with tears in her eyes. Guessing that Madame Necker had been lecturing her, Suard went towards her to comfort her, and whispered, '*Une caresse du papa vous dédommagera bien de tout ça.*' She immediately, wiping the tears from her eyes, answered: '*Eh! oui, Monsieur, mon père songe à mon bonheur présent, mamma songe à mon avenir.*' There was more than presence of mind, there was heart and soul and greatness of mind in this answer."

In December, 1820, she returned to England, where the last years of her life were spent. Scott says of her, in 1827:—

"It is scarcely possible to say more of this very remarkable person than that she not only completely answered but exceeded the expectations which I had formed. I am particularly pleased with the *naïveté* and good humored ardor of mind which she unites with such formidable powers of acute observation."

To which the reviewer adds:—

"The object of the most refined and cultivated society of London and Paris, in their ordinary intercourse, is not to instruct or be instructed, to dazzle or be dazzled, but to please and be pleased. Now, Miss Edgeworth was pre-eminently the fashion year after year, and she wisely acted on Colton's maxim in 'Lacon': 'In all societies it is advisable to associate if possible with the highest. In the grand theatre of human life, a *box-ticket* takes you through the house."

Miss Edgeworth thus describes Almack's:—

"Fanny and Harriet have been with me at that grand exclusive paradise of fashion, Almack's. Observe that the present Duchess of Rutland, who had been a few months away from town, and had offended the lady patronesses by not visiting them, could not at her utmost need get a ticket from any of them, and was kept out to her amazing mortification. This may give you some idea of the importance attached to admission to Almack's. Kind Mrs. Hope got tickets for us from Lady Gwydir and Lady Cowper (Lady Palmerston); the patronesses can only give tickets to those whom they personally know; on that plea they avoided the Duchess of Rutland's application; she had not visited them—'they really did not know her grace,' and Lady Cowper swallowed a camel for me, because she did not really know me; I had met her, but had never been introduced to her till I saw her at Almack's."

"Fanny and Harriet were beautifully dressed: their heads by Lady Lansdowne's hairdresser, Trichot; Mrs. Hope lent Harriet a wreath of her own French roses. Fanny was said by many to be, if not the prettiest, the most elegant-looking young woman in the room, and certainly 'elegance, birth, and fortune were there assembled,' as the newspapers would truly say."

She heard from Mrs. Siddons' own lips, a most interesting incident of her career:—

"She gave us the history of her first acting of Lady Macbeth, and of her resolving, in the sleep scene, to lay down the candlestick, contrary to the precedent of Mrs. Pritchard and all the traditions, before she began to wash her hands and say, 'Out, vile spot!' Sheridan knocked violently at her door during the five

minutes she had desired to have entirely to herself, to compose her spirits before the play began. He burst in, and prophesied that she would ruin herself for ever if she persevered in this resolution to lay down the candlestick! She persisted, however, in her determination, succeeded, was applauded, and Sheridan begged her pardon. She described well the awe she felt, and the power of the excitement given to her by the sight of Burke, Fox, Sheridan, and Sir Joshua Reynolds in the pit."

To excuse her constant yearning for the stage after her formal retirement, she was wont to say that nothing in life could equal the excitement caused by that sea of upturned faces in the pit. This story leads naturally to one told by Sir Humphry Davy:—

"Sir Humphry repeated to us a remarkable criticism of Buonaparte's on Talma's acting: 'You don't play Nero well; you gesticulate too much; you speak with too much vehemence. A despot does not need all that; he need only pronounce. *"Il sait qu'il se suffit."*' And, added Talma, who told this to Sir Humphry, 'Buonaparte, as he said this, folded his arms in his well-known manner, and stood as if his attitude expressed the sentiment.'"

To the end of her life she kept up her writing. Her children's books were published then. Scott writes to Joanna Baillie:—

"I have not the pen of our friend Miss Edgeworth, who writes all the while she laughs, talks, eats, and drinks, and I believe, though I do not pretend to be so far in the secret, all the time she sleeps, too. She has good luck in having a pen which walks at once so unweariedly and so well."

The brief conclusion and the reviewer's summary, we will quote from the *Edinburgh*:—

"She generally sat down to her writing-desk (a small and plain one made by her father) in the common sitting-room, soon after breakfast, and wrote till luncheon, her chief meal; then did some needlework, took a short repose, and wrote for the rest of the afternoon. She probably varied her habits during Scott's visit to Edgeworth-Town.

"On May 7th, 1849, being then in her eighty-third year, she writes to Mrs. Richard Buller: 'I am heartily obliged and delighted by your being such a goose, and Richard such a gander, as to be frightened out of your wits at my going up the ladder to take off the top of the clock.' She actually had mounted the ladder, as if emulous of the fate of the old Countess of Desmond, who broke her neck by a fall from a cherry-tree. On the 22d she was taken suddenly ill with pain in the region of her heart, and expired within a few hours in the arms of her step-mother, the author of the *Memoir*."

* * * * *

"The late Earl of Dudley, a fervent admirer, christened her the Anti-sentimental Novelist; and Madame de Staël was reported to have said, '*que Miss Edgeworth était digne de l'enthousiasme, mais qu'elle s'est perdue dans la triste utilité.*' When this was repeated during the visit at Coppet in 1820, the Duchesse de Broglie declared, '*Ma mère n'a jamais dit cela; elle en était incapable.*' For all that, we suspect she did say it. The internal evidence is strong, and the

remark is partly founded in truth. Miss Edgeworth is worthy of the highest admiration of the soberer kind; she does not inspire enthusiasm."

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"It is from the apex of the pyramid that men calculate its height, and the altitude of genius must be taken where it has attained its culminating point. Let those who wish to appreciate Miss Edgeworth, and derive the greatest amount of refining and elevating enjoyment from her works, pass over the prefaces, short as they are—never think of the moral, excellent as it may be—be not over-critical touching the management of the story, but give themselves up to the charm of the dialogue, the scene-painting, the delineation and development of character, the happy blending of pathos and humor with the sobriety of truth. Let them do this, and they will cease to wonder at the proud position conceded to her by the dispassionate judgment of her most eminent contemporaries.

"We cannot conclude without expressing an earnest wish that a *Memoir* so rich in curious matter, and so well calculated to confirm and even exalt her reputation, will not long be confined to a limited circle. In this age of monuments and testimonials, such a monument, if she wanted one, would be the most appropriate and the most durable."

WAITING.

BY MRS. ELLEN M. MITCHELL.

'Tis past the midnight hour.
Was that his tread upon the silent street?
The faintest sound has power
To make each throbbing pulse with tumult beat.

No, no, I watch in vain,
The idol I have made is only clay;
Oh God, soothe Thou this pain!
Roll back the clouds of gloom that shroud my way.

A woman's lot is mine;
To love, to suffer, in meek patience bear
With wrong, yet give no sign
Of outward woe, no token of despair.

Though all the world forsake,
I pledged my word with him to live and die;
That vow I will not break,
My soul is bound by every holy tie.

Can I not bear neglect,
At length to lure him from his downward track!
Is hope forever wrecked?
Will not my strong love win the truant back?
Hush! heard you not a tone?
The sleeping babe stirred softly on my breast;
Was that the wind's low moan?
The very air with list'ning seems oppressed.

Where is thy father, child?
This long, long, weary night will soon be passed;
Have fiends his steps beguiled
To wicked haunts, their snares about him cast!

Oh God, my weak heart aid,
His reeling, staggering step at last I know;
I shrink from him afraid,
Have I not felt the fierce weight of his blow?

Is this to be my fate
Night after night? Will nothing melt his heart?
Must I all vainly wait?
O demon of the bowl! how strong thou art!