

Celebrated Beauties.

"Woman, be fair, we must adore you ;
Smile, and the world is all before you."



LOOKING back across the gulf of years which divides us from the latter portion of the last century, we must be struck by the total change that has passed over society generally. No men like those giants in intellect, Chatham, Fox, Swift, Johnson, now fill the canvas ; no fine gentlemen, who, as Thackeray says, were in themselves a product of the past, and for which the finikin, white-vested masher is but a poor substitute. And the women !—those wondrously fair creatures, whose faces have been handed down to us by Reynolds or Gainsborough, and who smile at us from their gilt frames. What witchery in the almond-shaped eyes, long and languishing ; what pouting lips ; what arched and lovely necks ; what queenly dignity in their gait and carriage, and withal nothing of the voluptuous immo-desty which marks the wanton beauties of Charles II.'s Court : they were mistresses, these were wives.

There was never a period when so much homage was paid to beauty as in the last century. Men went mad for a lovely face, fought duels for a smile or a flower given by their mistress to a rival, and threw rudence to the winds to obtain her. We

are now going to take a glance at some of these fair magicians, whose stories read, many of them, like fairy tales ; Cinderella, for instance, pales before the history of the two Irish girls who, more than 150 years ago, crossed the fish-pond which divides the sister countries, and came to seek their fortunes, with only their lovely faces *pour tout potage*. The surpassing beauty of the sisters has become matter of history, nor, perhaps, is there a parallel instance of mere beauty exciting so extraordinary a sensation as that produced by these portionless girls.

Horace Walpole, writing to Sir Horace Mann, says :— "You who know England in other times will find it difficult to conceive what indifference reigns with regard to Ministers ; the two Miss Gunnings are twenty times more the subject of conversation than the Duke of Newcastle or Lord Granville."

Again he says :— "The Gunning girls have no fortune,

and are scarce gentlewomen, but by their mother. (She was the Honourable Bridget Bourke, third daughter to Theobald, sixth Viscount Mayo.) The Bourkes have Plantagenet blood, quite enough to compensate for the inferior tap of the Gunnings."

Maria was the eldest of "the goddesses,"



ELIZABETH GUNNING (DUCHESS OF HAMILTON).
(From the Picture by C. Read.)

as Mrs. Montagu styles the two girls. She was born in 1733, Elizabeth two years later. Consequently, when they appeared in London, one was nineteen, the other seventeen.

The character of the beauty of the Gunnings will be seen in the accompanying portrait of Elizabeth — long swimming eyes, and small, delicate mouth, and the soft, composed face, breaking from between the two lace lappets, secured in a top-knot over the head.

Soon both sisters had admirers. "Lord Coventry, a grave lord of the remains of the patriot breed," dangled after Maria, while Elizabeth was singled out by the Duke of Hamilton, who was wild and dissipated. He fell desperately in love with the young beauty, who, on her side, was well tutored by her Plantagenet mother how to play the noble fish she had on her line. The sequel is well known; how the Duke, inflamed by Elizabeth's coyness and coquetry, insisted upon the extempore marriage at midnight, the curtain-ring doing duty for a golden fetter. Her sister's good fortune decided the fate of Maria, who in a short time wedded her grave lord.

It is an old maxim that "Nothing succeeds like success," and the furore caused by the "goddesses" increased after their elevation to the peerage. "The world is still mad about the Gunnings.* The Duchess of Hamilton was presented on Friday; the crowd was so great that even the noble crowd in the drawing-room clambered upon chairs and tables to look at her. There are mobs at their doors to see them get into their chairs, and people go early to get places at the theatre when it is known they will be there. Doctor Sacheverell never made more fuss than these two beauties." A shoemaker got two guineas for showing a shoe he was making for Lady Coventry. But the mind of her ladyship was not equal to her beauty, the fact being that neither of the girls had been educated decently. The Duchess, however, concealed her deficiency better than Lady Coventry, who, Horace Walpole tells us, said every day some new "sprop-sits." Stories flew about of her sayings which, no doubt, lost nothing in the repetition; as when she told the good-natured king that the only sight she wished to see was a coronation. It was to him she also complained that she could not walk in

the park, the people stared at her so much; upon which George II. sent her a guard to keep the starers in order. This incident caused the circulation of the accompanying ballad, composed by Horace Walpole:—

"Shut up the park, I beseech you,
Lay a tax upon staring so hard;
Or, if you're afraid to do that, sir,
I'm sure you will grant me a guard.

"The boon thus requested was granted,
The warriors were drawn up with care.
With my slaves and my guards I'm surrounded,
Come, stare at me now, if you dare!"

The beautiful Coventry enjoyed her title but a short time, killing herself by the excessive use of white paint. She died at the early age of twenty-eight, and it was a tribute to her that she was regretted by all who had known her; even the heartless set who made up her world have a word of sorrow for this beautiful simpleton.

Elizabeth was more prosperous. Her life from end to end was a success. She was double-duchessed, marrying, a second time, after a year's widowhood, Colonel Campbell, who succeeded to the Dukedom of Argyle. The Duke of Bridgewater had also proposed for her. She was created Baroness in her own right, and given the office of Lady of the Bedchamber to Queen Charlotte. She died in 1791, having been mother to four dukes and wife to two, a dignity which few women could claim.

Here come another pair of charming sisters, Catherine and Mary Horneck, daughters to Reynolds' kinsman, Captain Kane Horneck; they are best known to this generation through the medium of Oliver Goldsmith's admiration for them, just as the Miss Berrys' best claim to celebrity is Horace Walpole's quasi-Platonic friendship. The loving nicknames of the "jessamy Bride" and "Little Comedy," which were given to the sisters by Oliver, show the terms of intimacy upon which he stood. And this friendship seems to have brought out some of the best points in the character of the lovable author of the "Immortal Vicar." Now we see him leading them through the crowded masquerade at the Pantheon, arrayed in his plum-coloured suit and laced hat; or he is conducting them and their mother on a trip to Paris, his simple, harmless vanity highly pleased at being the escort of such a lovely trio (for Mrs. Horneck was as handsome as her daughters). As usual, his innocent pride was misinterpreted. Boswell, whom Horace Walpole calls the "Mountebank to a Zeno," talks of his envious disposition,

* Horace Walpole's letters.

and adds that when accompanying two beautiful young women with their mother on a tour in France, he was seriously angry that more attention was paid to them than to him. But Boswell seems always to have hated Goldsmith.

Of the two sisters, Mary, the younger, the "Jessamy Bride," seems to have exerted a strange fascination over him. "Heaven knows," as his biographer, Mr. Forster says, "what impossible dreams may have come to the awkward, unattractive man of letters," but he never aspired to other regard than his genius and simplicity might claim at least, for the sisters heartily liked him, and perhaps the happiest years of his life were passed in their society."

One is glad to hear of even a ray of happiness crossing the path of the poor, sensitive poet; but it was nevertheless through his admiration for the "Jessamy Bride" that he met one of those mortifications which press keenly upon one of his highly strung, nervous temperament. This annoyance came when he was in the full tide of the success of "She Stoops to Conquer." We may assume that the sweetest

part of this success had been that it raised him in the eyes of his dear Mary. Nine days after, *The London Packet*, in an abusive article directed against the author of the new comedy, attacked him coarsely. "Goldsmith had patiently suffered worse attacks, and would doubtless here have suffered as patiently, if baser matters had not been introduced, but the libeller had invaded private life and dragged in the 'Jessamy Bride.'" "Was but the lovely

H—k as much enamoured, you would not sigh, my gentle swain, in vain."

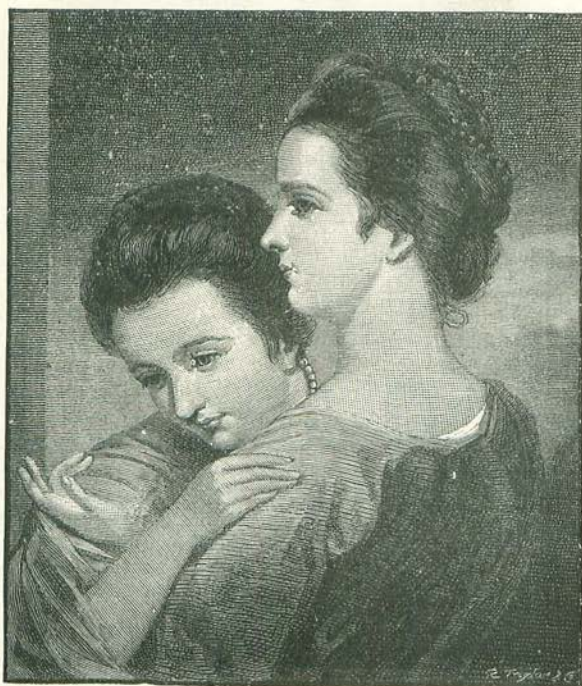
On reading this, Goldsmith fell into one of his sudden furies. He rushed off to the publisher, Evans, and beat him with his cane. Evans, who was a sturdy man, returned the blows; the combatants were at last separated, and Goldsmith was sent home in a coach much disfigured. The affair did not end here; the poor, sensitive poet was abused in every newspaper of the day, all steadily ignoring the *real* ground of offence. He had in the end to pay fifty pounds to Evans for the assault.

It is pleasant to think that during the lifetime of the poet no rival disturbed his peace of mind. Catherine, "Little Comedy," married early Mr. Bunbury, second son to Sir Charles Bunbury, of good Suffolk family, but up till the time of Oliver's death, the "Jessamy Bride" had no declared lover, nor did she marry Colonel Gwynn until three years later. Both sisters mourned their gentle friend sincerely. At their request his coffin was opened that a lock of hair might be cut from his head for them. It was in Mrs. Gwynn's possession when she died nearly seventy years later. She

lived to a great age, preserving her beauty even in years. The Graces in her case had triumphed over Time. Haslett met her at Northcote, the artist's; she was talking of her favourite, Dr. Goldsmith, with recollection and affection, unabated by age.

"I could almost fancy the shade of Goldsmith in the room," adds Haslett, "looking round with complacency."

Let us make place now for the most lovely of all Sir Joshua's lovely creations—a n d t h e



MARY AND CATHERINE HORNECK.
(F. om the Picture by Sir Joshua Reynolds.)

woman in the flesh was quite as beautiful. Her beauty got her a royal husband, hers legally with all sanction of Church, but not of State. Ah! there was the sore place. It was, in fact, her beguiling of the Duke from the right path of royalty that induced the famous Marriage Act of 1772. The Duke of Cumberland, third brother to George III., was little more than an overgrown schoolboy; his manners, Wraxall says, made his faculties, which were limited enough, appear even meaner. He was immensely attracted by Lady Anne Horton, recently a widow, and daughter to Colonel Simon Luttrell, of famous, or rather infamous memory; an Irishman of wild, roistering habit, who had been put forward to fight Wilkes, and so made Lord Carhampton.

Anne Horton is described as having bewitching, languishing eyes, which she could animate to enchantment if she pleased. Her coquetry was so active, so varied, and yet so habitual, that it was difficult not to see through it, and yet as difficult to resist. She danced divinely, sang charmingly, and was by no means deficient in talent. Like all the members of her family, who were cunning and specious, she laid her snares for the weak prince so adroitly that he fell in with all her plans; and, her marriage being duly witnessed, she had none of the heart-burnings and uncertainty which poisoned the life of Lady Waldegrave, who had married the Duke of Gloucester, but had left matters very much to his honour. Both ladies, to say the truth, had a troublous time. It was hardly worth the fuss and the turmoil, the ups and the downs, the humiliations and the slights inflicted upon them by the Royal pair, and their subservient Court.

Here we have another group of sisters—Irish too—the Miss Montgomerys, daughters to Sir William Montgomery. They are painted by Sir Joshua as twining wreaths round a statue of Hymen, a pretty allegory, for the three girls were standing hand in hand on the threshold of Hymen, one of them being engaged

to Mr. Gardiner, afterwards Lord Blessington; the other to the Honourable J. Beresford; the third and handsomest to the Marquis of Townshend, then Viceroy of Ireland. The Marquis, who was son to the odd Lady Audrey, who figures in Walpole and Selwyn, was a frank and fearless soldier, having fought at Dettingen and Fontenoy. His fancy had been taken by Miss Montgomery, whom he had seen some two years before performing in a Masque of Comus at Marlay, the residence of



ANN, DUCHESS OF CUMBERLAND.
(From the Picture by Sir Joshua Reynolds.)

Mr. Latouche. He had then prophesied she would be a lovely woman, and felt bound to set the seal of his approval upon the fair creation. Mrs. Delaney says that the women did not admire Lady Townshend, which, no doubt, is a proof that she attracted the admiration of the worthier sex. In Sir Joshua's picture she fills the canvas—her attitude is commanding, her smile bewitching. Her sisters are of a less majestic type.

What a lovely creature have we here—Elizabeth Linley, whose talents and mental endowments were something surprising, joined as they were to a beauty which seems to have captivated every soul who came near her; indeed, we have only to look at her portraits by Sir Joshua and Gainsborough, both evidently stimulated by love of their subject, to gather an idea of the spell she worked. The expression of the faultless face is so divinely sweet, there is such a mixture of archness and intelligence

in the wondrous eyes, that we can make a guess at what the impression must have been when life animated the lovely picture. So, too, it was with her singing; she was possessed of the double power of delighting an audience equally in pathetic strains and songs of brilliant execution, a combination allowed to few vocalists.

The life of this gifted being was a troubled one. It began in a romance,

returned to London. Richard fought two duels with Captain Matthews, and finally the course of true love ran smooth, and he and Elizabeth were publicly wedded, with all pomp and ceremony, in April, 1773.



MRS. BERESFORD.



LADY TOWNSHEND.

(THE MISS MONTGOMERYS.)

(From the Picture by Sir Joshua Reynolds.)

MRS. GARDNER.

From the first the public took the young pair under its protection; they made friends everywhere. It was in truth an ideal union of beauty and talent. Mrs. Sheridan's lovely voice

which added to her interest in the eyes of the public. The Linleys were all musi-

would have ensured them a good income; but her husband would not allow her to sing in public. This resolution on his part earned him the hearty commendation of Johnson:—"He has acted wisely and nobly. Would not a gentleman be disgraced by having his wife singing publicly for hire? No, sir, there can be no doubt here." *Autre temps, autres mœurs*—a gentleman does not now disdain to live by his wife's earnings!

cians; her father, Dr. Linley, was a teacher of great eminence, living at Bath. When the Sheridans came to reside there, the two brothers fell at once in love with the siren Elizabeth, who had already more lovers than she knew how to manage. She preferred, however, Richard Sheridan, and eloped with him to France, to avoid an importunate lover, Captain Matthews. On their arriving in France, the astute Richard worked on his companion's feelings and persuaded her to be married to him at Lille by a clergyman who performed these irregular marriages. The bride at once retired to a convent, where she remained until her father came to fetch her. Of late this version of the incident has been denied, and it is said there was no marriage; anyhow, the father, daughter, and Sheridan

Meantime, admirers crowded round the beautiful Mrs. Sheridan. Sir Joshua's portrait of her as "St. Cecilia" was exhibited in the Academy of 1775. Most simple and beautiful, was the praise of the carping critic, Horace Walpole. Even the excellent and most virtuous King took notice of the young beauty, and it was said ogled her when she sang in oratorios.

The struggle in which Sheridan was more or less engaged during his whole life had begun. A brilliant, erratic genius, such as was the author of the "Rivals," is not a safe guard of domestic happiness; but, after all is said and done, Sheridan

was not so much to blame, and even his worst enemy cannot deny that he had a warm heart.

Moore tells us that, with all her beauty and talent, Mrs. Sheridan was not happy, nor did she escape the censure of the world; but that Sheridan was ever unmindful of her, Moore declares to be untrue. On the contrary, he says he followed her with a lover's eye throughout. Her letters to him would certainly give the reader the idea that she was on

the best terms with her husband. They are delightful, fresh, and natural, and perfectly frank This gifted woman died early. She was only thirty-one when consumption laid its fatal hand upon her . . . During her last illness Sheridan was devoted to her. His grief and his remorse for any shortcomings in his married life are most touching! Miss Le-Fanu, writing an account of the last days to Miss Sheridan, says: "Your brother behaved most wonderfully, although his heart was breaking, and at times his feelings were so violent that I feared he would be quite ungovernable at the last.

Yet he summoned up courage to kneel by the bedside till he felt the last pulse of expiring excellence." And Mr. Moore tells us that, some weeks after his wife's death, "a friend, happening to sleep in the room next his, could hear him sobbing through the greater part of the night." But soon after he fell in love with Pamela, and married a Miss Ogle in two years.

And now we come to the most beautiful

woman of her time, Isabella, Duchess of Rutland. Looking at her picture by Sir Joshua, we cannot but be struck by the infinite grace of the attitude, the queenly dignity mixed with womanly sweetness. The Duchess was in fact eminently womanly, although acknowledged to be a queen of beauty. No word of scandal touched her name; and this in an age of Sneerwells and Backbites.

In *The European Magazine* of 1782 there is this curious testimony to her Grace's devotion to her lord:—
"Annexed to the respective names are the amusements which the following women of fashion principally delight in:—

Lady Spencer, riding.
Lady Salisbury, dancing.
Lady Craven, acting.
Lady Pembroke, Viol de Gambe.
Mrs. Damer, platonics
Mrs. Greville, poetry.
Duchess of Devonshire, admiration.
Lady Weymouth, mankind.
Lady Huntingdon, The Tabernacle.
Lady South, the last word.
The Duchess of Rutland, her husband."

In 1782 the Duchess accompanied the Duke to Ireland, where he filled the post of Lord Lieutenant. She was well fitted to win the hearts of the Irish people, who were then, as now,



MISS LINLEY.

(From the Picture by Gainsborough.)

easily impressed by beauty. The magnificence of the little Court had never been equalled, while at the same time decorum and a certain order were preserved, which had not always been the case. Under Lords Chesterfield and Townshend, Mrs. Deans talks of the guests carrying the dishes off the supper tables, and in Lady Hardwicke's time there it was that the romping bouts and the famous

Cutchacutchoo prevailed, but no wicked tales are told of our Duchess's Viceroyalty. Once only did she descend from her pedestal of dignity: it might be that the breath of frolic was too strongly in the air for even a Saxon nature to resist. Anyhow she *did* repair to the Irish Ranelagh Gardens to see the fun, disguised in the dress of one of her own waiting-women. She was of course recognised, and mobbed.

On another occasion, her jealousy was excited by hearing the Duke say he had accidentally seen the loveliest woman he had ever beheld. She never rested until she found out the residence of this

Mrs. Dillon, and forced her way into her presence, when a glance told her she was both beautiful and virtuous. Ashamed of her suspicions, she frankly told what had brought her, and warmly invited the other to return the visit. This, however, Mrs. Dillon had the good sense and dignity to decline.

In Mr. Gilbert's interesting history of Dublin, he mentions that the body of the Duke was waked (according to the Irish custom) in the House of Lords for three nights. The coffin was then carried by bearers to Christ Church Cathedral, where it lay in State. The Duchess returned to England, and never married again.



ISABELLA, DUCHESS OF RUTLAND.
(From the Picture by Sir Joshua Reynolds.)