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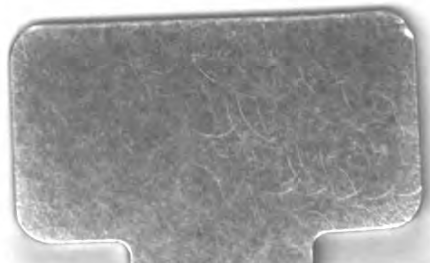


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CLASSIC AND HISTORIC
PORTRAITS.

BY

JAMES BRUCE.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS.

EUDOCIA.

THE Empress Eudocia, the queen of Theodosius the younger, was, while a heathen, called Athenais, and was the daughter of Leontius, a philosopher of Athens. "The writer of a romance," says Gibbon, "would not have imagined that Athenais was nearly twenty-eight years old when she inflamed the heart of a young emperor." Having been ill-used by her brothers, Athenais fled to Constantinople, where she was introduced to Theodosius by his sister Pulcheria, who had

previously given a glowing description of the charms of the fair refugee.

In Gibbon's account of Athenais, the physical and the sentimental are blended together in that writer's very best style. "She had," he says, "large eyes, a well-proportioned nose, a fair complexion, golden locks, a slender person, a graceful demeanour, an understanding improved by study, and a virtue tried by distress."

Theodosius, who was first permitted to behold this rare beauty from behind a curtain, where he had been concealed by Pulcheria, immediately fell in love with her, and made her his queen. She, on her part, forsook the pagan faith, and at her baptism assumed the pleasant Christian name of Eudocia. The Christian empress delighted in elegance and splendour, loved gems and gold, and had a taste for literature and art after the corrupted fashion of her age. She is the reputed author of a cento from the verses of Homer, adapted to the life of Christ, which is still extant. She converted several books of the Old Testa-

ment into hexameter verse, and wrote the "Legend of St. Cyprian," and a "Panegyric on the Persian Victories of Theodosius." The composition of a cento is a sufficient proof of the depravity of the empress's taste, which, however, would be much admired in her own day; and the turning of the Old Testament into hexameters was certainly a sad waste of time.

The empress enjoyed a high reputation for piety. Her habits of devotion, however, did not save her good name from the whisperings of scandal. The emperor became jealous of her, and banished her to Jerusalem, where she died after an exile of sixteen years, spent in religious exercises. The emperor's favourite eunuch raised the calumny. Eudocia was charged with an amour with Paulinus, the master of the horse, whose comeliness is celebrated by the writers of the time. The evidence of her guilt was that Paulinus had brought to the emperor some apples which Theodosius himself had given to Eudocia. Gibbon doubts the truth of even the story

being alleged. If it were true, there is certainly good ground for believing that a plot had been laid, such as in romances we often find quite effectual for the ruin of a virtuous woman.

The reader, as Gibbon remarks, is reminded of the tale in the "Arabian Nights' Entertainment," of the young man who kills his wife in a fit of jealousy, arising from her having given away, as he supposes, one of the three apples which he had bought for her in the caliph's garden at Balsora. Shakespere's "Othello" has done great good in discouraging, through the case of the handkerchief, all belief in this kind of circumstantial evidence.

In reading the story of Eudocia, as well as the Arabian tale, it should be recollected that, in the emblematic language of the East, the ripe apple signifies requited love. "Comfort me with apples," says the bride in the Canticles, "for I am sick of love." In some ancient paintings, Venus was represented with a ripe apple in her hand. From Catullus, we learn that it was the custom for the fair one

who had secretly received an apple from her lover, to conceal it in her bosom.* In one of the Love Epistles of Aristænetus, a writer living perhaps near to the time of Eudocia, the lover is represented as inscribing a declaration on the apple which he throws in the way of his mistress.† In another of these love letters, the lover throws an apple into the bosom of the woman with whom he is in love, which she receives and kisses, and hides in her girdle.‡

* Catullus, "Carm." lib. xv, Ad Ortalum.

† Aristænetus, "Epist." lib. i, Ep. x.

‡ Aristænetus, "Epist." lib. i, Ep. xxv.

THEODORA.

THE Empress Theodora, the profligate wife of Justinian, was, as her mother and her sisters Comitona and Anastasia were, extremely beautiful. Yet her beauty was not of that kind which has sometimes been possessed by licentious women which simulates modesty; for Procopius, using a remark which has been attributed to many others since his time, tells us that she carried indecency in her very face. It should be noticed that she and her sisters were deliberately and studiously brought up to wickedness by their mother. Each of them, as she

grew up, was sent to the stage of Constantinople. When Comitona, the eldest, came out, Theodora, then a mere girl, appeared as her attendant, wearing the long sleeves which marked the dress of a servant, and carrying the seat on which her sister sat. Theodora followed the career of Comitona, and her beauty soon attracted admiration. Her face, such as it is described to have been, was reckoned fine ; her complexion was moderately pale ; her eyes were brilliant, and glanced hither and thither. Her stature was short ; but the exquisite beauty of her figure was such, we are told, as could not be expressed by human art or declared by speech ; the statue erected of her by the Byzantines failing entirely, as Procopius says, to do justice to the charms of her person.

Theodora as empress loaded herself with jewels after the fashion of Constantinople, that fashion so repeatedly inveighed against by St. John Chrysostom in his discourses ; and a figure of her in long robes, with strings of large pearls on her head, neck and shoulders, has been en-

graved from a mosaic made of her in her time at Ravenna.*

Beyond her talents as a comic actress—a sort of Columbine—Theodora is not represented as having any of the accomplishments of her times, and it is expressly mentioned by Procopius that she could neither sing, nor play on an instrument, nor dance. She was thus deprived of some of the most powerful weapons for attacking the human heart. Justinian, her devout and theological husband, must have been one of those men whom the grossest indecency attracts instead of repelling. The law which forbade the marriage of a patrician with a woman who had been on the stage was expressly and solemnly repealed in favour of the most abandoned of stage performers—of her whom the historian calls “of all bad women that ever lived by far the most celebrated,”—who practised arts “which he who wishes God to be merciful to him may not even mention.”

* See Procopius, “Anecdota” (Fig. 5). Lipsiæ, 1827.

Justinian, adds Procopius, took for his own "the common disgrace of all mortals." The emperor multiplied statues of her throughout the provinces. He also called cities, towns, forts, and public baths after her name.*

It has been said that the crimes of the Tiberiuses, Caligulas, and Neros could not have been perpetrated by Christians. If the parallels to these monsters are not easily to be found amongst the emperors after Constantine, heathen Rome has no female parallel to Theodora; for Messalina herself, with all her infamy embalmed in the terrible verses of Juvenal, gains something of character when her guilt is compared with the horrible brutalities which, after all the deductions that can be made, we are compelled to believe of "the highly-to-be-revered Theodora, given by God to Justinian," as the loving emperor called her.

Human faith is staggered at the record of her impurities, and might doubt if the Roman

* See Alemanni, "Annotationes Historicæ," Procopius, p. 361, where a list of places called after Theodora is given.

senator who has told so much and yet professes to have left more and worse actions unrecorded, had not been over-credulous of an infamy than which the diseased imagination of a romancer, revelling in ideal wickedness and painting a lascivious fiend, could have conceived nothing more horrible. But though we should withhold our belief from the anecdotes of Theodora in her palace, we are compelled to give credit to Procopius, her contemporary, when he relates what she did on the open stage of Byzantium. That stage must have made rapid progress in shamelessness since the time of Chrysostom ; for though in his discourses he has more than one allusion to the unbecoming sights to be seen there,* he has no description of anything like what is described by Procopius.

The same reason which has led me merely to allude to the ample record of the habits of Tiberius, compels me to adopt a similar method with Theodora, and to pass over wholly un-

* See Chrysostom, Opera, lib. vii. p. 113 ; and lib. xi. p. 464. Paris, 1718.

touched the picture of Antonina, the wife of Belisarius, the companion in wickedness of the empress.

Of such a woman as Theodora it may be censurable even to hint that one good thing can be said. I do not know whether it be to her credit, or otherwise, that after she became empress she did not forget her old stage companions, but kept with her Chrysomalla and Indara, who had been dancers when Theodora was the comic actress. The empress also was the foundress of one of those asylums—the earliest noticed in history—which in modern days are called by the beautiful and tender name of Magdalen Institutions.

I am sure, however, that she deserves some credit for having employed her influence with her orthodox and persecuting husband to procure a relaxation of the severities exercised against heretics. Her own faith, it should be admitted, was not quite orthodox. The clergy, who in all ages have been in the habit of studiously disobeying the prohibition of the Saviour against presuming to point to the sins

of individuals as the cause of the afflictions with which Heaven may be pleased to visit them, regarded the malady of which Theodora died—a cancerous sore covering all that fair body which had raised her to the throne of the greatest empire in the world—as the result of the divine vengeance, not on her impure life, but on her want of a perfectly accurate belief in the Athanasian Creed. Had she in all matters of faith been what the triumphant religious party would have had her to be, it is not unlikely that they would have done something to save her memory from the execration of posterity by obliterating the record of her crimes.

Of the innocent arts which Theodora used to heighten the effect of her beauty, something may lawfully be said. From her system of living, as detailed by Procopius, it may be inferred that in her time stoutness of form, for which the Byzantines have long had a passion, was in request; for her habits were exactly such as are prescribed to those who desire to be fat. She made abundant use of the bath,



remaining in it long, and only leaving it to eat, and to rest in bed during great part of the day as well as of the night. At table she used an infinite variety of meats to provoke her to eat plentifully.

“The sensual Byzantines,” says M. Chasles, “destroyed the worship of beauty and proportion, in order to accord to stoutness that preference which all the nations of the East have professed.”* The taste of the Constantinopolitans in this way is sufficiently established by a variety of passages in the writers of the Eastern capital. Chrysostom feels it necessary to tell his hearers that “the virtue of the body does not consist in fatness, nor in a good habit of person, but in the capacity of bearing torments.”†

In a passage which M. Chasles has quoted, the same father speaks of the great care and expense which the ladies took to display the floating folds of their robes, the adornment of their hair, and the roundness of their figures.

* Chasles, “*Etudes sur le Moyen Âge*,” p. 113.

† St. Chrysostom, *Opera*, lib. 1, p. 724.

I doubt, indeed, if this taste has not been in most countries a more prevailing one than critics on statuary are willing to allow; and if the modern Americans are not the only people who are fairly chargeable with a decided fancy for slenderness, while their beauties have been severely censured by good judges on every point except their feet, of which the German traveller, Grund, anxious to praise all that is right as well as all that is wrong in America, has spoken with such rapture.* And if we are

* "There is one perfection," says Grund, "in ladies, sometimes the first to attract our notice, and the last to vanish when every other beauty has faded and departed, which consists in delicate feet and ankles. The idea is taken from Göthe's novel, 'Die Wahlverwandschaften,' and would hardly have found its introduction here, were I not backed by the all-powerful authority of the immortal poet, who at the same time was the most accomplished artist. Well then, this perfection is one of which the American ladies can certainly boast, and which they possess in a higher degree than the French, though they take infinitely less pains to obtrude it on the notice of strangers."—*The Americans*, by Francis J. Grund. Vol. 1, p. 37. Lond. 1837.

to believe what the author of the "Rambles in the United States" tells us of the "peculiar newly-invented and really very ingenious corset," and of the other articles of dress which the American women have adopted, they appear themselves to distrust the sincerity of the professed admiration of their countrymen for slimness, and to blame the unkindness of nature in their characteristic form, and earnestly and commendably to study to supplement her niggardliness.

Stoutness of figure, as it has certainly been the taste of Asia and Africa, has not escaped admiration in Europe. I have met with few commendations of slenderness in European writers. Chaucer indeed tells us of Alison, the carpenter's wife, that

"Fayre was this yonge wif, and therewithall
As any wesel hire body gent and small;"

and he seems to describe a modern lady of New York as travellers have painted her, when he adds :

“Winsing she was as is a jolly colt,
Long as a mast and upright as a bolt.”

On the other hand, in a great variety of European writers of different nations and ages, the *embonpoint* enters into the description of a beauty. In the “Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles,” it almost uniformly forms an element in the charming women mentioned. In the third novel, the miller’s wife is “very beautiful and *embonpoint*.” In the twenty-first, the abbess is described as “beautiful and young and *embonpoint*.” It is true that in some other instances in these tales, the expression *embonpoint* is evidently taken to mean “well made,” generally speaking; but this only makes the proof stronger that stoutness was considered to be handsomeness, just as we find that the Saxon passion for fair hair and fair complexions has made the English word “fair” a synonyme for beauty.

The Queen of Navarre—who, however, borrows much of her phraseology from the “Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles”—speaks usually in the same way of her beauties. In her eighth novel

the jealous wife asks her husband if it is the beauty and *embonpoint* of her servant-maid that have seduced his affections from her. In the fifteenth novel the wife ridicules the bad taste of her faithless spouse for loving a lady who is thinner and less beautiful than herself; and in the twenty-fifth, the wife of the advocate of Paris is described as "very beautiful in the face and complexion, and still more beautiful for her figure and her *embonpoint*;" (*fort belle de visage et du teint, et plus belle encore pour la taille et pour l'embonpoint.*)*

These are pictures of women drawn by a woman, and they show that the pious Queen of Navarre concurred in that taste which I believe has been the general taste in France to the present day. It was distinctly the taste of Brantome, and his taste was undoubtedly the fashionable taste of his time. Montaigne also describes the arts which were used by the ladies in his day to give themselves a false appearance of stoutness. Some years later we have the

* "Contes et Nouvelles," de Marguerite de Valois, tom. I, p. 306. Amst. 1698.

same taste displayed in a very minute and particular portrait of a female beauty, drawn by one who was herself a stout beauty. It is the description of Mademoiselle de Villene, by Madame Deshoulières. I give the portrait entire.

“ Je ne puis m’empêcher de faire la peinture
 Du plus charmant objet qu’ait formé la nature ;
 C’est la jeune Phyllis dont les divins appas
 Se sont rendus fameux par cent mille trépas.
 Je connois son esprit, sa beauté, son mérite
 Sa taille n’est encore ni grande ni petite ;
 Elle est libre, mignonne et pleine d’agrément
 Toute seule elle peut faire plus d’un amant.
 Ses cheveux sont fort noirs ; son teint n’est pas de
 même,
 Il est vif, delié ; sa blancheur est extrême.
 Son nez n’est pas mal fait. Mais que ses yeux sont
 beaux !
 Qu’ils sont fins ! qu’ils sont doux ! et qu’ils causent de
 maux !
 Ces yeux noirs et brillants ou l’amour pour ses armes
 Font naître des desirs et répandre des larmes.
 Tant d’illustres amants que l’on voit en ces lieux
 Sont, chère Amaryllis, l’ouvrage de ces yeux.
 Sa bouche est d’un beau tour ; elle est vive et char-
 mante
 Par sa forme on connaît qu’elle est très éloquente.

Elle a je ne sais quoi qu'on ne peut exprimer
Qui fait qu'on ne peut pas s'empêcher de l'aimer.
Elle a de belles dents ; le tour de son visage
Est si beau, qu'il n'est rien qui le soit davantage.
Elle a de l'embonpoint, comme il en faut avoir ;
Sa gorge est blanche, pleine : et l'on ne sauroit voir
En toute la nature une gorge plus belle ;
Et ses bras et ses mains sont aussi dignes d'elle.
La fraîcheur de son teint, et sa vivacité
Font bien voir que Phyllis a beaucoup de santé.
Elle a cet air gallant qui sait plaire et qui donne
Un charme inexprimable a toute sa personne.
Pour fair une conquête et pour la conserver
Elle a tout ce qu'il faut ; et l'on doit avouer
Que sa gorge, ses bras et sa taille admirable
Sa bouche et ses beaux yeux n'ont rien de comparable,
Son esprit tout divin répond a son beau corps
Le ciel en la faisant épuisa ses trésors."*

* "Œuvres de Madame et de Mademoiselle Deshoulières," tom. 1, p. 1. Paris, 1821.

CHARLEMAGNE.

THE person and habits of the Emperor Charlemagne have been described with all the minuteness desirable by his secretary and friend Eginhart.* He was large and strong in body, of great but not gigantic stature, measuring seven times the length of his foot.† It is

* “*Vita et Gesta Karoli Magni Imperatoris invictissimi,*” per Eginhartum ejus Secretarium descripta. Francof. 1707.

† “*Statura eminenti,*” says Eginhart, “*quæ tamen justam non excederet; nam septem suorum pedum proceritatem ejus constat habuisse figuram.*” “*M. Gail- lard,*” says Gibbon, “*fixes the stature of Charlemagne at five feet nine inches of French, about six feet one inch and a fourth English measure.*”

probable that the emperor's foot was a very long one. He does not appear to have derived any of his personal features from his father Pepin the Little, but from his mother, who was very tall, and who is called "Bertha with the long foot." Pepin, his father, is described as being of exceedingly small stature, but of great courage and incredible strength; though I cannot believe that he cut off the head of a lion with a stroke of his sword, as the French chronicles relate.* Bertha, his mother, in the early histories of France figures as a giantess; later historians admit that she was of great stature, and all agree that her character was generous and noble. Mezerai insists that she got her name of Bertha with the great foot, on account of her having one foot larger than the other.† I hardly think that this is so likely as that both her feet were large.

The head of Charlemagne was round and high, his eyes were very large and sparkling,

* Mezerai, "Abrégé Chronologique de l'Histoire de France," tom. 1, p. 447. Paris, 1717.

† Mezerai, tom. 1, 544.

his nose a little exceeded the middle size, his hair was beautifully white (*canitie pulchra*, says Eginhart), his countenance cheerful. There was much dignity in his appearance, whether sitting or standing. Although his neck was thick and rather short, and his belly rather protuberant, those defects were concealed by the proportion of his other parts. His walk was firm, and his whole bearing manly. His voice was clear, but more slender than accorded well with the appearance of his body.†

It may be worth while to compare this sketch with the picture drawn by Mezerai. "One cannot hear the name of this prince without immediately conceiving the idea of something great. He was of an imposing figure, and well formed in all his parts, except that his neck was a little too thick and short, and his belly a little too protuberant. His walk was grave and firm, his voice not sufficiently clear. His eyes were well opened and brilliant, his nose long and aquiline, his countenance gay and serene, his complexion

* Eginhart, "Vita Karoli," ut supra.

fresh and lively, nothing effeminate in his action and in his bearing, but nothing proud or disdainful; his mind gentle, easy and jovial, his conversation unrestrained and familiar.”*

There was a general resemblance between Charlemagne and William the Conqueror. Both were of great stature and full in person; and as Eginhart says of Charlemagne, so William of Malmesbury tells us of the Norman, that whether sitting or standing his appearance was majestic.

The health of Charlemagne, Eginhart tells us, was good, except that for four years before his death he was frequently seized with fevers. Latterly he was lame of one leg. In his illness he acted more according to his own notions of what was good for him than by the advice of his physician, whom he hated because he forbade him the roasted meats to which he had been accustomed, and in which he delighted, and directed him to use boiled meat. He exercised himself continually in riding and hunting, according to the habit of his nation, as there is,

* Mezerai, tom. 1, 458.

says Eginhart, scarcely to be found on the earth a people who equal the Franks in this respect. He loved natural hot baths, frequently exercising himself in swimming, in which he excelled. On this account he built a palace at Aix-la-Chapelle; and here in his latter days he remained constantly till the end of his life. To these baths he invited his sons, his nobles, and his friends, and sometimes a whole crowd of attendants and guards; so that occasionally there would be a hundred or more persons bathing there.

In his dress the emperor followed the native Frank fashion, wearing a linen shirt and trowsers, a jacket with a silk border and trunk-hose. Besides these he had bands on his legs. In winter he fortified his breast and shoulders with a corslet made of otter-skins. He wore a Venetian cloak, and was always girt with a sword, the belt of which and the girdle on which it hung were either of silver or gold. He had also a sword adorned with jewels which he wore on the occurrence of solemnities, or when ambassadors from distant nations were

present. He, however, rejected all foreign garments, however beautiful, nor ever suffered them to be put upon him, except that when he was at Rome, at the request of Pope Adrian and again at the request of Leo, his successor, he appeared in a long robe and cloak and shoes after the Roman fashion.

At great public ceremonies he wore a garment interwoven with gold and jewelled shoes, with a golden clasp fastening his cloak. He then walked adorned with a diadem of gems and gold. On other occasions his dress was little different from that of the vulgar. In his eating and drinking he was temperate, but particularly in his drinking; for he abominated drunkenness in any man, and more particularly in himself, and those about him. He could not, however, Eginhart goes on to say, abstain so well from eating, and used to complain that fastings were hurtful to his body. He feasted rarely, and then principally on great days and with a great number of persons. At his ordinary suppers,* the emperor always

* The *cena* of Charlemagne, which I have translated

had his roasted meats, of which, as I have before noticed from Eginhart, he partook more willingly than of any other food. During supper he either had a play performed before him, or listened to a reader. The reading in which he delighted most was the histories of ancient kings. It is mentioned also that he took great pleasure in the treatise of St. Augustin "De Civitate Dei."

In summer, after his noon's repast (*cibus meridianus*), he used to take some apples, and drink a little, and then putting off his robes, as at night he would retire to rest for two or three hours.

Eginhart, who furnishes all these particulars, is an historian of the highest veracity. In the midst of all his partiality for his patron we can learn the whole truth about the emperor's habits. Charlemagne was temperate in his drinking, but voracious in his eating; and this,

supper, was with the emperor, as with the Romans, the principal meal of the day, answering in this respect, and from the time at which it was taken, to the modern dinner of England.

as will be seen, is what legend and romance unite in recording of him.

Gluttony, which would be reckoned exceedingly vulgar in humble life, is a kingly and aristocratic vice, and is not reckoned ungentle in royal and exalted persons. “*La noblesse oblige,*” says the Baroness d’Oberkirch, “nobility ennobles.” Royal and aristocratic blood makes that refined in those who possess it, which is regarded as brutish among people who are not of good families. There is a long list of imperial gluttons ranging from the great Mithridates of Pontus—that king so wonderful in everything: who could drive six horses in hand, speak fluently twenty-two different languages, and swallow with impunity any ordinary poison—ranging from this marvellous man down to a living continental princess. The Baroness d’Oberkirch who considered, as she herself tells us, the want of high blood as the only fault utterly unpardonable, records a feat of her own in gluttony in the confectionary line, for which she paid the penalty of several days’ severe sickness, while all the time she had

the mortification to see another lady of high family, who she says had outdone her in the quantity which she devoured, walking about apparently quite uninjured.

The emperor, says Eginhart, was accustomed to break his rest at night by waking several times and occasionally rising. Then, when he was girt, he not only admitted his friends, but if the count of the palace reported to him any lawsuit which could not be settled without his authority, he presently ordered the litigants to be brought in, and examined the case and gave judgment as if he were sitting in court. Besides this, he would at these times dispatch any other business and give orders to his servants. In these matters Eginhart describes a practice which the emperor had in common with Augustus and Napoleon.

Charlemagne, says his secretary, was copious in discourse, and could express very clearly whatever he wished to say. Not contented with his own language he bestowed pains in the acquiring of foreign tongues; and he learned Latin so well, that he was accustomed

to pray in that language as well as in his native tongue. The Greek, however, we are told, he could understand better than he could pronounce it. He cultivated the liberal arts most studiously, and loaded with honours those who taught them. His teacher in grammar was Peter of Pisa ; in his other studies he listened to Albinus, called Alcuinus, the Saxon, a deacon from Britain. Under him he devoted much time to the acquiring of rhetoric, and dialectics and astronomy. He attempted also to write, and for this purpose he carried about with him in his bed, under his pillow, tablets and little books, so that when he had leisure he might accustom his hand in forming the letters. But this labour, says Eginhart compassionately, “ unseasonable and late begun,” succeeded but indifferently. The affectionate secretary enlarges on the emperor’s works of piety and almsgiving, mentioning that he corrected the reading and singing in the churches, though he himself neither read nor sung in public, but in a low voice and in common with the rest of the congregation.

Such is the substance of Eginhart's highly interesting account of Charlemagne's studies, and from his kindly statements there is no great difficulty in fairly estimating the extent of the emperor's scholastic attainments. This great man, who makes so prominent a figure in history as a warrior and statesman, and a munificent patron and warm lover of literature and science as he undoubtedly was, could read but could not write. I do not know, however, whether his painful efforts to acquire the art of writing in his advanced years do not excite an admiration of the greatness of his character, as much as if we were to hear that he had been a scholar from his youth upwards. The amount of Charlemagne's Latin was that he was able to pray in that language—that is, he could repeat the Latin prayers of the Church, which many a one can do who can neither read nor write.

The Scottish King, Malcolm III., a man of good intellect and a patron of learning, might as well be called a Latin scholar as Charlemagne, because he used to kiss the book which his

wife the sainted Margaret read to him. There is no necessity nor even excuse for extending the meaning of the word *orare* in the secretary's phraseology farther than understanding it to signify that the emperor used the prayers prescribed by the Church. (*Latinum ita didicit ut æque illa ac patria lingua orare sit solitus*). The expression about his Greek is obscure and evasive; and it may be fairly inferred that his being able to say "Kyrie Eleison" in church was about the full extent of Charlemagne's acquirements in that rich language. But what man, even what learned man in France or Germany, in that age understood Greek? Tiraboschi declines believing that even Italy, where, if anywhere in the west, the knowledge of it might be expected to be lingering, could boast of a single Greek scholar. "I do not find," he says, "to tell the truth, in the ninth century, any writer of our provinces, of whom it can be affirmed that he knew Greek."*

With the genuine portrait of the emperor,

* Tiraboschi. "Storia della Letteratura Italiana," tom. vi, p. 118. Firenze, 1776.

furnished by his contemporary and friend, the particulars of which I have given in a condensed form, it is curious and interesting to compare the picture drawn about three centuries later by a writer who, adopting the grave air of history, has given us the romance of Charlemagne. It will be seen, however, that this is a romance "founded on facts." In the history, Charlemagne is a tall man and an excellent eater; in the romance, he swells into the stature of a giant with a giant's strength, and the appetite of an ogre; while his temperance in drinking is eulogised by the romancer just as it is by the historian.

In the life of Charles the Great and Roland, falsely attributed to Turpin, Archbishop of Rheims, who was the emperor's contemporary, the twenty-first chapter is entitled, "De persona et fortitudine Caroli." Here we are told that Charles was brown, (*brunus* after the German *braun*) red in the face, handsome and beautiful in the body, but terrible in the aspect. His stature was *eight* times (the history says *seven* times) the length of his feet, *which were very*

long, (scilicet qui erant longissimi.) His shoulders were very broad, continues the romancer, and his loins proportionately so; and he had a suitable belly, with thick arms and legs. He was most beautiful in all his joints, strong in conflict, and a most keen soldier. His face was a span and a half in length, his beard a span and his nose about half a span. His forehead was a foot in breadth, and his eyes as the eyes of a lion sparkled like carbuncles; every man on whom he looked in wrath was terrified. His girdle was eight spans.

In the eating department, Charles is made to figure like one of those terrible monsters for clearing the world of which, a meritorious young man, familiarly called "Jack," has acquired the immortal title of "the giant killer." At dinner, says the pseudo Turpin, the emperor took little bread, but eat the fourth part of a ram, or two fowls, or a goose, or a piece of pork (*spatula porcina*—a most indefinite description of quantity), or a peacock, or a crane, or a whole hare. He drank, however, but little wine, and that soberly diluted with

water. He was so strong, that with his sword he cut down an armed soldier sitting on horse-back, horse and all, from the crown of the head to the ground with one stroke.

Similar stories have found their way into other histories besides this of the so-called Turpin. Montaigne censures Bodin for treating his favourite Plutarch as a fabulist when he relates that Pyrrhus, with his sword, cut down an armed man into two halves.* In the history of Scotland, however, the full feat attributed to Charlemagne of cutting man and horse asunder at a stroke, is ascribed to a Scottish knight fighting in the French army during the wars between England and France in the fifteenth century. Charlemagne, we are farther told, could raise an armed man on his palm with one hand from the ground to his head. He was, says the pretended Turpin, in conclusion, most generous in his gifts, most righteous in his judgments, and pleasant in his discourse.†

* Montaigne, "Essais," liv. iv. c. 32.

† "De Vita Caroli Magni et Rolandi Historia,

The reader who listens to the way in which, according to this wonderful history, the bed of Charlemagne was guarded by night, will not be surprised that his slumbers were neither sound nor lengthened. "About his bed every night a hundred and twenty brave and orthodox men (the author of the romance is intensely orthodox and exceedingly theological) were placed to guard him. Forty of these passed the first watch of the night, namely ten at his head and ten at his feet, ten on his right side and ten on his left, holding each in his right hand a naked sword, and in his left a burning candle. In the same way, other forty kept the second watch; and, in like manner, other forty kept the

Joanni Turpino, Archiepiscopo Rimensi vulgo tributa," p. 56. Florentiæ, 1822.—The real Archbishop Turpin died in the year 800, fourteen years before Charlemagne. The romance attributed to him has been pretty accurately assigned to the end of the eleventh or the beginning of the twelfth century, between 1090 and 1120. By some writers, Pope Calixtus II., who in 1122 put the seal of his infallible authority on the truth of the whole story, has been charged with the authorship of this curious book.

third watch even until day, the rest in the meanwhile sleeping.”* The emperor must have been as famous for sleeping as he was for eating, if he could have slept with all these annoyances about him.

On four solemn festivals of his Church, says Turpin, when the emperor kept his court in Spain, he wore his crown and carried his sceptre ; namely, on the birthday of the Saviour, on the eve of Pasch, on the day of Pentecost, and on St. James’s-day.

* Turpin, “ De Vita Caroli,” p. 57.

MIDDLE AGE PORTRAITS.

I AM aware that as the memory of the heroes who lived before Agamemnon has perished, because, as Horace tells us, they had not a poet to celebrate their deeds, so there is much ignorance prevailing about the personal appearance and characteristics of the great and enlightened men and women of the dark ages, arising not so much from the want of writers and chroniclers in these ages as from their obscurity at this day, and the dryness of their manner, which repels the perusal of modern readers. The Byzantine writers, in particular, are tasteless, silly, and cold.

Mr. Hallam is not perfectly, though tolerably, correct when he tells us that between the appearance of the work of Boethius, "De Consolatione Philosophiæ," (anno 460) and the date of the "Letters of Abelard and Heloise" (1170), Europe did not produce a single entertaining work. He might have added to this list, as coming within this dry period, that France gave to the world the "History of the Franks," by Gregory of Tours (591); Germany, Eginhard's "Life of Charlemagne" (870); and England, the histories of the Venerable Bede (730) and William of Malmesbury (1142); all of them very interesting works.

I should have liked well to have been able to have presented my readers with a complete portrait of the famous Queen Brunehilde, "the murderess of seven kings," as the old chroniclers call her; of the great and good King Alfred; and of the famous Gerbert, or Pope Sylvester II., the greatest man of science of his age, of whose connexion with the devil so many stories have been handed down to us by

a succession of credulous historians. But above all, I regret, with M. Chasles, that we are entirely ignorant of the outward appearance, the manners and habits of Roswida, the nun of Gandesheim, who, amidst the thick darkness of the tenth century—the darkest of the dark—the *sæculum obscurum* of historians—with a pious and faithful hand, trimmed the lamp of knowledge in her chamber in the convent, and having studied the drama in the plays of the heathen Terence, wrote those Christian comedies still extant which are mentioned with such high praise by the earliest literary annalists of Europe, as works calculated to lead those who witnessed their performance in the paths of virtue and religion.

The Christian theatre was then, as it had always been since its origin with St. Gregory of Nyssa, and continued to be till about the end of the sixteenth century, the faithful ally of the pulpit and the Church. Little did the cheerful and good-humoured nun dream that the time would come when a set of sour, surly fellows, calling themselves what she would not have called

herself, godly, would rise up and make a divorce between religion and everything that is agreeable, and declare that such innocent and instructive recreations as had produced roars of salutary laughter amongst her spiritual sisters, were the inventions and contrivances of Satan, who, according to the Puritans, is the author of everything that is pleasant, graceful, or elegant, or that tends, in any measure, to make the burden of this weary life bearable.*

* The question has been raised, were the comedies of Roswida intended for performance and actually performed, or only designed for perusal? From the specimen of their character, and the nature of the fun which pervaded them, as given by M. Chasles, I cannot doubt that they were actually performed. Mr. Hallam ("Introduction to the Literature of Europe," lib. 1, c. 14), speaks with contempt of the nun's comedies; but Hallam speaks contemptuously of "Bayle's Dictionary," and had a perfect passion for everything that is dry and unreadable, and an utter destitution of all imagination, taste, or feeling. M. Chasles, who has the faculties of a true critic about him, gives a favourable judgment on the writings of Roswida. See his Essay "Hrosvita, Religieuse de Gandesheim," in his "Etudes sur le Moyen Age," p. 243.

M. Chasles is, I think, pretty safe in assuring us that whether Roswida was or was not beautiful, her appearance must have been intellectual and expressive. His picture of the young nun reading Terence under the shadow of the great oaks on the banks of the Ganda is extremely fine.

ABELARD AND HELOISE.

WE have but little, and that very imperfect, knowledge of the persons of the famous Abelard and Heloise. In modern times doubts, not well-founded I think, have been entertained, whether Heloise was really beautiful. It may not be good evidence of her personal charms, that Abelard, from the first time of his becoming acquainted with her, meditated her seduction; but the fair interpretation of the celebrated passage, in which he ranks her literary attainments above her beauty, is, I think, a testimony that she was possessed of beauty.

From this passage, it must be admitted that no less acute a critic than Bayle, who, however, had a predisposition to undervalue the influence of mere personal beauty in exciting love, has inferred that Heloise was but moderately comely. "As in her face," says Abelard, "she was not the lowest, so in literature she was supreme" (cum per faciem non esset infima, per abundantium literarum esset suprema.*) From this indirect mode of compliment, Bayle argues that Heloise was merely "sufficiently pretty" (*assez belle*); and he asks whether those who have described her as possessed of the most ravishing beauty are to be believed in preference to Abelard, who had an interest in magnifying her charms. †

Now, it is certainly to be regretted that Abelard, who has shown so little modesty and so much distinctness in speaking of his own great personal attractions, has not avoided all

* "Petri Abelardi Abbatis Ruyensis et Heloisæ Abbatissæ Paracletensis Epistolæ," Epist. I, p. 9. Lond. 1718. (Rawlinson's Edit.)

† "Dictionnaire Hist. et Crit." Art. "Heloise."

ambiguity in his description of Heloise, though the circumstance is perfectly characteristic of the man. Yet it may still be contended, and with good reason, that the *non infima* may be taken to express a great degree of beauty, and be an equivalent for *eximia*.

A completely parallel usage of the same form of compliment, occurs in the Gospel of Matthew. "And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, art not the least (*οὐκ ελαχιστα*) amongst the princes of Judah; for out of thee shall come a king who will rule my people," where it cannot be disputed that the highest honour is intended to be bestowed on the city which gave birth to the Saviour. On the whole, I think we have Abelard's testimony, as far as it is valuable, to the beauty of Heloise; and if on this subject he has been much more concise than could have been wished, we must remember, that when he penned this passage, his days of rapture were fled for ever.

In an interesting abstract of the history of Abelard and Heloise, M. Villenave states

his opinion that Heloise had a moderate beauty (*une beauté médiocre*); and from some expressions in the strange commentary which Abelard makes in his second epistle to Heloise, on the passage in the song of Solomon, "I am black but comely," he ventures to assert that she was of a dark complexion.

We have evidence that both Heloise and Abelard were of tall stature. M. Villenave's essay contains an account of the various translations, from place to place, which the remains of this famous pair underwent, from the time that they were first interred in the priory of Saint Marcel, till they were removed to the cemetery of Père le Chaise. "They have been troubled and agitated in death," he says, "as they had been in life."

When Lucien Buonaparte, as Minister of the Interior, in 1800, directed that their remains should be removed from their then resting-place, in the church of Nogent, to the Museum of French Monuments, the coffin was opened. The head of Abelard was found to be incom-

plete, but that of Heloise was perfectly entire. Besides the head of Heloise, the coffin contained the lower jaw in two parts, and the thighs, the legs, and the arms, all completely preserved.

On this occasion, Delaunaye, the author of a life of Abelard, examined with care the bones remaining of both skeletons (which were separated by a leaden plate), and declared that both had been persons of great stature and fine proportions (*d'une grande stature et de belles proportions*). Lenoir, the originator of the Museum of Monuments, came to the same conclusion, adding, that "the head of Heloise is beautifully proportioned; the forehead of a flowing form (*d'une forme coulante*), well-rounded, and in harmony with the other parts of the head, expresses still a great beauty."

While their remains were in the Church at Nogent, enormous sums, amounting sometimes to a thousand crowns, were several times offered for a single tooth of Heloise. "I have no occasion to add," says Delaunaye, "that these offers were made by Englishmen." Lenoir preserved

in his cabinet, some fragments of the bones and teeth of both Heloise and Abelard.*

“There is,” says M. Villenave, “no authentic image of these illustrious personages, who for a moment were the light of letters and of philosophy in the long darkness of the middle ages.” There are, it appears, two medallions of Abelard and Heloise in an old and miserable house in the cloister of Notre Dame, said to have been the residence of Fulbert, Heloise’s uncle; but the costume of both proves that these figures are works of a comparatively modern date. Busts of the two were moulded by direction of Lenoir from casts taken from their skulls.

Those who do not seek so much to be accurate as entertaining in their histories, never fail to ascribe abundance of beauty to women who have inspired a powerful passion in the other sex. The popular stories of Heloise all agree in heaping a crowd of charms upon her

* Villenave, “Abelard et Héloïse, leurs Amours, leurs Malheurs, et leurs Ouvrages,” p. 118, prefixed to “Lettres d’Abelard et Héloïse.” Paris, 1840.

person, which they have composed out of the usual materials of black hair, black eyes, ruddy lips, white teeth, perfect symmetry of form, &c. Such testimonies might be easily set aside, if in addition to the evidence furnished by Delaunaye and Lenoir, we had not other opinions from writers who had studied the history of the famous lovers, and were not able to put Bayle's interpretation on Abelard's words. Papire Masson tells us that Heloise was of excelling wit and beauty (*præstanti ingenio et forma*).

Gervase also, who had studied every document referring to her and Abelard, and who certainly had nothing either of sentiment or romance about him, and whose avowed object was to withdraw attention from the history of the erring lovers to the record of the piety of the abbot and the abbess, considering that in treating as they had done of "the least edifying days" of Abelard, other writers had "composed pieces of gallantry only suited to nourish an impure flame;" even Gervase, the recluse of La Trappe, with these high views, feels justified

in telling us of Heloise that “few girls surpassed her in beauty, while in the kingdom and perhaps on earth she had not her equal in wit and learning.” (Peu de filles la surpassoient en beauté ; mais il n’y en avoit dans le royaume, ni peut-être sur la terre qui l’égaloit en esprit et en érudition.)*

Brucker, the historian of Philosophy also tells us that she was “commendable for her exquisite beauty” (*eximia pulchritudine commendabilis*),† which is sufficient to show that this very learned writer had read the testimony of Abelard in the same spirit as I think it ought to be read.

Of Abelard we have his own testimony that he was very beautiful ; and though he was in every respect a conceited coxcomb, perhaps his evidence on this point cannot well be rejected. He tells us that when he contemplated the seduction of Heloise he believed he would have a very easy task. “For I was then,” he says,

* “Vie de Pierre Abeilard,” &c. tom. I, p. 42. Paris, 1720.

† “Historia Critica Philosophiæ,” tom. III, p. 744. Lipsiæ, 1743.

“of so great reputation and was so endowed with the graces of youth and form, that I feared no repulse from any woman whatever on whom I might condescend to bestow my love.”* This language is remarkably characteristic of Abelard. At the time to which he refers he was forty and Heloise not half that age ; and yet he could speak of his “youth.” There is no doubt that downright impudence, in which Abelard was an eminent proficient, has a great charm for most men and women in this world. The power of audacity in politics and in war is invariably acknowledged, and in love also that assurance which is blind to all chance of failure will often succeed where a world of modest merit may fail. The younger Crebillon in his best and indeed his only decent romance, “*Les Egarements du Cœur et de l’Esprit*,” introduces the universal favourite Versac instructing Meilcour in the art of succeeding in female society, and

* “*Tanti quippe tunc nominis eram et juventutis et formæ gratia præeminebam, ut quamcumque fæminarum nostro dignarer amore, nullam vererer repulsam.*”—*Abelardi “Epist.”* 1, p. 9.

assuring him that all that is required is to talk incessantly about himself and in praise of himself; and that it was by professing a highly favourable opinion of himself that he had driven all his rivals out of the field. "Let us not," says Versac, "be inwardly prejudiced in favour of our own merit, but let us appear to be so; let a certain assurance be painted in our eyes, in the tone of our voices, in our gestures, and even in the regard we have for others. Above all, let us speak continually and speak well of ourselves; let us not fear to say and say again that we are possessed of superior merit. There are thousands of people who are believed to have merit, simply because they never cease telling us that they have."*

Abelard could act according to the laws here laid down without being guilty of any hypocrisy; for this arrogant man was sincerely and profoundly impressed with a sense of his own talents. It is not an uncommon thing to see a woman passionately in love with a man who

* "Les Egarements du Cœur et de l'Esprit," p. 277. Maestricht, 1786.

has not one particle of love or admiration, or even respect, to bestow upon any creature in the world but himself; whose whole worship is paid at his own shrine; and who, to the eyes of all indifferent persons, appears scarcely to put a decent veil over his heartless and ignorant contempt of the being who loves him ardently, and of the whole sex to which she belongs. Such a man was Abelard; such a woman was Heloise. It is certainly far from evident that Abelard ever loved Heloise at all. Heloise herself, constitutionally the victim of vehement passion, had more than mere misgivings on this subject; and in a very remarkable passage in her first letter she reproaches Abelard with having neither friendship nor love for her; "and this," she adds, "my dearest, is not so much my thought as that of all others."*

* "Concupiscentia te mihi potius quam amicitia sociavit, libidinis ardor quam amor. Hæc, delectissime, non tam mea est quam omnium conjectura."—*Epist. Heloisæ*, I, p. 51. This is most painfully unromantic. Heloise wrote with terrible vigour; and literary women of the twelfth century used language

That Heloise ardently loved and generously loved Abelard, there is no room to doubt. Hers was a better nature; and it is to be regretted that in their attempts to palliate the hateful selfishness of her seducer, most of his biographers have done great injustice to his victim. Her expressed desire to be considered the mistress rather than the wife of Abelard, after their secret marriage, has been represented as an effusion of diseased licentiousness. But Heloise may surely claim to be judged by reference to the opinions of the age in which she lived. To have been avowedly a married priest, would have ruined the worldly prospects and crossed the ambition of Abelard; while to have kept a mistress or any quantity of mistresses, would have been no bar to his sitting in the which is not permitted to men in the nineteenth. "She loved like St. Theresa, and wrote sometimes like Seneca," says M. Cousin. In her third letter, amidst a crowd of references to Scripture and to the writings of the Fathers and Saints of the Church, she makes a special and verbatim quotation from Ovid's "Art of Love."

chair of St. Peter, and acting as the Vicar of God.

The prevailing opinion in Heloise's time was, that it was positively pollution for a priest to be married, but quite allowable for an unchaste man to officiate at the altar. This opinion was sincerely and devoutly held by Heloise, and in this light, which was her light, what has been charged against her as the delirium of profligacy, was the fruit of her zeal for the honour and the interests of Abelard. The great joy which she felt at the prospect of becoming a mother, is characteristic of the woman and a favourable characteristic. "She wrote to me about it," says Abelard, "with the greatest exultation" (*cum summa exultatione*).* I suspect that the profligate theologian did not read the letter conveying the happy tidings with any exultation at all.

Perhaps Heloise was aware that her vain lover would take care to let the world know sufficiently about his fine figure without her

* Abelardi, "Epist." 1, p. 12.

assistance. It must, however, be regarded as somewhat remarkable that the evidence of the woman who loved him to distraction is wanting to confirm the very favourable judgment which Abelard passes on his own beauty. Heloise alludes distinctly enough to his accomplishments, and tells us in language breathing of her own intense passion that neither maid nor married woman could resist him.* “There were in particular in you,” she says, “two gifts by which you could presently draw towards you the heart of any woman—the arts of talking and of singing; gifts rarely attained by philosophers.”

Abelard besides was a poet; I venture to conjecture a cold, stiff, and pedantic poet and Heloise alludes to his amatory verses, which, on account of their sweetness of diction and music, she says, were in every one’s mouth—as a principal cause why the women sighed for

* “Quæ conjugata, quæ virgo non concupiscebat absentem et non exardebat in præsentem?”—*Epist. Heloisæ*, I, p. 51. Heloise’s language is unfortunately always gross.

love of him ; and “ as these songs,” she tells us, “ for the most part treated of our loves, they spread my name in many regions and kindled the envy of many women against me.”* She adds, and this is the only reference which she makes to his person, and it is vague enough—“ For what gift of mind or body did not adorn thy youth ?”

Pope, in his beautiful epistle of Heloise, makes her predict that her love would be grafted “ immortal” on the fame of Abelard. I dare say that this might be the thought of Heloise, but it is just the reverse that has taken place. Abelard owes all the fame which he now enjoys to the passion entertained for him by Heloise, who deserved a more worthy lover ; he owes all the knowledge which exists of his name to his profligacy.

Popular opinion, misled by a succession of romance writers, has been amazingly favourable to the memory of Abelard, in whose real character it is difficult to discover one redeeming point. For the guilt of Heloise, many excuses

* “ Epist. Heloise,” 1, p. 51.

may be pleaded. Abelard was a grave divine of forty years of age, a commentator on the Scriptures, and a teacher of religion, when he deliberately undertook the ruin of Heloise, then a girl between seventeen and eighteen;* and for this purpose he appealed to the avarice of her uncle, by offering to educate his niece at whatever price he should be pleased to pay. All this is stated in the plainest and coolest language by Abelard himself, in the first of the epistles published in Rawlinson's collection. He adds that he was confounded at the simplicity of Fulbert in accepting his offer, and delivering

* The writers of the romances which have been made about Abelard evade all allusion to this dreadful disparity between the years of the seducer and the seduced. Both Abelard and Heloise died in their grand climacteric—the 63rd year of their ages; Abelard on the 21st of April, 1142 (Gervase, tom. II, p. 132); Heloise on the 17th of May, 1164 (Gervase, lib. II, p. 284). Gervase expressly tells us that she was seventeen or eighteen when she became the pupil of Abelard (Gervase, tom. I, p. 42), and when Abelard was consequently forty—more than double her age by two years. In the face of these dates, it avails nothing that Abelard, with his usual impudence, speaks of his youth.

his niece wholly into his hands, "as if he had committed a tender lamb to a famished wolf" (*quam si agnam teneram famelico lupi committeret.*)* All this is rather infamous than romantic; it is quite different from any of the tales in which those who have "loved not wisely, but too well," have mutually been the seducers of each other.

The latter days of the Abbess Heloise were not particularly edifying. Her mind, naturally easy to corrupt, had been completely debauched by the arts of Abelard; and when he was compelled to be virtuous himself, and desired to wean her affections from the deceitful pleasures of this world, and turn her soul to the all-satisfying love of God, he failed in his endeavours. Her letters afford the most unmistakable evidence, that never was mortal woman more feebly qualified for the office of an abbess than was the unfortunate Heloise, whose burning imagination in the midst of her devotions presented to her soul none but the most sensual ideas and images.

* Abelardi, "Epist." 1, p. 9.

There has often been remarked something like a temporal judgment in the loathsome deaths of many who have desired to live in sinful pleasures. The Empress Theodora, we have seen, was covered with ulcers. The disease of which Abelard died has been described as the itch. His body appears to have been as completely overrun with sores, as was that of the patriarch Job in the days of his affliction. Gervase compares him to the man of Uz, both in his sufferings and in his patience, and has given a minutely painful account of his disease and his torments, with which I shall not trouble my readers.

ELIZABETH OF HUNGARY.

SAINT ELIZABETH OF HUNGARY and her husband Louis the Landgrave of Thuringia were the most beautiful persons of their times. The eloquent modern biographer of Elizabeth, the Count de Montalembert, has in his extremely interesting work collected from a crowd of authorities the particulars of her form, and features, and appearance. All the chroniclers agree in praise of her extreme beauty.

“She was very beautiful in the person,” say the Bollandists (*corpore valde speciosa erat*). “Saint Elizabeth,” says the German Adam Ursinus, “was perfect in the body” (*volkommen*

an dem Leibe). “There was not a more beautiful person in the world,” says a French writer, quoted by Montalembert. Her figure was tall and stout, and her features admirable. Her hair was black, and her complexion was dark but beautiful; (*Braun an dem Angesichte und schön*) says Ursinus. And all authorities agree that her whole appearance and carriage were noble and majestic.

Montalembert has combined all the particulars furnished by his authorities into a fine portrait. “Her beauty,” he says, “was regular and perfect; her entire figure left no improvement to be desired in it; her complexion was dark and clear (*son teint était brun et pur*), her hair black, her figure of unrivalled elegance and grace, her walk grave, and full of nobleness and majesty; above all, her eyes appeared like a fire (*foyer*) of tenderness, of charity, and of compassion. It was easy to see that in this earthly beauty, there was painted a brilliant reflexion of the immortal beauty of her soul.”*

* “Histoire de Sainte Elizabeth de Hongrie,” par le Comte de Montalembert, p. 226. Paris, 1849.

The biographers of illustrious persons have generally shown a disposition, while intending to exalt the character of their heroes and heroines, to paint them like themselves; and often to lower them to their own standard. Thus D'Aubigné, trying to exalt Luther, makes him like a modern Evangelical preacher, and by leaving out one-half, and that certainly not the worse half of his character, has succeeded in depriving it of what helped to make the great German reformer the natural, impulsive, likeable man that he was; presenting to us a person little better than D'Aubigné himself, instead of the true man Luther; the player at skittles, the advocate of the theatre, the drinker of ale, whose favourite lines expressed his favourite tastes, which were for wine, beauty, and music—

“ Wer nicht liebt Wein, Weiber und Gesang,
Der bleibt ein Narr sein Lebelang.”

In this spirit, some ascetic writers have painted Elizabeth, very much such as they themselves were, and have tried to make an absurd and

whimsical devotee of her who appears to have been a perfect lady. Writers of a more sound and cheerful religion have described her as everything that is amiable and graceful in mind, as she was in body—a light and joy to the circle in which she moved. The amiable St. Francis of Sales, a saint of the first and truest order, himself by-the-by like Fenélon, whom he so much resembled in mind, distinguished for his personal beauty; “the gentleman saint,” as Leigh Hunt, in one of his essays calls him—as if to be a saint and a gentleman were a marvel, if not even a miracle—this St. Francis, in his charming work on the devout life—the prettiest and most practical of books of piety—tells us of Elizabeth that “As for St. Elizabeth of Hungary, she played and danced sometimes, when she was in company to which these things were pleasures, which did no harm whatever to her devotion, for that was so deeply rooted in her soul, that as the rocks by the lake of Rietta grow larger amidst the waves and billows, so did her devotion increase amidst the pomps and vanities to which her

condition exposed her. Great fires are made greater by the wind; it is only the small ones which are extinguished if they be not protected by a cover.”*

The taste of Elizabeth was for plain and humble attire; but at any time, at the request of her husband, or to please the assemblies in which she had to appear, she would dress and adorn her beautiful person with a magnificence becoming her rank.

The fame and virtues of Elizabeth have thrown the name and history of her husband, the pious Louis, into the shade. It may be mentioned as interesting that this matchless dark beauty was married to a prince of an exceedingly fair complexion, with long light hair flowing over his shoulders. His figure was well proportioned, the expression of his features calm and benevolent. “The charm of his smile,” says Montalembert, “was irresistible. His walk was noble and dignified; his voice of extreme sweetness.” “Many persons,” adds

* S. François de Sales, “Introduction à la Vie Devôte,” c. xxxiv. Paris, 1850.

the enthusiastic writer, "believed that they saw in him a striking resemblance to the portrait which tradition has preserved of the Son of God made man."*

* "Histoire de Sainte Elizabeth," p. 215.

DANTE.

WE are familiar with the slender, wasted, melancholy, and somewhat feminine features of the great Dante, conveyed to us evidently with fidelity by the earliest Italian painters, copying from the great Giotto, his contemporary. The soft, slender, half-shut eye is said to be a peculiarity in the paintings of Giotto, and part of his manner. The sallow, tinged complexion of the poet is well known, from its association with the belief of the common people of Italy in his time that Dante had actually visited those regions of pain—"the grieving city," and "the lost people,"—which

he has described in that immortal work which awoke to life the long-slumbering genius of modern Europe and modern poetry. The original fresco portrait of Dante has been revealed in our days on the wall of the chapel of the Palazzo del Podesta at Florence, where it had for nearly five hundred years been covered over with a thick, dirty coating.

The exquisitely beautiful imaginative picture of Dante meditating the story of Francesca di Rimino, by Mr. Noel Paton, a Scottish artist of a peculiarly graceful genius—which, from the calm sweet atmosphere which it presents, would be a fine picture if the figure of Dante, were a mere accessory, like a shepherdess in a landscape of Claude—has the merit of giving us the Dante of Giotto,—though the Dante of latter days; for the fresco discovered in 1840 is Dante in his thirtieth year. “On comparing,” says Mrs. Jameson, “the head of Dante, painted when he was about thirty, prosperous and distinguished in his native city, with the later portraits of him when an exile, worn,

wasted, embittered by misfortune, and disappointed and wounded pride, the difference of expression is as touching as the identity of features is indubitable.”*

* Mrs. Jameson, “Memoirs of the Early Italian Painters,” vol. I, p. 32.

ROBERT BRUCE.

ROBERT BRUCE, the greatest of Scottish kings, was, according to Major the historian, "of a fair, graceful, and active body, with broad shoulders, and a beautiful countenance; his hair after the fashion of the Northerns being yellow, and his eyes blue and sparkling."* His stature, as it was ascertained by the disinterment of his remains in the year 1818, "when Scotland after five centuries again beheld her great deliverer," was between five feet

* "Erat enim pulchro, decoro et vegeto corpore, latis humeris, venusta facie, flava, more borealium cæsarie, cæruleis et micantibus oculis."—Major "*Hist. Majoris Britannia*," lib. v, c. 2.

ten and six feet. From the measurement of the thigh bone, Dr. Gregory calculated that he was from five feet ten to five feet eleven ; while others thought the skeleton that of a man of six feet. His head was of the middle size and well formed, such as is generally found in men of the highest ability.

The coins of King Robert represent him with his locks long and curled. The lower jaw was found to be remarkably strong and deep. This, says Sir Robert Liston, in his anatomical remarks on the skeleton, has been considered as indicative of great strength ; and hence the ancient sculptors in their figures of the divinities combined depth of this bone with the shortness peculiar to youth. The *ramus* (the bone proceeding upwards from the back part of the jaw), he adds, rises almost perpendicularly from the base of the bone.

It appears that, as in the instances of Julius Cæsar and the illustrious Sobieski, the hardships and toils of his early years brought upon Robert Bruce a premature old age. The disease of which he died is attributed by Barbour,

who in this point is followed by Bishop Leslie, to his out-door life during the days of his adversity.

In the character of this man there was a singularly harmonious and beautiful union of the best moral and intellectual gifts. His intellect was at once vigorous, refined, and subtle. With all his heroism as a warrior and his wisdom as a politician, he could never have done what he did, if he had not added to his heroism and his wisdom the rarest patience in affliction, and the most unwavering reliance on Providence. What he really achieved, and how he achieved it, make his genuine history like the richest treasures of romance. He had to contend with poor resources against a wealthy enemy, and with inferior numbers against armies and leaders who were the terror of all Europe, and yet this extraordinary contest was completely successful.

If Poland or Hungary, in their struggles for nationality in modern days, had had a head like that of Robert Bruce to guide them, they would at this hour have been completely independent

nations. And this man, if he had not been a great warrior and a profound politician, and called on to exercise all his high and varied gifts for the noblest national purposes, would have shone, as Cæsar and Alexander would have shone, in private life. He was, as his recorded sayings prove, a man of a poetical mind, and of a gentle and graceful wit. He had those soft parts of conversation "which win the favour of the other sex." He resembled in all their good points Henry II. of England, and Henry IV. of France; and as men being human must be imperfect, there is reason to believe that in some measure, though to a less degree, he also resembled those great kings in their too warm admiration of female beauty.

On the other hand, it has been alleged that, as is recorded of Augustus, he made his affairs of gallantry subservient to his state policy; and it certainly does not appear that they ever, as they frequently did with the English and the French Henry, stood in the way of his duty to himself and his country. However this may be, it is certain that it was in the depth of diffi-

culties and dangers, out of which no genius less splendid and no virtues less obstinate than his could have delivered him, that a woman, gifted perhaps with a presentiment that a bright day of triumph was about to dawn on so much heroism and so much goodness, placed with her own hands the crown on the brows of the most illustrious of Scotland's monarchs.

IGNEZ DE CASTRO.

THE true history of Iñez de Castro, the mistress, and in succession the wife, and lastly, in death, the crowned queen of Pedro of Portugal, called "the Cruel," is as full of melancholy romance and of terrible and grand tragedy as anything that poetry and fiction have ever conceived. The extreme beauty of her neck and bosom has been celebrated. A portrait of her has been transmitted to our times. An engraving of it, borrowed from a work entitled "Retratos e elogios dos Varoes e Donas que illustraron a nação Portugueza," is prefixed to the second volume of Adamson's "Life of Camoens," as

her history forms an episode in the great epic poem of Portugal. The features are uncommonly regular and handsome, and the whole face and expression are marked by calmness and gentleness. Even the peculiar and unnatural head-dress in which she appears does not destroy, though undoubtedly it does not add grace to, her sweet features.

That must have been an affecting and solemn ceremony, exciting emotions at once pleasing, sublime, and terrible—something to which there is no parallel in all history, when, four whole years after the barbarous murder of this famed beauty, Pedro, on coming to the throne, caused the body of his adored wife to be translated from its tomb in the monastery of Santa Clara to that of Alabaça. When the corpse was disinterred in the midst of the nobles, the dead lady was placed on a royal throne, and Pedro with his own hands put a golden crown on her head, while all present kneeled before her, saluting her, and kissing her hand as Queen of Portugal. When the procession arrived at Alabaça, this

appalling yet pathetic coronation of a mouldering carcase was repeated. The beautiful figure of Ignez was sculptured on her tomb, but was afterwards injured by an attempt to open it made by King Sebastian.

The care which Pedro took solemnly to remove all manner of doubt of his having been married to Ignez, though state policy had compelled him to espouse her only in private, redeems a multitude of crimes. We understand and compassionate the gloominess of his after character; we sympathise with the terrible vengeance which he took on the assassins of his bride. He was deeply injured if ever man was. The murder of Rizzio by the Scottish barons was a crime of atrocious baseness; but I do not know in what terms the killing of Ignez de Castro by the Portuguese nobles can be at all adequately described.

The narrative now given of the resurrection of Ignez contradicts and refutes the story sometimes told that the murderers cut off her head. She was stabbed with poniards in the neck and

bosom, "that neck of alabaster," says Camoens,
"which bore those perfections with which love
killed him who afterwards made her queen."

"No collo de alabastro que sostinha
As obras com que Amor maton de amores
A quello que despois a fez rainha."

AGNES SOREL.

AGNES SOREL, the mistress of Charles VII., is the most celebrated French beauty of her age, inheriting from her own day to this the title of "the beautiful Agnes." Posterity has dealt very gently with her memory and character, and has represented her as at once endowed with the meekness and humility of Mademoiselle de la Vallière, and with the patriotism and generous public spirit of Nell Gwynne. To her influence over the king is attributed all the good that appeared in him, and she in particular gets credit for having roused him to the effort which drove the Eng-

lish out of France. The popular portrait of this frail beauty is indeed quite enchanting. "Heaven," says Mademoiselle de B——, "had not only endowed Agnes with the charms of face; she had an air full of grace, an admirable figure, more wit than any other woman in the world and that the most delicate and finely turned, and a certain greatness of soul which led her naturally to generosity; all her inclinations were noble; she was attentive, compassionate, ardent in friendship, discreet, sincere, and in short, altogether fitted to make herself be loved to distraction."*

After noticing her death under suspicion of poison, Mademoiselle de B—— goes on to say: "Such was the unfortunate end of the most beautiful person whom France ever gave birth to. Her memory has ever been esteemed there. Celebrated authors speak favourably of her; never did the mistress of a king make so generous a use of her favour, which she never employed but for the good of others. The

* "Histoire des Favorites," par Mademoiselle de B——, p. 102.

care which she took to inspire the project of war into the king covers her with much glory, and on this point Francis I. bestowed on her illustrious testimonies which will make her live eternally.”*

The reference to Francis I.’s testimony reminds us of the verses said to have been written by him on Agnes, which certainly show that he, living about a century after her, believed in her gentleness and in her patriotism. The king, finding her portrait amongst several others in a portfolio, wrote some lines under each of them, and the following under that of Agnes :

“ Gentille Agnes ! plus d’honneur tu mérites
La cause étant de France recouvrée
Que ce que peut dans un cloître ouvrir
Close nonain, on bien dévôte hermite.”

The historian Duclos has adopted these stories. Agnes, he says, “was the mistress for whom Charles had the greatest passion, and she was the most worthy of his attachment. Her singular beauty caused her to be called

* “Histoire des Favorites,” p. 158.

‘the Fair Agnes,’ and she was also called ‘the Lady of Beauty,’ a rare example for those who enjoy the same favour. She loved Charles only for himself, and had no other object in her conduct than the glory of her lover and the good of the state. Agnes Sorel distinguished herself by qualities preferable to those which are found in her sex.”* And again he says that Agnes “died this year (1450) regretted by the king, the court, and the people. She never abused favour, and united the rare qualities of a tender mistress, a true friend, and a good citizen.” “I do not know,” he candidly adds, “how Alain Chartier strove so much to defend the chastity of Agnes, who died in childbed. She had three daughters to Charles.”†

A violent death, and distance of years soften the asperity with which persons in the situation of Agnes Sorel are assailed during their lives; and after the grave has closed over her, charitable posterity is willing to believe that an

* “Histoire de Louis XI.” par M. Duclos, tom. 1, p. 5. Amst. 1746.

† Duclos, tom. 1, p. 64.

unchaste woman may not have been altogether a demon. The rancour of her own sex has long ceased to persecute the memory of Fair Rosamond, and even of the more guilty Jane Shore; and the most harshly virtuous of the sex in the present day are good enough to hope that both the one and the other have found that grace which was given to Mary Magdalen and Rahab the harlot. Under the notion, which is the prevailing one in the present day that Agnes Sorel was an extremely amiable sinner, and a lover of her country and her country's glory, a set of quadrilles bearing her name is admitted to a place on virtuous pianos; just as Nell Gwynne is at this day introduced on the stage in decent comedies.

Yet there is unfortunately stubborn contemporary authority for destroying the whole idea of Agnes's moral loveableness and her patriotism, and for leaving her nothing to recommend her but her mild features, her alabaster skin, and her golden hair, which have never been disputed. It is historically untrue that it was by her persuasion that the king was excited to expel

the English from France. The peace of Arras was concluded eight years before Charles became enamoured of Agnes. From certain contemporary accounts which it is not easy to distrust in favour of later testimonies, there is reason to believe that the meekness and sweetness attributed to Agnes Sorel, were rather the property of Mary of Anjou, Charles's injured queen.

George Chastelain, a contemporary writer, in his "Chronique des Ducs de Bourgogne" represents Agnes as a woman ostentatious in her splendour, and not merely immodest in her manners, but a zealous teacher of immodesty in other women. She appeared at court in all the state of a princess; her apartments were more richly adorned than those of the queen, she had more female attendants, and she had all the reverence shown to her that she could have had if she had herself been queen. Her beds, her tapestries, her linen, the vessels and dishes on her table, the rings and the jewels which she wore, were all finer than those of the queen, and

so was her kitchen, and so was everything about her. There was in short, he tells us, no princess in Christendom so highly adorned, and kept in such state. "With this woman, called Agnes," says Chastelain, "whom I have seen and known, the king was terribly besotted." To please her, he tells us, Charles did many things against his honour, and the murmurs against both her and him were loud. The trains which she wore, he adds, were longer by a third than any princess of this kingdom had, and her robes were more costly. "And of everything," Chastelain says, "in the way of dress that can seduce to immodesty and licentiousness, she was the producer and promoter."* He describes with indignation the extreme to which Agnes carried the lowness of her dress, and the zeal with which she studied day and night to make all virtuous women throw aside honour, shame and good manners, and the great

* George Chastelain, as quoted by Le Roux de Lincy in his introduction to the "Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles," p. 14. Paris, 1844.

influence which she exercised in corrupting the morals of France.* The whole nobility, he says, gave themselves up to vanity by her exhortation and example.

In what Chastelain says of the richness of apparel in which Agnes delighted, his testimony is confirmed by Olivier de la Marche, and by Monstrelet, both of them contemporary historians; and those who speak of the simplicity and plainness of her dress, and her unostentatious habits are manifestly in the wrong. "This fair Agnes," says Monstrelet, "had been five years in the service of the queen, during which she had enjoyed all the pleasures of life in wearing rich clothes, furred robes, golden chains, and precious stones."†

* "Descouvrioit les espaules et le seing devant, jusques aux tettins, donnoit a toute baudeur loy et cours, feust a homme, feust a femme, ne estudiott qu'en vainité jour et nuit pour desvoier gens, et pour faire et donner exemple aux preudes femmes de perdicion d'onneur, de vergoigne et de bonnes meurs."—*Chastelain as quoted by Le Roux de Lincy.*

† "The Chronicles of Enguerrand de Monstrelet," vol. ix, p. 96 (Johnes's Trans.) Lond. 1810.

We must presume that the extreme openness of dress, which Chastelain so much reprobates in Agnes, had been introduced by her amongst the women at court; as otherwise, if she had merely followed the established fashion, she could not be fairly charged with immodesty. As to her indulgence in the most gorgeous garments, while it may argue bad taste, it can hardly be reckoned criminal; and it is not fair to treat that as a sin in Agnes which is mentioned without any reprobation in women of unquestioned innocence. There is, in truth, an appearance in Chastelain's statements—which, however, in substance are confirmed by other good authorities, and cannot be rejected—of a wish to make Agnes look at least as bad as she was. Besides calling her by the harshest name which can be bestowed on a frail woman, he adds that she was a poor servant (*povre an-celle*), and of an insignificant and low house (*de petite basse maison*).

This is pure spite on the part of the virtuous chronicler. It is no alleviation of Agnes's guilt to recollect that she had the miserable

merit of being of noble rank, and of an ancient family, being the daughter of the Seigneur de St. Geran, while her poor service was that of being first the attendant of Isabella, Queen of Naples and Sicily, and afterwards of Mary, the wife of Charles. Her situation in the household of the amiable queen when she became the king's mistress, her rank by birth and her education, are all aggravations of her criminality. Neither extreme youth, nor ignorance, nor any chain of unfortunate circumstances can be pleaded in her behalf. She was not the girl of seventeen as Mademoiselle de B——, for the sake of romantic effect, makes her when the king fell in love with her. It was in the year 1431, when she was two-and-twenty, that she entered the service of Isabella of Naples.

How long after this it was till she became lady in waiting to the Queen of France, when Charles could first have seen her, I have not been able to ascertain. I have seen a calculation which makes her about eight-and-twenty when the king fell in love with her; there is, however, better reason to believe that she was

three-and-thirty. Olivier de la Marche, a contemporary writing about certain events which took place in 1444, tells us in connexion with them that "the king had just (*nouvellement*) elevated a poor lady, a pretty woman (*genti femme*), called Agnes du Sorel, and placed her in such triumph and power, that her state was comparable to that of the great princesses of the realm."*

The truth appears to be that Agnes became known as mistress to the king, who was rather her junior, at the ripe age of thirty-three. This fact, for such I assume it to be, spoils one of Mademoiselle de B——'s most affecting sentences. Speaking of Agnes, when the king fell in love with her, she says: "That penetrating vivacity which the age of seventeen gives to an infinite beauty, spread an air full of charms on the least of her actions, and the most insensible souls could not resist her."†

Seventeen has always been the favourite

* "Olivier de la Marche," quoted by Le Roux de Lincy ut sup. p. 13.

† "Histoire des Favorites," p. 104.

figure with romancers in fixing the age of a heroine at the period of her most splendid achievements. It is the age of womanhood in Asia, and in novels and poetry in England, where it has the great merit of alliterating pretty tolerably with "sweet." Hence while "sweet seventeen" is a stock phrase with the dealers in fiction, we never hear of sweet eighteen, nor sweet twenty ; much less of sweet three-and-thirty.

Whatever merits Agnes may have had, it is hardly consistent with the idea of her being possessed of much humility, that she should strive, as it is a fact that she did, to outshine the queen in all kinds of magnificence ; more especially as Mary appears to have borne the alienation of the king's love from her, not merely with resignation, but with sweetness of temper, and by no action or word ever to have reproached the reigning favourite.

I suspect, after all, that when we add to Agnes's beauty, the gay temper, pleasing manners, and agreeable conversation which Monstrelet allows her, we have summed up

her perfections; and all that can farther be pleaded with truth in her favour, is her charity to the poor—quite a common, and indeed a characteristic virtue amongst women of Agnes's class—and her death-bed repentance, both of which are attested by genuine history. Her arrogance, and disregard for the feelings of the queen, are hardly to be doubted. On one occasion the dauphin (afterwards Louis IX.), it is said, gave Agnes a blow on the face, for uttering some irritating language—some say for speaking disrespectfully of the queen.

It is not easy to say much in favour of Louis's character, but his attachment to his mother was sincere, and he resented the ill-usage which she suffered, so far as to quarrel with his father about it; while he hated Agnes Sorel, for her ostentatious magnificence, and the contempt in which she is said to have held the queen.

There is reason to doubt if Agnes Sorel died of poison, as is positively affirmed by several historians. Mezerai states it broadly as a fact.

The scandal went, that the poison was administered by the dauphin. The known ill-will which he bore to Agnes, would naturally lead to the fixing of such an accusation upon him. Agnes was seized with violent purgings, which continued a long time, and then carried her off, in the fortieth year of her age.

“She was,” said Monstrelet, who shows her no particular favour, “very contrite, and sincerely repented of her sins. She often remembered Mary Magdalen, who had been a great sinner, and devoutly invoked God and the Virgin Mary to her aid. Like a true Catholic, after she had received the Sacraments, she called for her book of prayers (in which she had written with her own hand the verses of St. Bernard), to repeat them. She then made many gifts, which, including alms and the payment of her servants, might amount to nearly sixty thousand crowns.”*

The interesting chronicler who tells us these particulars seems to relent in her favour, when he describes, as he does with much simple

* “Monstrelet,” lib 1, p. 98.

pathos, the last moments of this renowned beauty. "The fair Agnes," he says, "perceiving that she was daily growing weaker, said to the Lord de la Trimouille, the lady of the Seneschal of Poitou, and one of the King's equerries, called Gouffier, in the presence of all her damsels, that our fragile life was but a stinking ordure. She then required that her confessor would give her absolution from all her sins and wickedness, conformable to an absolution which was, as she said, at Loches, which the confessor, on her assurance, complied with. After this, she uttered a loud shriek, and called on the mercy of God, and the support of the blessed Virgin Mary, and gave up the ghost on Monday, the 9th day of February, in the year 1449, about six o'clock in the afternoon." Monstrelet kindly adds: "May God have mercy on her soul, and admit it into Paradise!"

The body of Agnes was interred in the church at Loches, which had been enriched by her pious liberality. Her figure in white marble was placed on a black tombstone. At one end

were two angels supporting the pillow on which her head rested, while in the playful allusion to her name, which was common in her days, two lambs lay at her feet. I think I have read somewhere that at the Revolution this monument was destroyed by a horde of ruffians, who scattered about the bones of the royal favourite. Those ingenious persons who have persuaded themselves that that insane revolution was an outburst of the indignation of a virtuous people against the vices of kings and queens, and who find in every brutality of that period a proof of the sincere love of goodness by which its perpetrators were actuated, will be able to attribute this atrocity to the reverence which the revolutionists felt for that virtue in which poor Agnes was specially deficient.

Charles lamented the death of Agnes with unaffected grief. He survived her seven years. Out of his affectionate memory for the aunt he immediately made her niece (others say her cousin), Madame de Villequier, his next chief mistress; but the greatness of his sorrow required the consolations of a whole seraglio.

Mezerai is bitterly sarcastic on the grief of this besotted voluptuary. "In 1449," says the historian, "when the king was at Jumieges, they poisoned for him his dear Agnes Sorel, without whom he could not live a moment. To console him, Antoinette de Maignelais, lady of Villequier, the cousin of the deceased, took her place; but she was not alone. This voluptuous monarch set himself to keep a great number of beautiful girls, at least for the pleasure of his eyes." After the lady of Villequier came another who was called, probably from her imperiousness, or her control over the kingdom, *Madame la Régente*, and who is celebrated for her extreme regard to decorum; and fourthly, and lastly, the daughter of a pastry-cook came into favour. She is known in history as *Madame des Chaperons*—the lady of hoods; "because," says Chastelain, "of all women in the world, she it was who best put on her hood."

It has been noticed that Chastelain blames Agnes Sorel for introducing the open dress which he condemns. The censure, in all likelihood,

is bestowed at random. The same charge has been brought by various historians against Isabella of Bavaria, the wife of Charles VI., famed for the fairness of her complexion and the foulness of her soul, and who died about the time that Agnes Sorel became known at court. The fashion which Chastelain inveighs against has in Europe, where fashions are not eternal, been going out and coming in at intervals, according to accidental circumstances, since the first time that women fell into the habit of wearing clothes at all. The loose open dress would become general when those women in whose hands was the control of the taste of their sex conceived, as Isabella of Bavaria it is well known did, that they had everything to gain by the freest exposure of their perfections; and it would become more close when the rulers of fashion fancied, as it is said Madame de Maintenon did, that it was for their advantage to place more reliance on the imagination than on the eyes of their admirers. Nearly a century before Isabella of Bavaria is said to have invented the anathematised costume,

the censure of Dante had immortalised the low dress of the women of Florence, whom the great poet foolishly calls impudent, because they did not choose to fashion the fronts of their gowns according to his taste.* These censurers mistake matters of mere convention for matters of the essence of morality, and always take care to denounce the reigning fashion, whatever it be, as immoral.

Tertullian and Chrysostom direct all decent women to veil their faces. Poppæa veiled her face, but abated nothing of her profligacy. Tertullian takes it upon him to declare that it is the revealed will of Heaven that a woman should wear a veil, and also that this veil should cover her person from the head to the loins; this is the dimension which he says an angel of heaven revealed to a holy sister of his ac-

* Dante, "Divina Commedia," Purgat. XXIII, 98:

"Tempo futuro m' e gia nel cospetto
 Cui sara quest' ora molto antica
 Nel qual sara in pergamo interdetto
 Alle sfacciate donne Fiorentine
 L' andar mostrando colle poppe il petto."

quaintance. The African father's notions were those of his country, and he has expressly praised the Arab women for covering the whole face except one eye; "content to enjoy half the light rather than prostitute the whole face."* Yet unlawful love does not rage so furiously, in countries where women expose their faces and persons with the greatest freedom, as it does where they are closely veiled. In many countries, close dressing is the ensign of those women who put no value on their chastity; and the nearest approach to nudity is the costume of the pure in heart and life.

There is a terrible story of a moral Queen of Malabar, who subjected one of her women to the martyrdom which has immortalised St. Agnes, because she had dared to come into her presence with her bosom covered after the licentious fashion of the Europeans. If the pious Richard Baxter felt called upon to write "A just and seasonable reprehension of naked breasts and shoulders," when these were fash-

* Tertullian, "De Velatis Virginibus," c. 16, Opera, tom. I, p. 182.

ionable, he would, if the fashion had run the other way, have published "a just and seasonable reprehension" of tuckers and neckerchiefs, and proved them to his own satisfaction to be unscriptural and a sinful departure from the simplicity of primitive times.

The philosophy of the whole matter is this, that such women as Isabella of Bavaria would not be more modest in one dress than in another; and that singularity in dress is more immodest than any dress whatever, which has ever become general, can be. The rule for gowns and fashions is the same as that for words and expressions—

"Be not the first by whom the new are tried,
Nor yet the last to lay the old aside."

On this point, the young Antonia, in Mandeville's curious dialogue, has all the reason on her side, in opposition to her censorious aunt. "Though you are pleased," says the niece, "to find fault with my behaviour, I don't know that ever I was guilty of any immodesty in my life; I don't invent the fashions; but indeed



I don't love to be pointed at for affecting singularity. I dress myself as I see other young gentlewomen do; my stays are not cut lower than other people's."

This is the moral of the case; and what follows is equally good. "Women, in strictness," says Aunt Lucinda, "should never appear in public but veiled; at least, young women should never show their faces but to their nearest relations."

To this Turkish doctrine of the old lady, the reply of the niece is admirable. "Indeed, aunt, when 'tis the fashion to go veiled, I won't stick out, but I shall hardly begin first."*

* "The Virgin Unmasked," p. 18. Lond. 1742.

MRS. JANE SHORE.

MRS. JANE SHORE is known to the present age, by the sufficiently distinct accounts of her person, handed down from her own time. "Two or three poems," says Michael Drayton, "written by sundry men, have magnified this woman's beauty, whom that ornament of England, and London's more particular glory, Sir Thomas More, very highly hath praised for her beauty, she being alive in his time, though very poor and aged. Her stature was mean, her hair of a dark yellow, her face round and full, her eye grey, delicate harmony betwixt each part's proportion, and

each proportion's colour; her body fat, white, and smooth, her countenance cheerful, and like to her condition. That picture which I have seen of her, was such as she rose out of bed in the morning, having nothing on but a rich mantle, cast under one arm on her shoulders, and sitting on a chair, on which her naked arm did lie."*

Sir Thomas More, whose account of Mrs. Shore, in her extreme old age, I shall afterwards quote, gives us a fine picture of her doing public penance in St. Paul's Churchyard, walking in a procession in a white sheet, and with a taper in her hand, before the cross. He says, "She went so fair and lovely, namely, while the wondering of the people cast a lovely rud in her chekes (of which she before had much misse), that her great shame won her much praise, among those that were more

* "England's Heroical Epistles." "The greater part of this passage, as well as the extracts from Sir Thomas More afterwards given, are appended by Bishop Percy to his 'Ballad of Jane Shore.'"—*Reliques of Ancient English Poetry*, vol. II, p. 190. Lond. 1846.

amorous of her body, than curious of her soule." Sir Thomas says there was "nothing in her body that you would have changed, but if you had wished her somewhat higher."

Such was Mrs. Shore, when she attracted the love of Edward IV., the handsomest prince of his time.

In the picture-gallery at Hampton Court, there is a picture of Jane Shore, in which it is impossible to trace a particle of beauty. Over her head is the inscription: "Baker's wife, mistris to a King." Jane Shore was a goldsmith's wife.

In the common histories of her, there is an attempt to alleviate her guilt, by representing her as having been married against her inclination, by her parents, when she was eighteen, and Mathew Shore thirty; and for her benefit, the romance tells us that he was ill-favoured, mean-looking, and strongly marked with small-pox. In direct opposition to this testimony, we have the statement of Sir Thomas More, which I think must be received, that the unfortunate goldsmith was

“young and goodly, and of good substance.” And Michael Drayton, no doubt well-informed on the subject, though not a contemporary, tells us that he was “a young man of right goodly person.”

It is but justice to Jane Shore to receive without hesitation or qualification the uncontradicted testimony of Sir Thomas More, as to the use which she made of her influence with the king. Archbishop Tennyson, a prelate of irreproachable life, did not shrink from publicly speaking of the virtues of Nell Gwynne; and Jane Shore, more guilty than the poor orange girl, has been fortunate in receiving a eulogium from such a man as Sir Thomas More.

According to More, Jane Shore was the only one of his mistresses whom the king loved, and “whose favour to say the truth—for sin it were to belie the devil—she never abused to any man’s hurt, but to many a man’s comfort and relief. Where the king took displeasure, she would mitigate and appease his mind; where men were out of favour, she would bring

them in his grace ; for many that had highly offended, she obtained pardon ; of great forfeitures, she obtained remission ; and finally, in many weighty suits, she stood many men in great stead, either for none or very small rewards, and those rather gay than rich ; either for that she was content with the deed itself well done, or for that she delighted to be sued unto, and to show what she was able to do with the king, or for that wanton women and wealthy be not always covetous."

We are the more impressed with Jane Shore's merit in these matters when we recollect that the throne of England was never filled by a more selfish, heartless, and cruel wretch than her lover. Of the beauty of Jane Shore in her youth there is no room to doubt. But she survived her charms. Alas ! "age that gives whiteness to the swan, gives it not unto woman." Sir Thomas More, writing in 1513, thirty years after the death of King Edward, tells us that there were people who "deemed her never to have bene well visaged ; whose judgment," he adds, pathetically, "seemeth to me somewhat

like as though men should guesse the beauty of one long before departed, by the scalpe taken out of the charnel-house; for now she is old, lene, withered, and dried up, nothing left but ryvilde skin and hard bone. And yet being even such, whoso will advise her visage might gesse and devise which partes how filled wold make it a fair face.”

The little fat and fair young woman when old, thin, and withered, and her golden locks exchanged for grey and scanty hairs, her queenly ornaments for the weeds of poverty, and her joyous spirit for pining melancholy, was not likely to retain much of the charms which once distinguished her. In fact, Jane Shore's style of beauty, fascinating while it lasts, rapidly passes into decay. We have seen that yellow hair, both by the ancients and the moderns, has been considered the ornament of youth; it never indeed, or very rarely, remains to adorn advanced years. The comparison between the Jane Shore of 1483, and the Jane Shore of 1513, as furnished between Drayton and Sir Thomas More is a powerful sermon on the

instability of worldly grandeur and the frailty of human beauty. There is a sonnet in a fine spirit addressed to such a beauty as Mrs. Shore was in the days when her beauty lost her her virtue, by an Italian poet, Antonio Tibaldeo, which is so pretty, that its insertion here will not be deemed out of place.

“ Non saranno i capei sempre d’or fino
Non saran’ sempre perle i bianchi denti,
Non sempre avran splendor gli occhi tuo’ ardenti
Ne sempre rose il bel volto divino.
Bellezza è come i fior’ che nel mattino
Son freschi e vaghi, e poi la sera spenti ;
Ne noi ci renoviam, come i serpenti,
Che nati son sotto miglior destino.
Deh muta ormai questi costumi altieri
Che i giorni corron più che cervi e pardi,
E stolta sei, se sempre durar speri.
Manca ogni cosa, e nel specchio guardi,
Vedrai che non se’ quale fosti jeri
Però provvedi a non pentirti tardi.”

LUCREZIA BORGIA.

IN speaking of the celebrated picture of Titian, in which the famous, or as vulgar opinion says, the infamous Lucrezia Borgia is introduced as presented to her husband by the Madonna, Mrs. Jameson says: "I looked in vain in the countenance of Lucrezia for some trace, some testimony of the crimes imputed to her; but she is a fair, golden-haired, gentle-looking creature, with a feeble and vapid expression."*

* Mrs. Jameson, "Visits and Sketches," vol. II, p. 126.

There certainly are instances of persons whose looks have betrayed nothing of the vigour, energy, and strong passions of their nature. Thus of the ferocious ruffian Graham of Claverhouse, Sir Walter Scott tells us that he had "a beautiful and melancholy visage, worthy of the most pathetic dreams of romance;" and Lord Byron says that the cruel Ali Pacha was "the mildest-looking gentleman" that he ever saw. The gentle, childish-looking Couthon was unquestionably one of the most ferocious monsters of the French Revolution; and when he was carried to the tribune, as he was required to be on account of his extreme bodily weakness, his soft, mild voice was ever lifted up in calling for more cruel bloodshed, and more sweeping slaughters.

As a general rule, however—and it is a rule which guides us every day in life, and guides us with safety—when furious, and cruel, and treacherous passions live in the heart, they are to be traced in manhood in the lineaments of the face. The personal description of the stalwart Cataline, his pallid complexion, his

unpleasant, unhealthy eye,* his walk sometimes rapid, at other times slow, and the frenzy in his face and features, as noticed by Sallust, a great painter, is familiar to all readers. Fuzeli used to decline the company of the famous French painter, David. David had a hare lip; but it was not this innocent disfigurement which displeased Fuzeli. He said, that when he looked at the French artist, he could never divest his mind of the atrocities of the French Revolution, nor separate them from the part he had acted in them, for they were stamped on his countenance.†

On the whole, in judging of the nature of our fellow-creatures at first sight, an observer with his own heart and feelings as they ought to be, will very rarely be far deceived by confiding in that natural skill in physiognomy with which we all come into the world. "Heaven,"

* It is not easy to translate the expression *fædi oculi* (Sallust "Catalina," c. xv.); but an unhealthy-looking eye is strikingly descriptive of great criminals.

† Knowles, "Life and Works of Fuzeli," vol. 1, p. 258.

as some one says, "is not in the way of hanging out false colours." The face is a book in which the innocent and the good may every day read lessons of caution and aversion for their guidance, protection and defence, and find

"How surer than suspicion's thousand eyes
Is that fine sense which to the pure in heart,
By mere repugnancy of their own goodness,
Reveals the approach of evil!"

I do not believe that an authentic instance can be quoted of a thoroughly good man with a sinister expression of countenance, though it would appear that there have been bad men with pleasing features; though I suspect a good eye would have detected a serpent-like beauty in those of them who were decidedly and deliberately wicked. The world does not put any faith in that professional physiognomist who denounced Socrates as a vicious man; we merely believe that his features were rude and inelegant in the extreme.

There is scarcely a man amongst all the good, great, and wise men of antiquity whom it

would be safe to prefer to Phocion—to honest, wise, and witty Phocion. There was a beautiful balance of the moral and intellectual gifts in this man. He was the sagest man of his times ; and of all the ancients he was, perhaps, as his recorded sayings amply attest, the wittiest. His great moral virtues were rigid honesty, a passionate attachment to truth, and great kindness of disposition. Yet of this admirable man, Plutarch tells us—and he evidently speaks from contemporary statements—that “though one of the most humane and best-tempered men in the world,” his countenance was severe, ill-natured, and forbidding, so much so that it repelled strangers from addressing him.

This account also agrees with an admission in one of Phocion’s own sayings, that his brow appeared lowering. Yet it is nowhere stated that there were any traces of cunning, of dissimulation, or of sycophancy in this rough face. I think no more can be made of this narrative than that Phocion, like many other good men, was “no beauty”—no Alcibiades, nor Xeno-

phon, nor Critias. And nowhere in this world would the want of fine features in a ruler or general be criticised with more exaggeration of severity than in Athens — Athens, which, though deficient in beautiful women, boasted above all the states of Greece of her beautiful men.*

On this point, however, it is to be observed that, in general, the vices and the real character, where it is bad, are more easily to be read in the faces of men than of women, owing, no doubt, to the greater shallowness and simplicity of the manly nature, and to the greater power which, in protection of their inferior physical strength, nature has given to women in controlling and concealing the outward expression of the passions which rage, and the fires which burn in their hearts and their brains. A woman certainly is no more to be blamed for having more art in her nature, and more wisdom in her

* See the very curious dissertation of M. de Pauw, "de la Constitution physique des Atheniens," in his "Recherches Philosophiques sur les Grecs," tom. I, p. 107. Berlin, 1787.

daily contrivances than a man, than a fox is to be censured for having about him more cunning and wiles than a lion.

The face of the man of middle age, whose breast has, for a life-time, been agitated by violent passions, will not be unwrinkled; and the habitual tone of his voice, though he may strive to modulate it to serve his purposes, will have acquired something, at least, of a harshness which once did not belong to it. But it is not uncommon to meet with a woman who has passed through a painful career of crimes and passions, of agony and grief, still speaking with the sweet voice which enchanted the listener in the days of her innocence and happiness, still wearing the composed features, the "cheek unprofaned by a tear," which might be thought to betoken days spent wholly in the indolent enjoyment of pleasure, and with a brow still perfectly smooth; as smooth, indeed, as the ocean in a calm—that same ocean which, a few hours before, has torn to pieces in its fury, and engulfed in its never satiated jaws, noble fleets

of which not a trace can now be found on its bosom—that calm bosom which invites the disconsolate to rest upon it, and there find peace to their troubled hearts.

The reader who believes all that is recorded of the crimes of Lucrezia, and looks to the portrait of her as described by Mrs. Jameson, even after he makes allowance for some sweetness which the great art of Titian may have added to it, has a striking illustration of these remarks, and is compelled to confess that this is not the woman that he looked for. Even he, who charitably and better instructed, can find no good evidence of the more dreadful and more disgusting crimes attributed to Lucrezia, must still look for something harsh, distracted, or melancholy in the face of the woman who was the daughter of Alexander, and the sister of Cæsar Borgia, who had been brought up and had lived so much amidst scenes of infamy, and witnessed, as she must have witnessed, so much of habitual, and daily, and revolting wickedness. But less flattering describers than

Titian have testified that the traces neither of sin nor of sorrow were to be found in her fair face.

Lucrezia, however, notwithstanding the lustre thrown around her by the pencil of the painter and the verses of a poet she patronised, was not exactly a beauty. The contrast between the fair golden hair and black eyes, given to her by the great artist, is always striking, as in nature it is extremely rare. In picture galleries all the celebrated Italian women of Lucrezia's time appear with this fascinating half-flaxen, half-golden hair which painters give to their Venuses and other ideal beauties. It may hence be doubted if the charming colour of Lucrezia's hair was not the production of her own skill, though in bare justice, we must give a woman full credit for all the beauty with which she can array herself, and judge of her as she appears at her best, in fair reward of the amiable desire to please which leads to the use and perfection of the cosmetic science.

The world of antiquity allowed to the Queen of Heaven herself all the graces and witchcrafts

which she could derive from placing the celestial girdle around her waist ; and no earthly woman deserves either commendation or thanks for being less beautiful than she might be if she liked. On the matter of fact, as to whether the hair of Lucrezia was by nature or only by art golden, there is, I believe, no evidence. For the rest of her features and person, between the favourable eulogium of an Italian poet and the more specific criticism of a German prose writer, agreeing together in substance, as praise and censure often do, and taking these two descriptions along with her portraits, we learn pretty accurately what this famous woman was like. Her eyes were black and piercing, and her luxuriant hair fell in profusion over her shoulders. She had it tied tastefully with a black band. Her figure was large, and it had the great fault of exhibiting something like a masculine vigour in it. Her features were far from being regular. Her forehead was indeed comely and well shaped, but her nose was long and slender ; her lips were deficient in fulness, and the lower part of her face was

retreating. Such is the picture which is compounded out of the materials furnished by Strozzi and Burckhardt, as they are quoted by M. Chasles.*

Leigh Hunt, in one of his essays on female beauty, assures us, on the evidence of his own eyes, that the hair of Lucrezia was of that colour which is justly and properly called golden. Mr. Hunt was in possession of an interesting and affecting relic of mortality—a solitary hair of this famous woman's head. "It was given us," he says, "by a lamented friend (Lord Byron), who obtained it from a lock of her hair preserved in the Ambrosian Library, at Milan. On the envelope he put a happy motto, 'And beauty draws us with a single hair.' If ever hair was golden it is this. It is not red, it is not yellow, it is not auburn; it is golden and nothing else; and though natural-looking too, must have had a surprising appearance in the mass. Lucrezia, beautiful in every respect, must have looked like a vision in a picture, an angel

* M. Philarète Chasles, "Etudes sur le Moyen Age," p. 409.

from the sun. Everybody who sees it, cries out and pronounces it the real thing.

“We must confess, after all, we prefer the auburn, as we construe it. It forms, we think, a finer shade for the skin, a richer warmth, a darker lustre. But Lucrezia’s hair must have been still divine. Mr. Landor, whom we had the pleasure of becoming acquainted with over it, as other acquaintances commence over a bottle, was inspired on this occasion with the following verses :—

“Borgia, thou once wert almost too august
And high for adoration ; now thou’rt dust ;
All that remains of thee these plaits unfold,
Calm hair meandering with pellucid gold.”

“The sentiment,” continues Mr. Hunt, “implied in the last line will be echoed by every bosom that has worn a lock of hair next it, or longed to do so. Hair is at once the most delicate and lasting of our materials, and survives us like love. It is so light, so gentle, so escaping from the idea of death, that with a lock of hair belonging to a child or a friend, we

may almost look up to heaven and compare notes with the angelic nature ; may almost say, ' I have a piece of thee here, not unworthy of thy being now.' ”*

This is a very learned and exquisitely fine and tender discourse on hair. As regards the great beauty which Leigh Hunt attributes to Lucrezia, I must say that, although it may be quite safe and perfectly logical to judge of the stature of Hercules by his foot ; and though both ancient history and a beautiful modern fairy tale join in informing us that a man of susceptible feelings is able to fall in love with a woman at the bare sight of one of her slippers, it yet appears like the sublime of gallant rapture to discover, from the inspection of a single hair from that large flowing mass—and in hair, mere length and quantity are undoubtedly great beauties—which once adorned the head of Lucrezia Borgia, that her large and tall person was “ beautiful in every respect.”

* Leigh Hunt, “ Men, Women, and Books,” vol. 1, p. 240.

A cold-hearted sneerer may think that Leigh Hunt and Walter Savage Landor more than came up to a parallel with the man immortalised by Hierocles, the Joe Miller of the ancients, who, having a house for sale, went about amongst the public, carrying a brick in his pocket as a specimen. The single brick would at least show of what materials the man's house was constructed; but the single hair, besides that it might be dyed, might be a selected hair. For there is one peculiarly bewitching sort of hair which Leigh Hunt has unfortunately omitted to commemorate and laud in his catalogue, though it is capable of competing for victory with the very finest and rarest. This consists of soft auburn locks, intermingled here and there with bright golden hairs. This kind of hair, which is extremely difficult to find, will do much for a woman's head which has nothing else, externally or internally, to recommend it to admiration or love.

The character of Lucrezia Borgia has laboured with the mass of readers, from her own day

to ours, under terrible stains ; but she has not wanted her defenders, and even eulogisers. The greater part of her life appears, in wicked times and in wicked places, to have been passed in all outward decorum, decency and dignity. Ranke quotes from a contemporary report of the Ambassador of Venice to the Court of Rome, a passage about Lucrezia, in which she is called "wise and liberal;" and as her great natural abilities and talents have not been questioned, she is, taking her at the worst estimate that has been formed of her, entitled to this eulogium. Her personal beauty and her moral character have both gained something with posterity by her generous patronage of literature, and particularly of poetry ; for a poet who knows his craft, will praise anything or anybody, if he is well paid for his panegyric. It is more to her true glory, that her counsel, her influence, and the free use of her purse, were all given to the establishment and diffusion of the art of printing in Italy.

There was wisdom, as well as liberality and

enlightment in this. The patronage of printing, which in the long run, says M. Chasles, corrects its own errors, was a far more unequivocal proof of her real liberality, than the giving of pensions to sycophantic court poets.

She knew, however, what Virgil and Horace had done for Augustus; and there was something good in her desire that both her soul and her body should appear as fair and bright as possible in the eyes of a merciful posterity. She knew what liberality to men of letters had done for other famous women. She knew that canonised saints of the Church and grave bishops had praised the Christian virtues and piety of Brunehilde, "the murderess of seven kings;" and Lucrezia's liberality was as great, and her guilt certainly not so great, as that of the ancient Frank queen. Though Mr. Roscoe's defence of the perfect innocence of Lucrezia may not be wholly satisfactory, still there is room left for disbelieving the more revolting charges which have been heaped on the memory of this woman.

If, however, the extreme guilt and the ex-

treme beauty of Lucrezia are questionable, the atrocious crimes and the singular beauty of her brother, Cæsar Borgia, are not in the least doubtful. Contemporary history declares that this horrible monster, who, in a Christian age and country, renewed by his crimes the memory of the Roman Commodus, whom he resembled in strength and personal attractions, was the most beautiful young man in the world; comparing him in this respect with Ferdinand, King of Naples, celebrated at that time for his great personal comeliness, and giving the preference to Borgia. He was an Achilles, tall and graceful in person, and beautiful in the face, and, like Achilles, of prodigious strength—a Hercules and Adonis united. Yet it must be doubted if his face could have any of that moral beauty, which appears in the countenances of men who get no credit for comeliness, though Borgia might present a beauty nothing less than that of “archangel ruined.”

Pope has adopted the name of this monster as descriptive of the height of incarnate wicked-

ness ; and I am afraid that the name of Borgia, borne by the father Alexander and the brother Cæsar, has an air of blood, of poison and of sensuality about it, which throws a black cloud of prejudice around the memory of Lucrezia, the daughter and sister.

In the loathing and horror which this very name produces, it appears to be entirely forgotten that in St. Francis Borgia the Church of Rome has canonised a man of rank with the humility of a true follower of Him who was born in a manger ; a saint with all innocent and virtuous accomplishments ; a wit and a scholar, and one who is to be honoured with Xavier and Borromeo, as amongst the most amiable of men.

After the death of Lucrezia, her third husband, Duke Alfonso of Ferrara, married a poor country girl of extraordinary beauty. All who have seen any pictures, are familiar and delighted with that charming portrait by Titian, which has been multiplied by copies more than, perhaps, any other of his works—representing a young and very fair woman twining her luxu-

riant yellow hair. This is believed to be this peasant girl, Donna Laura, the second wife of Alfonso.

“Titian,” says Mrs. Jameson, “painted her several times, *e nuda e vestita*. I have never seen in any gallery a portrait by Titian recognised as the portrait of Donna Laura; but for several reasons, on which I cannot enlarge in this place, I believe the famous picture in the Louvre styled ‘Titian’s Mistress,’ to be the portrait of this peasant duchess.”*

* Mrs. Jameson, “Sacred and Legendary Art,” p. 341.

ANNE BULLEN.

THE power of charming, possessed by this celebrated woman, is historically established. Her claims to a high rank in pure physical beauty, have, however, been disputed. Her perfections in this way have been made the subject of controversy—even of religious controversy—the fiercest and fieriest of all contentions.

Anne Bullen, who lived and died in the ancient faith of Rome, is, nevertheless, though no saint in her own age, yet in ours, on account of the services which her personal charms rendered to the Reformation, a woman of good memory with Protestants; as on the other

hand, and from the same cause, she is an object of severe judgment, of reprobation, and of calumny with Roman Catholics. If her beauty did not create the Reformation in England, it undoubtedly hastened its outbreak, and accelerated its lagging progress. Heaven, which works its great and good ends by whatever instruments it thinks proper, made lust and avarice the great and conspicuous promoters of the purification of religion in England. "The British Bluebeard" was the leader of the hosts of the Reformed Faith; and the base panderer to his guilty passions was its high priest.

There will be found an agreement in the main about the beauties and the defects which were to be found in Anne Bullen. Both Protestants and Roman Catholics are agreed that she was tall, and that her figure and limbs were, on the whole, handsome; though the Roman Catholics, as will be seen, censure several of the details. Her fine black hair, her beautiful black eyes, her exquisitely formed mouth, and the elegant oval shape of her face, are admitted on both sides.

Protestant writers have made it a point of faith, an article *stantis aut cadentis ecclesiæ*, to describe her as without spot or wrinkle. The Roman Catholic writers have found out about as many spots and wrinkles on her body as they have discovered in her soul, and they have adhered to facts in their unfavourable portrait. They tell us that her skin was so yellow, that she always looked as if she had the jaundice; and this is perfectly true. It is admitted by her passionate admirer, Wyatt the poet, while speaking of her "rare and admirable beauty," "that her face was not so whitely clear and fresh;" in plain words it really was yellow, but it was beautiful notwithstanding.

The Roman Catholics assure us also, and this is perfectly true, that one of her upper teeth stood out from the rest. Then as to their exaggerated facts. The Roman Catholics tell us that she had six fingers on her left hand, and a tumour below her chin. These superfluities coming in aid of her yellow face, could scarcely be said to make her "a dainty dish to set before the king."

But the Protestants have reduced the sixth finger on her left hand to something like an abortive attempt on the part of nature at a second little finger, amounting after all to nothing better than a very large wart, which, however, Anne took great care to conceal, as constantly as possible, with a glove. As to the tumour below the chin, in Protestant eyes it dwindled down, and sweetened and beautified itself into a handsome mole, which is no disfigurement, but rather a grace to a woman, if it be well placed; besides being indicative, as the voice of ages has declared, of a loving constitution, which Anne had, and of great worldly prosperity, which assuredly she had not. To conceal the wart, or superfluous little finger on her left hand, Anne Bullen introduced the fashion of hanging sleeves. The large mole under her chin she concealed under a richly ornamented collar, which also became the fashion amongst the Court ladies. The mole is certainly not to be seen in Holbein's portrait of her, in which her neck is bare.

With all this, the expression of Anne's

features was sweet and sprightly. Her bitterest enemies have joined with her most partial friends in allowing that her taste in dress, and in all kinds of adorning was admirable, and that she displayed much genius in striking out new and splendid fashions. She had a graceful manner, and spoke in a sweet voice, and was highly accomplished in dancing and singing and in playing on the lute.

DIANA OF POITIERS.

DIANA OF POITIERS, created by Henry II. of France, Duchess of Valentinois, is one of the most famous of those women, who in the maturity of life have inspired a violent passion, and who have retained the power of charming even in old age. "I have seen the Duchess of Valentinois," says Brantome, "at the age of seventy, as beautiful in the face, as fresh and as amiable as at the age of thirty."* Brantome takes care never to underrate wonders of this kind; Diana was only sixty-seven at her death.

* Brantome, "Dames Galantes," Œuvres, tom. iv, p. 179.

“I saw her,” he says afterwards, “six months before her death, still so beautiful that I know not a heart so rocky as not to be moved at the sight of her, though before that she had broken her leg on the street in Orleans. She was managing her horse as dexterously as ever she had done, but he slipped and fell under her. From the sufferings which she endured from this accident, it might have been thought,” he says, “that her beautiful face would be altered; but nothing was farther from the result; her beauty, her grace, her majesty, her fine appearance, were all the same as they ever had been. I believe,” he adds, “if this lady had lived a hundred years she would never have grown old either in the face, so finely was it composed, or in the person, so good was her constitution, and so excellent her habit of body. It is a pity that the earth covers this beautiful body.”

Diana, as we learn from Brantome had an extreme whiteness of skin, “and that without painting at all.” Brantome adds, however, a report that every morning she took some soups containing *aurum potabile* and other drugs

which he could not describe, to preserve her charms. Such a woman as Diana we may be sure would neglect no means of averting the appearance of old age, and the means she would use would be those that would be least liable to detection or suspicion. Amongst more scrupulous women, there has been a distinction drawn between such arts as Brantome attributes to Diana, and the less innocent practice of outward painting, as it would be esteemed by those who forebore it.

In a very curious "Discourse of Artificial Beauty," in the form of a dialogue between two ladies, the one who advocates every means of making the face and the person agreeable, speaks of "some who arraign before the rash tribunal of their judgments every face, whose handsomeness they either envy, if natural, or grievously reproach, if they think it hath anything artificial beyond what themselves are wonted to or acquainted with; who yet in other things do as much contend against the defects, deformities and decays of nature and age as may be, by washings, anointings and

plasterings, by many secret medicaments and close receipts, which may either fill and plump their skins, if flat and wrinkled, or smooth and polish them, if rugged and chapped, or clear and brighten them, if tanned and freckled; only in the point of colour or tinctures, added in the least kind or degree, they are not more scrupulous than censorious; as if every one that used these had forsaken Christ's banner, and now fought under the devil's colours."*

The little treatise from which I have made this extract is a well and closely reasoned and really eloquent defence of the practice of painting the face in order to add to its beauty, or to conceal the decay of its freshness, against the sophistical objections of puritanism and hypocrisy. The arguments brought from Scripture are shown to be wholly irrelevant. It is to be observed that as the great strength of the puritan argument against dancing is the fact that the wicked daughter of Herodias danced, so the pretended argument from Scripture against painting the

* "A Discourse of Artificial Beauty in Point of Conscience between two Ladies," p. 2. London, 1692.

face is that Jezebel, like other women of her time, painted her face, which be it observed, should prove to those who are capable of being deluded by such absurdities, that it is also unscriptural to tire the head as Jezebel did, or even "to look out at a window," as Jezebel also did.

It would never occur to such arguers as these that it is a virtue to desire to please; and that as a woman can hardly go against the customs and usages of her age and country, and be innocent, so where face painting and patching are the fashion, a wise man will not look for the best and most amiable of the sex amongst those who abstain from what is forbidden neither by reason nor Scripture. All the arguments against women using every art to heighten and preserve their charms, when the fashion runs in the direction of these arts, resolve themselves into the hateful belief of the ascetic, that everything that is offensive to man is agreeable to Heaven, and the relative belief that all that is agreeable to man is offensive in the sight of God—a belief which has charac-

terised all false religions since the beginning of time till the present hour.

Jezebel was justly punished, not for making herself beautiful, but for the murder of Naboth. Yet Jezebel may be slandered, and they have slandered her, who in the face of the taunting language which she gave to Jehu, insist upon it that her object in adorning her person was to attract his unlawful love. From the whole history of her death, it is the fair inference that calmly contemplating the fall of her throne and her own fate, she resolved like Cleopatra to die like a queen, defying her enemy. In the "Discourse of Artificial Beauty" before quoted, justice is done to Jezebel as regards her behaviour at her death. "She puts herself into a posture of majesty, as showing that height and greatness of mind which could own herself in the pomp and splendour of a princess, even then when she expected her enemy and her end; that she might at least perish (as she thought) with the more reputation of a comely person, and undaunted spirit which abhorred to humble

and abase itself after the manner of fearful and squalid suppliants in sackcloth, or to abate any of those accustomed ornaments with which she used as a queen to entertain herself in her prosperity.”*

Henry had been married to Catharine de' Medici when he and his bride were only fourteen years of age; and he fell in love with Diana when he was eighteen and she thirty-nine, and his love continued unabated till his death, when she was sixty-seven. It gives us a striking idea of the disparity in years between these lovers, to reflect that Henry was younger than Diana's own children. She was married to the Seneschal of Normandy four years before Henry was born, and had been the mother of two daughters. By the vulgar, the influence of Diana over Henry was attributed to witchcraft; and the grave historian De Thou, has imputed it to the effect of philtres and medicines. We need not believe that she had recourse to either the chemist or the apothecary, in order either to preserve her beauty or to bewitch the king; but that she

* "A Discourse of Artificial Beauty," p. 10.

gained his love by the beauty which is not unusual in a Frenchwoman of forty, and retained it by the indescribable graces of manner and conversation which make the inevitable decay of beauty unobserved, and by the power of a strong mind over a weak.

Mademoiselle de Luzan makes her a perfect Poppæa in the art of varying her attractions. "The Duchess of Valentinois," she says, "had lived long enough to be experienced in pleasure, voluptuous by nature, and attentive in preserving her conquest, she every day devised new entertainments. She was too knowing not to recollect that at upwards of forty, she had unceasingly to guard the heart of a young prince who was not twenty-nine. (He was nineteen when she was forty.) In place of the air of flowery youth which was somewhat wanting in her beauty, she employed art, and this art was guided by long experience in gallantry, by a mind acute, cunning and adroit, by a lively gaiety, or by a soft languor. With these advantages a woman in her decline may preserve her conquest, but it is difficult for her to make a new one. Diana

preserved hers by a thousand charms of the mind, happily put into operation. She was a sort of Proteus ; she knew how to exhibit herself to Henry under a form always new.”*

During the whole period of Henry’s reign, Diana openly ruled the king, and influenced all the public affairs of France. Even the queen, Catherine de’ Medici, with all her vigour of mind and ambition, and great talents for business, never resisted the will of the favourite, nor sought to thwart her schemes.

“She mixed herself up with everything,” says Mezerai. “She could do everything ; she was, so to speak, the soul of the king’s counsels. And in order that it might be known that it was she who reigned, it was his will that there should be seen on the furniture, on the devices, and even on the fronts of his royal buildings, a crescent, and the bows and arrows which were the arms of this unchaste Diana. The love of a young king for a woman of forty, who had had several children to her

* Mademoiselle de Luzan, “*Annales Galantes de la Cour de Henri Second,*” tom. 1, p. 129. Amst. 1749.

husband, might be called an enchantment without charms."

Mezerai, it will be observed, speaks with less gallantry than the courtly Brantome. "There was," he says, "more of old age than of bashfulness on her forehead; and years which had extinguished the brilliancy of youth in her eyes, lighted up more violently the flames of desire in her heart. She was unjust, violent, and proud towards those who displeased her, but otherwise she was beneficent and liberal. She also had a very agreeable mind, and her hands still more so, as she bestowed much, and with a good grace. The king loved her because she was very sensible of love, and her temperament sometimes led her to seek elsewhere for the completion of her pleasures, as she found in him the completion of her fortune and her honours."*

Diana of Poitiers is an instance—though not a solitary one, by any means—of a woman loved to distraction by a man, whose mother, in respect of difference of ages, she might have

* Mezerai, "Abregé Chronologique," tom. III, p. 103.

been. Such affections are unromantic; but romances and poetry have both given very unfair representations of the loves of this actual world.

European writers have not had the courage to speak of the beauty of a woman past twenty, their notions on this subject being drawn neither from feeling nor experience, but servilely stolen from Eastern writers describing beauty in countries where a woman is a mother at fifteen and an old woman at thirty. Yet there are more writers than Ovid who have done justice to the beauty of matured womanhood. In one of the Love Epistles of Aristænetus, Terpsion is introduced, censuring her lover for his bad taste in preferring the charms of a girl to the richer beauty of a woman, and urging the superiority of the latter with great effect.* Our own pious and amiable Dr. Donne tells us that

“No spring nor summer beauty hath such grace
As I have seen in an autumnal face.”

* Aristænetus, “Epist.” lib. II, Ep. VII, p. 151.

I have elsewhere noticed that Gibbon, in speaking of the Empress Eudocia (Athenais), says that "the writer of a romance would not have imagined that Athenais was nearly twenty-eight when she inflamed the heart of a young emperor." The remark is a sound one; but, as an exception to its truth, it may be mentioned that Crebillon, in his best romance, the "Egarements du Cœur et de l'Esprit," makes Madame de Lursay by far the most interesting and effective beauty in the story, arrived at the age of forty, when she makes a conquest of the young hero of the novel.

It is to Diana of Poitiers that Brantome is understood to refer in another part of his "Dames Galantes," where he speaks of "a great sovereign who loved so passionately a great lady, an aged widow, that he left his queen, beautiful as she was, and all others for her sake. But in this," he says, after his usual fashion, in speaking of such matters, "he was right; for she was one of the most beautiful and loveable ladies that one could see; and

her winter, indeed, was better than the spring, the summer, and the autumn of others.”*

Mrs. Jameson, in her account of the paintings at Althorpe, describes one that has been several times copied — “that most curious picture of Diana of Poitiers once in the Crawford collection. It is a small half-length; the features fair and regular. The hair is elaborately dressed with a profusion of jewels, but there is no drapery whatever—*force pierrieries et très peu de linge*, as Madame de Sevigné described the two Mancini.”†

With regard to this picture, it may be conjectured that the Duchess had chosen to have herself represented thus naked, in the character of her namesake in the ancient mythology. We have seen that amongst the devices on her equipage she used the moon, the representative of Diana in heaven, and a bow and arrows, the weapons of the goddess of the chase upon earth.

* Brantome, “Dames Galantes,” Œuvres, tom. iv, p. 103.

† Mrs. Jameson, “Visits and Sketches at Home and Abroad,” vol. II, p. 245.

As an active huntress the Duchess might be flattered by being compared to the Greek Diana, but she should not have invited those awkward comparisons which her name and character together must have suggested between her and the cold divinity who bore the title of "the perpetual virgin."

At Hampton Court, in the Queen's Gallery, there is a curious picture called "Francis I. and the Duchess of Valentinois." The bringing of these two together in a picture keeps alive the scandal which, though affirmed by more than one French historian, is not well authenticated, that Diana, before she became the favourite of Henry, had been mistress to his father. In this picture, Francis and the lady who is squinting into his face, form a ludicrously ugly couple. There can be no doubt that though a caricature of his likeness, this is Francis, as may be seen by a comparison of it with his portrait by Holbein in the same room. There may be doubts, however, if the other portrait is that of the Duchess of Valentinois. All the portraits of Francis represent him with these small eyes.

In this picture they are peculiarly piggish. The little woman beside him is yellow-haired, amazingly ill-favoured, with very small and very ill-shaped eyes.

We must not be surprised that an artist should put out of his hands a thing like this as representing a handsome prince and a beautiful lady, seeing that many painters, and amongst these some of great name, have given us portraits of the goddess of beauty herself in which the face is devoid of charms, and the figure offends painfully against the natural proportions of the female form.

CATHARINE DE' MEDICI.

BETWEEN Brantome and one or two other writers, we have a tolerably complete picture of that remarkable and interesting woman Catharine de' Medici. Brantome does the purely eulogistic part to perfection. Catharine, he tells us, was of a very beautiful and gorgeous figure, of great majesty, always very gentle when there was occasion, of fine appearance and good grace, her face fair and pleasant, her bosom very beautiful and white and full, her body also very beautiful and fair. She was of a very rich *embonpoint*, her legs very handsome, and she loved to wear fine stockings.*

* Brantome, "Dames Illustres," Œuvres, tom. II, p. 41.

Catharine, though stout in womanhood, was a slender girl, a very common, and indeed the usual case. She is described by Antonio Suriano, ambassador from Venice to Rome, who saw her in 1533, as slender and small in person; her features not delicate, and he adds that she had the large eyes peculiar to the Medici family. "Her nature," he adds, "is lively, her spirit gentle, and her manners good."* This is the description of Catharine at the age of fourteen, when an Italian girl is considered a young woman. Catharine was married at fourteen. It is the age of Shakspeare's Juliet.

Lady Capulet.—Thou know'st my daughter's of a pretty age.

Nurse.—Faith I can tell her age unto an hour.

Lady Capulet.—She's not fourteen.

Nurse.—I'll lay fourteen of my teeth—

And yet, to my teen be it spoken, I have but four—

She is not fourteen. How long is it now

To Lammas-tide?

Lady Capulet.—A fortnight and odd days.

Nurse.—Even or odd, of all days in the year,

Come Lammas-eve at night shall she be fourteen.

* "Relatio Antonii Suriani," quoted by Ranke, "History of the Popes," Appendix, No. 20.

The great beauty which Brantome attributes to Catharine endured with her, as he tells us, as a wife and widow almost to her death ; “ not that she was then,” he says with a caution unusual with him in such cases, “ as fresh as she was in her most flourishing years, but in good preservation, and very desirable and agreeable.”

The flattering picture painted by Brantome must be modified by the sketches drawn by writers less prejudiced in favour of royal charms. Catharine de' Medici was not a beauty. There were serious drawbacks to the perfections which Brantome finds in her. The more faithful picture by Mezerai bears manifest marks of minute accuracy, and of being derived from contemporary sources. Catharine, according to Mezerai, was of middle height, and fat and square in the figure (*grosse et carrée*), her face was rather large, the mouth projecting (the phrase here is, *la bouche relevée*, which may have some other signification), her complexion was perfectly white, but with little carnation in it, the eyes soft but large, and rolling

about with great volubility, her head very large, and she could not walk even a short distance without bathing it in water. A face rather large and a head very large are perfectly destructive of beauty. A small head in a woman is more tolerable to a just taste than a head which can be called large, much less very large.

“As for the rest,” says Brantome, “Catharine had the finest hand I believe that ever was seen. The poets have praised Aurora for having beautiful hands and beautiful fingers, but I believe that the queen would have surpassed her in this, and she kept her hands beautiful even till her death. Her son Henry III. inherited from his mother a great deal of this beauty of the hands.”

Brantome is very liberal of fine hands to his ladies, but there is reason to believe that Catharine was proud of her hands and her feet. A narrow hand with long slender fingers appears to be what is required. Such are the hands of Dante's Beatrice in the Canzone, in which he draws so complete a picture of

beauty. With the exception of the broad forehead which Dante bestows on his mistress, the rest of her portrait is entirely after the ancient taste. She has the crisped, golden locks, the mouth "amorous and beautiful," the nose straight, the chin small, the neck white and slender, finely joining with the shoulders and bosom, and as heightening their effect the slender hands of Beatrice are attached to arms which the poet says were large and broad :

" I bracci suoi distesi e grossi."

The hand of Alcina in her enchanted form in the "Orlando Furioso" is long and narrow, and her picture is one of the most complete descriptions of a beauty to be found in all poetry :

"Lunghetta alquanto e di larghezza angusta."*

"Her hands long and her fingers slender," is part of a very minute description of a perfect woman in the curious and learned work of Nicolas Venette. I give the whole portrait as

* Ariosto, Orlando Furioso, c. VIII, st. XIV.

drawn by Venette in a note below, as it contains some peculiar points.*

* “En effet, sa taille est haute, bien prise et des plus fines; son air a je ne scay quoy si remply de majesté qu'il inspire du respect aux plus hardis; son humeur est agréable et son esprit vif et brillant. A la considérer en particulier, *son embonpoint est accompli* et le tour de son visage merveilleux. Ses dents sont blanches, ses joues et ses lèvres sont de couleur de rose, *son front est assez large*, ses yeux grands et *bleus*, bien ouverts et pleins de feu, ses sourcils noirs, *sa bouche* et ses oreilles petites, son nez bien fait, sa gorge un peu élevée, ses mains longues et doigts deliez, sa poitrine large, son flanc pressé, ses pieds petits et délicats.” Venette then adds what he considers ~~the~~ the ancient portrait of a beauty, and here the small forehead comes in place of the large one in his own picture. “Et si l'on veut une beauté qui plaisoit aux anciens, je diray avec Petrone, qu'elle a les cheveux naturellement frisez, qui lui battent agréablement les epaules; *que son front est petit* au dessus duquel on voit de véritables cheveux retraits agréablement, que ses sourcils se courbent, que ses yeux sont plus brillants que les étoiles dans l'obscurité de la nuit, que son nez est un peu aquilin; que sa bouche est petite semblable a celle de Vénus de Praxitele. Enfin que son visage, sa gorge, ses bras et ses jambes ornez de lien, de coliers et de brasselets d'or

Fine hands—that is, fair and slender hands—have even been admired in the other sex. In the Queen of Navarre's novel, where the lady of Pampeluna falls in love with the Cordelier, the beautiful hands of the priest are made to play a principal part in inspiring this unhappy passion. She goes to church on the first day of Lent. "After sermon the Cordelier celebrated mass, at which the lady was present, and took the ashes from his hand, which was as beautiful and white as a lady could have. The devout lady paid much more attention to the priest's hand than to the ashes he gave her, persuaded that this spiritual love could not be hurtful to the conscience, whatever pleasure she received from it."*

D'Israeli, in his "Curiosities of Literature," notices that Henrietta, the Queen of Charles I., in describing the famous Earl of

effacent la blancheur du marbre le plus estimé."—*Nicolas Venette, "Tableau de l'Amour Conjugal,"* p. 242. Cologne, 1696.

* "Contes et Nouvelles de Marguerite de Valois," tom. II, p 17.

Strafford, in a private letter says: "Though not handsome he was agreeable enough, and he had the finest hands of any man in the world." Ninon de l'Enclos, as will be mentioned afterwards, felt a repugnance to a man with large hands. More than one French writer dwells with enthusiasm on the beautiful hands of Napoleon.

All writers, who have spoken on the subject, have agreed in praising the elegant taste and splendour which Catharine displayed in her dresses, and in her retinues. "She always dressed very well and superbly," says Brantome, "displaying every new and genteel invention." Corneille, the painter, he says, drew Catharine dressed after the French fashion, with a bonnet adorned with large pearls, and a robe with wide sleeves of silvered lace, trimmed with wolf's fur. Her three daughters appeared beside her in this picture. The Queen was delighted with her portrait, which ladies seldom are.

Varillas celebrates the skill with which all her

dresses were adapted to her person. She rested her claims to admiration greatly on her fine ankles; and in order to do justice to their excellence, she had her silk stockings drawn tight upon them; and in riding, which was her usual exercise, she threw one leg rather ostentatiously over the pommel of the saddle. In her days, and long after, it should be observed, that stockings were an article of dress which women attended to with great care, and bestowed much expense upon. A common present in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries from a gentleman to a lady, as a New-year's gift, was a pair of stockings and garters, often of the costliest and most curious materials and adornment.* Carnation-coloured stockings

* In Southey's "Common Place Book" we find the following notices about stockings. The first is from the Skipton Accounts under date 1618: "Paid for a pair of carnation silk stockings and a pair of ashe-coloured taffata garters and roses, edged with silver lace, given by my Lord to Mrs. Douglas Shiefield, she drawing my Lord for her valentine, £3 10s." Under date 1611, we have: "Sir F. Bacon sends to

and yellow garters were the handsome fashion ; and these gaudy and expensive ornaments were intended only for partial concealment.

Catharine, as we are told by Brantome, delighted in the chase, and could manage a horse admirably, though in the course of her life she suffered severely from falls. On one occasion she broke her leg, and on another received so severe an injury on the head, that she had to undergo the operation of trepanning. In fine weather she played at the *pallemail* and at the *arbalest à jallet*, a sort of cross-bow for shooting clay-pellets. For bad weather she was always inventing some new dance or ballet. She patronised theatrical entertainments, as also the performances of zanies and pantaloons, at which, says Brantome, she would laugh her fill. She had a great relish for humour, and showed her enjoyment of such jokes as men even must not make now-a-days.

Catharine loved to surround herself with

Sir M. Hicke's lady and daughters a New-year's gift of carnation stockings to wear for his sake."—*Southey's "Common Place Book,"* pp. 321 and 513.

beautiful women as her attendants. Amidst the general accusations, which have been cast upon her, her chastity has not been spared, and she has been accused of having various amours with persons of low rank. These charges may, I think, be dismissed as not supported by any good authority. The general licentiousness of her court, however, is well established; but it should be recollected that her immediate predecessors were Francis I., and Henry II., and that the court and the kingdom had long been ruled by mistresses; and the amount of the charge that can fairly be brought against Catharine on this score is, that she did not reform the morals of the palace. It must farther be admitted that she made use of the circle of beauty, which she gathered around her, for political objects.

“She brought with her,” says Mezerai, in speaking of a visit she made to her son Henry II., “a great band of very beautiful women, whom she displayed in all her negotiations, like snares, to catch those with whom she treated.”

In order to retain the powers of the state in her own vigorous hands, she encouraged the debaucheries of her sons. She made a complete Sybarite of Henry III. He threw away prodigious sums in gambling; he disguised himself in masquerade, and appeared dressed as a woman. And Mezerai tells us that Catharine entertained him at a feast, at which the most beautiful women of the court attended with their hair dishevelled, and their bosoms uncovered.*

The court of Catharine in short was altogether like what the court of her husband had been. Speaking of Henry II., Mezerai says: "Almost all the vices which ruin great states, and draw down the wrath of Heaven, reigned in his court—luxury, immodesty, libertinage, blasphemies, and the curiosity as foolish as impious, of searching after the secrets of the future by the detestable illusions of magical art."

The account which the historian gives of the court under Charles IX. (that is, under Catharine), is a parallel to this with some still

* Mezerai, "Abregé Chronologique," tom. III, p. 280.

darker shades in the picture. "Before this reign, it was the men that by their example and persuasions drew the women into gallantry; but now that love affairs formed the greater part of the intrigues and mysteries of state, the women went before the men; their husbands left the bridle loose upon them from complaisance, and from interest; and besides, those who loved change, found a satisfaction in this liberty which, instead of one wife, gave them a hundred."*

During this reign, the court and the kingdom swarmed with sorcerers. The queen herself studied and practised magic. She wore about her person some characters written on a piece of the skin of a dead-born child.

Catharine was ten years married before she had a child, and in the ten subsequent years she had ten children, three of whom died in infancy. Brantome makes the remark that it was the nature of the women of the Medici family to be late in conceiving. During the period of her barrenness, Catharine, who, during the whole

* Mezerai, tom. III, p. 254.

life-time of Henry, is allowed to have conducted herself with prudence, was neglected and despised ; but her subsequent fertility, says Mezerai, "made her triumph over the ill-will of her enemies, and acquired for her the affection of the people, and the esteem of the court, who regarded her afterwards with admiration and respect, as a beautiful tree always loaded with flowers and fruits."*

The employment of the famous John Ferne-
lius, the physician, at her deliveries is noticed by the historians of Catharine. She rewarded him with a hundred thousand crowns, or about six thousand pounds sterling, on each occasion. It does not appear that the example of Catharine brought the practice of employing physicians instead of midwives into fashion. It is certain that, more than a century afterwards, when a medical man was employed at the first delivery of Mademoiselle de la Vallière, it was considered a thing unprecedented ; and the reason for the departure from ordinary usage in this case was not any anticipated difficulty in

* Mezerai, tom. III, p. 149.

labour, but the king's desire—certainly a vain desire—to make the delivery a secret, by keeping it out of the mouths of women.

Up till this time (1663), a learned physician, omitting to notice the exception in the case of Catherine de' Medici, asserts that the employment of physicians as midwives was unknown in any country in Europe.* In the history of ancient Athens, there was, for a very short time, a departure from the usage of all nations which created terrible consternation and discontent. After the example set in the instance of La Vallière, the practice of employing physicians appears to have prevailed in France.

Bayle, writing about 1690, asserts that it was then unknown in any country except France. But he adds this prediction: "The time, perhaps, will come when the same fashion will prevail in the greater part of Europe; and modesty will undergo the fate of a thousand

* Roussel, "Système Physique et Morale de la Femme," p. 277. Paris, 1845. The same assertion is made by Astruc in his "Histoire Sommaire de l'Art d'Accoucher."

other things which are subject to the fantastic and inconstant laws of custom."* The prophecy has been fulfilled.

Mezerai has not been favourable to the moral character of Catharine, but there is a great deal of truth and of sagacity in his sketch. "Her mind," he says, "was extremely subtle, concealed, full of ambition and of artifice, able to accommodate itself to all sorts of persons, to dissemble her real views, and to conduct her designs with incredible patience; ready in finding expedients in cases of need, being never surprised by any accident, as if she had herself desired and brought about all that happened. Otherwise, she was gentle—at least, in appearance—generous, and magnificent. * * *

She also merits the praise of not only loving architecture, painting, and sculpture, but also of having favoured men of letters, and having brought from Greece and Italy many ancient and rare manuscripts, which are, at this day, the most beautiful ornaments of the Royal Library.

* Bayle, "Dict." art. "Hierophile."

“ She entertained all strangers with much courtesy, and her own domestics with great familiarity. She had a marvellous grace in persuading, and loved diversions even in the midst of the greatest difficulties in her affairs.

* * * From the time of the death of her husband, she strove to keep the sovereign authority in her own hands. This she could not do without distracting her mind with continual pain and disquietude, and the kingdom with troubles and disagreements, arousing and elevating sometimes one faction, and sometimes lowering and lulling to rest another, uniting sometimes with the weaker out of prudence for fear that the stronger might overwhelm her, sometimes again with the stronger from necessity, and sometimes holding herself neutral when she felt herself powerful enough to control both ; but never intending to extinguish them altogether.”*

I am afraid that I may be considered as offering an outrage to virtue itself, if I speak of any good and noble qualities in the woman

* Mezerai, tom. III, p. 150 .

whose name, to many readers, awakens no other memory than that of St. Bartholomew's-day. It cannot, I admit, be considered any palliation of this execrable crime that it was not the fruit either of fanaticism or of bigotry. Catharine was neither a fanatic nor a bigot ; and in religious matters, as separated from state politics, was a friend to toleration. Indeed, her enemies in her own day gave her credit for the boldest latitudinarianism.

In a little book published in her own lifetime, and written, no doubt, with the same intention as John Knox wrote his treatise against the " Monstrous Regiment of Women," to incite her subjects to rebellion against her, Catharine, whom the writer elaborately compares to the horrible Fredegondes and Brunehildes of the early Frank history, is plainly called an atheist. " Katherine," says this writer, " being of the race of an atheist, and nourished in atheisme, hath replenished the realme, but specially the Court, with atheistes."*

* " Ane Meruellous Discours upon the Lyfe, Deedes,

The infamous massacre of St. Bartholomew was a *coup d'état* dictated by what she considered a pressing emergency, when her throne was tottering under the assaults of its enemies, and it was conceived and carried out in the spirit of that expediency in which she had been educated; the Italian policy of the period. It was a terrible blow, struck at a dangerous and powerful enemy; a deed which men who were neither fanatics nor bigots highly approved, as extremely salutary in prostrating the power of what they regarded as a hateful, hypocritical, intriguing, and insidious faction.

We cannot suppose that Catharine, who lived amongst them and knew them, could look on the Huguenots of France as they are regarded by the Protestants of the nineteenth century; as a congregation of saints. This certainly was not the light in which they were

and Behaviours of Katherine de Medicis, Quene Mother," printed at Cracow, 1576. I have used the copy of this curious little book, which is in the Advocate's Library at Edinburgh. As the place of publication, perhaps, we should read Edinburgh for Cracow.

regarded by men at that period, who cannot be accused of fanaticism either in politics or in religion. We may safely call Montaigne—a liberal, a tolerant, and a philosophic man—as a witness to his impressions of the character of the Huguenots. “In this contest,” says Montaigne, in his “Essay on Liberty of Conscience,” “by which France is at present agitated with civil wars, the better and the sounder party is, without doubt, that which maintains the ancient religion and the ancient policy of the country.”*

The most dreadful crimes have been committed conscientiously; and as the philosophical Tacitus half approves of the cruelties of Nero to the early Christians, whom the historian unhappily regarded as a hateful people, so I can believe, notwithstanding the tale of the remorse which visited her dying pillow, that Catharine, to the last, believed that the massacre of the Huguenots was a patriotic deed.

Catharine's conduct as a wife appears to

* Montaigne, “Essais,” liv. II, c. 19.

have been exemplary. The uncomplaining patience with which she endured the king's neglect of her for the love of Diana of Poitiers may, by those who are not disposed to put a good construction on her extraordinary forbearance, be received as merely a proof of her great control over the expression of her feelings. But after she assumed and, as queen-mother, vigorously exercised the powers of monarchy, the magnanimity with which she refused to revenge herself, or allow any others to revenge her, upon her who, for twenty years, had been her rival; and the care which she took, while succeeding lawfully to all the political authority which the Duchess of Valentinois had so long unlawfully exercised, that neither the wealth, nor the palaces, nor any of the presents which Henry had bestowed on his favourite should be withdrawn from her, will compel those who are capable of giving due weight to the rare and great merit of such conduct, to confess that, if Catharine's memory is loaded with one of the most gigantic crimes in history, she exhibited,

on more than one occasion, virtues, in which few indeed of those who can execrate her great guilt will be inclined or able to imitate her.

QUEEN ELIZABETH.

IF it were desired to prove from partial testimonies that this unamiable woman was a great beauty and a perfect saint, it would not be difficult to collect a good body of evidence on both points from her contemporaries, and from persons who ought to have known what she was like, including herself. Her admiration of her own personal beauty was intense and enthusiastic. Whether or not it be true that she instructed her painters to paint her face without any shadow in it, it is certain that she never could be satisfied with any likeness made of her, in however courteous and flattering a manner

the artist had behaved towards her. She was disgusted with the best efforts in this line; feeling how far those painters who were most anxious to please had fallen short in doing justice to the charms which her faithful looking-glass, which could not lie, revealed to her in herself. She viewed with execration the attempts made to convey her features to the canvas.

She executed wrath against innumerable portraits of herself, painted with the most passionate desire of pleasing her, or at least of appeasing her indignation, and with the most sincere and loyal design of imposing her on the world, and on all who had not seen or were not likely to see her, as a beauty; as not merely the rival, but the vanquisher of her fair cousin, Mary of Scotland. No Iconoclast of Byzantium, no conquering son of the Koran ever, in his devoutest rage, manifested a more religious fury against graven images, and the likenesses of divine or human beings, either in the heavens above or the earth beneath, than the Virgin Queen, the "bright occidental star" did against

the best portraits of herself; her sacred wrath against the more favourable being only surpassed by that with which she burned against the more faithful. Sir Walter Raleigh, her admirer, tells us of "the pictures of Queene Elizabeth made by *unskillful and common* painters, which *by her own commandement* were knockt in peeces and cast into the fire."* As some excuse for her blindness to the moderate charms of her person and of her mind, it should be recollected that never was woman more flattered as to both than was Elizabeth. A volume of eulogiums on both might be compiled without trouble, the contents being in prose and verse, concluding, in the latter department, with the famous lines :

" She was, she is, what can there more be said,
On earth the first, in heaven the second maid."

The general appearance of Queen Elizabeth, as discernible through all the mists and the rose-colouring of flattery is not difficult to gather. She was of the middle height.

* Raleigh, "History of the World." Preface. Lond. 1614.

When she learned that Mary, whom she regarded as her audacious rival in beauty, though no rivalship was dreamed of by the unfortunate Queen of Scots, or was ever dreamed of by any person of taste, was tall, she declared, as thousands of women under similar circumstances have declared of themselves, that Mary was too tall, and that she herself was of the true proper height for a woman. The person of Elizabeth it is understood is done justice to, and is accurately embodied in the equestrian figure of her to be seen in the Tower of London. There were some good points about her. Her person was reasonably well proportioned; her shoulders and bust were good. Various writers have spoken of the dignity and stateliness of her walk and carriage; but these, like her whole character, partook of something of the harshness of masculine vigour.

Her hands have been praised for their beauty and fairness; they were narrow, the fingers being long, and these are the hands of the admired fashion. Such was the hand of Ariosto's beautiful enchantress, as I have else-

where noticed, "lunghetta alquanto e di larghezza angusta." Elizabeth was aware of this excellence, and endeavoured to make the most of it. Before company she was continually pulling off and on her gloves, and her fingers were decorated with rings and precious stones in order to call attention to their symmetry. But her face was long, hard, full of harsh lines, and intensely unwomanly, her hooked nose being particularly unfeminine. Her eyes were small, her teeth bad, and her lips thin and tasteless. Her hair and complexion were of a sandy, or insipid washed-out whitey-brown hue. Her little eyes are generally said to have been grey; but a very accurate observer who had gazed on her with much interest, and whom I am about to quote, tells us that they were black.

The appearance of Elizabeth, from childhood to old age, may be studied in the various portraits of her in Hampton Palace. They all bear a resemblance, Elizabeth becoming gradually less and less comely as she advanced from childhood to youth, womanhood and old age. The picture of her when a mere child, by

Holbein, in the King's Writing Closet (281 in the catalogue), is like that of a boy, and bears a great resemblance to another picture by the same painter (282) when she was a girl. The portraits by Zuccherro and by M. Garrand (283 and 285) represent her in old age. In the allegorical picture of her by Luke de Heere (284) the resemblance to the other portraits cannot be mistaken. This picture represents Elizabeth as vanquishing Juno in power, Minerva in intellect, and Venus in beauty.

“Juno potens sceptris et mentis acumine Pallas
Et roseo Veneris fulget in ore decus ;
Adfuit Elizabeth, Juno perculsa refugit
Obstupuit Pallas, erubuitque Venus.”

There is a very curious and rare book of travels originally written in Latin, by Paul Hentzner, a German who paid a visit to England in the time of Elizabeth, in the capacity of tutor to a young German nobleman. The work of Hentznerus lay in manuscript in the original Latin till about the middle of last century, when it was translated by Horace Walpole and printed

at his private press at Strawberry Hill. The edition now before me is a small volume of a hundred and fifty pages, printed from the private edition of Walpole with the portraits of several persons mentioned by Hentzner. An engraving of Zuccherò's portrait of Elizabeth "done by order of the Parliament" forms the frontispiece.

Hentzner's work is extremely interesting. He had an eye for detail in everything, and he has described everything that he saw. When admitted into Queen Elizabeth's presence chambers, he gazed on her with the eye of a painter, a milliner and a jeweller, and he has faithfully committed the fruit of his gazings to paper. He has given us a picture of Elizabeth in her sixty-fifth year, her face, her form, her dress, her retinue, her speech and her manners. I extract liberally from his picturesque pages.

"We were admitted by an order Mr. Rogers had procured from the Lord Chamberlain, into the presence chamber, hung with rich tapestry; and the floor, after the English fashion, strewed with hay, through which the Queen commonly passed in her way to Chapel: at the door stood

a gentleman dressed in velvet, with a gold chain, whose office was to introduce to the Queen any person of distinction that came to wait on her : it was Sunday, when there is usually the greatest attendance of nobility. In the same hall were the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Bishop of London, a great number of counsellors of state, officers of the Crown, and gentlemen, who waited the Queen's coming out ; which she did from her own apartment, when it was time to go to prayers, attended in the following manner :

“ First went gentlemen, barons, earls, knights of the garter, all richly dressed and bare-headed : next came the chancellor, bearing the seals in a red silk purse between two ; one of which carried the royal sceptre, the other the sword of state, in a red scabbard, studded with golden fleurs-de-lis, the point upwards ; next came the Queen, in the sixty-fifth year of her age, as we were told, very majestic ; her face oblong, fair but wrinkled ; her eyes small, yet black and pleasant, her nose a little hooked ; her lips narrow, and her teeth black (a defect the English seem subject to, from their too great

use of sugar); she had in her ears two pearls, with very rich drops; she wore false hair, and that red; upon her head she had a small crown, reported to be made of some of the gold of the celebrated Lunebourg table; her bosom was uncovered, as all the English ladies have it, till they marry; and she had on a necklace of exceeding fine jewels; her hands were small, her fingers long, and her stature neither tall nor low; her air was stately, her manner of speaking mild and obliging. That day she was dressed in white silk, bordered with pearls of the size of beans, and over it a mantle of black silk, shot with silver threads; her train was very long, the end of it borne by a marchioness; instead of a chain, she had an oblong collar of gold and jewels.

“As she went along in all this state and magnificence, she spoke very graciously first to one and then to another, whether foreign ministers, or those who attended for different reasons, in English, French, or Italian; for besides being well skilled in Greek, Latin, and the languages I have mentioned, she is mistress

of Spanish, Scotch and Dutch ; whoever speaks to her, it is kneeling ; now and then she raises some with her hand. While we were there, M. Slawata, a Bohemian baron, had letters to present to her, and she, after pulling off her glove, gave him her right hand to kiss, sparkling with rings and jewels, a mark of particular favour : wherever she turned her face, as she was going along, everybody fell down on their knees. The ladies of the court followed next to her, very handsome and well shaped, and for the most part dressed in white : she was guarded on each side by the gentlemen-pensioners, fifty in number, with gilt battle-axes.

“ In the ante-chapel next the hall where we were, petitions were presented to her, and she received them most graciously, which occasioned the exclamation of ‘ Long live Queen Elizabeth !’ She answered it with ‘ I thank you, my good people !’ In the chapel was excellent music ; as soon as it and the service were over, which scarce exceeded half an hour, the queen returned in the same state and order, and pre-

pared to go to dinner. But while she was still at prayers, we saw her table laid out with the following solemnity. A gentleman entered the room bearing a rod, and along with him another who had a table-cloth, which, after they had both kneeled three times with the utmost veneration, he spread upon the table; and after kneeling again, they both retired. Then came two others, one with the rod again, the other with a saltseller, a plate, and bread; when they had kneeled, as the others had done, and placed what was brought upon the table, they too retired with the same ceremonies performed by the first.

“ At last came an unmarried lady (we were told she was a countess), and along with her a married one, bearing a toasting-knife; the former was dressed in white silk, who, when she had prostrated herself three times in the most graceful manner, approached the table, and rubbed the plates with bread and salt with as much care as if the queen had been present; when they had waited there a little while, the yeomen of the guards entered, bare-headed,

clothed in scarlet, with a golden rose upon their backs, bringing in at each turn a course of twenty-four dishes, served in plates, most of it gilt ; these dishes were received by a gentleman in the same order they were brought, and placed upon the table, while the lady-taster gave to each of the guards a mouthful to eat of the particular dish he had brought, for fear of any poison.

“ During the time that this guard, which consists of the tallest and stoutest men that can be found in all England, being carefully selected for this service, were bringing in dinner, twelve trumpeters, and two kettle-drummers, made the hall ring for half an hour together. At the end of all this ceremonial, a number of unmarried ladies appeared, who, with a particular solemnity, lifted the meat off the table, and conveyed it into the queen’s inner and more private chamber, where, after she had chosen for herself, the rest goes to the ladies of the court. The queen dines and sups alone with very few attendants ; and it is very seldom that anybody, foreigner or native, is admitted at that time,

and then only at the intercession of somebody in power.”*

Here is valuable evidence from a most valuable witness. Walpole remarks with pleasure : “ Fortunately so memorable a personage as Queen Elizabeth happened to fall under his notice ! The excess of respectful ceremonial used at decking her majesty’s table, though not in her presence, and the kind of adoration and genuflexion paid to her person, approach to Eastern homage. When we observe such worship offered to an old woman with bare neck, black teeth, and false red hair, it makes one smile ; but makes one reflect what masculine sense was couched under those weaknesses, and which could command such awe from a nation like England.”

Walpole has appended to his translation of Hentzner the “ *Fragmenta Regalia ; or observations on the late Queen Elizabeth, her times and favourites, by Sir Robert Naunton, Master of the Courts of Wards* ” All that Naunton, in

* “ *Paul Hentzner’s Travels in England during the reign of Queen Elizabeth,*” p. 33. Lond. 1797.

his professed eulogium of Elizabeth, tells us of her is, that "she was of person tall (the middle size rises into tallness when measured by a panegyrist), of hair and complexion fair, and therewith well-favoured, but high-nosed, of limbs and features neat, and, which added to the lustre of these external graces, of a stately and majestic comportment." Farther on he tells us that "her wonted oath" was "God's death." This was her favourite affirmation, but it was certainly not her solitary one, for she had abundant variety, and swore with an energy becoming her character.

Elizabeth covered herself with rich dress and cumbrous ornaments gathered from all quarters of the world. At her death it is said that there were three thousand costly suits in her wardrobe. Brantome, who thought a woman amazingly fine when she was weighed to the earth with gold and gems, and who also speaks with rapture of the dazzling beauty of ladies of sixty, seventy, and fourscore years of age, had seen Elizabeth, as he expresses it, in her summer and in her autumn, though not in

her winter, and he thus describes her as she appeared to his polite and courtier eyes. It is extremely awkward for Elizabeth that Brantome places this account of her in that part of his "Dames Galantes" which is devoted to "amorous old women" (*vieilles amoureuses*).

"The Queen Elizabeth of England," he says, "who reigns at this day, I am told is as beautiful as ever; which, if she really is, I hold her as a beautiful princess; for I have seen her in her summer and in her autumn; as to her winter, she approaches it closely, if she be not now in it; for it is a long time now since I have seen her. The first time I saw her, I know what age she was then said to be of; I believe that what has preserved her so long in her beauty, is that she has never been married, nor has borne the weight of marriage, which is very burdensome, and particularly when one has several children."*

Elizabeth's continual refusals of marriage, notwithstanding her evident admiration of handsome courtiers, has been appealed to amongst

* Brantome, "Dames Galantes," Œuvres, iv, 188.

other proofs of her guilt by those writers who have described her as a licentious princess. The evidence against her on this score is certainly very imperfect, and her celibacy is now generally accounted for from an innocent cause. This view is confirmed by some passages in her answers to the applications made to her by the Parliament praying her to take a husband, and it is alluded to by the historians Camden and Mezerai, as well as by Amelotte de la Houssaye, Bayle, and various other subsequent writers.

MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS.

THE personal charms of Mary Queen of Scots have been more extensively celebrated than those of any other woman of modern times, and more so, perhaps, than those of any woman in all history, Helen of Troy alone excepted. It is possible, had she led a life unmarked by romantic incidents, or had her history been less deeply tragical from her childhood to the tomb than it was, that the praise of her beauty would have been less extravagant, though it is not possible to doubt that with this fatal gift—fatal to her, certainly—she was abundantly endowed.

The modern notions of her beauty are far from being distinct or well settled. This certainly does not arise from any want of pictures claiming to be original portraits of Mary, which are to be found in abundance in the mansions of aristocratic collectors in England and on the continent. There was an Italian painter, who has obtained the name of Lippo dalle Madonne, or "Philip of the Madonnas," on account of his constantly employing himself in the painting of heads of the blessed Virgin Mary. In the same way, a great many painters have occupied themselves in multiplying portraits of Mary Queen of Scots. The greater number of these portraits may be fairly considered as works of imagination, compounded out of such features as the painter thought would together make a fine picture.

Such beauties of the artist's imagination are always, as if by a regular law, infinitely inferior to the portraits of real women of ordinary comeliness. Even when he attempts to improve nature herself out of the materials which she furnishes him, the painter always fails. "The

Greek," says Jeremy Taylor, "that designed the most exquisite picture that could be imagined, fancied the eye of Chione, and the hair of Pægnium and Tarsia's lip, Philenium's chin and the forehead of Delphia, and set them all on Melphidippa's neck, and thought that he should outdo both art and nature. But when he came to view the proportions, he found that what was excellent in Tarsia did not agree with the other excellency of Philenium, and that though singly they were rare pieces, yet in the whole they made an ugly face."

It is not given to mortal painter either to create by his imagination or compound by his learning, anything to compare with the faces which are to be seen in profusion in the real world. A perfectly beautiful face when we meet with it in painting, is sure to be the face of an individual. Look over the pages of a book of imaginary beauties, "Idols of Memory," "Flowers of Loveliness," "Dreams of my Youth," and so; and then turn to Vandyk's portrait of Margaret Lemon in the gallery at Hampton Palace, and see and feel how inferior the

brightest imagination of a conceited painter is to the workmanship of Heaven.

It is to be feared that Mary's real beauty has suffered from the imagination of painters. Very few of the extant portraits of her have any beauty or grace about them at all. I have scarcely seen one with a fine forehead, or even an approach to the shape of a fine forehead—that sweetly arched brow which we see in the real portraits of Lady Denham, the Duchess of Somerset, Miss Bagot, or many others of Sir Peter Lely's beauties, and in the portraits of the fascinating Ninon de l'Enclos. Yet this fine form of head is by no means a rarity in real life. Almost all the portraits of Mary agree in destroying the beauty of the lower part of the face by surmounting it with an offensively high, broad, and square-formed forehead.

It is probable that Mary, with all her beauty otherwise, had such a forehead; for mere imagination which, when trusted to, almost always leads painters far astray from true beauty, would have taught them to avoid the

unpardonable error of giving to a woman so renowned for the effect of her charms, a forehead which repels a refined taste; and besides this, they had the example of the exquisitely-formed and graceful foreheads presented to them in the Venuses, Cleopatras, and Magdalenes of the great masters.

The celebrated picture of Mary, at Hardwicke, is thus described by Mrs. Jameson. It is "a full-length, in a mourning-habit, with a white cap (of her own peculiar fashion), and a veil of white gauze. This, I believe, is the celebrated picture so often copied and engraved. It is dated 1578, the twenty-sixth year of her age, and the tenth of her captivity. The figure is elegant, and the face pensive and sweet." This is the picture of Mary which, as it appears in prints, makes the nearest approach to the likeness of a beauty.

"The lovely picture by Zuccherò," continues Mrs. Jameson, "is at Chiswick. There is another small head of her in a cap and feathers at Hardwicke, said to have been painted in France. The turn of the head is airy and

graceful. As to the features, they are so much marred by some *soi-disant* restorer, that it is difficult to say what they may have been originally.”*

Mary was tall in person and gracefully formed. Her hair, which, in childhood or girlhood, was yellow, grew to a dark auburn in womanhood, fading in the colour afterwards, and becoming grey before her death, with suffering and grief. Her hair, says Brantome, “so beautiful, fair, and ashy—*si beaux, si blonds, et cendrés.*” Mary, however, like her royal cousin Elizabeth, who had more need of deceit, often wore false locks of yellow or red. Her eyes were grey, her face was oval, and the lower part was well formed; the chin, which approached to be what is called a double chin, being extremely handsome.

Her grief for the death of the husband of her girlhood was no doubt sincere; but we are not obliged to believe Brantome when he assures us that she lost all her colour from sorrow at the

* Mrs. Jameson, “Visits and Sketches,” vol. 11, p. 201.

death of the Dauphin. Her face, however, in womanhood is said to have been pale; her complexion generally was clear. In her latter days her hair, as noticed before, became grey; but she did not pine away into fleshlessness with grief, but grew corpulent. Yet when she appeared on the scaffold at Fotheringay, in the forty-ninth year of a life, the last eighteen years of which had been passed in dreary imprisonment, she still was a beautiful woman.

As far as being real pictures of her style of dressing, all the old portraits of Mary may be depended on as authentic records. It is remarkable that though no one of these dresses is calculated to show her figure to advantage, her dresses, even the stiffest of them, are free from the cumbersomeness so general in the female attire of the times. What a contrast does the most formal and courtly of her suits present to the dress of Elizabeth, which always appears to do injustice to her person by concealing her well-formed shoulders!

The portraits of Mary, as a young woman, often represent her in a kind of riding-dress

—a dress disagreeable in itself, and extremely unfavourable for a portrait—helping, in her case, by its close fastening up to the throat and entire want of freedom and openness, the ill effect of the masculine forehead generally given to her, and making her bear a very offensive resemblance to a handsome young man.

Brantome, who it is to be recollected accompanied Mary to Scotland after the death of the Dauphin, has some highly characteristic remarks on her dress. Such, he tells us, were the charms of her person, that when she was dressed like a savage as he had seen her, after the barbarous fashion of the savages of her country, she appeared in a mortal body and in barbarous and rude costume, a true goddess. “What then would she appear,” he exclaims in a fine and truly Parisian rapture, and in the most sublime style of a French dressmaker, “what then would she appear in her fine and rich garments, either French or Spanish, or with her Italian bonnet, or in her white, full mourning dress in which she looked so beautiful; for the

whiteness of her complexion contended for the victory with her veil; but in the end, the art of her veil lost the day, and the snow of her lovely face outshone the other.”*

As to her discourse, Brantome tells us that such was the grace of her talking, that the rude and barbarous and unseemly language of her country became very beautiful and agreeable in her, “but not in others,” he adds. All this is truly and delightfully after the manner of Brantome.

Mary had learned dressing, or the art of being dressed, at the Court of Catharine de' Medici, and was herself a woman of the greatest good taste. All the continental fashions of dressing were well enough known amongst the ladies of Scotland long before Brantome came amongst them; but it may readily be conceded that the women of the British Islands of the highest rank will never, to the end of time, be able to put their garments about them with the elegance, grace and ease which are common amongst all

* Brantome, “Dames Illustres,” Œuvres, tom. II, p. 108.

women in France, Spain and Italy. With Brantome, all that was French was beyond improvement.

I do not know if the inherent meanness and poverty of the French language, its harsh consonantal, and perhaps still more disagreeable diphthong sounds have ever been acknowledged—perhaps they have never been perceived by any Frenchman, for the French are a thoroughly patriotic people. As to the question of language, however, and of comparative euphony, there need be no hesitation in declaring the Scottish language of the sixteenth century to have been a very superior language to the French Court language of any century. Brantome's tastes, however, were wholly conventional, and his standard was the French Court. By that standard he judged not only of fashions and of manners, but of morals, and it is to be feared even of women's faces. And as this was his general standard, so his particular standard was the French Court exactly as it existed in his own day, at the very period at which he wrote.

Thus, though Isabella of Bavaria, the Queen of Charles VI., and the ladies of her Court adopted the style of dress which they considered capable of setting off their beauty to the best advantage, Brantome looking to their costume, as it appeared in the tapestries of the period, treats it with contempt as compared with the fashions introduced by Margaret of France and Navarre in his time.* Indeed, if we may believe him, neither ancient nor modern, mortal nor immortal women were ever dressed like the women of the French Court in his time. Speaking of the voluptuous Margaret's dress, he says, "I have seen her sometimes, and so have others beside me, dressed in a robe of white satin, covered with tinsel with a little carnation, with a veil of tan-coloured crape or Roman gauze, thrown over her head carelessly, but never was anything so beautiful; and whatever may be said of the goddesses of old or of the empresses, as we see them in the ancient

* Brantome, "Dames Illustres," Œuvres, tom. II, p. 192.

medals pompously adorned, they looked like mere chamber-maids beside her.”*

I think a refined taste would uphold the elegance of the head-dress of Olympias, the mother of Alexander, in the medal to which I have referred in another place, in opposition to the most elegant head-dress to be seen in any French picture of the sixteenth century. Speaking elsewhere, Brantome says: “The Roman ladies, as they are to be seen in the ancient statues and medals, will be found with their head-dresses and their garments in perfection, and very fit to make them be loved; now our French ladies surpass all, but it is to the Queen of Navarre that they owe thanks.”†

This Queen, whose fine taste is thus enthusiastically celebrated, was a very tall and stout woman. She barely preserved decency in her manners, and is said to have studied inventions to make herself beloved, such as are only to be read of in amorous romances.

Mary did not neglect the care of her beauty

* Brantome, Œuvres, tom. II, p. 194.

† Ibid. III, p. 289.

during her long imprisonment in Fotheringhay Castle. Brantome is rapturous about the charms of her person, which the awkwardness of the executioner unexpectedly exposed, when he tore off the body of her gown and her low collar. But Mary, who like Anne Bullen, studied effect in death, had prepared to be charming in the last scene; and like Anne Bullen she was not only pious, but really witty in her dying moments. She hastily gathered her dress about her, and pleasantly reproved the executioner by saying: "I am really not in the habit of putting off my clothes before so much company." If Mary had not murdered the worthless and heartless Darnley, she would have been deservedly ranked amongst the most amiable of women; while her long captivity, and her death on the scaffold—certainly not on account of her great crime—fully entitle her to be regarded as a martyr to her own beauty, the victim of another woman who envied her and abhorred her for her charms, and who, if Mary had not been so provokingly lovely, would have easily pardoned her for the death of a husband

who had proved himself wholly undeserving of her love or even respect. The murderess of Darnley had real injuries to avenge; the assassins of Rizzio had simply a thirst for blood to gratify.

Mary was accomplished in singing, in playing on the virginals and in dancing.

Miss Strickland has prefixed to her history of Mary, in her "Lives of the Queens of Scotland," an engraving from the famous painting in Culzean Castle, which was presented to the Earl of Cassilis by Mary herself. It represents Mary in the fourteenth year of her age, in the days of her happiness. Miss Strickland's description of the original painting is well worthy of quotation. "This most beautiful and undoubted likeness of Mary Stuart," she says, "represents her in the morning flower of her charms, when she appeared at the summit of all earthly felicity and grandeur. It is in a nobler style of portrait painting than that of Zuccherro, and worthy of Titian or Guercino. It is scarcely possible for an engraving to do justice to a picture, of which

the tone and colouring are so exquisite. The perfection of features and contour is there united with feminine softness, and the expression of commanding intellect. Her hair is of a rich chestnut tint almost black, which Nicholas White (who had ascertained the fact from her ladies) assures us was its real colour. Her complexion is that of a delicate brunette, clear and glowing; and this accords with the darkness of her eyes, hair, and majestic eyebrows. Her hair is parted in wide bands across the forehead, and rolled back in a large curl on each temple, above the small delicately moulded ears. She wears a little round crimson velvet cap, embroidered with gold and ornamented with gems, placed almost at the back of her head, resembling indeed a Greek cap, with this difference, that a coronal frontlet is formed by the disposition of the pearls, which gives a regal character to the head-dress. Her dress is of rich crimson damask embroidered with gold, and ornamented with gems. It fits tight to her bust and taper waist, which is long and slender; so is her gracefully turned throat. She has

balloon-shaped tops to her sleeves, rising above the natural curve of her shoulders. Her dress is finished at the throat with a collar band, supporting a lawn collarette, with a finely quilted demi-ruff. Her only ornament is a string of large round beads, carelessly knotted about her throat, from which depends an amethyst cross.”*

The portrait, thus described and thus admired by Miss Strickland, is not that of a female beauty. Making every allowance for the defect of the engraving in wanting the exquisite colouring of the painting, the head is altogether unwomanly in form, and form is the foundation of beauty in a face. The forehead—that large and ungracefully shaped forehead—it need hardly be said would have repelled Zeuxis or Guido; it is a forehead that might be very becoming in a stupid professor of mathematics. No painter, left to himself to devise a female face, would dare to bestow such a forehead as this upon it.

* Miss Strickland, “Lives of the Queens of Scotland,” vol. III, p. 94.

The admiration of such foreheads in women is a depravity of modern times, and is yet and ever will be confined to a few sectarians in taste. The ancients—erring perhaps on the other side, but the safe and gentle side—sighed for narrow and low foreheads. I cannot recollect in any ancient writer a passage in praise of a large forehead in a woman.* Horace calls Lycoris “illustrious” for her slender forehead.

“*Insignem tenui fronte Lycorida
Cyri torret amor.*”

Winkelman, who has noticed this passage in his work on “Ancient Art,” tells us that the Greek women, where the real beauty was wanting, gave the appearance of loveliness to their foreheads by fastening a band below their hair;

* In one of the elegies attributed to Cornelius Gallus the phrase *frons libera* occurs :

“*Nigra supercilia, et frons libera, lumina nigra
Urebant animum sæpe notata meum.*”

It would surely be a forcing of the meaning of the passage to make a broad forehead out of this. *Frons libera* is a free smooth brow.



and that the beautiful women of Circassia produce the same effect by an ingenious manner of combing down their locks. Petronius, in his exquisite picture of Circe—in which he has assembled so many points of high beauty—the naturally curled hair flowing down on her shoulders, and the eyebrows almost joined, does not forget to describe the forehead as “very small.”*

From a passage in Montaigne, founded no doubt on the relations of travellers, it appears that the charm of low foreheads is understood by the women of Mexico; and that in order to produce its appearance, they make use of every art to make the hair grow down on their brows.†

The oldest seeming commendation of a large forehead in a woman, that I have happened to meet with, occurs in the Canzone of Dante.

* Petronius, “Satyricon,” p. 96. Paris, 1601.

† “Les Mexicaines content entre les beautez, la petitesse du front et ou elles se defont le poil, par tout le reste du corps, elles le nourrissent au front et peuplent par art.”—*Montaigne*, “*Essais*,” liv. II, c. 12.

“Io miro i crespi e gli biondi capegli,” where he gives a detailed and very fine description of his mistress, and praises, as appears, her “ample forehead,” “la spaziosa fronte.” But in justice to Beatrice, may not her lover’s “spaziosa” be the Latin “speciosa,” beautiful? Chaucer however, following soon after Dante, is unequivocal in praising the broad forehead of the prioress.

“Sickerly she had a fair forehead ;
It was almost a span broad, I trow.”

The celebrated verses, which enumerate the thirty points of woman’s beauty, all of which are said to have been assembled together in Helen of Troy, are of unknown authorship. They have been translated into most languages, and are found in French, Latin, Italian, and Spanish, the French being believed to be the original;* but they have never been regarded

* Brantome gives both the French and the Spanish version of these famous lines, declaring his belief that it is in vain to think of meeting with all the thirty points in one woman.—*Dames Galantes, Œuvres*, tom. III, p. 291.

as older than the commencement of the sixteenth century. In these lines, it is laid down that the perfect woman must have three parts broad, "the breast, the forehead, and the space between the eyes."* It is somewhat remarkable that out of these three, the ancients desired two—the two latter—to be narrow. But there are great offences against sound taste in this enumeration of the thirty points; and if Helen had been such as this writer supposes her to have been, Paris would never have stolen her away—

"Trojaque nunc stares, Priamique arx alta maneres."

* "Tres anchas : los pechos, la frente, y el entrecejo."

CERVANTES.

IT is fortunate that the immortal author of "Don Quixote," of whose romantic personal history, all that we know is so extremely interesting, as all that we learn of his character is so amiable, has not neglected, while giving us some hints in the most modest manner about the chief points in his adventures, to draw a striking picture of himself, according in every respect with the animated and intellectual portraits of him which have come down to our times. This picture occurs in the prologue to his novels, and refers to the portrait made of him by Don Juan de Jaregui, to be engraved

for this work, in order to satisfy the desires of those who wished to know what the face and figure of the author were like. Cervantes tells us that his face is oval, his hair chesnut colour, his forehead smooth and free (*lisa i desembarazada*), his eyes cheerful, his nose crooked (*corbo*), though well proportioned; his beard silvery, though not twenty years ago it was golden; his moustaches large, the mouth small, the teeth neither small nor large, because there are but six of them, and these ill-conditioned, and worse placed, as they have no communication the one with the other; the body between the two extremes, neither large nor small; the complexion clear, rather fair than brown; rather round in the shoulders, and not very light in the feet.

He goes on to tell us that he lost his left hand in the naval battle of Lepanto by the shot of an arquebuss; "a wound," he says, with characteristic nobility of spirit, "which he regards as beautiful (*hermosa*), as he received it in the most memorable and lofty occasion which these past ages have seen, or those to

come may hope to see, fighting under the conquering banners of the son of that thunderbolt of war Charles V. of happy memory.”*

This is quite in the spirit of Cervantes himself, and of the noble age of Spanish literature, when all her poets and great authors were soldiers and adventurers who had fought at home and abroad, by sea and land—Cervantes, Lope de Vega, Mendoza, Boscan, Montemayor, Garcilazo, Ercilla, Calderon (first a soldier and then a priest).

The fighting periods in all civilized countries are, as was particularly and pre-eminently the case in ancient Greece and modern Spain, those periods in which what are sometimes called “the arts of peace” flourish most prosperously, and when literary genius has shone forth with the greatest brilliancy. Socrates, Eschylus, Sophocles, and Xenophon, were all themselves men who fought their countries’ battles, as well

* “Vida de Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra,” autor, “Don Gregorio Mayans i Siscar,” p. 174: prefixed to the “Vida y Hechos del Ingenioso Hidalgo Don Quixote.” Haya, 1744.

as conferred honour on her literature. All this is quite in the teeth of the statements made at the conferences of the Peace Society, but in perfect accordance with the truth of history.

With our Northern notions, which associate black hair with the pictures of the people of the South, we are often surprised in reading how many distinguished men of Spain and Italy have had brown, yellow, or red hair. We find Cervantes with brown hair on his head, and his beard yellow ; Camoens, the glory of Portugal, and Tasso, the great epic poet of Italy, with yellow hair ; and Alfieri, who, in our time, revived the literary spirit of his country, rejoicing like the Roman Sylla, and enchanting the other sex with his flowing locks.

In the case of the women of Cervantes's times, the frequent occurrence of golden hair may be accounted for from the circumstance that, as the passion for yellow locks ran very high in the sixteenth century, those women who were afflicted with the misfortune of having black, imitated the colour which in-

spired love by wearing a false head-dress, as did the ancient Messalina when, in matronly years, she wished to allure her lovers by the show of youthful beauty, or practised that strange and apparently lost art of discharging the black colour and assuming the golden, which was known in ancient Greece to both women and men, which, in the days of Tertullian, was employed by his countrywomen of Carthage upon their strong, vigorous, African black hair—that great denouncer of women's vanities, describing, as I have noticed before, the torture and danger to which they subjected themselves in order to make themselves beautiful; and which was unquestionably both known and universally practised in Europe in the sixteenth century.

The taste of Cervantes in women's hair was the taste of his age. He could have adorned the head of his hero's imaginary mistress with hair of any colour that he chose—and he has chosen to make it yellow—in the splendid description of her given by her romantic lover.

“I can only declare,” said Don Quixote to Señor Vivaldo, after heaving a deep sigh, “that her name is Dulcinea; her country Toboso, in La Mancha; her rank at least that of a princess, seeing that she is my queen and mistress; her beauty superhuman, since in her are truly met all the impossible and chimerical beauties which poets give to their ladies; her hair is golden, her forehead the fields of Elysium, her eyebrows the bow of heaven, her eyes suns, her lips coral, her teeth pearls, her neck alabaster, her bosom marble, her hands ivory, her whiteness that of snow; while all of her that modesty conceals from human vision is such, as I think and understand, that a discreet consideration can only extol, but must not compare with anything.”

Except in reference to the absolutely essential beauty of yellow hair, all this, though extremely eloquent, is sufficiently vague and undefined.

There was a curious resemblance between Cervantes, the glory of Spain, and Camoens, the glory of Portugal, extending to their

general history, their captivity, poverty, genius, chivalrous spirit, and personal appearance. Both were soldiers and literary men of a highly poetical character. Cervantes lost his left hand in battle; Camoens his right eye. It has been remarked, as to personal appearance, that the nose of Cervantes, the peculiar characteristic of which is the elevation in the middle, is exactly the nose of Camoens as seen in his portraits. The complexion of the two was nearly the same.

Camoens's early biographer, Manoel Severin de Faria, tells us that the poet was of middle stature, with a full face, his countenance a little lowering (which that of Cervantes was not any more than his spirit), *his nose long, raised in the middle, and large at the end.* This is the nose of Cervantes accurately described. In his youth, the hair of Camoens, which afterwards became grey with sorrow and suffering, is described as being yellow like saffron. It is hardly worth mentioning that this elevation in the middle of the nose, as described in Cervantes and Camoens, has been declared, by

some whimsical observers, to be a physiognomical characteristic of genius.

No romances are finer than the histories, as far as they have been related, of Cervantes and Camoens, particularly of the cheerful Cervantes. It is not generally known that Madrid has not the undisputed reputation of his birth; and that as several cities strove for the honour of having produced Homer, there is a contention between four places in Spain for the glory of giving Cervantes to the world, the claims of Madrid being denied by Esquivias, Seville, and Lucena. The verses in praise of Madrid cited from Cervantes' own "Viage del Parnaso," are far from being conclusive in favour of the Spanish capital.

Cervantes died in the same year and in the same month, though it is not positively established that it was on the same day, with Shakspeare—that 23rd of April, which is the anniversary both of the birth and the death of England's great dramatist, and by a curious coincidence is also the anniversary of the feast of England's patron saint, George of Cappa-

docia. The death of Cervantes, on whose life, as, on his writings, there is no stain of evil or unworthiness, is highly interesting. He lived and died poor but contented; feeling, as there can be little doubt that every great man, neglected by his own age, has felt, that just posterity would amply repay him for the praises withheld from him by his contemporaries.

“I have given,” he says in his “Viage del Parnaso,” “in ‘Don Quixote’ an amusement to the melancholy and angry breast, in every season and for all time.”

“Yo he dado en Don Quijote passatiempo
Al pècho melancolico i mohino
En qualquiera sazon, en todo tiempo.”

The reader who is able to form a conception of the pleasures of a life of literary labour, is delighted to hear that the last work of the studious Bayle was to send a revised proof-sheet to the printer. Cervantes died still more decidedly in harness. He wrote on to the last under the increasing affliction of dropsy, and completed his romance of “Persiles and Segis-

munda." On the 18th of April, 1616, wishing "to go forth, like a Christian wrestler victorious in the last struggle," he received extreme unction, and then waited on death with a serene soul. Next day, he wrote the graceful and cheerful dedication of his last romance, to the Duke of Lermos, in which he says, he must commence with the old lines once so famous, and which he could wish were not so pat to his purpose just now. "Having placed my foot in the stirrup while in the pains of death, I write this to you, great lord:"

" Puesto ya el pie en el estrivo
Con las ansias de la muerte,
Gran Señor, esta te escrivo."*

This is exceedingly striking, and his pious biographer Don Gregorio feels the beauty of it; and only those who can see no good in a well-spent life, but think that a man should keep up all his religion in order to make it blaze out unexpectedly on his death-bed, will fail to admire the characteristic fine temper

* "Vida de Miguel de Cervantes," p. 169.

displayed by Cervantes in his last earthly moments. He could look back on years of honourable toil and sufferings, which the world had not recompensed, but which he had endured with patience and even in a joyful spirit—on writings in which there is “no line which, dying, he could wish to blot;” on a great work left as a treasure of delight to mankind, and distinguished for its purity even in the particularly pure and chaste literature for which his country is honourably distinguished above all other countries—that country of which there is this singular thing to say, that while it alone has produced more dramas than all other lettered nations, ancient and modern, put together, as their dramas now exist, have accumulated, it has no Congreve, nor Vanburgh, nor Cibber, no single drama in which there is anything to call up a blush on the cheek of modesty.

SIR KENELM DIGBY.

SIR KENELM DIGBY and his wife, Venetia Stanley, were a husband and spouse in every way remarkable, both being endowed with personal gifts and graces which attracted the admiration of their contemporaries. Mrs. Jameson describes the portrait of Sir Kenelm at Althorpe, and seems to have been disappointed at not finding him an Adonis. She mistook the character of his appearance. Everything about the knight was romantic, and his figure was that of a giant. I am surprised that the description of his person and manners given by Wood appears not to have met the eye of Mrs.

Jameson, for it is not to be forgotten. "His person," says Wood, "was handsome and gigantic, and nothing was wanting to make him a complete cavalier. He had so graceful elocution and noble address, that if he had been dropt out of the clouds in any part of the world, he would have made himself respect."*

Mrs. Jameson, in her account of Althorpe, has well described "the beautiful but appalling picture of Venetia Digby, painted by Vandyk after she was dead. She was found one morning sitting up in her bed, leaning her head on her hand, and lifeless; and thus she is painted. Notwithstanding the ease and grace of the attitude and the delicacy of the features, there is no mistaking this for slumber; a heavier hand has pressed upon those eyelids, which will never more open to the light; there is a leaden lifelessness about them, too shockingly true and real:

" 'It thrills us with mortality,
And curdles to the gazer's heart.'

"The picture at Windsor," Mrs. Jameson

* Wood, "Athenæ Oxonienses," vol. II, p. 354.

continues, "is the most perfectly beautiful, and impressive female portrait I ever saw. How have I longed, when gazing at it, to conjure her out of her frame, and bid her reveal the secret of her mysterious life and death."

Horace Walpole notices a portrait of Lady Digby by Vandyk, in which "she is represented as treading on Envy and Malice, and is unhurt by a serpent that twines round her arm." Walpole had also in his possession portraits of Lady Digby by Isaac and Peter Oliver.

"Nearly opposite to the dead Venetia," says Mrs. Jameson, "in strange contrast, hangs her husband, who loved her to madness, or was mad before he married her, in the very prime of life and youth. This picture, by Cornelius Jansen, is as fine as anything of Vandyk's. The character expresses more of intellectual power and physical strength, than of that elegance of face and form we should have looked for in such a fanciful being as Sir Kenelm Digby. He looks more like one of the *Athletæ*

than a poet, a metaphysician and a squire of dames.”*

As a good specimen of the ingenious art by which a person conscious of some perfections in himself, may direct attention to them by praising the same graces in another, let the reader compare the description of Sir Kenelm, which I have given from Wood, with the compliments which Sir Kenelm passes on the Earl of Dorset in his “Observations on the *Religio Medici*” of Sir Thomas Browne, which are inscribed to that nobleman. In the course of an argument about personal identity, Sir Kenelm says, “Give me leave to aske your Lordship if you now see the *cannons*, the *ensignes*, the *armes* and other martial preparations at Oxford with the same eyes wherewith many years agoe you looked upon Porphyrie’s and Aristotle’s peeces there? I doubt not but you will answer me—Assuredly with the very same. *Is that noble and graceful person of yours*

* Mrs. Jameson, “Visits and Sketches,” vol. II, p. 243.

*that begetteth both delight and reverence in every one that looketh upon it? Is that body of yours that now is groune to such comely and full dimensions, as nature can give her none more advantageous, the same person, the same body which your virtuous and excellent mother bore nine months in her chaste and honoured wombe, and that your nurse gave suck unto? Most certainly it is the same.”**

I have noticed elsewhere that Sir Kenelm, whose head was filled with every kind of nonsense, is said to have put his wife on a diet of capons, which had been fed upon vipers, believing that this was a means of preserving beauty to extreme old age.

I think Sir Kenelm is better characterised in the mere allusion to his turn of mind made by Mrs. Jameson in her usual graceful and significant manner, than he is in the strange eulogium passed by Southey on the eccentric knight, “of whose conversion,” he says, “were men

* “Observations upon the Religio Medici,” occasionally written by Sir Kenelm Digby, Knight, p. 49. Lond. 1659.

to be estimated according to their talents and accomplishments, the Romish Church might be more proud than of any other in this country of which it may ever have had to boast.”* We may give up the case of Gibbon’s temporary conversion to Romanism, though in truth it gives a colour to every page in which the great historian discusses any matter of controversy between the Church of Rome and the churches of the Reformation ; it being the fact that a man may be a zealous Romanist or a zealous Protestant as far as he is called on to speak on the question between the two creeds, without being a Christian at all. But should the instance of Gibbon be given up, surely Mr. Southey must have forgotten the conversion of Dryden in the maturity of his intellect to the Church of Rome ; and there is no good evidence to lead us to doubt the sincerity of that conversion. The seduction of such a man as Dryden may be fairly set off as a parallel to the conversion on the continent in our days, of the accomplished Friedrich Schlegel.

* Southey’s “Essays,” vol. II, p. 361. Lond. 1832.

JOHN SOBIESKI.

JOHN III. OF POLAND, better known as John Sobieski, the deliverer of Christendom from the Mussulmans, is one of the most romantic characters in history. His exploits, if they had taken place in the seventh and not in the seventeenth century, would have been read with disbelief by the present generation. In his own day he was called "The Wizard King."

In the year 1677, the famous Dr. South accompanied his pupil, the son of the Earl of Clarendon, on an embassy to Poland, to congratulate Sobieski on his election to the throne, which had taken place two years before. This

was six years before Sobieski compelled the Turks to raise the siege of Vienna, the exploit with which his renown is now immortally associated, but already the King of Poland was looked on as the noblest soldier in Europe. After having been, like Cæsar, regarded as a fashionable and dissipated young man, his military genius had broken out in all its refulgence, and he had gained those great victories which are celebrated under the harsh-looking Slavonic names of Slobodisza, Podhaice, Kalusg, and Chocim, and been declared by his country to have ten times saved the state by his wisdom and valour.

Dr. South has left us a description of the person of Sobieski, in a letter addressed to the famous scholar Dr. Edward Pococke. "As for what relates to his majesty's person," says South, "he is a tall and corpulent prince, large-faced and full eyes, and goes always in the same dress with his subjects, with his hair cut round his ears like a monk, and wears a fur cap, but extraordinary rich with diamonds and jewels, large whiskers, and no neckcloth. A long robe



hangs down to his heels in the fashion of a coat, and a waistcoat under that of the same length, tied close about the waist with a girdle. He never wears any gloves, and this long coat is of strong scarlet cloth, lined in the winter with rich fur, but in the summer only with silk. Instead of shoes, he always wears both at home and abroad Turkey leather boots, with very thin soles and hollow deep heels, made of a blade of silver bent hoop-ways into the form of a half-moon. He carries always a large scimitar by his side, the sheath equally flat and broad from the handle to the bottom, and curiously set with diamonds."

The large full face of Sobieski is well shown in a portrait of him engraved in the "Mercure Hollandais," for May, 1674.* The king is represented without a neckcloth, and with a fur tippet on his shoulders.

The large person of Sobieski, like the gigantic

* "Mercure Hollandais." Amst. 1676. This volume contains also spirited portraits of the Prince of Orange, M. de Raubenhaupt, Admiral de Ruyter, Viscount Turenne, and Charles IV., Duke of Lorraine.

figure of the ancient Mithridates, was the habitation of a mind of vast capacity. Besides his military acquirements, Sobieski was skilled both in science and literature.

“This prince,” continues South, “is a very well-spoken prince, very easy of access, and extremely civil, having most of the qualities requisite to form a complete gentleman. He is not only well versed in all military affairs, but likewise, through the means of a French education, very opulently stored with all polite and scholastic learning. Besides his own tongue, the Slavonian, he understands the Latin, French, Italian, German, and Turkish languages; he delights much in natural history, and in all the parts of physics; he is wont to reprimand the clergy for not admitting the modern philosophy such as Le Grand’s and Cartesius’s into the universities and schools, and loves to hear people discourse of these matters, and has a peculiar talent to set people about him very artfully by the ears, that by these disputes he might be directed, as it happened once or twice during this embassy, where he showed a

poignancy of wit on the subject of a dispute held between the Bishop of Posen and Father de la Motte, a Jesuit, and his majesty's confessor, that gave me an extraordinary opinion of his parts."

The hard life led by Sobieski in his earlier days—when his relaxations from war consisted in following the chase—had the effect of hastening on decay and old age. He was but fifty-four years of age, a period at which the mental and bodily constitution of a great general might be thought to be at its best, when by the terror of his name as much as of his arms he drove the Turks from the borders of Christendom, and at that time he is described as broken down and infirm, and with difficulty able to mount his horse.

Long before his death, in the sixty-sixth year of his age, he was feeble and sickly in body and mind, and in allusion to his infirmities and his notorious subjection to his wife, he was caricatured in some prints at the time as an old man suckled in a woman's lap. In his last

illness, immense quantities of mercury were administered to him by a Jewish physician. His death, however, followed a stroke of apoplexy, by which he was attacked on the 27th of June, 1696. When Charles XII. visited his tomb, he burst into tears, and said: "So great a king as this ought to have never died."*

Sobieski, all his life long from his marriage, was under the most submissive subjection to his wife, Marie Casimire de la Grange d'Arquien. She was the daughter of the Marquis de la Grange d'Arquien, had been married to the Prince Zamoisky, and was one of the maids of honour to the queen of King Casimir when Sobieski espoused her. During all his wars, he never ceased communicating everything that happened to his "beloved Mariette, only joy of my soul." He writes to her about his rheumatisms and the pains in his back; he sends her the stirrup of the vizier, bestudded with gems, which had been found on the field at Vienna;

* Solignac, "Histoire générale de Pologne," Contin. tom. iv, p. 94. Ams. 1780.

and describes to her the magnificent furniture seized in the captured camp of the Mussulmans.*

Marie de la Grange is described as a beauty and a wit. In his fate in wedlock, Sobieski has been compared with the heroic Belisarius ; but the comparison with the profligate Antonina does injustice to Mariette. His slavish subjection to his wife, indeed, brought ridicule on his illustrious name ; but I have nowhere learned that there was any crime in the Queen of Poland.

* I have taken these particulars about Sobieski's letters from some source to which I have mislaid the reference.

ANNE OF AUSTRIA.

THIS queen deserves attention, were it only that the true politeness and graceful manners of her son, Louis XIV. of France, are said to have, in a great measure, been imparted to him or cultivated in him by her ; while it is added that, in their utmost perfection in the great monarch, they were but a faint and feeble souvenir of the fascination which dwelt in his mother.

Anne, the wife of Louis XIII., was, as we learn from the description of her given by Madame de Motteville, her maid of honour, collated with other accounts, tall in stature,

with an air of mingled majesty and sweetness in her deportment. Her hair was light brown, slightly curled, and fell in profusion over her shoulders. After the fashion of the times, she wore powder. The complexion of her face was not delicate, and she painted grossly. Her skin otherwise was soft and very fair. Her nose was rather large and unfeminine; her eyes were pleasing, though there was observable in them a tinge of green; her forehead and the contour of her face were excellent; her mouth was small, but well made; her lips were rosy, and her smile exceedingly fascinating. Her neck and bosom were beautifully formed. Her arms and her hands, which were finely shaped, were widely celebrated for their exquisite proportions. On her hands, one of Menage's friends made the following lines :

“ Il pendoit au bout de ses manches,
Une pair de mains si blanches,
Que je voudrois en vérité
En avoir été souffleté.”

Anne was one of the numerous gluttons of royal rank. As a general rule, women are

neither epicures nor gluttons as compared with men; and spareness in eating, with something like an indifference to the quality of what is eaten, are recommendations of a woman to the other sex. Yet Ælian has a chapter devoted to the voracity of Aglais, the daughter of Megacles, who consumed at one meal twelve pounds of flesh (pounds of twelve ounces, it is understood), and four chœnixes of bread, and drank a measure of wine (about a gallon). The chœnix was usually baked into four small loaves. This female glutton, it is mentioned, played on the pipe, and wore false hair, with a crest on the crown of her head.*

A female writer of royal blood, who knew Anne, and has made some terrible revelations of the grossness of manners which prevail at courts, tells us that the queen eat in a manner perfectly frightful—*d'une manière toute effrayante*—four times a day. To this voracity, some thought that the terrible disease of which she died was owing.†

* Ælian, lib. 1, c. 26.

† “Mémoires sur la Cour de Louis XIV. et de la

In her latter years, Anne, who had been scrupulously and sensitively delicate about the care of her person to make herself agreeable to all around her, so that no linen or cambric was fine enough for her, suffered dreadfully from sores, which covered her whole body. Under this affliction—a terrible one to a beauty—her patience was heroic, and she struggled, to the last, to make her person as little offensive to those about her as possible by using perfumes —“the strongest perfumes of Spain,” says the Duchess of Orleans. When she observed that her beautiful hands began to swell, she said: “It is time for me to depart.”

The moral character of this queen appears, on the whole, to have been good; but she had the weakness to encourage, or at least not to discourage, declarations of passionate love, and of admiration of her beauty, which ill-natured observers have turned to account against her

Régence, *Extraits de la Correspondance Allemande de Madame Elizabeth Charlotte, Duchesse d'Orléans,* p. 326. Paris, 1823.

fair fame. The Duchess of Orleans, her daughter-in-law, assures us that she was secretly married to the Cardinal Mazarin; and as that princess, of all scandalous chroniclers, appears to have had no special ill will to Anne, it is difficult to refuse to receive her testimony on this point. The cardinal was not a priest, the duchess tells us, and there was nothing to hinder him from contracting a marriage.

It is to be observed that, if the queen had been a Messalina, it would not have degraded her in the eyes of the duchess; but to have been honourably married to a person below her royal rank was a guilt not to be effaced.

It is confirmatory of the existence of the marriage that Anne, who, at one time, showed every manifestation of love to the cardinal, exhibited, at a later period, the most decided enmity—perhaps the sole enmity of her gentle life. “He tired dreadfully of the good queen,” says the duchess, “and treated her

harshly, which is the ordinary consequence of such marriages.”*

There was a woman, Madame la Beauvais, the confidante of the queen-regent's secret marriage, who held the situation of first lady of her bed-chamber; *Scire volunt secreta domus, atque inde timeri*. La Beauvais was old and frightfully ugly—“blind on one eye and bleared on the other,” says the Duc de St. Simon. This woman, however, was experienced in affairs of profligate love—the very picture, physically and morally, of a malevolent and licentious witch in a fairy tale. She had in her keeping the secret of the queen's marriage, and could show at any time, if offended by neglect, the private passage by which the cardinal every night entered her royal mistress's bed-room. Hence she ruled the good-natured Anne, and made her do what she pleased. The great, and all who desired to be great, paid their devotions at the shrine of this ugly goddess. La Beauvais appeared at court in the splendour of a lady of the highest rank, and

* “Mémoires de la Cour de Louis XIV.” p. 320.

was treated with every distinction till the hour of her death.

The queen's great powers of eating descended to her royal successors. The polite Louis XIV. had the appetite of an ogre; and the communicative Duchess of Orleans tells us that her husband, the king's brother, was little less distinguished in this faculty, which flows in high blood, and lost nothing of its strength in the daughter, and in the Duc de Berri.

"I have often seen the king," says this female Suetonius, "sup four dishes of different soups, then a whole pheasant, and next a whole partridge, after these a great plate of salad, then mutton with gravy and garlick, two large slices of ham, a dish of pastry, and after that fruits and confectionary. Both the king and the deceased monsieur (the duke, her husband) were extremely fond of hard boiled eggs."*

The duchess adored Louis, and was his most intimate friend. Her testimony as regards him cannot be set aside. The details I have here

* "Mémoires de la Cour de Louis XIV." p. 51.

given are disgusting, but they would not offend such an admirer of blood royal as the duchess ; and what the Bourbons did in the way of eating down to Louis XVI., who eat with great vigour up till the hour that he laid his innocent head on the block, there is abundant historical evidence to prove to be entirely after the fashion of princes and princesses, and of the highest of the male and female aristocracy, and a thing only regarded as vulgar in humble and undignified circles.

Louis's queen—the good, affectionate, amorous, little, fair and fat Maria Teresa, the Infanta of Spain—did not sit down to any of these terrible devourings, but kept eating and munching continually at nice small bits, as if she had been, says the Duchess of Orleans, “a little canary.”*

* “Mémoires,” p. 84.

NINON DE L'ENCLOS.

THE famous Ninon de l'Enclos, the object of the admiration of Paris for the greater part of a century, is known upon unquestionable evidence to have been one of those rare women who have preserved their beauty from childhood to an extremely lengthened period of life. At every stage of her girlhood, her maturity, and her old age, up till her eightieth birthday, she made fresh conquests. She is farther remembered as being the only woman, except perhaps Madame Duchatelet, who in modern times has successfully filled in society the place which was held by the Aspasia and other *Hetaires*

of ancient Athens, educated and accomplished women, all of them importations from Ionia, who, while allowed to have many virtues and all kinds of modest graces, did not even profess that virtue, the want of which in a different state of society, entails along with it in public estimation, and often in reality, a want of almost every other.

We read, with amazement at the state of ancient manners, that in Greece, the most refined people of antiquity at the period of their greatest refinement denied education to those who were to be their wives and the mothers of their children, and bestowed instruction in every kind of learning on those women who were deliberately trained to indulgence in sensual pleasure. We read with more amazement how generally these women, thus educated, were possessed not merely of those virtues which are not incompatible with the absence of chastity, but of others, which a woman who throws away her honour is generally believed, as a matter of course, to fling along with it. Aspasia was the counsellor of Pericles, if not also his speech-

maker ; Socrates listened with admiration to her lessons in wisdom, and those men who did not wish their wives and daughters to be entirely ignorant, brought them to the house of Aspasia to be instructed. Something of the same kind has not been unknown in the East ;* and in one of the best of the ancient Indian dramas, the courtesan of the piece is painted with every amiable virtue, and with the most charming meekness and modesty to recommend her and is made the instrument of bringing about that moral and happy *dénouement* which the laws of Hindu tragedy inexorably demand.

The history of Ninon is well known, and I have nothing farther to do with it, than to remark that all the most marvellous parts of it appear to be perfectly true. She was the child of a pious mother and of a licentious father. From the mother she received the best of Christian instruction, while her father, who was vicious from principle, diligently taught her to follow his example. Ninon

* The "Vesya" of the Hindus is the Greek *'εραυρη*.

preferred her father's instructions. Her mother died when the daughter was only fourteen years of age, and her father followed her to the grave within a year after. If that be a good child which obeys the dying injunctions of a parent, Ninon did her duty in becoming a voluptuary; she sinned in obedience to the fifth commandment. Her father regretted that his career of licentious indulgence had been cut short, and with his dying breath beseeched his daughter to make the best use of her years, and to be quite unscrupulous about the number, but at the same time select and delicate in the choice, of her pleasures.

Never did child in this world more faithfully obey the last will of a dear parent. And plenty of time was afforded her to manifest her unswerving obedience. Her father was no sooner dead, than she foreswore marriage and devoted herself to literature and love. One amour succeeded another with her, from her first avowed lover, the Count de Coligni, whose mistress she became at eighteen, to the Abbé Gedouin, whom

she chose as her favourite when she was eighty.

The advice of Ninon's father recalls us to the palmy days of the Greek and Roman heathenism, when the consideration of the near approach and certainty of death was urged, as it is urged in the loveliest and most pathetic of the odes of Catullus (*vivamus, mea Lesbia, et amemus*), as the strongest motive to omit no opportunity of enjoying this world's pleasures. Under the better influence of the religion which points to the world hereafter as the only abode of true bliss, the same consideration is pressed upon us as a motive to self-mortification, and the abhorrence of sensual indulgences.

All the portraits and descriptions of Ninon present us with a woman of that face and figure which promise enduring beauty. She was above the middle height stout and well-proportioned; the face is round rather than oval; the whole features are vigorous, decided and intellectual. The eye is beautifully large, open and soft. "Decency and passion," says one of

her biographers, "disputed in those eyes for empire."* The nose is particularly fine, and the mouth, where we look for the indication of taste and the love of pleasure, is exquisitely formed. The hair is long and beautifully curling, and tastefully arranged and adorned with pearls. The bust is full and handsome; the fall of the shoulders extremely elegant; her complexion was fresh and brilliant.

Lady Lytton Bulwer has introduced a description of Ninon into her novel, "The School for Husbands." As this picture has evidently been accurately and laboriously worked up from portraits and contemporary testimony, I give it entire.

"Rupert now directed his attention to the boxes on either side of him, which were rapidly filling; the stage box more especially, on his right hand, excited his curiosity, from seeing a young lady, apparently about eighteen or twenty, of great personal attractions, enter it, surrounded by a perfect swarm of men; one

* Vie de Mademoiselle de l'Enclos, p. 5, Lettres, &c. Lond. 1782.

removing her hood, another carrying her fan, a third her bouquet, while a fourth arranged her chair, and a fifth stooped down to place a footstool for her; the whole house, including *les somités aristocratiques*, evinced the greatest *empressement* to bow to this lady, who returned their greetings with a circular salutation, which included them all, in the most graceful manner, and with the least possible trouble to herself, as she sank into her chair, and leant back to speak to one of her satellites, who was in waiting at the back of it. She was very little above the middle height, of beautifully rounded proportions, and plump, without being fat; her skin was of a dazzling and satiny whiteness, her bust, hands and arms being most symmetrical; her face was more round than oval, her forehead was high and intellectual, the brows being low, straight, and beautifully pencilled; her eyes were large and liquid, and of a dark hazel; her nose small, white, and excessively *piquant*, having the end descended a little below the delicately chiselled nostrils, which had those little *fossettes* at each side, that a century and a

half later Madame de Genlis was so vain of possessing. Her cheeks were suffused with that vivid, yet delicate and peach-like bloom, so rare among her countrywomen; her mouth was a little large, but the lips were so deep and bright a red, and formed such a perfect Cupid's bow, from the short upper lip to the dimpled chin, and the teeth within it were so dazzlingly white, that envy itself could find nothing to criticise. Her magnificent hair (which was a dark brown, with that Georgione or horse-chestnut-red [varnished tinge through it, as if sun-beams had got entangled amongst its meshes) she wore, according to the fashion of the time, wreathed in plaits round the back of her head, and divided very low on the forehead, with a profusion of long tendril-like ringlets on either side, which were tied with knots of blue ribbon, over which, so as to show the ribbon through, were large bows of set pearls, with streamers and tassels of fine Oriental, pear-shaped, strung pearls, and the shoulders and front part of her *Berthe* were also fastened with

the same, likewise the centre of her bodice, down to the point of her stomacher, where hung one large pearl, nearly the size of a pigeon's egg; her dress was composed of white *moire*, with a broad sky-blue velvet stripe upon it, while the *Berthe* was *entirely* of blue velvet, with a *Résille* or network of pearls over it, which formed no contrast to her snowy skin. 'What a beautiful girl!' exclaimed Rupert. 'Who is she?'—'You are partly right and partly wrong: *beautiful* she most unquestionably is, but for her girlhood! if you want to find *that*, you must go back to the time when our friend Molière accompanied his late Majesty, Louis Treize, to Narbonne, in 1641, and even *then* she was not over *girlish*, being at that time five-and-twenty, as last Tuesday she completed her forty-sixth year.'—'Impossible,' said Rupert.—'Nothing is impossible to Ninon de l'Enclos, except, perhaps, ceasing to *be* Ninon,' rejoined Rohault."

Ninon, we are told, and need not doubt it, had a soft and interesting voice; she sung with more

taste than brilliancy, and danced admirably. She played well on the lute, in which she had been instructed by her father.

From early life she cultivated her mind by reading. When a mere child, we are told that her favourite authors were Montaigne and Charron. Montaigne is certainly not to be perused without pleasure at any age ; but notwithstanding the great reputation of Charron, we fear that most of his readers, if they dared to speak the truth, would confess that they find his work on "Wisdom" very tedious. When taken to church by her mother, Ninon used to pass the time there in reading romances, when she appeared to be looking on her prayer book.

There is nobody perfect, and the biographer of Ninon whom we have already quoted, admits that there were some slight defects which obscured her numerous good qualities. Firstly, he tells us that she was naturally jealous of the merit of other women ; secondly, she could not suffer a man who had large hands and a big belly (which was illiberal) ; and lastly, though

she played perfectly well on the lute, she required too much pressing to begin. Upon the whole, this was a moderate share of the frailties of humanity. The first-mentioned fault is to be found in the very best of women, and has by excellent judges been reckoned a virtue. "To say the truth," says Dean Swift, in his "Letter to a Young Lady," "I never yet knew a tolerable woman to be fond of her own sex." The Dean speaks strongly; but in fact, a woman who delights, or affects to delight in the society of her own sex is far from being amiable in the eyes of the more judicious of the other.

It is strange to find admirers of Ninon, like St. Evremond and others, writing to her and complimenting her with the classic name of Leontium—the name of that woman on whom Cicero, Diogenes Laertius, and all who have spoken of her, have bestowed the most opprobrious designations that can be inflicted on even a courtesan. The title was first bestowed in the most eulogistic manner on Ninon, by the Abbé Chateauneuf, in his "Dialogue sur la

Musique des Anciens." The name of Leontium is greater in literature and philosophy than that of Ninon ; but her extreme licentiousness has thrown scandal on the whole school of Epicurus in which she studied.

MADEMOISELLE DE MONTPENSIER.

THERE have been some women, who have taken care not to let the world to come after them lament its ignorance of their personal appearance and their characteristic habits, as far as these were fairly known to themselves.

Amongst these is Henrietta de Bourbon, daughter of Gaston, Duke of Orleans, the brother of Louis XIII., who has left copious memoirs of her times. These memoirs are the most decidedly personal memoirs that have ever been given to the world. They are wholly about Mademoiselle de Montpensier herself; nobody else, and nothing else being alluded to

except in so far as their connection with herself obliged her to notice them. In matters of court introductions and entertainments, and in details of the vulgarities of the great, she is perfectly silly ; but in such rubbish, and in the explanations of the genealogies of the illustrious obscure, she has since been quite outdone by the Baroness d'Oberkirch.

Mademoiselle—this is her designation in the French histories and memoirs of the time—tells us that her figure was good and graceful, her aspect open, her bosom rather handsome, while her hands and arms were good but not fine. “My legs,” she adds, “are straight, and my feet well-made. My hair is of a fine ash-colour, my face is long, my nose large and aquiline ;” which, it may be mentioned, as she has made no reflection on it herself, might be and is said to be royal, but is not beautiful. “My mouth is neither large nor small, but well proportioned, and my lips are of a good colour. My teeth, though not fine, are far from being bad ; my eyes are light blue, clear and sparkling.”

Upon one point there is a discrepancy between different parts of her own evidence. There is reason to believe that her teeth were very bad. While here in one place she tells us that they were far from being bad, in another she lets us know that it was characteristic of her royal race to have bad teeth. "I believe," she said one day to Monsieur de Lauzun, as she relates the conversation herself, "that my teeth are not beautiful, but this is a defect belonging to our family, and ought therefore to be less displeasing to you than another."

Her air, Mademoiselle tells us, was stately, but not haughty. "Une grande fille de belle taille," was the description of her figure which she one day overheard from the mouth of a person of taste.

In her girlhood she had small-pox, but according to her own account that cruel malady treated her gently, and did not leave on her face even a redness behind it.

She does not take much credit for her taste in dressing, as she lets us know that whatever dress she assumed was sure to become her

admirably. "I dress," she says in one place, "negligently, but not slovenly, and whether in dishabille or attired magnificently, I always preserve an air of distinction. Negligence of dress does not misbecome me, and when I do adorn myself, I venture to say that I disfigure the ornaments which I put on me less than they embellish me."

This is complimentary enough, but she is still more decided on her power of charming, independently of intrinsic ornaments, in a description which she gives of herself as she shone forth in full splendour at a fête in the Palace Royal. She had been attired for the occasion under the direction of her aunt, the Queen Dowager, whose remarkably good taste is noticed by all who have spoken of her. If it was Mademoiselle's usual practice to be negligent in her dress, she made up for much arrear in care by the patience with which she submitted to be made a block for showing off court dresses and fashions upon.

"They were three whole days," says Mademoiselle "in arranging my finery. My dress

was studded with diamonds and coloured flowers. I wore all the crown jewels, and also those of the Queen of England (Henrietta Maria), who at that time had still some remaining. Nothing more magnificent could be seen than my dress on this occasion; yet did I find many gentlemen who told me that my beautiful figure, my good looks, the fairness of my complexion, and the brightness of my light hair were more dazzling than all the riches that shone on my person." Mademoiselle would find many gentlemen who would tell her this, when once it was discovered that she would believe it.

Mademoiselle's favourite amusements were dancing, riding on horseback, and joining in the chase.

THE DUCHESS OF ORLEANS.

THE most singular portrait, personal, moral, and intellectual, which we have of a woman of royal blood, and proud to insanity of that blood, is perhaps that of the Princess Palatine, Charlotte Elizabeth, second wife of the Duke of Orleans (brother to Louis XIV.), and mother of the more famous Regent, the Duke of Orleans. The picture in every respect is complete as we find it in the memoirs of her times, but particularly as it is portrayed in all its coarse, vulgar, and disgusting details by herself, in those of her letters which have been published ; and though decency has induced the booksellers to

suppress much of what was in their hands, and though hundreds, if not thousands, of her scandalous letters are still, it is believed, extant in manuscript in various royal and noble houses, she has revealed so much of herself and others, that, considering what like her pictures are, it would be unreasonable to desire more.

Her writings and descriptions, addressed to various princes and princesses, dukes and duchesses throughout Europe, and as we must suppose, acknowledged on their part by letters partaking at least of much of the grossness of those which they continued to receive,* are useful in dispelling that extremely ignorant

* The French Editor is struck with horror at the filthiness of two letters, one written by the Duchess and another by the Electress of Hanover, which had been printed entire, without alteration or suppression of anything in the German edition of Strasbourg, 1798. "L'on a poussé l'exactitude jusqu'à imprimer textuellement deux lettres, une de la Princesse Palatine, et l'autre de l'Electrice d'Hanovre, toutes deux si ordurières, qu'on les prendrait pour un assaut. C'est un énigme dont le mot n'est pas connu."— "*Mémoires,*" *Avis de l'Editeur,* p. 7.

delusion that courts are the seats of politeness, refinement, and elegance. The court of Louis XIV. was perhaps the most refined court ever seen. Louis himself was unquestionably a man of genuine politeness; of that true politeness which is not in the least conventional, and is not, except in a very slight degree, to be acquired by education, but is a natural gift, partaking of the character of a virtue, as with the world it passes for virtue itself, and is to be found in whole nations and races of men, while it is wanting entirely in other whole nations and races; and which is to be met with as frequently in the humblest ranks as in the highest; though as a rule it is most rare in the extremes, in the lowest and in the most exalted stations in society, amongst those who are either below or above the necessity or temptation of cultivating the favour and good opinion and love of their fellow-creatures.

In the polite court of Louis XIV. Charlotte Elizabeth, Princess Palatine, and Duchess of Orleans, with the utmost conceivable brutality

in mind, manners, and language, held divided reign with Maintenon, the insidiously polished Maintenon herself.

I may, first of all, take Madame's minute description of her own person. "Madame" is the title which she bears in the French memoirs of her times. As, however, she is unreasonably depreciatory of herself, I must, in justice to her memory, compare her own sketch with the rather more favourable portraits drawn of her by others.

It may be thought strange, though Madame was sensible that she did not excel in beauty of face and person, that she should be more severe on her own ugliness than any other person who had seen her ; but this is not inconsistent with such a character as hers. It might be also wondered at that her own pen should describe scenes in which she herself is represented as behaving herself like a beast, and talking language which it would have called up a blush in the face of the poorest unfortunate woman walking the streets of Paris to have listened to.

It is all accounted for by the fact that, in Madame's belief, there was just one thing, and one thing alone, that gave dignity and nobility of character to man or woman, and that was old blood royal. Beauty, virtue, intellect, manners, were all perfectly worthless without this; with this, nothing else was necessary for procuring the worship of the world. This she had in the highest possible perfection; for though her father—a poor German prince, the Elector Palatine Charles Louis—was a brute, who, at the royal table in his savage palace, would give her royal mother a blow on the face when she happened to say anything that did not please him, Madame held her family to be far exalted above every other royal house in Europe, and believed that she herself had shown a marvellous condescension, when she stooped to bestow all her personal plainness, all her coarseness, rudeness of manners, vulgarity, and ignorance, the hand which she herself describes as the ugliest in the world, and the heart which was certainly none of the purest,

on a beautiful prince, the brother of the most powerful monarch of the times.

“ I must be ugly,” says Madame. “ I have no features ; I have small eyes, a short and thick nose, and long and flat lips. All this won't make a physiognomy. I have, besides, great hanging cheeks, and a large face, yet I am very short in person. My body and my thighs are also short ; in one word, I am truly a little ugly creature (*un petit laideron*). If I had not a good heart (there is reason to dispute her title to a good heart), I would not be tolerated anywhere. In order to ascertain if my eyes indicate any mind, they would require to be examined by a microscope, or with spectacles, otherwise it would be difficult to judge. Uglier hands than mine are, it would probably be difficult to find in the whole world. The king has often remarked this, and has made me laugh heartily. As not being able in conscience to flatter myself that I have anything pretty about me, I have adopted the course of being the first to laugh at my own ugliness.

This has succeeded well with me, and I have often had occasion to laugh.”*

This is the portrait of the duchess drawn by herself; but in consideration of the modesty which this woman, grossly immodest in every other respect, displays in disclaiming all personal attractions, she is entitled to the benefit of the moderate commendation which her outward appearance has received from others. In another part of her narrative, she tells us that in youth she was slender, but grew stout in mature womanhood. Madame Sevigné simply tells us, that she was by no means a brilliant beauty, that her features were masculine, her figure coarse and full, and her countenance robust.

The Duc de St. Simon has, however, been able to point out some merits in her face and figure, and is pleased even with her small eyes. “Her complexion,” he says, “her bosom,

* “Mémoires sur la Cour de Louis XIV. et de la Régence, Extraits de la Correspondance Allemande de Madame Elizabeth-Charlotte, Duchesse d’Orleans,” p. 2. Paris; 1823.

and her arms were admirable, and so were her eyes." These particulars, we should think, would have made her at least tolerable. "Her mouth," he adds, "was well enough. She had fine teeth, a little long; her cheeks were too large and too hanging, which spoiled her, but did not destroy her beauty. What disfigured her most were the places for her eyebrows, which were peeled off and red, with very few hairs. Her eyelids were beautiful, and her chesnut hair was well-arranged. Without being a hunchback or deformed, she had one side larger than the other, and walked awry."

Here, it will be observed, is a discovery of beauties and of defects which Madame herself had omitted, or affected to omit, discovering. The swelling on her side is, however, noticed in another manner by the duchess. She tells us that, "I am naturally a little melancholy, and when anything vexes me, my left side swells as if I had a ball of water within me."*

With characteristic coarseness of mind and manners, the duchess, no doubt considering

* "Mémoires," &c. p. 3.

that no kind of polite acquirements can add lustre to royal blood, never learned to either speak or write decently the language of her adopted country. The puppyism of the great Frederick, in encouraging the use of French at his court, and discouraging his own nobler German, was not better evidence of vulgarity of mind than the duchess's neglect in learning the language of the court in which she lived, and the pride she took in her ignorance as something quite in accordance with the dignity of her royal birth and ancient lineage.

The rudeness of John Bull is sufficiently marked in his adherence, wherever he is placed and whatever lands he may visit, to the monotonous round of English eating and English cookery. This weakness was intense in the duchess. At the court of France, she would neither eat nor drink anything that was French. She would defile her royal mouth with nothing but German dishes. She stuck spitefully to her saur-kraut and salad dressed with hog's lard; and persuaded Louis to join her in her omelette with pickled herrings.

“I breakfast rarely,” she says, “and on nothing but bread and butter. I take neither chocolate, coffee, nor tea; I cannot endure these foreign drugs. I am German in all my habits, and I think nothing good either in eating or drinking except what is in conformity with our ancient usages. I taste no soup, excepting what is prepared with milk, beer, or wine.”

She then alludes to the ordinary French dishes, the tasting of which makes her sick. Her body, she says, swells, and she suffers from colic, sometimes vomiting till the blood comes. In this case, the duchess assures us that nothing but ham and sausages were capable of putting her stomach to rights again. “I never had French manners,” she says, “and I could not adopt them, as I have always regarded it as an honour to be a German, and to preserve the maxims of my country, which rarely succeed here.”

This repulsive woman regretted that she had not been created of the other sex. In her girlhood, she preferred swords and guns to dolls,

and made some desperate attempts to become a boy. Having heard the story of that Marie Germain, who, by practising leaping, had changed her sex, she imitated her example, and made, as she says, such terrible leaps, that it was a miracle that she did not a hundred times break her neck.

In an after part of her work, this repulsive woman expresses something like dissatisfaction with the means appointed by Providence for the continuance of the human race. Agreeing with Sir Thomas Browne on this point, she does not express herself with Sir Thomas Browne's politeness.*

* "J'ai été bien aise quand, après la naissance de ma fille, mon époux a fait lit à part, car je n'ai point aimé le metier de faire des enfans. C'était aussi bien desagréable de coucher avec Monsieur; il ne pouvoit souffrir qu'on le touchat pendant son sommeil; il fallait donc me coucher sur le bord du lit, d'ou je suis tombée quelquefois comme un sac." — *Mémoires*, p. 12. Those to whom details of the lives of the great have a peculiar value, will be pleased with these little domestic events, related by a lady, of the unapproachable grandeur of the duchess. In an after part of her Memoirs,

I have noticed in another place that a young man on being reproved by Pythagoras, is said to have died of grief, to the deep affliction of the philosopher. The Duchess of Orleans tells us with infinite satisfaction, that she caused the death of a young lady by an admirable scolding which she gave her, and which the duchess herself reports, adding that Louis would say in allusion to this event, "One must not trifle with you in regard to your house; life depends on it." The crime which this lady committed, was that she and her sister had stated, probably with perfect truth, that they were Countesses Palatine of Lutzelstein. The duchess in a fury, called her a liar and a bastard, and her mother the worst of all names; assuring her that if even the Count Palatin had been regularly married to her mother, who belonged to the house of Gehlen, her daughter was not the less a

she lets us know that Louis's amiable queen, of whom it may be remarked that she has no slander to tell, by no means sympathized with her in the peculiar notion which she shared with the philosopher of Norwich.—

*See Mémoires, p. 84. **

bastard for all that, as in the case of Counts Palatin, marriages with women below their own rank are not valid, and that her mother's real husband was a hautboy player; and that if she ever dared again in her life to say that she was a Countess Palatin, she would cause her petticoats to be cut off. "The girl," adds the duchess, and this is all she does add, "took this so much to heart, that she died of it very soon after." The other sister and Countess Palatin she caused to change her name, and allowed her to fly; *je l'ai laissé courir*.*

* "Mémoires," p. 81. I have not been able to do justice to the brutality of the duchess in this scene. The following is an extract from the French: "J'appelai l'une des filles et lui demandai qui elle était. *Elle me dit en face*, qu'elle était une Comtesse Palatine de Lutzelstein. *De la main gauche?* 'Non,' répondit elle; 'je ne suis point batarde; le jeune Comte Palatin a épousé ma mère, qui est de la maison de Gehlen.' Je lui dis: 'En ce cas vous ne pouvez être Comtesse; car chez nous autres Comtes Palatins les mésalliances ne sont d'aucune valeur; je dirai encore plus; tu mens en disant que le Comte Palatin a épousé ta mère; c'est une putaine avec laquelle le Comte Palatin peut avoir couché comme tant d'autres; je sais qui est son véri-

It is only a selection of the personal characteristics of this repulsive woman as described by herself, that can be presented to a modern reader. She has told of her own sex, as for instance of Madame Maintenon, and of Catharine of Sweden, horrible things, as horrible as any that Suetonius has related of Tiberius or Caligula ; things not hinted at, even by the most scandalous of male writers. She wrote continually, and circulated amongst the princesses, and the female nobility of the continent, such abominable letters as the most despised of her sex would hardly read ; receiving, it must be presumed, from some of her fair and royal correspondents, returns of a quality not unsimilar to that of the communications which she sent them.

“The numerous correspondences,” says the French editor of the selected letters which I have used, “are probably yet buried in the archives of Spain, of Naples, of Berlin, and other great cities. Two or three correspondences only have

table mari, c'est un hautbois. Si à l'avenir tu te fais passer pour une Comtesse Palatin, je te ferai couper les jupes au ras du cul.”—*Mémoires*, p. 81.

been published, at least in extracts. The princess wrote a barbarous German, mingled with the provincialisms of the Palatinate and French phrases ; there is in her expressions an indecency which treats nothing gently, and which contrasts strangely with the delicate and graceful style of the Sevignés, Cayluses, Maintenons, and other women of the court of Louis XIV. The correspondence forms, however, a true *Chronique Scandaleuse* ; all the anecdotes afloat find a place in them. What an increase of light there will one day be, when these archives will be opened to give to the public the rest of this voluminous correspondence ! Many families may be offended at it, but the history of manners will gain much. A false brilliancy has long dazzled the eyes of posterity in regard to the age of Louis XIV ; it is well that this illusion should be destroyed by persons who were close witnesses of its pretended grandeurs, and who had the good sense to appreciate them at their true worth.”*

As there is here a compliment paid to the

* “Mémoires,” Avis de l’Editeur, p. 33.

good sense of Madame—the existence of which is extremely doubtful—and as other writers have spoken of her virtues, it may be as well just to notice, that her possession of virtue, in the restricted sense, has not been disputed. She is just a specimen of the fact that as a woman may lose her honour without losing that modesty which should have been its safeguard, so a woman may be perfectly virtuous in the qualified sense of the word, as Madame was, and utterly destitute of a rag or shadow of shame, as she also was. Neither the Greek Theodora (whose history Madame had studied in the free pages of Procopius), nor the Roman Messalina, was in heart and soul more debauched than this virtuous Duchess of Orleans.

MADAME DE MAINTENON.

THE great personal beauty of Madame de Maintenon is admitted by all her contemporaries, even by those women of her time who hated her most; and never, certainly, was woman more sincerely and ardently hated. This hatred has descended to our own times, and I have never met a woman, and certainly not often a man, acquainted with her history, who did not regard Madame de Maintenon, the decorous, prudish, and apparently devout wife of Louis XIV., as by far the worst of all the ladies of the French court in her days.

The Baroness d'Oberkirch speaks the general

opinion of this beautiful, accomplished, and highly intellectual woman when she says: "Of all the women of infamous celebrity, I feel the greatest antipathy to Madame Maintenon, notwithstanding the marriage, which cast a veil over her errors." It is here assumed that Madame de Maintenon was profligate; a charge for which, whatever faults she had, there is certainly a want of proof; while it is certain that, for many a long year, she endured the greatest poverty, which she could at once have relieved, if she had been regardless of her reputation. Her marriage with the king was, I suspect, an unforgiveable crime with the Baroness d'Oberkirch.

The figure of Mademoiselle d'Aubigné was tall and graceful, and when, as the widow Scarron, she was brought to court at the age of forty, she was a perfectly charming woman. Her air and walk were dignified and modest beyond description. Her arms were beautiful, and her hands, as her whole complexion was, were exceedingly fair. All who have spoken of her have noticed her remarkably fine large

black eyes, which charmed those on whom she smiled, and overawed those who dreaded her enmity.

Her first husband, the hunchbacked, invalid, and witty Scarron, whom she married when she was but sixteen, has given a humorous enumeration of the items of her marriage portion, particularizing amongst the stock "a pair of large, black, killing eyes, an elegant figure, a pair of fine hands, and a great deal of wit."

The lovely Montespan, who, like Louis, regarded Maintenon as her religious instructor, and looked up to her with awe, on the occasion of her being delivered of a daughter, writes to Maintenon, praying her to come and see her; "but do not," she says, tremblingly, for Montespan's religion was sincere and deep, and the pious reproofs with which Maintenon visited her frailty often shook her soul with terror, "do not glare at me with those black eyes of yours; they frighten me." The ugly Duchess of Orleans, who hated Maintenon not certainly for her vices, even the horrible and unnatural vices which she falsely attributes to

her, but for having dared to marry the king, admits that Maintenon "was eloquent, and had fine eyes."

The expression of Madame de Maintenon's face was extremely varied. There was usually a calm gravity about her features which, at first, repelled the king; but when Maintenon had a purpose to serve by being agreeable, her smile was perfectly bewitching, and her manners sweetly gracious. The form of the lower part of her face was particularly fine, the chin and the mouth being exquisitely shaped. The fairness of her skin was remarkable. "Her black eyes," says her biographer, La Beaumelle, "contrasted with the whiteness of her skin, like fire sparkling amidst snow."

The art of dressing to advantage, Madame de Maintenon, whose taste was, like that of Louis, exquisite in everything, understood far better than any other woman in the court where she reigned, where every one exerted all her talents, and skill, and art to please, fascinate, and seduce. Her attire, according to Madame Sevigné, was rich, but modest; other ac-

counts bear that a plain unexpensive dress, when she put it on, assumed the appearance of costliness. Like the ancient Poppæa, she is said to have heightened the effect of her charms by a modest concealment of them. The Countess of Blessington, who had in her possession a neckerchief pin, said to have once belonged to Maintenon, attributes, in a very indelicate passage in one of her works, the modest style in which the royal favourite dressed to true art; maliciously insinuating that a more loose fashion of attire would have been injurious to the effect of what was concealed. In other words, the bust of Madame Maintenon was not so elegantly formed as that of "the gorgeous Lady Blessington."

The Duchess of Orleans, who cannot allude to Madame Maintenon without prefixing to her name the worst epithet which her impure mind can suggest, and who seldom speaks of her without charging her with some crime, tells us of one innocent art which it appears Maintenon had recourse to, to make her person agreeable, or rather to conceal a defect. "Nobody at

court," says Madame, "used perfumes, except Old Maintenon." *La vieille Maintenon* is the expression of her French translator, but he lets us understand in his preface that he has been obliged to curtail the exuberant filthiness of Madame's vocabulary, and that, in the original German, the substantive never fails to be accompanied by a shockingly offensive adjective — *die alte Zote* ; "an expression," he adds with infinite grace, "which the delicacy of the French language does not permit me to translate, and which contains nothing flattering to the morals of her to whom it refers. What a hatred must have existed between these two women to carry them to such extremities! It is well that the public should know these things, in order to avoid the chimerical notions which are usually entertained about the amenity of courts, and particularly of that of Louis the Fourteenth."*

For whatever reason Madame de Maintenon might have used perfumes, it could not have been to please the king ; for if we are to believe

* "Mémoires sur la Cour de Louis XIV.," p. 31.

the Duchess of Orleans—his most intimate friend, next to Maintenon—Louis hated all perfumes, and could not, she says, endure them on any one but on Maintenon. Yet it appears from the context of this passage that he could not suffer them even on her ; for she says that when in his company Maintenon always laid the blame of the perfumes on some other lady.

I have no doubt that this revelation about the perfumes and the deceptions of Maintenon is made by the ugly duchess from the most malevolent motive, as it certainly is brought forward with all the skill of a malignant woman. In stating the bare facts, she leaves the intelligent reader to save her the trouble of drawing the obvious inference which must be drawn from them, that after all Maintenon had not every personal charm, and that nature, so liberal to her in face and form, had neglected to bestow on her “the cow’s ambrosial breath,” and in its stead had given her that which is popularly said to be a usual accompaniment to a skin of extreme whiteness such as Maintenon’s was.

Louis had a pure taste, and he no doubt held with Montaigne that there is a natural defect to hide where grateful odours are had recourse to ; and with the ancient dramatist, that a woman is the most pleasantly perfumed when she smells of no perfume.

Besides those great powers of conversation which are attested by so good a judge as Madame de Sevigné, and so fiendish an enemy as the Duchess of Orleans, Maintenon possessed that rare and enviable art of telling a story beautifully, which has made the name of the gifted Princess Scheherazade immortal, and rendered her memory dear to all generations of the human race. What a compliment is implied to this talent of hers in what is related of her when she was the humble wife of Scarron, and when her visitors were the most intellectual that Paris could afford, that her guests fed on her discourse, in disregard of the quality of her dinners, the occasional meagreness of which was overlooked and forgotten in the delight inspired by the fascinating hostess. “ There

must be another story, Madame," whispered a female attendant to her one day, "*for the roast is too small.*"

The truth of all the eulogies bestowed on her tongue is more than substantiated by this anecdote. At these parties there would be present the very learned Menage and the graceful Count de Grammont; the pleasant Marchioness de Sevigné and the voluminous Mademoiselle de Scuderi; the beautiful Ninon de l'Enclos and the ill-favoured Pelisson, he to whom a lady once said: "Sir, you positively abuse the privilege which men have of being ugly."

The presence of the famous Ninon at Madame Scarron's parties has been laid hold of as a proof of the licentious life which some of her less judicious enemies have charged against her. But the charge, it must in fairness be recollected, would involve in the same censure Madame de Sevigné, Mademoiselle Scuderi, and many other women whose reputations have come down untainted to our times. The testimony of Ninon herself, who despised chastity

out of principle, may be received in behalf of Madame Scarron. She has told us contemptuously of the poet's wife, that she was virtuous, not so much from coldness of constitution as from weakness of mind. "I might easily have cured her of that, had she not been afraid of offending God."

Madame de Montespan also, though profligate herself in morals, appears to have regarded Madame Maintenon as perfectly virtuous. She committed the education of her children to her, and Madame de Montespan was just the woman to desire that her children should be brought up in the paths of virtue, and taught to avoid the errors of their mother. Throughout her whole wicked career, in the mind of Montespan a painful conflict between the love of pleasure and the most fervid religious impressions tore and wrung her soul with remorse. Her history relates the agonizing and convulsive efforts which at different times she made to divorce from her heart the love of the king; and they are but ill-read in the deep and mysterious histories of the human heart who will attribute

to hypocrisy the religious professions made by such a woman as she was. The histories of the pious King of Israel, of St. Augustin, of St. Theresa, and of many more obscure saints of both sexes, furnish abundant proof that that constitution which is most naturally susceptible of high devotional feelings is, as a natural consequence of its capacity for heavenly love, the weakest to resist the assailments of mere earthly passion.

Madame de Maintenon has been charged with hypocrisy in her religion as in everything else. However much truth there may be in this, it is certain that while the utmost outward decorum marked her whole behaviour in every station in life, the wife and widow of Scarron, and the favourite and wife of the king, never omitted the regular discharge of all the religious observances of her Church.

There are strange stories told of the mere chances by which this woman, whose name bears a conspicuous place in the annals of Europe for a considerable part of a century, escaped death in her childhood. She came to

the world in a loathsome dungeon, where her father and mother were confined, and where they were discovered and relieved by a relative when emaciated with hunger; the infant Frances d'Aubigné, then two days old, crying for the food which her mother, whose breasts were dried up by distress, could not give her. After being thus once saved from the jaws of death, a second deliverance still more wonderful, awaited her when a girl. While with her father and her mother on their passage to America, she fell sick, and the vital energies sunk so low that she was believed to be dead. The gun was loaded which was to give the signal for committing to the deep that beautiful person which was destined to rule the most splendid court in Europe. A sailor had the body of the little Frances d'Aubigné in his arms, when her mother desired once more to press her to her bosom; she felt her heart beating; and the future wife of Louis XIV. was restored to the world.

These tales do savour something of romance. The chief particulars are related in the "Memoirs

of M. Anquetil;" but he is not so distinct as could be wished in reference to the authorities which bear him out in his marvellous narrative. One thing, however, is certain, that in childhood Frances d'Aubigné endured much poverty and harsh usage, having been particularly subjected for whole years to the tyranny of her own sex; a calamity which it may be believed exercised so far a baneful influence on her character—as it has on that of thousands of others similarly circumstanced—as to help to foster that cold selfishness which was the repulsive feature in it. It has been mentioned, that in her girlhood, as if foreseeing the elevation which she was one day to attain, Mademoiselle d'Aubigné took care to preserve her beauty. While employed in a farm-yard in looking after poultry, she is said to have protected from the attacks of the sun's rays, by using a mask, that fair face which, with her other graces, afterwards raised her to the supreme authority in France.

There are several persons who have made a great noise in the world whose existence, immediately after birth, is said to have been

almost miraculous ; and what is observed, is that such persons, when the first danger is over, become more healthy, more beautiful, and often more long-lived than others. Such was Madame de Maintenon, who lived in the enjoyment of good health till the age of eighty-three. St. Francis of Sales was a seven months child, and his death for many a day was daily and hourly expected ; but he grew up to manhood in increasing beauty of person and elegance of mind, and constantly improving health, and died in a mature age.

Such was the profligate Maréchal de Richelieu, "the Nestor of gallantry," as he was called, destined by the graces of his person to be for nearly a century the most beloved by the other sex, as he was perhaps in all other respects the most worthless man in France ; to find himself surrounded by the hearts of constant women, while he himself had no heart at all, and to marry a young beauty at the age of eighty-four.

Richelieu, in this circumstance, if in nothing else, like St. Francis of Sales, was a seven months

child, and in the desperate hope of saving him, the infant was swaddled in cotton and placed by the fire; his parents in the meantime endeavouring to reconcile their minds to his death. His father, however, having a wise horror of doctors, kept them carefully away from the cradle of his child, and the result was that nature took him into her own hands, and reared him up into the handsomest man in France. One day a sudden convulsion appeared to end his life, and he was for some minutes regarded as dead, but by the skill of a *femme de chambre* he was restored to the light of day. The singular beauty of this woman, his earliest female acquaintance, was afterwards remarked as prophetic of his future universal favour with her sex. "The Maréchal," says one of his biographers with a delicate wit, "spent his lifetime in returning her thanksgivings."*

* "Vie privée du Maréchal de Richelieu, contenant ses amours et intrigues et tout ce qui a rapport aux divers rôles qu'a joués cet homme célèbre pendant plus de quatre-vingt ans," tom. 1, p. 2. Paris, 1791. The following is an extract regarding the Maréchal

There is a rather pretty epigrammatic epitaph on the Maréchal, ascribed to the pen of Maintenon, who, however, died long before him. His name was Louis Francis Amand du Plessis. I can only now give an English version of the lines.

“ Here lies Amand,
Whom Cupid gave, in malice to the fair,
His smile, his quiver, and his wings to wear.”

from the Editor's preface : “ L'amour le traita encore plus favorablement ; toutes les femmes se disputaient son cœur ; les pleurs qu'il devoit leur faire répandre ne les empêchoient pas de voler au devant de l'infidèle ; elles étoient encore heureuses de partager entr'elles la portion de l'amour qu'il daignoit leur accorder.”

CATHARINE OF RUSSIA.

THE personal appearance of this interesting woman, and her mode and habits of life, are easily gathered from the concurring accounts of various writers who had seen her familiarly. At the age of forty-three she was in the full flower of her robust style of beauty, and perfectly elegant in her figure, which was purely feminine from the shoulders to the feet, which were remarkably handsome, and of which she was very proud.

In her latter years, her extreme corpulence made her appear not so tall as she was in youth. Her face had considerable comeliness

in it. Her forehead, though well-formed and free, was, however, larger than is pleasant in a woman ; and there was something of a want of feminine grace about the lower parts of her face. Her eyes were large, and of a pleasant greyish-blue, as they have generally been described, though less favourable observers have noticed something of a disagreeable expression in them. She herself also was sensible of the ill-effect of a wrinkle at the base of her nose, and wished it to be omitted in her portraits.* Her neck

* “The celebrated Lampi had lately painted a striking likeness of her, though extremely flattering ; Catharine, however, remarking that he had not entirely omitted that unfortunate wrinkle, the evil genius of her face, was greatly dissatisfied, and said that Lampi had made her too serious and too wicked. He must accordingly retouch and spoil the picture, which appeared now like the portrait of a young nymph. The celebrated Le Brun, who was at Petersburg, and who could not obtain the honour of taking her likeness when living, saw her after she was dead, and drew it from his memory and imagination. I saw the rough draught of this portrait, which was extremely like.”—*Secret Memoirs of the Court of Petersburg, particularly towards the end of the Reign of Catharine*, II, p. 40. Dub-

was thick, but well-turned, and not short. It was the neck which we see on the coins of the voluptuous Roman emperors and empresses. Her bosom was full and her shoulders very finely formed; and all who have spoken of her have admired the grace and dignity of attitude with which she wore the crown. Her hair, which was of a beautiful light brown, she

lin, 1801. This work, from which I have taken some of the particulars about Catharine's person, professes to be a translation from the French, though there is no reference to the name of the author. He is said however, to have lived for about ten years in Petersburg, and to have been frequently near the person of the Empress. But for some unmistakable French eloquence in this work, there would be something suspicious in the statement in the advertisement prefixed, in which we are told that "the publishers of the following translation have been induced, by a sense of decency and propriety, to suppress or soften a few anecdotes contained in the original, the grossness of which would undoubtedly outrage the public and private feelings of Englishmen." Notwithstanding the sacrifice which has been made to the extreme delicacy of "the public and private feelings of Englishmen," the work is a very curious contribution to the history of Catharine.

dressed with much simplicity and taste ; and her taste in matters of dress was good. She improved the attire of her time, and sensible of the fineness of her bust, she introduced a fashion at court calculated to do justice to a handsome figure. Since her time the ladies of Russia have relapsed into a former costume, which does the greatest injury to the best forms.

After the usage of her country, however, Catharine rouged grossly. Her walk was extremely dignified and graceful, and her whole carriage and movements such as became a great empress. Her usual dress was very plain, but on great state and solemn occasions she appeared with her hair and the body of her dress glittering with brilliants. In public processions she wore a coronet of diamonds. The habitual expression of her features was that of the utmost composure, characteristic of the calmness and mildness of her disposition. As she walked, she usually threw her eyes on the ground. Before her death she had become excessively corpulent ; her legs were swollen

and diseased, which impaired her grace in walking; and most of her teeth were gone, which disfigured her face, besides rendering her speech indistinct. Her voice also was hoarse and broken.

Catharine had a cultivated mind, a love and a taste for music, painting and statuary, and a good appreciation of the value of literature, of which she was not merely a generous but a most judicious patroness. Like her lover Potemkin, she wrote poetry. She never danced, but in the ball-room occupied herself at a card-table, preferring those games which did not interrupt that pleasant and good-natured conversation in which she so much delighted, and of which she was so great a mistress. She was moderate in everything but in love. She contrasted favourably in all respects, except in respect of her one great failing, with her predecessor the Empress Elizabeth, who had her fair share of that great failing also, and was besides, what Catharine was not, a religious hypocrite, a drunkard, and a truly royal and enormous eater.

Summer and winter, Catharine rose early, and as she desired to give as little trouble as possible to her servants, even in a country where servants are slaves, made her breakfast of coffee for herself, and generally finished her toilet without assistance.

It seems to be but seldom recollected that it is the splendour of Catharine's talents and the greatness of her virtues, as compared with those of other sovereigns, that have brought so much to light, and placed in such strong contrast the weak part of her character. By those who speak of her in the coarse and virulent language which Lord Brougham has employed in reference to her amours, it is entirely forgotten that before her and around her on every side Catharine could never have seen examples of anything whatever but of the coarsest, the most undisguised, and the most regular and formal licentiousness.

At the court of Russia it certainly could not be said, in the language of Burke, that "vice itself lost half its evil by losing all its grossness." On the other hand, Catharine could not, in the

society in which she lived, see an example of any of the great virtues which she herself possessed, and which were wholly her own, being far above those of her country, her age, her rank, and in some respects even of her sex. She was one of those women who could neither be vicious nor virtuous on a small scale. There was a magnificence in her virtues, and she had no petty weaknesses.

Power and greatness, so generally injurious to the character of women, neither dazzled nor corrupted her. Though a despotic sovereign, ruling over a nation of barbarians, she ruled with singular humanity and beneficence. The good of her subjects was ever near and dear to her great heart; she pursued with energy every measure for ameliorating their social condition. Under her the toleration of all religious opinions was carried out to the full extent required by the Gospel, at a time when England was practising the basest and cruelest persecution. She improved the criminal law, and with less ostentation, but certainly not with less zeal, was a greater reformer of prison

discipline than Howard, "the philanthropist," who when in her capital treated her, after his usual harsh fashion, with a rudeness ill-deserved by one who, besides her condescension to him, had been so distinguished a labourer in the cause which he professed to have so much at heart.

She would not allow the execution of a criminal to take place in any part of her immense dominions till she herself had the fullest opportunity of making herself acquainted with the whole circumstances of his crime, in the hope of being able to extend towards him that mercy which she always delighted to exercise.

Such she was as a ruler. As a woman, in many of her virtues, she rose far above the general level of those of her sex who are free from her great vice, and are regarded by themselves and by the world as models of female virtue.

It has been said—and history shows that there is a certain amount of truth in the statement—that a woman cannot simply cease

to love ; that when her love begins to grow lukewarm, a reaction has commenced, which stops short of nothing but violent hatred. It may not be unnatural that a woman shall hate the man who is in possession of the secret of a passion which, in her, has died away, and that where the power exists she will desire the death of the forsaken lover.

Thus did the Assyrian Semiramis, if tradition so hoary as that which reaches from her day is to be credited ; and tradition, though it may not be always true to history, is generally true to human nature.* Thus also did the three beautiful and voluptuous princesses of Burgundy, whose wantonness and cruelty have given a romantic interest to the history of the Tower of Nesle.

Catharine, was more powerful than these princesses, and lived in a more barbarous age, and she was as powerful as the Assyrian queen ; but she showed that cruelty is not the necessary companion of licentiousness. Those whom she divorced from her arms were not deprived of

* See Diodorus Siculus, lib. ^v11, c. 13.

her favour and kindness. There is no instance of her ill-treating any of her discharged lovers. But Catharine, who was in every way a great, was, in many respects, a very good woman. Her highest praise—and it is rare praise—is that she had completely overcome the characteristic guilt of women—the great and repulsive stain of the sex—even of those women who are otherwise commendable, and who regard themselves as perfectly pure; which Catharine was too humble in heart to do. She, before whose footstool the highest in rank were equally humbled with the lowest, was utterly divested of that passion which women have, where they have the power, of oppressing, degrading, and torturing their own sex—torturing them in their feelings, I mean.

Her delight was to make all her domestics around her happy, to consult their comfort, to gratify their feelings, and to surround herself with their affections. And when all Russia lamented the death of its great sovereign, the warmest tears were shed by the humblest of Catharine's attendants, who bewailed the loss

of the courteous and gracious mistress, who never spoke to them but with the sweetest familiarity, and with whom they had freely shared in that cheerful conversation, the charm of which was felt by the noblest and the most highly accomplished in the land.

MADAME DE STAEL.

THE famous Madame de Stael, the most influential political writer in the earlier part of this century, and the greatest writer of her sex of whom any country can boast, is described by most of those who had seen her as having little pretensions to beauty, or being what in the slang of fashion is called "plain." The coarse lines of a poet in the "Antijacobin," about her "purple cheek and pimpled nose," lines no doubt inspired by that base and mean hatred with which feeble-minded men regard women whose intellect throws their own into obscurity, have no doubt contributed to keep alive an

erroneous idea that she was positively ugly. This is the opinion expressed by M. Chasles, in a passage which I have quoted in the sketch of Sappho. The modern Corinne was noways the rival in beauty of her Bœotian namesake, whose charms deluded the senses of the judges who five times over awarded to her the prize in lyric poetry over Pindar himself,* and with whose

* Of Corinna, the most beautiful of the Greek poetesses, there was, according to Pausanias, a portrait in the public gymnasium of the city of Tanagra, representing her as a most beautiful woman, with a fillet wreathed round her temples, on account of her having excelled Pindar in poetry. The vanquished poet gave expression to his wrath by ungallantly calling Corinna "a pig." From this expression, handed down to us by Ælian, M. Philarete Chasles draws the inference that Corinna was very stout in person. I cannot see any other fair inference that can be drawn from it than that Pindar, as might have been expected of a poet under such circumstances, had lost his temper and behaved like a beast. The belief of the world is, that it was the beauty of Corinna's person, and not her poetry, that decided the award of the judges. "On reading her works," says Barthelemy, as the young Anacharsis,

name Madame Stael has associated her own by adopting it as the title of perhaps her most celebrated work.

A woman, however, who had seen her, and must have despised her with all her transcendent intellectual gifts, for want of the dull, sluggish blood of high aristocracy in her veins, admits quite enough to redeem the modern Corinne from the imputation of being entirely destitute of personal attractions. "But for her eyes, which are *splendid*," says the Baroness d'Oberkirch "one would almost say that she is ugly. *Her figure is beautiful*; she is very fair, and there is a sparkling intelligence in her glance."* A woman with splendid eyes, a sparkling intelligence in her glance, and a beautiful figure, cannot well be despicable in point of personal comeliness.

"we are tempted to ask why, in poetical competitions, they were so often preferred to those of Pindar; but when we view her portrait, we inquire why they have not always obtained the preference."

* "Memoirs of the Baroness d'Oberkirch," 1, 316.

But Madame de Stael had more points of beauty than these. Her fair complexion was contrasted with her thick, strong coal-black hair. There was that largeness and bold outline about her features which mark a decided and intellectual character, and gratify a vigorous taste ; and when such features have once made an impression, they retain their hold on the mind more powerfully than a face with gentler and more delicate lines. And though Madame de Stael was not a Nourmahal, her face, it is admitted, displayed a continually changing expression in accordance with the emotions of her soul, and with the infinitely varying tones of her voice.

When her mind for a moment was but faintly excited, her eyelids appeared to be heavy. Her stout figure which, as the Baroness d'Oberkirch admits, was beautiful, was shown to advantage by the grace of her carriage. It is not always, though it might be thought that it should be always, that a woman with a fine figure has along with it that grace of motion

and attitude which arises from the control of a refined mind over the body.

Napoleon's Marie Louise had an admirable figure physically considered, but her heavy lumpish soul could not impart elegance, or anything but awkwardness to her postures.

Madame de Stael's arms were particularly beautiful; their fine rounded form is to be seen in the common portraits of her. Some accounts bear that she dressed with tawdriness and vulgarity; it is certain that she loved decided and gaudy colours, and committed the grave offence against society of consulting her own taste in what she wore, rather than adopting the prevailing modes.

Madame de Stael loved poetry, painting, statuary, architecture, music and dramatic performances, all to enthusiasm, as she did everything that refines and elevates humanity. Though she was anything but learned in the technicalities and cant of criticism, there is no writer of her country who has given to the

world so many bright, beautiful and profound thoughts on the sentiment of art, on the feelings and emotions which its master-pieces excite. There has been much written by both men and women on the greatness and grandeur of St. Peter's, but nothing that is worth reading when it is placed beside the reflections on it in "Corinne."

Madame de Stael was a musician, both vocal and instrumental, and in private theatricals acted with the enthusiasm and emotion which might be expected from her character. In company she was not merely a splendid talker, but to this proud character she added the more amiable one of being an earnest and attentive listener. It has been remarked to her honour that she made no hypocritical avowals of humble talents and moderate gifts—avowals which in her would have been most offensive.

When we reflect that Napoleon did not only not admire and reverence this woman; that he did not merely treat her rudely, but proceeded from rudeness to persecution, we are

amazed that his mind could be so great in some things, so mean and miserable in others. I dare say, however, that Wellington would have seen nothing in her ; but Alexander would have honoured her as a princess, and Cæsar would have adored her.

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