AUGUST.

BY KATHARINE TYNAN.

Sweet it is away from men and cities,
Where the deep greenwood sings its ancient ditties,
On wide moors where the sky is great and spacious;
O'er the hills majestical and hoary,
In deep glens where the brown stream tells its story,
And the gray trout turns in a pool capacious.

Now, my dear, once more shall we stray and wander
Hand in hand, take our delight and ponder,
Far away from the city's fret and fever;
How the seasons pass and the sweet roses,
All delights their pauses have and closes,
Only love endures for ever and ever.

Happy now the gleaning man and reaping,
Sweet his food and deep his pleasant sleeping
In his gold-thatched house beside the coppice.
All the day the sun in sweat will bathe him,
But nor grief nor cares can fret nor scathe him
Where Sleep shakes for him her bed of poppies.

Happy is he than with the townsman's riches.
Deeps and shallows of gold the cornfield stretches.
Better his simple cottage than a palace,
Where all night the harvest moon's above him,
And those angels of God, the sweet stars, love him,
Where the wind wanders in the golden valleys.

The New-York Tribune.

SUNDAY, AUGUST 19, 1906.

There is a demon abroad whom we would like to see exorcised, the demon of what we may call—fitting an ugly phrase to an ugly thing—bibliomaniacal reconstruction. The late William Morris did a good deal to make it respectable, and to this day the idea persists that it is somehow beautiful and thrilling to read a classic in a modern imitation of the ancient form in which he was first published. The newest book of the sort is to be an edition of the "Trionfi" of Petrarch, in an English translation. All possible effort will be made to render it a joy (?) to the eye. The initial letters will be executed in raised gold. The copies on vellum will contain a full page facsimile of an original illuminated page, and so on. We ought to be overwhelmed with bliss at the prospect, and we are sure that the book will give illimitable pleasure to many collectors. Nevertheless, we must go on feeling that while an illuminated page has its charms—in an ancient volume—there is nothing like mere good type and paper for a modern publication. It is not simply that they make reading an easy, peaceful thing. They are, just by themselves, beautiful. After all, is there anything in the world more exquisitely refreshing to a lover of literature than an honest, clear, well proportioned page? Every step in the direction of gorgeous ancientry is a step away from the golden mean.

Mr. W. H. Mallock, writing in "The National Review," makes an interesting comparison of Mr. Alfred Austin and the late Lord Tennyson. This well meant paper, "Two Poet Laureates on Life," may easily offend the Tennysonians. We can hear them saying, "Why drag in Austin?" But we are glad Mr. Mallock has written this essay if for no other reason than that it offers a lesson in literary good manners to many critics who are unquestionably in need of such instruction. It is quite true that if you find a man's poetry bad it is in no wise comforting to be told, as Mr. Mallock tells us of Mr. Austin, that he is a good scholar and linguist, an experienced traveller, "an unusually acute student of foreign politics," an admirable prose writer, etc., etc. But, on the other hand, is it necessary to heave a brick at him in mere wanton insult? Is it polite, or even intelligent, to ignore the good verse he has written and to hoot at him as though he were a kind of literary pariah? Mr. Austin has, we own, put our manners severely to the test. There is verse of a certain sort that excites utter weariness, rising suddenly to righteous wrath, and we fear that the present laureate knows how to write such verse. But at least let us take it as Mr. Mallock takes it; let us give it its chance, read it, consider it, and, if we must find fault, let us do so like gentlemen.

The literary agent, whatever his virtues or vices may be, serves at least one good purpose—he is the cause of eloquence in others. Readers who are interested in the subject well remember the point and vigor with which Mr. Henry Holt paid his compliments to the agent in his "Atlantic" paper on "The Commercialization of Literature." A word on the other side is spoken in the current "Fortnightly," the anonymous contributor to the subject being himself a practitioner of the deadly, or beneficent, craft. It is all very exhilarating for the disinterested outsider, but if he happens to have thought the matter over at all he cannot help feeling that the professional debaters are arguing in a circle. Much as we hate to burden the world with the reiteration of the fact that two and two make four, we must repeat what we have often said, that the literary agent is desirable or not according as the individual author is pleased or disgusted with his ministrations. We have heard fearful stories of the poor creature, but then only the other day we heard a successful novelist saying that he simply could not do without the help his agent gave him. Experience is the only thing that teaches in this matter. There will be literary agents, good and bad, as long as the printing presses hold out.

TWO ELIZABETHS.

A Pair of Literary Ladies of the Eighteenth Century.

ELIZABETH MONTAGU, THE QUEEN OF THE BLUE-STOCKINGS. Her Correspondence from 1720 to 1761. By her great-great-niece, Emily J. Climenson. Illustrated. In two volumes. 8vo, pp. 296-305. E. P. Dutton & Co.

A WOMAN OF WIT AND WISDOM. A Memoir of Elizabeth Carter. 1717-1806. By Alice C. C. Gaussen. Illustrated. 12mo, pp. 263. E. P. Dutton & Co.

The two volumes in which Mrs. Climenson has republished the early letters of her great-great-aunt, Elizabeth Montagu, are useful chiefly in showing the editors of other collections what to avoid. The letters are separated by passages biographical and explanatory, which are dulness incarnate. The work, dealing as it does with a most interesting period and with a remarkably interesting group of people, is, as a whole, lacking in picturesque color and movement. It is not enough to say that Mrs. Montagu's letters are largely dry, trivial and pretentious, sans grace and spirit—they lose much of what interest they have in a setting so heavy and flat. Most, if not all of them, were published nearly a hundred years ago by Mrs. Montagu's nephew, Lord Rokeby, and the present editor has not improved upon the early one. Mrs. Climenson, it appears, is the possessor of all Mrs. Montagu's MSS., an immense collection, and she hopes to continue the work of selection and publication. She will be wise to make liberal excisions, unless the correspondence gained in interest with the passage of years; and her indulgence in connecting comment should be checked.

ELIZABETH MONTAGU.
(From the portrait by Reynolds.)

Elizabeth Robinson Montagu was, as a letter writer, in a different category from her friend and contemporary, Fanny Burney, as in brains and learning she was inferior to Elizabeth Carter, but in her lesser rank she was undoubtedly clever, and, for her time, well educated. She was not averse to the display of her resources. Walpole, who calls her "the learned Aspasia," said of her that she "has both knowledge and wit, . . . but, mercy on us! they are both indefatigably forever at one's service!" Dr. Johnson, it is to be feared, had his tongue in his cheek when he remarked, "She diffuses more knowledge in her conversation than any woman I know, or, indeed, almost any man." It is not wonderful that the eminent Blue-Stocking and the disputatious Lexicographer arrived in time at a state of mind which prevented them from seeing one another across a room. Fanny Burney thought that the Montagu reasoned well and harangued well, but that she had no wit. As for Fanny's brilliant old friend, Daddy Crisp, he writes to her from his rural hermitage concerning Mrs. Montagu: "I believe I have told you of several letters the Duchess of Portland showed me of hers formerly (for I had no acquaintance with herself), so full of affectation, refinement, attempts to philosophise, talking metaphysics—in all which particulars she so bewildered and puzzled herself and her readers, and showed herself so superficial, nay, really ignorant, in the subjects she paraded on—that, in my own private mind's pocketbook, I set her down for a vain, empty, conceited pretender and little else."

Did this Queen of the Blue-Stockings, the hostess of the leading literary salon of eighteenth century London, deserve this severe judgment? Not altogether. Though many of her letters are stuffed with pompous, platitudinous "learning," there are glimpses here and there of real thoughtfulness and shrewd observation. We could hardly read, at this day, her "Defence" of Shakespeare against the animadversions of Voltaire, but it was at least well meaning and earnest, and many persons of her acquaintance liked it. They liked, too, her tart comment on the letter in which Voltaire claimed that he had himself first pointed out to the French some pearls that he found on the "énorme fumier"—"enormous dungheap"—of Shakespeare's plays. "I little thought," added the Frenchman, "that I should help to tread under foot the crowns of Racine and Corneille, in order to adorn the head of a barbarian and a buffoon." Mrs. Montagu heard this letter read aloud to the Academicians, and the "*énorme fumier*" roused her wrath. "*C'est un fumier,*" she exclaimed aloud, "*qui a fertilisé une terre bien ingrate.*"

Edward Montagu, grandson of the famous Earl of Sandwich, was a very rich man, whose adoration of the wife nearly thirty years younger than himself led him to indulge her to the top of her bent. She had everything she wanted, including a beautiful house and a cook enough in himself to organize a "salon." She hunted celebrities, people of rank and of genius; and all the mediocrities and toadies pursued and flattered her. We have seen that she had a powerful gift of conversation, but she had not, it appears, the charming art of thoroughly combining the social elements about her, and "diffusing" with her "knowledge" a general sense of glowing interest and *bien être*. What, by the way, was the aspect of this literary lady? In her youth she is said to have had beauty, with a vivacity and restlessness which led her friend, the Duchess of Portland, to nickname her "Fidget." As her girlhood passed her beauty apparently went with it, for her portraits are not particularly attractive. A long nose and a bulging forehead cannot be disguised, even by friendly Sir Joshua. In the days when Fanny Burney knew her, when she was at the height of her fame as a *Bas Bleu*, the author of "Evelina" thus described her: "She is middle sized, very thin, and looks infirm. She has a sensible and penetrating countenance, and the air and manner of a woman accustomed to being distinguished and of great parts." Unkind critics said she "tried for" this same air and manner, and Miss Burney thought she had extremely well succeeded.

The most curious thing to be noted about Mrs. Montagu's letters is that they should, after all, reveal so little of the manners and customs of her time. It is only occasionally that we come upon such odd glimpses as that of the Duchess of Portland's stately mansion at Bulstrode, where, being ordered by her doctor to take a bath, Elizabeth "suffered great disappointment" on finding the bathing tubs so out of order that they would not hold water for what she calls "a souze." It appears that it was the fashion to wear a special costume for a bath, even behind locked doors, for Elizabeth laments that her bathing dress was at home, and that when the bath tubs are ready she must extemporize a costume. Now and again, as we range through these pages, a noted figure rises before us. We see Mrs. Montagu taking her cousin, Laurence Sterne, to Reynolds's house, to amuse Lord Bath with his *bon mots* while the artist was at work upon the old peer's portrait; we see the Bard Macpherson and his attendant chorus of *bas bleus* drinking out of so-called nautilus shells a toast to the immortal memory of Ossian. There are few references to America in the letters; here is one which may be quoted as showing a vein of humor in General Wolfe:

> Mr. Boscawen yesterday show'd us a box of horrid implements with which the French cannon were charged at Louisbourg, rusty locks, pieces of pokers, curling tongs, nails in abundance and all sorts of iron instruments, and this not for want of ammunition, but wanton cruelty. He found the cannons loaded with these as well as ball. General Wolfe had a gridiron shot at him; it fell short of him, but he had it taken up and straiten'd, and eat a beefsteak broil'd upon it.

Mrs. Montagu's life-long friend, Elizabeth Carter, differed from most of the other Blue-Stockings in being the possessor of a truly sound and varied learning and of no pretension at all. Her poetry was poor stuff—and, indeed, her original writings of whatever sort are less important than might have been expected from one of her undoubted capacity. She had no genius, but her talents and her industry were more than respectable, and her nature was wholesome, cheery and genuine in a high degree. The daughter of a clergyman in the little seaside town of Deal, she acquired, as a child under paternal instruction, Latin, Greek and Hebrew; a Huguenot refugee gave her a perfect knowledge of French, and Italian, Spanish, German and Arabic she taught herself. The result of her persistent study and of her taking snuff and chewing green tea at midnight to keep herself awake over her books was shattered health. She lived to be an old woman, and trembling nerves and an ever recurring agony of headache testified to that girlish folly of inordinate study. She might have paid for it with her life in those early days if she had not taken the cure of long hours of exercise in the open air.

The work by which this learned Elizabeth won instant renown, even to the borders of Russia, was her translation from the original Greek of the discourses of Epictetus. "What! A woman translate such a work!" shouted all the literary folk, and they flocked about her with flattering curiosity. Johnson composed a Greek epigram upon her, and abated his gruffness when in company with her. The good man, ever mindful of culinary things, felt sincere respect for a lady who, as he said, could make a pudding as well as translate Epictetus, and work a handkerchief as well as compose a poem. Her head was in no wise turned by her success, and, in truth, she never lost the modest, mirthful simplicity which attracted people as much as did her cleverness. As for that literary success of hers, it was, for her time, remarkable. It enriched as well as distinguished her, giving her an independence which enabled her to maintain her own pleasant house at Deal and to visit London whenever she chose. It is worth while to remember that these visits were comparatively short and few, that this accomplished woman spent most of her life in her quiet seaside town with her books and her beloved garden, and neither showed nor felt any symptoms of "rusting out." She had suitors who appreciated her happy disposition and her winning, if not pretty, face; and she was once on the brink of an engagement with a highly eligible personage. But the adorer happened to publish some verses of which she could not approve, and was promptly dismissed in favor of puddings and the pen.

The story of Elizabeth Carter's uneventful life might have been told in much smaller space than Mrs. Gaussen has given to it, but it was well worth telling if only for the sake of its testimony to the sometimes disputed fact that womanly gentleness and devotion to domesticity need not quarrel with the enjoyment and employment of a learned mind.

AULD LANG SYNE.

From The Periodical.

Referring to the manuscript of "Auld Lang Syne," which J. Pierpont Morgan has purchased, "The Morning Post" expresses doubt as to its being the or merely an original. J. Dick writes that the original, according to his view, is that of Burns's holograph in the first of the four volumes of the "Interleaved Scots Musical Museum," which were bought by Quaritch for £685 in October, 1904. Burns there prefaced his verses by these words: "The original and by much the best set of the words of this song is as follows." The first publication of this set is in Dick's "Songs of Robert Burns" (London: Frowde, 1903), page 208, and the "Bibliographical Notes" pages 433-440. On page 25 is a description of the "Interleaved Museum."

If the "Auld Lang Syne" of J. Pierpont Morgan is a new find, Mr. Dick points out, it will have to dispute the copy referred to, which was written by Burns about 1791. The fact that he sent another copy in 1793 to George Thomson in no way detracts from what he wrote in the "Interleaved Museum," because he often carved new words for that dilettante editor, who continually badgered him to write more English in his songs.

HUMORS OF COMPOSITION.

From The London Chronicle.

A literary paper fans us acceptably with some choice, if not wholly unfamiliar, achievements of the "wild compositor." William Black, it seems, had four times to beg his printers to let one of his heroines die of opium. They had insisted on making her die of "opinion." By an error, the announcement, "A sailor, going to sea, his wife desires the prayers of the congregation," became "A sailor going to see his wife desires the prayers of the congregation."

Peculiarly dangerous is the compositor who puts in a little editing. "What is this? 'Sermons in stones, books in the running brooks?' Impossible! He means, of course, 'Sermons in books, and stones in the running brooks.'" Thus was Shakespeare amended. Very happy, however, was the literal correction of "Bring me my toga" into "Bring me my toga."