

Literary News and Criticism

Some Famous Women of Earlier European Days.

THE GREAT INFANTA. Isabel, Sovereign of the Netherlands. By L. Klingenstein. With an introduction by Edward Armstrong, M. A., F. B. A. With twelve illustrations. 8vo, pp. xxiii, 322. G. P. Putnam's Sons.

ISABELLA OF MILAN. PRINCESS OF SARAGONA AND WIFE OF DUKE GIAN GALEAZZO SFORZA. The intimate story of her life in Milan told in the letters of her young widow. As set forth by Christopher Hare. Illustrated. 8vo, pp. ix, 207. Charles Scribner's Sons.

HEROINES OF GENOA AND THE RIVIERA. By Edouarda Staley. Illustrated. 8vo, pp. xxxvii, 327. Imported by Charles Scribner's Sons.

Most of the numerous books about the heroines of old court life that are manufactured to-day, with the aid of scissors and paste, are based upon the public interest in historic scandal. But it is a little curious to find a scholar tactfully confessing his subjection to this idea. In a quite supererogatory introduction to Miss Klingenstein's excellent memoir of "The Great Infanta," Mr. Armstrong remarks that a cautious critic "might object that there was nothing which

This biography contains a pretty picture of her at eighteen, when she was at the height of her beauty.

At her father's court she was held to be peerless, and writers of prose and verse vied with each other in extolling not only her person, but her intellect. Skilled in all sports, she played and danced well, and was a great lover of music and poetry; she was her father's pupil in history and the science of politics. Her sister Catherine, a year younger than herself, though neither as handsome nor as gifted, lent by her light-hearted, merry disposition an air of gaiety to the court. Isabel had inherited her father's coloring. Her fair, stately beauty, contrasting with her sister's dark, sprightly pliancy, formed a picture so charming as to fire any imagination. Many an ardent gentleman, "sighing like furnace," tuned his lyre to a "sweet ballad," romantically despairing many a gallant courtier, exulting in the gracious, youthful presence, which filled the court with light, broke forth into such lustrous to their great father's house.

Philip looked on, delighted. Nevertheless, she ultimately became the weapon which he strove to use against his enemies. In his plans against England he reserved for her the crown of that realm. His fishing in the turbulent waters of French politics had for its aim her establishment upon the throne. Meanwhile he was brought to realize the approach of his own death, and saw that something practicable had to be done.

lightened resolution. In war and in peace she drove at the creation of some sort of living tie between herself and her subjects. Here is a picture of her at a review of departing troops:

The Infanta, "a second Aesclippa," thrilling with the prospect of battle, rode from troop to troop, striving to animate her men by a rousing harangue. She declared assured them that beyond the certain recompense which they would reap for the service to God, a great reward awaited them from herself, the archduke and from the King of Spain. She urged them to feel no fears about their pay, declaring that if all else failed she would pawn her jewels rather than that they would suffer loss.

When the siege of Ostend lengthened out (it lasted three years) she made a vow that she would not change her linen until the capture of the city. In the campaign against Breda she is represented by one English observer as wishing herself "of the masculine sex for some months, to perform some memorable exploit upon the Hollander." Naturally, all this endeared her to high and low among her people, and she gave the last touch to her popularity when, from time to time, she stepped down from her throne and mingled with the crowd. The fraternity of cross-bowmen were wont to choose for their "Reine papayee" the markswoman who could shoot the bird they affixed to the spire of the Sablon church. Before Isabel's time the royal winners of the prize had shot the bird by the hand of a deputy. The Infanta shot it for herself, and the town went mad for joy. We see her, after this feat, decorated with a baldric and conducted to the altar of the church, going thence to the market place amid the plaudits of thousands, and then raising a foaming bumper to the prosperity of the fraternity. We see her, in short, leading the life of a born ruler, knowing precisely how to win and hold the affections of the Netherlands. To that extent we know that she was indeed "The Great Infanta," one of the truly constructive figures in European history. Her instincts were sound. She saw what her state needed and was eager to act upon her convictions. Miss Klingenstein justly sums up the matter when she says that "notwithstanding the troubles which so frequently beset it, the Netherlands have always regarded the rule of Isabel as one of the few bright passages in their sad history." But she was chained to the Spanish junkernaut. It swept ruthlessly over her country and it wore her down. That she never gave up the fight until death came is her title to rank among the heroines of romance. One easily dispenses with the "love motive" in the rich narrative of her career. Without it she still remains a noble and intensely interesting woman.

The princess of the Italian Renaissance whose misfortunes are set forth in the latest volume by that industrious lady, "Christopher Hare," commands our pity, but is not otherwise a type to repay the biographer in any serious measure. "Isabella of Milan" is one of those books which do well enough for a lazy hour, but if left unwritten never would be missed. When the daughter of Alfonso of Naples first laid eyes upon her future husband she saw "a small, insignificant figure, with a pinched, sallow face of sickly appearance and a sulky mouth." If the fine feathers he sported helped her to form a tolerably favorable impression of the young Duke Gian Galeazzo, she was soon to learn how little they really counted. Morally as well as physically he was a weak vessel. Isabel's whole melancholy history is concentrated in a passage from one of the supposititious letters in this book, a passage which also hints at the ambition which was her most salient trait:

It is more than I can bear. I have tried in vain to raise my husband to a sense of his proper position. He, who is the real Duke of Milan, is quite content to be a mere cipher, and to leave everything in the hands of his uncle, Lodovico, who treats him like a child. It is the Lord Lodovico who makes all the plans, who gives all the orders, who is consulted about everything, and whose slightest word is law. We are mere pasteboard figures dressed up for show.

Gian Galeazzo died without having lifted a finger to assert his rights, and though he left an heir, the breath was scarcely out of his body before Il Moro had himself proclaimed duke. Isabel still hoped. Milan was a storm centre on the political map, and despite one humiliation after another she clung to the scene of her brief married life, believing that her son Francesco would one day triumph there. But when the French King entered Milan and gave

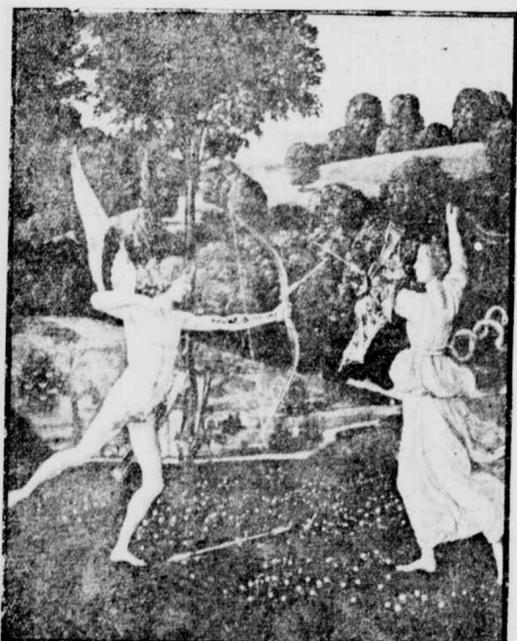


ISABELLA OF MILAN. (From the portrait by Beltraffio, in "Isabella of Milan.")

but no great admiration. Christopher Hare does out the narrative of her career with descriptions of court life and sketches of the notable personages of the day, serving the whole up in feminine and only mildly engaging fashion. We apprehend the events of some ten years of Milanese history through the *frontrun* of gossip transmitted by Isabella's lady-in-waiting, Violante da Canossa, and her sister in Naples. The epistolary form adopted by the author is intended, we gather, to create an atmosphere of "intimacy," but it yields one of factitious mechanism instead. The best thing in the book is the frontispiece from Beltraffio's exquisite drawing of Isabella.

Mr. Staley's "Heroines of Genoa and the Riviera" is of sentimentality all compact. From an historical point of view it is an invertebrate affair, full of Genoese legends, but giving no ordered and luminous account of the city. Though the author is all for picturesque and gets a good deal of it into his work, he is too discursive to do full justice to one of the great civic organisms of Italy. As for his "Heroines," they are no greater in number and no more individualized than those of any other Southern region. In the fourteenth century there were some Genoese ladies who thought to affirm the powers of their sex by embarking upon a Crusade of their own. "To drive out of the Holy Land the Sultan of Babylon." Everybody was very nice about it, but the Pope would not let his little venture by urging them not to expose themselves "to dangers which the most valorous men could scarcely endure, to be satisfied with degrading the cost of the armament of an expedition of male Genoese Crusaders, and furthering the complete maintenance in Genoa of hospitals, refugees and sanatoria for warriors and pilgrims returned inviolated from Palestine." So the ladies of Genoa stayed at home, put aside the few pieces of armor they had ordered made and ministered to their lords. That was about what Genoese femininity was fitted for, and they were not, in the long run, unhappy.

The city has given three or four women to history, or at all events to literature. She was a daughter of Genoa, Ginevra Lomellini, whose virtue supplied the motive for one of Boccaccio's finest tales, and, through that, inspired Shakespeare. She is the Imogen of his "Cymbeline." La Bella Simonetta, she of the



LA BELLA SIMONETTA E LE BEL GIULIO. (Simonetta Vesputi and Giuliano de' Medici.) (From the picture by Botticelli, in "Heroines of Genoa.")

her momentary dream of rehabilitation she was on the eve of her bitterest disappointment. The lad she cherished was taken from her, and there was nothing for her to do but withdraw to the Duchy of Bari, which was all that Lodovico had to spare her out of the wreck he had made of her life. She was lovely; she had some brains and resolution. If she had been better matched she might have played an effective part in the world. Circumstance as she was, she excites, as we have said, compassion,

enchancing portrait at Chantilly and of poetic, Medicean annals, was also born in Genoa. But Mr. Staley is rather hard put to it to find companions for these figures in his gallery, and it is not surprising that he is thrown back upon fragments of political history, anecdotes of society, descriptions of Genoese palaces and villas and miscellaneous personalities. Here and there we come upon some useful notes, as in the pages upon the local crafts. But the book, as a book, is light stuff.

the first to show their delight. They cheered her, threw bouquets at her, and she says she was so affected by the demonstration that she almost fainted. But her first thought was to rush home in a taximotor and carry the news to her father and mother, who were waiting anxiously for the result.

NEW FRENCH BOOKS

Queen Marie Caroline's Letters.

Paris, August 16. "Burn this letter immediately after reading it!" is the hastily written postscript that appears in upward of fifty letters written by Queen Marie Caroline, Queen of Naples and Sicily, and sister of Marie Antoinette, to the Marquis de Gallo, the Neapolitan Minister of State during the stirring period from 1785 to 1806. As the French historian, M. Welschinger, points out, the surest way of keeping intact an historical document is to bid the recipient to destroy it. De Gallo, however, had very good reasons for preserving the communications made to him by the Queen of Naples, many of which were written in lemon juice to insure secrecy, because the unbridled intrigues of the court of the wretched King Ferdinand IV and his clever but implacable Queen compelled the minister to keep in his possession many confidential instruments as a measure of self-defence.

These two bulky volumes, which contain 544 hitherto unpublished letters of Queen Marie Caroline, recently discovered by Commandant Weil and the Marquis di Somma Circeolo in the archives of the ducal family of De Gallo, and brought out by Emile Paul, form a valuable contribution to history. Queen Marie Caroline, daughter of Maria-Theresia, married when sixteen years old to King Ferdinand IV, was, in spite of her reckless dissipation and lack of moral principles, a remarkable woman. She was the mother of eighteen children, and assumed all the responsibilities of state owing to her husband's inveterate laziness and profligacy. Had she been in the place of her sister, Marie Antoinette, she would undoubtedly—judging from her letters—have made a pact with Mirabeau and other popular leaders, and perhaps have given quite another trend to French events.

Marie Caroline had great energy and decision, and was exceedingly intelligent and quick witted. She had a genuine admiration for Bonaparte, predicting, after the treaty of Campo Formio, that "this godlike young General Bonaparte would soon become the despot of Europe." Napoleon referred to her as "a

NEWS FROM THE NORTH.

From The London Spectator. As I went down by London Bridge And 't not long on land at home I met a lad from the North country, And gripped him by the hand, And said: "If you be late from home, O quickly tell me true How fares it now with mine own country, And with the folk I know?"

Oh, he looked up and he looked down, And slow he shook his head, And "Sure the place is not the same This many a year," he said.

"For this one's dead, and that one's wed, And that gone over sea; You scarce would know the place again, So many changes be."

"Tell me no more, no more," I cried, "These grievous news and ill; Full well I know, wherever you go, And those who bid at home."

"For folk must die, and folk must live, Since change and chance must be Alike for those who bid at home, And those who use the sea."

"Tell me if anything I'll find I've known and loved before; Do the trees stand up by Oakenclough? The winds blow off the Moor?"

"Do magpies in our planting build, And hares by Blackbrook run? And at Top o' th' Lowe the grasses blow All ruddy in the sun?"

"Still runs the brook, the trees stand up By yonder cloughside still; You can see the roof of your father's hall, Look over the windy hill."

"There will I go, and there shall meet Old ghosts of joy and pain, And the folk I knew in the time that's gone Shall greet me once again."

"The lad that's dead, the lad that's wed, With me shall leap and run, As they did when we were boys at home Ere roving days begun."

"There is no land so lone and far, There is no grave so deep that there Shall they unheeding bide, When the winds that blow in mine own country Do call them to my side!"

A WOMAN'S SUCCESS

Mlle. Heuvelmans Beats Her Male Rivals for Prix de Rome.

From The London Daily Telegraph. For the first time in the history of French art, and since the institution of the famous Prix de Rome, a young woman student has been awarded the coveted honor over the heads of her male competitors. The successful laureate is Mlle. Lucienne Antonette Heuvelmans, whose success in sculpture I had occasion to mention two years ago, when she obtained the second Grand Prix. Something is surely changed when a young woman can obtain such a recompense, and "feminism" in France has scored a distinct triumph. Some twenty years ago there was quite an outcry raised against what was then a daring novelty—namely, the admission of female pupils at the Ecole des Beaux Arts. The dispute finally calmed down, the girl students were allowed to follow the classes, and they had the right to get instruction from the best teachers. But it was never dreamed of then, or even since, that a girl, or a young woman, would elbow her male companions out of the way and secure for herself the crowning reward, that of a Prix de Rome. Even the granting of a second Grand Prix already caused some excitement. Many a prominent artist, whose voice was of great weight in official circles, was still opposed to any such idea as that of sending a young woman student to the Villa Medicea in Rome with a purse from the state. But the ice is now broken, and Mlle. Heuvelmans leads the way.

Mlle. Heuvelmans was born in Paris on Christmas Day, 1889. Her parents live near the Bastille, and her father had a rather important atelier of artistic cabinet work. She had a liking for sculpture at a very early age, but really did not begin to take it up seriously until she was eighteen. She was then preparing, as she told me, to secure her brevet as a teacher in the municipal schools of Paris. She finally passed her examination, and has, in fact, for a number of years been teaching drawing and modelling classes at the communal schools. Before taking to sculpture she had attempted painting, and for a year she was a pupil of M. Humbert. But one day she saw a copy of a fountain by Injalbert representing a girl trying to close up the mouth of the fountain's head. The subject tempted her, and she tried to model it. She was pleased with her success, and from that time forward she had a regular passion for modelling and sculpture. She entered the Ecole des Beaux Arts seven years ago, and became a pupil of M. Marqueste and M. Henuaux. She obtained a prize at the end of her first year at the school, and had a recompense of one kind or another each subsequent year. For six years past she entered "en loge" every year for the Prix de Rome. After obtaining the second Grand Prix two years ago, she had great hopes of getting the Prix de Rome last year, but the outcome was a terrible disappointment to her. Still, she made another attempt this year, and put all her energy into it, with success at last. There was quite a scene in the courtyard after a long deliberation at the conclusion of all the competitors by the students "en loge," announced that the Grand Prix de Rome was awarded to her. There was quite a scene in the courtyard after this announcement. The young men, her fellow students, were

MARIE CAROLINE OF NAPLES.

(From the portrait by Mme. Vigée-Lebrun in the National Gallery at Madrid.)

man in woman's clothing," used to call her a "Frédégonde," and said that she would "not hesitate at any crime to carry out her ambition." Among Marie Caroline's favorites were Admiral Acton and her Minister of Foreign Affairs, De Gallo. She was an intimate companion of Lady Hamilton. Had her surroundings been better she would have been quite a different woman. Her letters are bright and original. They give vigorous pictures of the period and are replete with fresh and amusing anecdotes concerning Nelson, Talleyrand, Murat and the prominent men and women of the courts of Vienna and Naples. The two volumes are carefully edited and annotated by Commandant Weil and the Marquis de Circeolo. The first one contains a reproduction of Mme. Vigée-Lebrun's portrait of Marie Caroline, now in the Royal Museum at Madrid.

A USEFUL CHINESE TREE.

From The Dundee Advertiser.

The tree from which China wood oil is produced is one of those strangely versatile organisms which are occasionally to be found to make easy the path of man. It has dozens of uses. Its timber, though not obtainable in large sizes, is soft and white when new, but becomes very hard and durable as it ages, and is impervious to water and insects, so that it is especially suited to many uses. A fibre is obtained from the tree, and is spun and woven into a useful cloth; but it is the fruit which is principally of use. The tree is easy of cultivation, and in from three to six years bears fruit, yielding from 20 to 50 pounds of nuts a year for the following ten years or so. Some idea of its valuable qualities can be gathered from the variety of uses to which the Chinese put the oil. It is about equal in usefulness to coconut oil. It serves as fuel and as oil for lamps. It waterproofs paper for umbrellas and other purposes. It is used for varnishing boats and all sorts of woodwork and for making cloth waterproof. The soot resulting from its imperfect combustion gives the well-known Chinese ink. Combined with lime, clay, sand and earth it forms a composition almost as strong as granite. The ash left after burning the nut itself, mixed with the oil, makes a certain high temperature, which is used in China for calking boats and for a first coat of paint. One of the peculiar qualities of the oil is that on heating above a certain high temperature it coagulates into a substance resembling amber and cannot thereafter be softened by heat. Whether the oil has had its possibilities for usefulness exhausted cannot be said, but further utilities are quite likely to be found.

Germany and Heine.

Lord Haldane in his recent university address, "Great Britain and Germany: A Study in Ethnology," had words of reproach for Germany concerning her treatment of Heine. He pointed out that Germany in the end of the eighteenth century had her Elizabethan age, so far as literature and philosophy were concerned.

Hugo and Waterloo.

The ninety-seventh anniversary of the battle of Waterloo occurs next year on June 18, and this is to be the occasion of the unveiling of a monument to Victor Hugo. The committee of Frenchmen formed to make arrangements for this monument believe that the poet's writings concerning the battle entitle him to a formal commemoration.



THE GREAT INFANTA, ISABEL CLARA EUGENIA. (From the portrait by Rubens, in "The Great Infanta.")

could be called romantic in Isabel's life. The critic who made this objection would be not merely captious but stupid. "She never had, as far as is known," we are told, "a sentimental love affair." Is a love affair the only possible source of romance? The fact is that Isabel's life was one long adventure, full of the dramatic issues which react upon character and emotion. The story of it certainly makes romantic reading. Miss Klingenstein tells it charmingly. Much of her space has necessarily to be given to political and military transactions, in the course of which the Infanta's purely feminine traits are pretty well obscured, but the balance of the narrative is well preserved, and not even when she is most gravely "historical" is the author dull.

It is one of the cruellest ironies of history that the favorite daughter of Philip II of Spain was perhaps the saddest victim of his warped genius for government. She worshipped him, but from beginning to end she was sacrificed to his political system, feeling its painful pressure long after his death. If she never blamed him it was clearly for the reason that Miss Klingenstein brings out—namely, the King's determination of all his acts on absolutely conscientious grounds. To our modern eyes Philip is a bigoted despot, criminally egotistical. To his daughter he was not only wisdom incarnate, but the whole-hearted defender of the Church, and hence impeccable. Herself profoundly religious by nature, she bowed unquestionably to a rule having ecclesiastical sanction, and so she grew up a more than willing martyr to a false conception of the state. Only two years old when her mother died, she was at a very early age made free of Philip's companionship. Miss Klingenstein has something to say about the girl's lighter occupations, about her delight in gardens and in the chase, but more significant is this passage on her daily sessions with the King:

As quite a child she was admitted into his study, to bring him the sheets to be folded up and put into packets to be addressed to his secretaries. Later, when she began to read, books of history formed her special delight. Philip took pleasure in acquainting her with matters of negotiation and government, in which she proved an apt pupil; though perhaps her progress was equally of slight exaggeration in declaring that graybeards were struck dumb by the words of wisdom which fell from her young lips. Father and daughter would spend many hours together at the same table, engaged in the King's favorite occupation of writing, whereby, according to a contemporary, "he despatched more than three secretaries, and in this manner, with his pen and his purse, governeth the world."

She was, as Miss Klingenstein observes, "the one being whom he loved to the end of his life," but that, of course, in no wise affected his sense of her value to him as a possible pawn in the game he was always playing in the interests of the empire. He resisted, it is true, the overtures that the young King of Portugal led for her hand, and when his policy led him to acquiesce it was with reservations which we may be sure would have been twisted to suit himself had Sebastian lived. Isabel was then too young—not yet in her teens—and not even Philip's statecraft could withstand the appeal of her sweet innocence. Besides, as has been said, he genuinely loved her. She had, therefore, some years of carefree youth, pursuing happiness with the King's entire good will.