

LETTER XXII.

May 18.

Dear M.:--

I can compare the embarrassment of our London life, with its multiplied solicitations and infinite stimulants to curiosity and desire, only to that annual perplexity which used to beset us in our childhood on thanksgiving day. Having been kept all the year within the limits which prudence assigns to well-regulated children, came at last the governor's proclamation, and a general saturnalia of dainties for the little ones. For one day the gates of license were thrown open, and we, plumped down into the midst of pie and pudding exceeding all conception but that of a Yankee housekeeper, were left to struggle our way out as best we might.

So here, beside all the living world of London, its scope and range of persons and circles of thought, come its architecture, its arts, its localities, historic, poetic, all that expresses its past, its present, and its future. Every day and every hour brings its' conflicting allurements, of persons to be seen, places to be visited, things to be done, beyond all computation. Like Miss Edgeworth's philosophic little Frank, we are obliged to make out our list of what man must want, and of what he may want; and in our list of the former we set down, in large and decisive characters, one quiet

day for the exploration and enjoyment of Windsor.

We were solicited, indeed, to go in another direction; a party was formed to go down the Thames with the Right Hon. Sidney Herbert, secretary at war, and visit an emigrant ship just starting for Australia. I should say here, that since Mrs. Chisholm's labors have awakened the attention of the English public to the wants and condition of emigrants, the benevolent people of England take great interest in the departing of emigrant ships. A society has been formed called the Family Colonization Loan Society, and a fund raised by which money can be loaned to those desiring to emigrate. This society makes it an object to cultivate acquaintance and intimacy among those about going out by uniting them into groups, and, as far as possible, placing orphan children and single females under the protection of families. Any one, by subscribing six guineas towards the loan, can secure one passage. Each individual becomes responsible for refunding his own fare, and, furthermore, to pay a certain assessment in case any individual of the group fails to make up the passage money. The sailing of emigrant ships, therefore, has become a scene of great interest. Those departing do not leave their native shore without substantial proofs of the interest and care of the land they are leaving.

In the party who were going down to-day were Mr. and Mrs. Binney, Mr. Sherman, and a number of distinguished names; among whom I recollect to have heard the names of Lady Hatherton, and Lady Byron, widow of

the poet. This would have been an exceedingly interesting scene to us, but being already worn with company and excitement, we preferred a quiet day at Windsor.

For if we took Warwick as the representative feudal estate, we took Windsor as the representative palace, that which imbodyes the English idea of royalty. Apart from this, Windsor has been immortalized by the Merry Wives; it has still standing in its park the Herne oak, where the mischievous fairies played their pranks upon old Falstaff.

And the castle still has about it the charm of the poet's invocation:--

"Search Windsor Castle, elves, within, without,  
Strew good luck, ouphes, on every sacred room,  
That it may stand till the perpetual doom  
In state as wholesome as in state 'tis fit,  
Worthy the owner, and the owner it.  
The several chairs of order, look you, scour  
With juice of balm and every precious flower,  
Each fair instalment, coat, and several crest,  
With loyal blazon evermore be blest.  
And nightly, meadow fairies, look you, sing  
Like to the garter's compass, in a ring.  
The expressure that it bears, green let it be,  
More fertile, fresh, than all the field to see,

And Honi soit qui mal y pense, write  
In emerald tufts, flowers, purple, blue, and white,  
Like sapphire, pearl, and rich embroidery,  
Fairies use flowers for their charactery."

As if for the loyal purpose of recommending old Windsor, the English skies had cleared up into brightness. About nine o'clock we found ourselves in the cars, riding through a perpetual garden of blooming trees and blossoming hedges; birds in a perfect fury of delight. Our spirits were all elated. Good, honest, cackling Mrs. Quickly herself was not more disposed to make the best of every thing and every body than were we. Mr. S., in particular, was so joyous that I was afraid he would break out into song, after the fashion of Sir Hugh Evans,--

"Melodious birds sung madrigals:  
Whenas I sat in Babylon," &c.

By the by, the fishing ground of Izaak Walton is one of the localities connected with Windsor.

The ride was done all too soon. One should not whirl through such a choice bit of England in the cars; one should rather wish to amble over the way after a sleepy, contemplative old horse, as we used to make rural excursions in New England ere yet railroads were. However, all that's bright must fade, and this among the rest.

About eleven o'clock we found ourselves going up the old stone steps to the castle. It was the last day of a fair which had been holden in this part of the country, and crowds of the common people were flocking to the castle, men, women, and children pattering up the stairs before and after us.

We went first through the state apartments. The principal thing that interested me was the ball room, which was a perfect gallery of Vandyke's paintings. Here was certainly an opportunity to know what Vandyke is. I should call him a true court painter--a master of splendid conventionalities, whose portraits of kings are the most powerful arguments for the divine right I know of. Nevertheless, beyond conventionality and outward magnificence, his ideas have no range. He suggests nothing to the moral and ideal part of us. Here again was the picture of King Charles on horseback, which had interested me at Warwick. It had, however, a peculiar and romantic charm from its position at the end of that long, dim corridor, vis-a-vis with the masque of Cromwell, which did not accompany it here, where it was but one among a set of pictures.

There was another, presenting the front side and three quarters face of the same sovereign, painted by Vandyke for Benini to make a bust from. There were no less than five portraits of his wife, Henrietta Maria, in different dresses and attitudes, and two pictures of their children. No sovereign is so profusely and perseveringly represented.

The queen's audience chamber is hung with tapestry representing scenes from the book of Esther. This tapestry made a very great impression upon me. A knowledge of the difficulties to be overcome in the material part of painting is undoubtedly an unsuspected element of much of the pleasure we derive from it; and for this reason, probably, this tapestry appeared to us better than paintings executed with equal spirit in oils. We admired it exceedingly, entirely careless what critics might think of us if they knew it.

Another room was hung with Gobelin tapestry representing the whole of the tragedy of Medea. First you have Jason cutting down the golden fleece, while the dragon lies slain, and Medea is looking on in admiration. In another he pledges his love to Medea. In a third, the men sprung from the dragon's teeth are seen contending with each other. In another the unfaithful lover espouses Creusa. In the next Creusa is seen burning in the poisoned shirt, given her by Medea. In another Medea is seen in a char drawn by dragons, bearing her two children by Jason, whom she has stabbed in revenge for his desertion. Nothing can exceed the ghastly reality of death, as shown in the stiffened limbs and sharpened features of those dead children. The whole drawing and grouping is exceedingly spirited and lifelike, and has great power of impression.

I was charmed also by nine landscapes of Zuccarelli, which adorn the state drawing room. Zuccarelli was a follower of Claude, and these pictures far exceed in effect any of Claude's I have yet seen. The

charm of them does not lie merely in the atmospheric tints and effects, as those of Cuyp, but in the rich and fanciful combination of objects. In this respect they perform in painting what the first part of the *Castle of Indolence*, or Tennyson's *Lotus Eaters*, do in poetry-- evoke a fairyland. There was something peculiar about their charm for me.

Who can decide how much in a picture belongs to the idiosyncrasies and associations of the person who looks upon it. Artists undoubtedly powerful and fine may have nothing in them which touches the nervous sympathies and tastes of some persons: who, therefore, shall establish any authoritative canon of taste? who shall say that Claude is finer than Zuccarelli, or Zuccarelli than Claude? A man might as well say that the woman who enchants him is the only true Venus for the world.

Then, again, how much in painting or in poetry depends upon the frame of mind in which we see or hear! Whoever looks on these pictures, or reads the *Lotus Eaters* or *Castle of Indolence*, at a time when soul and body are weary, and longing for retirement and rest, will receive an impression from them such as could never be made on the strong nerves of our more healthful and hilarious seasons.

Certainly no emotions so rigidly reject critical restraints, and disdain to be bound by rule, as those excited by the fine arts. A man unimpressible and incapable of moods and tenses, is for that reason an incompetent critic; and the sensitive, excitable man, how can he know

that he does not impose his peculiar mood as a general rule?

From the state rooms we were taken to the top of the Hound Tower, where we gained a magnificent view of the Park of Windsor, with its regal avenue, miles in length, of ancient oaks; its sweeps of greensward; clumps of trees; its old Herne oak, of classic memory; in short, all that constitutes the idea of a perfect English landscape. The English tree is shorter and stouter than ours; its foliage dense and deep, lying with a full, rounding outline against the sky. Every thing here conveys the idea of concentrated vitality, but without that rank luxuriance seen in our American growth. Having unfortunately exhausted the English language on the subject of grass, I will not repeat any ecstasies upon that topic.

After descending from the tower we filed off to the proper quarter, to show our orders for the private rooms. The state apartments, which we had been looking at, are open at all times, but the private apartments can only be seen in the queen's absence, and by a special permission, which had been procured for us on this occasion by the kindness of the Duchess of Sutherland.

One of the first objects that attracted my attention when entering the vestibule was a baby's wicker wagon, standing in one corner; it was much such a carriage as all mothers are familiar with; such as figures largely in the history of almost every family. It had neat curtains and cushions of green merino, and was not royal, only maternal. I



mused over the little thing with a good deal of interest. It is to my mind one of the providential signs of our times, that, at this stormy and most critical period of the world's history, the sovereignty of the most powerful nation on earth is represented by a woman and a mother. How many humanizing, gentle, and pacific influences constantly emanate from this centre!

One of the most interesting apartments was a long corridor, hung with paintings and garnished along the sides with objects of art and vertu. Here C. and I renewed a dispute which had for some time been pending, in respect to Canaletto's paintings. This Canaletto was a Venetian painter, who was born about 1697, and died in London in 1768, and was greatly in vogue with the upper circles in those days. He delighted in architectural paintings, which he represents with the accuracy of a daguerreotype, and a management of perspective, chiaro oscuro, and all the other mysteries of art, such as make his paintings amount to about the same as the reality.

Well, here, in this corridor, we had him in full force. Here was Venice served up to order--its streets, palaces, churches, bridges, canals, and gondolas made as real to our eye as if we were looking at them out of a window. I admired them very warmly, but I could not go into the raptures that C. did, who kept calling me from every thing else that I wanted to see to come and look at this Canaletto. "Well, I see it," said I; "it is good--it is perfect--it cannot be bettered; but what then? There is the same difference between these and a

landscape of Zuccarelli as there is between a neatly-arranged statistical treatise and a poem. The latter suggests a thousand images, the former gives you only information."

We were quite interested in a series of paintings which represented the various events of the present queen's history. There was the coronation in Westminster Abbey--that national romance which, for once in our prosaic world, nearly turned the heads of all the sensible people on earth. Think of vesting the sovereignty of so much of the world in a fair young girl of seventeen! The picture is a very pretty one, and is taken at the very moment she is kneeling at the feet of the Archbishop of Canterbury to receive her crown. She is represented as a fair-haired, interesting girl, the simplicity of her air contrasting strangely with the pomp and gorgeous display around. The painter has done justice to a train of charming young ladies who surround her; among the faces I recognized the blue eyes and noble forehead of the Duchess of Sutherland.

Then followed, in due order, the baptism of children, the reception of poor old Louis Philippe in his exile, and various other matters of the sort which go to make up royal pictures.

In the family breakfast room we saw some fine Gobelin tapestry, representing the classical story of Meleager. In one of the rooms, on a pedestal, stood a gigantic china vase, a present from the Emperor of Russia, and in the state rooms before we had seen a large malachite

vase from the same donor. The toning of this room, with regard to color, was like that of the room I described in Stafford House--the carpet of green ground, with the same little leaf upon it, the walls, chairs, and sofas covered with green damask. Around the walls of the room, in some places, were arranged cases of books about three feet high. I liked this arrangement particularly, because it gives you the companionship of books in an apartment without occupying that space of the wall which is advantageous for pictures. Moreover, books placed high against the walls of a room give a gloomy appearance to the apartment.

The whole air of these rooms was very charming, suggestive of refined taste and domestic habits. The idea of home, which pervades every thing in England, from the cottage to the palace, was as much suggested here as in any apartments I have seen. The walls of the different rooms were decorated with portraits of the members of the royal family, and those of other European princes.

After this we went through the kitchen department--saw the silver and gold plate of the table; among the latter were some designs which I thought particularly graceful. To conclude all, we went through the stables. The man who showed them told us that several of the queen's favorite horses were taken to Osborne; but there were many beautiful creatures left, which I regarded with great complacency. The stables and stalls were perfectly clean, and neatly kept; and one, in short, derives from the whole view of the economics of Windsor that

satisfaction which results from seeing a thing thoroughly done in the best conceivable manner.

The management of the estate of Windsor is, I am told, a model for all landholders in the kingdom. A society has been formed there, within a few years, under the patronage of the queen, Prince Albert, and the Duchess of Kent, in which the clergy and gentry of the principal parishes in this vicinity are interested, for improving the condition of the laboring classes in this region. The queen and Prince Albert have taken much interest in the planning and arranging of model houses for the laboring people, which combine cheapness, neatness, ventilation, and all the facilities for the formation of good personal habits. There is a school kept on the estate at Windsor, in which the queen takes a very practical interest, regulating the books and studies, and paying frequent visits to it during the time of her sojourn here. The young girls are instructed in fine needlework; but the queen discourages embroidery and ornamental work, meaning to make practical, efficient wives for laboring men. These particulars, with regard to this school, were related to me by a lady living in the vicinity of Windsor.

We went into St. George's Chapel, and there we were all exceedingly interested and enchanted in view of the marble monument to the Princess Charlotte. It consists of two groups, and is designed to express, in one view, both the celestial and the terrestrial aspect of death--the visible and the invisible part of dying. For the visible

part, you have the body of the princess in all the desolation and abandonment of death. The attitude of the figure is as if she had thrown herself over in a convulsion, and died. The body is lying listless, simply covered with a sheet, through every fold of which you can see the utter relaxation of that moment when vitality departs, but the limbs have not yet stiffened. Her hand and a part of the arm are hanging down, exposed to view beneath the sheet.

Four figures, with bowed heads, covered with drapery, are represented as sitting around in mute despair. The idea meant to be conveyed by the whole group is that of utter desolation and abandonment. All is over; there is not even heart enough left in the mourners to straighten the corpse for the burial. The mute marble says, as plainly as marble can speak, "Let all go; 'tis no matter now; there is no more use in living--nothing to be done, nothing to be hoped!"

Above this group rises the form of the princess, springing buoyant and elastic, on angel wings, a smile of triumph and aspiration lighting up her countenance. Her drapery floats behind her as she rises. Two angels, one carrying her infant child and the other with clasped hands of exultant joy, are rising with her, in serene and solemn triumph.

Now, I simply put it to you, or to any one who can judge of poetry, if this is not a poetical conception. I ask any one who has a heart, if there is not pathos in it. Is there not a high poetic merit in the mere conception of these two scenes, thus presented? And had we seen

it rudely chipped and chiselled out by some artist of the middle ages, whose hand had not yet been practised to do justice to his conceptions, should we not have said this sculptor had a glorious thought within him? But the chiselling of this piece is not unworthy the conception. Nothing can be more exquisite than the turn of the head, neck, and shoulders; nothing more finely wrought than the triumphant smile of the angel princess; nothing could be more artistic than the representation of death in all its hopelessness, in the lower figure. The poor, dead hand, that shows itself beneath the sheet, has an unutterable pathos and beauty in it. As to the working of the drapery,--an inferior consideration, of course,--I see no reason why it should not compare advantageously with any in the British Museum.

Well, you will ask, why are you going on in this argumentative style? Who doubts you? Let me tell you, then, a little fragment of my experience. We saw this group of statuary the last thing before dinner, after a most fatiguing forenoon of sightseeing, when we were both tired and hungry,--a most unpropitious time, certainly,--and yet it enchanted our whole company; what is more, it made us all cry--a fact of which I am not ashamed, yet. But, only the next day, when I was expressing my admiration to an artist, who is one of the authorities, and knows all that is proper to be admired, I was met with,--

"O, you have seen that, have you? Shocking thing! Miserable taste--miserable!"

"Dear me," said I, with apprehension, "what is the matter with it?"

"O," said he, "melodramatic, melodramatic--terribly so!"

I was so appalled by this word, of whose meaning I had not a very clear idea, that I dropped the defence at once, and determined to reconsider my tears. To have been actually made to cry by a thing that was melodramatic, was a distressing consideration. Seriously, however, on reconsidering the objection, I see no sense in it. A thing may be melodramatic, or any other atic that a man pleases; so that it be strongly suggestive, poetic, pathetic, it has a right to its own peculiar place in the world of art. If artists had had their way in the creation of this world, there would have been only two or three kinds of things in it; the first three or four things that God created would have been enacted into fixed rules for making all the rest.

But they let the works of nature alone, because they know there is no hope for them, and content themselves with enacting rules in literature and art, which make all the perfection and grace of the past so many impassable barriers to progress in future. Because the ancients kept to unity of idea in their groups, and attained to most beautiful results by doing so, shall no modern make an antithesis in marble? And why has not a man a right to dramatize in marble as well as on canvas, if he can produce a powerful and effective result by so doing? And even if by being melodramatic, as the terrible word is, he

can shadow forth a grand and comforting religious idea--if he can unveil to those who have seen only the desolation of death, its glory, and its triumph--who shall say that he may not do so because he violates the lines of some old Greek artist? Where would Shakspeare's dramas have been, had he studied the old dramatic unities?

So, you see, like an obstinate republican, as I am, I defend my right to have my own opinion about this monument, albeit the guide book, with its usual diplomatic caution, says, "It is in very questionable taste."

We went for our dinner to the White Hart, the very inn which Shakspeare celebrates in his Merry Wives, and had a most overflowing, merry time of it. The fact is, we had not seen each other for so long that to be in each other's company for a whole day was quite a stimulant.

After dinner we had a beautiful drive, passing the colleges at Eton, and seeing the boys out playing cricket; had an excellent opportunity to think how true Gray's poem on the Prospect of Eton is to boy-nature then, now, and forever. We were bent upon looking up the church which gave rise to his Elegy in a Country Churchyard, intending, when we got there, to have a little scene over it; Mr. S., in all the conscious importance of having been there before, assuring us that he knew exactly where it was. So, after some difficulty with our coachman, and being stopped at one church which would not answer our purpose in any



respect, we were at last set down by one which looked authentic; embowered in mossy elms, with a most ancient and goblin yew tree, an ivy-mantled tower, all perfect as could be.

There had been a sprinkle of rain,--an ornament which few English days want,--and the westering beams of the sun twinkled through innumerable drops. In fact, it was a pretty place; and I felt such "dispositions to melancholies," as Sir Hugh Evans would have it, that I half resented Mr. S.'s suggestion that the cars were waiting. However, as he was engaged to speak at a peace meeting in London, it was agreed he should leave us there to stroll, while he took the cars. So away he went; and we, leaning on the old fence, repeated the Elegy, which certainly applies here as beautifully as language could apply.

What a calm, shady, poetical nature is expressed in these lines! Gray seems to have been sent into the world for nothing but to be a poem, like some of those fabulous, shadowy beings which haunted the cool grottoes on Grecian mountains; creatures that seem to have no practical vitality--to be only a kind of voice, an echo, heard for a little, and then lost in silence. He seemed to be in himself a kind of elegy.

From thence we strolled along, enjoying the beautiful rural scenery. Having had a kind invitation to visit Labouchère Park that day, which we were obliged to decline for want of time, we were pleased to discover that we had two more hours, in which we could easily

accomplish a stroll there. By a most singular infelicity, our party became separated; and, misunderstanding each other, we remained waiting for W. till it was too late for us to go, while he, on the other hand, supposing us to have walked before him, was redoubling his speed all the while, hoping to overtake us. In consequence of this, he accomplished the walk to Labouchère Park, and we waited in the dismal depot till it was too late to wait any longer, and finally went into London without him.

After all, imagine our chagrin on being informed that we had not been to the genuine churchyard. The gentleman who wept over the scenes of his early days on the wrong doorstep was not more grievously disappointed. However, he and we could both console ourselves with the reflection that the emotion was admirable, and wanted only the right place to make it the most appropriate in the world. The genuine country churchyard, however, was that at Stoke Pogis, which we should have seen had not the fates forbidden our going to Labouchère Park.