

LETTER XIV.

ROSE COTTAGE, WALWORTH, LONDON, May 2.

MY DEAR:--

This morning Mrs. Follen called, and we had quite a long chat together. We are separated by the whole city. She lives at West End, while I am down here in Walworth, which is one of the postscripts of London; for London has as many postscripts as a lady's letter--little suburban villages which have been overtaken by the growth, of the city, and embraced in its arms. I like them a great deal better than the city, for my part.

Here now, for instance, at Walworth, I can look out at a window and see a nice green meadow with sheep and lambs feeding in it, which is some relief in this smutty old place. London is as smutty as Pittsburg or Wheeling. It takes a good hour's steady riding to get from here to West End; so that my American friends, of the newspapers, who are afraid I shall be corrupted by aristocratic associations, will see that I am at safe distance.

This evening we are appointed to dine with the Earl of Carlisle. There is to be no company but his own family circle, for he, with great consideration, said in his note that he thought a little quiet would be

the best thing he could offer. Lord Carlisle is a great friend to America; and so is his sister, the Duchess of Sutherland. He is the only English traveller who ever wrote notes on our country in a real spirit of appreciation. While the Halls, and Trollopes, and all the rest could see nothing but our breaking eggs on the wrong end, or such matters, he discerned and interpreted those points wherein lies the real strength of our growing country. His notes on America were not very extended, being only sketches delivered as a lyceum lecture some years after his return. It was the spirit and quality, rather than quantity, of the thing that was noticeable.

I observe that American newspapers are sneering about his preface to Uncle Tom's Cabin; but they ought at least to remember that his sentiments with regard to slavery are no sudden freak. In the first place, he comes of a family that has always been on the side of liberal and progressive principles. He himself has been a leader of reforms on the popular side. It was a temporary defeat, when run as an anti-corn-law candidate, which gave him leisure to travel in America. Afterwards he had the satisfaction to be triumphantly returned for that district, and to see the measure he had advocated fully successful.

While Lord Carlisle was in America he never disguised those antislavery sentiments which formed a part of his political and religious creed as an Englishman, and as the heir of a house always true to progress. Many cultivated English people have shrunk from acknowledging abolitionists in Boston, where the ostracism of fashion and wealth has been enforced

against them. Lord Carlisle, though moving in the highest circle, honestly and openly expressed his respect for them on all occasions. He attended the Boston antislavery fair, which at that time was quite a decided step. Nor did he even in any part of our country disguise his convictions. There is, therefore, propriety and consistency in the course he has taken now. It would seem that a warm interest in questions of a public nature has always distinguished the ladies of this family. The Duchess of Sutherland's mother is daughter of the celebrated Duchess of Devonshire, who, in her day, employed on the liberal side in politics all the power of genius, wit, beauty, and rank. It was to the electioneering talents of herself and her sister, the Lady Duncannon, that Fox, at one crisis, owed his election. We Americans should remember that it was this party who advocated our cause during our revolutionary struggle. Fox and his associates pleaded for us with much the same arguments, and with the same earnestness and warmth, that American abolitionists now plead for the slaves. They stood against all the power of the king and cabinet, as the abolitionists in America in 1850 stood against president and cabinet.

The Duchess of Devonshire was a woman of real noble impulses and generous emotions, and had a true sympathy for what is free and heroic. Coleridge has some fine lines addressed to her,--called forth by a sonnet which she composed, while in Switzerland, on William Tell's Chapel,--which begin,--

"O lady, nursed in pomp and pleasure,

Where learn'dst thou that heroic measure?"

The Duchess of Sutherland, in our times, has been known to be no less warmly interested on the liberal side. So great was her influence held to be, that upon a certain occasion when a tory cabinet was to be formed, a distinguished minister is reported to have said to the queen that he could not hope to succeed in his administration while such a decided influence as that of the Duchess of Sutherland stood at the head of her majesty's household. The queen's spirited refusal to surrender her favorite attendant attracted, at the time, universal admiration.

Like her brother Lord Carlisle, the Duchess of Sutherland has always professed those sentiments with regard to slavery which are the glory of the English nation, and which are held with more particular zeal by those families who are favorable to the progress of liberal ideas.

At about seven o'clock we took our carriage to go to the Earl of Carlisle's, the dinner hour being here somewhere between eight and nine. As we rode on through the usual steady drizzling rain, from street to street and square to square, crossing Waterloo Bridge, with its avenue of lamps faintly visible in the seethy mist, plunging through the heart of the city, we began to realize something of the immense extent of London.

Altogether the most striking objects that you pass, as you ride in the

evening thus, are the gin shops, flaming and flaring from the most conspicuous positions, with plate-glass windows and dazzling lights, thronged with men, and women, and children, drinking destruction. Mothers go there with babies in their arms, and take what turns the mother's milk to poison. Husbands go there, and spend the money that their children want for bread, and multitudes of boys and girls of the age of my own. In Paris and other European cities, at least the great fisher of souls baits with something attractive, but in these gin shops men bite at the bare, barbed hook. There are no garlands, no dancing, no music, no theatricals, no pretence of social exhilaration, nothing but hogsheads of spirits, and people going in to drink. The number of them that I passed seemed to me absolutely appalling.

After long driving we found ourselves coming into the precincts of the West End, and began to feel an indefinite sense that we were approaching something very grand, though I cannot say that we saw much but heavy, smoky-walled buildings, washed by the rain. At length we stopped in Grosvenor Place, and alighted.

We were shown into an anteroom adjoining the entrance hall, and from that into an adjacent apartment, where we met Lord Carlisle. The room had a pleasant, social air, warmed and enlivened by the blaze of a coal fire and wax candles.

We had never, any of us, met Lord Carlisle before; but the considerateness and cordiality of our reception obviated whatever

embarrassment there might have been in this circumstance. In a few moments after we were all seated the servant announced the Duchess of Sutherland, and Lord Carlisle presented me. She is tall and stately, with a decided fulness of outline, and a most noble bearing. Her fair complexion, blond hair, and full lips speak of Saxon blood. In her early youth she might have been a Rowena. I thought of the lines of Wordsworth:--

"A perfect woman, nobly planned,
To warn, to comfort, to command."

Her manners have a peculiar warmth and cordiality. One sees people now and then who seem to radiate kindness and vitality, and to have a faculty of inspiring perfect confidence in a moment. There are no airs of grandeur, no patronizing ways; but a genuine sincerity and kindness that seem to come from a deep fountain within.

The engraving by Winterhalter, which has been somewhat familiar in America, is as just a representation of her air and bearing as could be given.

After this we were presented to the various members of the Howard family, which is a very numerous one. Among them were Lady Dover, Lady Lascelles, and Lady Labouchère, sisters of the duchess. The Earl of Burlington, who is the heir of the Duke of Devonshire, was also present. The Duke of Devonshire is the uncle of Lord Carlisle.

The only person present not of the family connection was my quondam correspondent in America, Arthur Helps. Somehow or other I had formed the impression from his writings that he was a venerable sage of very advanced years, who contemplated life as an aged hermit, from the door of his cell. Conceive my surprise to find a genial young gentleman of about twenty-five, who looked as if he might enjoy a joke as well as another man.

At dinner I found myself between him and Lord Carlisle, and perceiving, perhaps, that the nature of my reflections was of rather an amusing order, he asked me confidentially if I did not like fun, to which I assented with fervor. I like that little homely word fun, though I understand the dictionary says what it represents is vulgar; but I think it has a good, hearty, Saxon sound, and I like Saxon, better than Latin or French either.

When the servant offered me wine Lord Carlisle asked me if our party were all teetotallers, and I said yes; that in America all clergymen were teetotallers, of course.

After the ladies left the table the conversation turned on the Maine law, which seems to be considered over here as a phenomenon, in legislation, and many of the gentlemen, present inquired about it with great curiosity.

When we went into the drawing room I was presented to the venerable Countess of Carlisle, the earl's mother; a lady universally beloved and revered, not less for superior traits of mind than for great loveliness and benevolence of character. She received us with the utmost kindness; kindness evidently genuine and real.

The walls of the drawing room were beautifully adorned with works of art by the best masters. There was a Rembrandt hanging over the fireplace, which showed finely by the evening light. It was simply the portrait of a man with a broad, Flemish hat. There were one or two pictures, also, by Cuyp. I should think he must have studied in America, so perfectly does he represent the golden, hazy atmosphere of our Indian summer.

One of the ladies showed me a snuff box on which was a picture of Lady Carlisle's mother, the celebrated Duchess of Devonshire, taken when she was quite a little girl; a round, happy face, showing great vivacity and genius. On another box was an exquisitely beautiful miniature of a relative of the family.

After the gentlemen rejoined us came in the Duke and Duchess of Argyle, and Lord and Lady Blantyre. These ladies are the daughters of the Duchess of Sutherland. The Duchess of Argyle is of a slight and fairy-like figure, with flaxen hair and blue eyes, answering well enough to the description of Annot Lyle, in the Legend of Montrose. Lady Blantyre was somewhat taller, of fuller figure, with very brilliant bloom. Lord Blantyre is of the Stuart blood, a tall and slender young

man, with very graceful manners.

As to the Duke of Argyle, we found that the picture drawn of him by his countrymen in Scotland was every way correct. Though slight of figure, with fair complexion and blue eyes, his whole appearance is indicative of energy and vivacity. His talents and efficiency have made him a member of the British cabinet at a much earlier age than is usual; and he has distinguished himself not only in political life, but as a writer, having given to the world a work on Presbyterianism, embracing an analysis of the ecclesiastical history of Scotland since the reformation, which is spoken of as written with great ability, in a most candid and liberal spirit.

The company soon formed themselves into little groups in different parts of the room. The Duchess of Sutherland, Lord Carlisle, and the Duke and Duchess of Argyle formed a circle, and turned the conversation upon American topics. The Duke of Argyle made many inquiries about our distinguished men; particularly of Emerson, Longfellow, and Hawthorne; also of Prescott, who appears to be a general favorite here. I felt at the moment that we never value our literary men so much as when placed in a circle of intelligent foreigners; it is particularly so with Americans, because we have nothing but our men and women to glory in--no court, no nobles, no castles, no cathedrals; except we produce distinguished specimens of humanity, we are nothing.

The quietness of this evening circle, the charm of its kind hospitality,

the evident air of sincerity and good will which pervaded every thing, made the evening pass most delightfully to me. I had never felt myself more at home even among the Quakers. Such a visit is a true rest and refreshment, a thousand times better than the most brilliant and glittering entertainment.

At eleven o'clock, however, the carriage called, for our evening was drawing to its close; that of our friends, I suppose, was but just commencing, as London's liveliest hours are by gaslight, but we cannot learn the art of turning night into day.