LETTER XVI.

MAY 8.

MY DEAR C.:--

In fulfilment of my agreement, I will tell you, as nearly as I can remember, all the details of the meeting at Stafford House.

At about eleven o'clock we drove under the arched carriage way of a mansion, externally, not very showy in appearance. It stands on the borders of St. James's Park, opposite to Buckingham Palace, with a street on the north side, and beautiful gardens on the south, while the park is extended on the west.

We were received at the door by two stately Highlanders in full costume; and what seemed to me an innumerable multitude of servants in livery, with powdered hair, repeated our names through the long corridors, from one to another.

I have only a confused idea of passing from passage to passage, and from hall to hall, till finally we were introduced into a large drawing room.
No person was present, and I was at full leisure to survey an apartment whose arrangements more perfectly suited my eye and taste than any I had ever seen before. There was not any particular splendor of furniture, or

dazzling display of upholstery, but an artistic, poetic air, resulting from the arrangement of colors, and the disposition of the works of virtu with which the room abounded. The great fault in many splendid rooms, is, that they are arranged without any eye to unity of impression. The things in them may be all fine in their way, but there is no harmony of result.

People do not often consider that there may be a general sentiment to be expressed in the arrangement of a room, as well as in the composition of a picture. It is this leading idea which corresponds to what painters call the ground tone, or harmonizing tint, of a picture. The presence of this often renders a very simple room extremely fascinating, and the absence of it makes the most splendid combinations of furniture powerless to please.

The walls were covered with green damask, laid on flat, and confined in its place by narrow gilt bands, which bordered it around the margin. The chairs, ottomans, and sofas were of white woodwork, varnished and gilded, covered with the same.

The carpet was of a green ground, bedropped with a small yellow leaf; and in each window a circular, standing basket contained a whole bank of primroses, growing as if in their native soil, their pale yellow blossoms and green leaves harmonizing admirably with the general tone of coloring.

Through the fall of the lace curtains I could see out into the beautiful grounds, whose clumps of blossoming white lilacs, and velvet grass, seemed so in harmony with the green interior of the room, that one would think they had been arranged as a continuation of the idea.

One of the first individual objects which attracted my attention was, over the mantel-piece, a large, splendid picture by Landseer, which I have often seen engraved. It represents the two eldest children of the Duchess of Sutherland, the Marquis of Stafford, and Lady Blantyre, at that time Lady Levison Gower, in their childhood. She is represented as feeding a fawn; a little poodle dog is holding up a rose to her; and her brother is lying on the ground, playing with an old staghound.

I had been familiar with Landseer's engravings, but this was the first of his paintings I had ever seen, and I was struck with the rich and harmonious quality of the coloring. There was also a full-length marble statue of the Marquis of Stafford, taken, I should think, at about seventeen years of age, in full Highland costume.

When the duchess appeared, I thought she looked handsomer by daylight than in the evening. She was dressed in white muslin, with a drab velvet basque slashed with satin of the same color. Her hair was confined by a gold and diamond net on the back part of her head.

She received us with the same warm and simple kindness which she had shown before. We were presented to the Duke of Sutherland. He is a tall,

slender man, with rather a thin face, light brown hair, and a mild blue eye, with an air of gentleness and dignity. The delicacy of his health prevents him from moving in general society, or entering into public life. He spends much of his time in reading, and devising and executing schemes of practical benevolence for the welfare of his numerous dependants.

I sought a little private conversation with the duchess in her boudoir, in which I frankly confessed a little anxiety respecting the arrangements of the day: having lived all my life in such a shady and sequestered way, and being entirely ignorant of life as it exists in the sphere in which she moves, such apprehensions were rather natural.

She begged that I would make myself entirely easy, and consider myself as among my own friends; that she had invited a few friends to lunch, and that afterwards others would call; that there would be a short address from the ladies of England read by Lord Shaftesbury, which would require no answer.

I could not but be grateful for the consideration thus evinced. The matter being thus adjusted, we came back to the drawing room, when the party began to assemble.

The only difference, I may say, by the by, in the gathering of such a company and one with us, is in the announcing of names at the door; a, custom which I think a good one, saving a vast deal of the breath we

always expend in company, by asking "Who is that? and that?" Then, too, people can fall into conversation without a formal presentation, the presumption being that nobody is invited with whom, it is not proper that you should converse. The functionary who performed the announcing was a fine, stalwart man, in full Highland costume, the duke being the head of a Highland clan.

Among the first that entered were the members of the family, the Duke and Duchess of Argyle, Lord and Lady Blantyre, the Marquis and Marchioness of Stafford, and Lady Emma Campbell. Then followed Lord Shaftesbury with his beautiful lady, and her father and mother, Lord and Lady Palmerston. Lord Palmerston is of middle height, with a keen, dark eye, and black hair streaked with gray. There is something peculiarly alert and vivacious about all his movements; in short his appearance perfectly answers to what we know of him from his public life. One has a strange mythological feeling about the existence of people of whom one hears for many years without ever seeing them. While talking with Lord Palmerston I could but remember how often I had heard father and Mr. S. exulting over his foreign despatches by our home fireside.

The Marquis of Lansdowne now entered. He is about the middle height, with gray hair, blue eyes, and a mild, quiet dignity of manner. He is one of those who, as Lord Henry Pettes, took a distinguished part with Clarkson and Wilberforce in the abolition of the slave trade. He has always been a most munificent patron of literature and art.

There were present, also, Lord John Russell, Mr. Gladstone, and Lord Grenville. The latter we all thought very strikingly resembled in his appearance the poet Longfellow. My making the remark introduced the subject of his poetry. The Duchess of Argyle appealed to her two little boys, who stood each side of her, if they remembered her reading Evangeline to them. It is a gratification to me that I find by every English fireside traces of one of our American poets. These two little boys of the Duchess of Argyle, and the youngest son of the Duchess of Sutherland, were beautiful fair-haired children, picturesquely attired in the Highland costume. There were some other charming children of the family circle present. The eldest son of the Duke of Argyle bears the title of the Lord of Lorn, which Scott has rendered so poetical a sound to our ears.

When lunch was announced, the Duke of Sutherland gave me his arm, and led me through a suite of rooms into the dining hall. Each room that we passed was rich in its pictures, statues, and artistic arrangements; a poetic eye and taste had evidently presided over all. The table was beautifully laid, ornamented by two magnificent épergnes, crystal vases supported by wrought silver standards, filled with the most brilliant hothouse flowers; on the edges of the vases and nestling among the flowers were silver doves of the size of life. The walls of the room were hung with gorgeous pictures, and directly opposite to me was a portrait of the Duchess of Sutherland, by Sir Thomas Lawrence, which has figured largely in our souvenirs and books of beauty. She is represented with a little child in her arms; this child, now Lady

Blantyre, was sitting opposite to me at table, with a charming little girl of her own, of about the same apparent age. When one sees such things, one almost fancies this to be a fairy palace, where the cold demons of age and time have lost their power.

I was seated next to Lord Lansdowne, who conversed much with me about affairs in America. It seems to me that the great men of the old world regard our country thoughtfully. It is a new development of society, acting every day with greater and greater power on the old world; nor is it yet clearly seen what its final results will be. His observations indicated a calm, clear, thoughtful mind--an accurate observer of life and history.

Meanwhile the servants moved noiselessly to and fro, taking up the various articles on the table, and offering them to the guests in a peculiarly quiet manner. One of the dishes brought to me was a plover's nest, precisely as the plover made it, with five little blue speckled eggs in it. This mode of serving plover's eggs, as I understand it, is one of the fashions of-the day, and has something quite sylvan and picturesque about it; but it looked so, for all the world, like a robin's nest that I used to watch out in our home orchard, that I had it not in my heart to profane the sanctity of the image by eating one of the eggs.

The cuisine of these West End regions appears to be entirely under French legislation, conducted by Parisian artists, skilled in all subtle

and metaphysical combinations of ethereal possibilities, quite inscrutable to the eye of sense. Her grace's chef, I have heard it said elsewhere, bears the reputation of being the first artist of his class in England. The profession as thus sublimated bears the same proportion to the old substantial English cookery that Mozart's music does to Handel's, or Midsummer Night's Dream to Paradise Lost.

This meal, called lunch, is with the English quite an institution, being apparently a less elaborate and ceremonious dinner. Every thing is placed upon the table at once, and ladies sit down without removing their bonnets; it is, I imagine, the most social and family meal of the day; one in which children are admitted to the table, even in the presence of company. It generally takes place in the middle of the day, and the dinner, which comes after it, at eight or nine in the evening, is in comparison only a ceremonial proceeding.

I could not help thinking, as I looked around on so many men whom I had heard of historically all my life, how very much less they bear the marks of age than men who have been connected a similar length of time with the movements of our country. This appearance of youthfulness and alertness has a constantly deceptive influence upon one in England. I cannot realize that people are as old as history states them to be. In the present company there were men of sixty or seventy, whom I should have pronounced at the first glance to be fifty.

Generally speaking our working minds seem to wear out their bodies

faster; perhaps because our climate is more stimulating; more, perhaps, from the intenser stimulus of our political régime, which never leaves any thing long at rest.

The tone of manners in this distinguished circle did not obtrude itself upon my mind as different from that of highly-educated people in our own country. It appeared simple, friendly, natural, and sincere. They talked like people who thought of what they were saying, rather than how to say it. The practice of thorough culture and good breeding is substantially the same through the world, though smaller conventionalities may differ.

After lunch the whole party ascended to the picture gallery, passing on our way the grand staircase and hall, said to be the most magnificent in Europe. All that wealth could command of artistic knowledge and skill has been expended here to produce a superb result. It fills the entire centre of the building, extending up to the roof and surmounted by a splendid dome. On three sides a gallery runs round it supported by pillars. To this gallery you ascend on the fourth side by a staircase, which midway has a broad, flat landing, from which stairs ascend, on the right and left, into the gallery. The whole hall and staircase, carpeted with a scarlet footcloth, give a broad, rich mass of coloring, throwing out finely the statuary and gilded balustrades. On the landing is a marble statue of a Sibyl, by Rinaldi. The walls are adorned by gorgeous frescos from Paul Veronese. What is peculiar in the arrangements of this hall is, that although so extensive, it still wears an air of warm homelikeness and comfort, as if it might be a delightful place to lounge

and enjoy life, amid the ottomans, sofas, pictures, and statuary, which are disposed here and there throughout.

All this, however, I passed rapidly by as I ascended the staircase, and passed onward to the picture gallery. This was a room about a hundred feet long by forty wide, surmounted by a dome gorgeously finished with golden palm, trees and carving. This hall is lighted in the evening by a row of gaslights placed outside the ground glass of the dome; this light is concentrated and thrown down by strong reflectors, communicating thus the most brilliant radiance without the usual heat of gas. This gallery is peculiarly rich in paintings of the Spanish school. Among them are two superb Murillos, taken from convents by Marshal Soult, during the time of his career in Spain.

There was a painting by Paul de la Roche of the Earl of Strafford led forth to execution, engravings of which we have seen in the print shops in America. It is a strong and striking picture, and has great dramatic effect. But there was a painting in one corner by a Flemish artist, whose name I do not now remember, representing Christ under examination before Caiaphas. It was a candle-light scene, and only two faces were very distinct; the downcast, calm, resolute face of Christ, in which was written a perfect knowledge of his approaching doom, and the eager, perturbed vehemence of the high priest, who was interrogating him. On the frame was engraved the lines,--

"He was wounded for our transgressions,

He was bruised for our iniquities;
The chastisement of our peace was upon him,
And with his stripes we are healed."

The presence of this picture here in the midst of this scene was very affecting to me.

The company now began to assemble and throng the gallery, and very soon the vast room was crowded. Among the throng I remember many presentations, but of course must have forgotten many more. Archbishop Whately was there, with Mrs. and Miss Whately; Macaulay, with two of his sisters; Milman, the poet and historian; the Bishop of Oxford, Chevalier Bunsen and lady, and many more.

When all the company were together Lord Shaftesbury read a very short, kind, and considerate address in behalf of the ladies of England, expressive of their cordial welcome. The address will be seen in the Morning Advertiser, which I send you. The company remained a while after this, walking through the rooms and conversing in different groups, and I talked with several. Archbishop Whately, I thought, seemed rather inclined to be jocose: he seems to me like some of our American divines; a man who pays little attention to forms, and does not value them. There is a kind of brusque humor in his address, a downright heartiness, which reminds one of western character. If he had been born in our latitude, in Kentucky or Wisconsin, the natives would have called him Whately, and said he was a real steamboat on an argument. This is not precisely the

kind of man we look for in an archbishop. One sees traces of this humor in his Historic Doubts concerning the Existence of Napoleon. I conversed with some who knew him intimately, and they said that he delighted in puns and odd turns of language.

I was also introduced to the Bishop of Oxford, who is a son of Wilberforce. He is a short man, of very youthful appearance, with bland, graceful, courteous manners. He is much admired as a speaker. I heard him spoken of as one of the most popular preachers of the day.

I must not forget to say that many ladies of the society of Friends were here, and one came and put on to my arm a reticule, in which, she said, were carried about the very first antislavery tracts ever distributed in England. At that time the subject of antislavery was as unpopular in England as it can be at this day any where in the world, and I trust that a day will come when the subject will be as popular in South Carolina as it is now in England. People always glory in the right after they have done it.

After a while the company dispersed over the house to look at the rooms. There are all sorts of parlors and reception rooms, furnished with the same correct taste. Each room had its predominant color; among them blue was a particular favorite.

The carpets were all of those small figures I have described, the blue ones being of the same pattern with the green. The idea, I suppose, is

to produce a mass of color of a certain tone, and not to distract the eye with the complicated pattern. Where so many objects of art and virtu are to be exhibited, without this care in regulating and simplifying the ground tints, there would be no unity in the impression. This was my philosophizing on the matter, and if it is not the reason why it is done, it ought to be. It is as good a theory as most theories, at any rate.

Before we went away I made a little call on the Lady Constance Grosvenor, and saw the future Marquis of Westminster, heir to the largest estate in England. His beautiful mother is celebrated in the annals of the court journal as one of the handsomest ladies in England. His little lordship was presented to me in all the dignity of long, embroidered clothes, being then, I believe, not quite a fortnight old, and I can assure you that he demeaned himself with a gravity becoming his rank and expectations.

There is a more than common interest attached to these children by one who watches the present state of the world. On the character and education of the princes and nobility of this generation the future history of England must greatly depend.

This Stafford House meeting, in any view of it, is a most remarkable fact. Kind and gratifying as its arrangements have been to me, I am far from appropriating it to myself individually, as a personal honor. I rather regard it as the most public expression possible of the feelings

of the women of England on one of the most important questions of our day--that, of individual liberty considered in its religious bearings.

The most splendid of England's palaces has this day opened its doors to the slave. Its treasures of wealth and of art, its prestige of high name and historic memories, have been consecrated to the acknowledgment of Christianity in that form, wherein, in our day, it is most frequently denied--the recognition of the brotherhood of the human family, and the equal religious value of every human soul. A fair and noble hand by this meeting has fixed, in the most public manner, an ineffaceable seal to the beautiful sentiments of that most Christian document, the letter of the ladies of Great Britain to the ladies of America. That letter and this public attestation of it are now historic facts, which wait their time and the judgment of advancing Christianity.

Concerning that letter I have one or two things to say. Nothing can be more false than the insinuation that has been thrown out in some American papers, that it was a political movement. It had its first origin in the deep religious feelings of the man whose whole life has been devoted to the abolition of the white-labor slavery of Great Britain; the man whose eye explored the darkness of the collieries, and counted the weary steps of the cotton spinners--who penetrated the dens where the insane were tortured with darkness, and cold, and stripes; and threaded the loathsome alleys of London, haunts of fever and cholera: this man it was, whose heart was overwhelmed by the tale of American slavery, and who could find no relief from, this distress except in

raising some voice to the ear of Christianity. Fearful of the jealousy of political interference, Lord Shaftesbury published an address to the ladies of England, in which he told them that he felt himself moved by an irresistible impulse to entreat them to raise their voice, in the name of a common Christianity and womanhood, to their American sisters. The abuse which has fallen upon him for this most Christian proceeding does not in the least surprise him, because it is of the kind that has always met him in every benevolent movement. When in the Parliament of England he was pleading for women in the collieries who were harnessed like beasts of burden, and made to draw heavy loads through miry and dark passages, and for children who were taken at three years old to labor where the sun never shines, he was met with determined and furious opposition and obloquy--accused of being a disorganizer, and of wishing to restore the dark ages. Very similar accusations have attended all his efforts for the laboring classes during the long course of seventeen years, which resulted at last in the triumphant passage of the factory bill.

We in America ought to remember that the gentle remonstrance of the letter of the ladies of England contains, in the mildest form, the sentiments of universal Christendom. Rebukes much more pointed are coming back to us even from, our own missionaries. A day is coming when, past all the temporary currents of worldly excitement, we shall, each of us, stand alone face to face with the perfect purity of our Redeemer. The thought of such a final interview ought certainly to modify all our judgments now, that we may strive to approve only what we shall then

approve.