

SOPHIA AND HARRIET LEE



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A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE ENGLISH DEPARTMENT AND THE
GRADUATE FACULTY
of the
UNIVERSITY OF KANSAS

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE
of
MASTER OF ARTS.
=====

June, 1914

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OUTLINE

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P R E F A C E

This article is the result, first of reading for a master's thesis in the University of Kansas, and secondly, of an ever-increasing interest in the work of the two sisters, who wove their small squares of tapestry, which served as suggestions to other and more skilful workmen, only to be cast aside and forgotten.

Professor John M. Clapp, of Lake Forest College, in his paper, A BIBLIOGRAPHY OF ENGLISH FICTION IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY, writes, "I never could account to myself for the wide variations of form and purpose in the works of fiction in the eighteenth century until I had caught a glimpse of the mass of contemporary writings, quite submerged now, of which they are merely the highest peaks." This paper on the Lee sisters is written with the hope of contributing a mite of information concerning a part of the submerged mass, on which depends the height of the peaks.

The difficulty of finding biographical material treating of the Lee sisters is second only to that of obtaining copies of their works. The biographical material available at the University of Kansas consists of a preface or two, a few letters, one or two magazine articles written at the time of the death of the sisters, the articles in the Dictionary of National Biography, and occasional references in books of English fiction. At the beginning of my study, the Library contained

one work of the Lee sisters, THE CHAPTER OF ACCIDENTS, in Mrs. Inchbald's collection of plays, 1811. During the year five additional volumes have been secured, THE RECESS by Sophia Lee, in one volume, and THE CANTERBURY TALES, by Harriet and Sophia Lee, in four volumes. From the University of Chicago I have obtained Oxberry's edition of THE CHAPTER OF ACCIDENTS, and from a private library, THE CANTERBURY TALES by Harriet Lee, Mason Brothers, New York, 1857. When it is possible to secure more material, I shall continue this investigation.

For the suggestion of the Lee sisters as a thesis subject and for securing the necessary books I am indebted to Dr. Chas. G. Dunlap. To Mr. Selden L. Whitcomb my thanks are due for the use of books and pamphlets from his own library, for notes on books difficult of access, for advice and suggestions concerning the work in hand, and most of all, for an insight into the scientific study of literature.

I N T R O D U C T I O N

Something of Dr. Johnson's attitude towards women preachers must be adopted towards the women writers of the eighteenth century. The wonder is ^{not} that they did their writing so well, but that they did it at all. Their performances are never really great, (even the books of the incomparable Miss Austen are scarcely that,) but they are often admirable, and always useful in carrying to the great writers some idea or method of presentation which, under the hand of genius, blossomed and bore fruit. This is the service the Lee sisters performed for Scott and Byron. There is no question of comparison. These are great and those are unknown. The Lee sisters enjoyed their brief triumph, and then stepped aside to let the conquerors pass by.

"There are several things," G.K.Chesteron writes of the novel, "that make this mode of art unique. One of the most conspicuous is that it is the art in which the conquests of woman are quite beyond controversy.....This is the first fact about the novel, that it is the introduction of a new and rather curious kind of art, and it has been found to be peculiarly feminine, from the first good novel by Fanny Burney to the last good novel by Miss May Sinclair." Much the same thing might be said of women as writers of the short story. The excursions made by the Lee sisters into the provinces of the novel and the short story prove their right to the claim of being pioneers in the field,

at least of being among those pathfinders who blazed the trail for Miss Burney and the others.

"There are people in the world who think their lives well employed in collecting shells; there are others not less satisfied to spend theirs in classing butterflies. For my own part," writes Sophia Lee in the introduction to THE CANTERBURY TALES, "I always preferred animate to inanimate nature, and would rather post to the antipodes to mark a new character, or develop a singular incident, than become a fellow of the Royal Society, by enriching museums with non-descripts..... The few discoveries I have made in that richest of mines, the human soul, I have not been churl enough to keep to myself." From this it would appear that, in 1798, the great poet of the Lyrical Ballads was not alone in writing with his eye on the object.

The Lee sisters lived from the middle of one century to the middle of the next; Sophia was born in 1750 and Harriet died in 1851. At Harriet's death, in her ninety-fifth year, "C.C." writes of her, "To have predicted the fame of the boy-artist, and then to live on till they who at his prime he painted in their youthful bloom have faded to elderly matrons; to have been born when George III was a stripling prince, and live into the blessed reign of Victoria, and the days of a Crystal Palace; to have been an intelligent little maiden ere

Napoleon lived, and before Louis Seize mounted his rotten
crumbling throne! What a century to have so nearly rounded!
What an experience to have crowded even into ninety-five years."

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B I O G R A P H I C A L
A N D
C R I T I C A L

L I F E

Sophia and Harriet Lee were the daughters of John Lee, an English actor and manager of plays, a gentleman who, originally articled to a solicitor, subsequently adopted the stage as a profession. Their mother was an actress who travelled with her husband, appearing with him in old and new plays. Mrs. Lee died early, leaving five daughters and one son. Mr. Lee died just after his daughter Sophia had achieved success with her play, THE CHAPTER OF ACCIDENTS.

John Lee is first heard of at the theatre in Leaman Street, Goodman's Fields in November, 1745, as Ghost to the Hamlet of Furnival. He was a remarkably unsuccessful man, (as Jeaffreson says, he "did anything but flourish") whether as an actor, a manager of plays, or as a dramatic author. As an author he had the rather doubtful honor of making an utter failure in creating the character of Sir Lucius O' Trigger, at the first production of "The Rivals," January 17, 1775, at Covent Garden Theatre. As a manager, he was constantly in pecuniary difficulties; as a dramatic author, or rather adapter of plays, he committed what the Biographia Dramatica calls "literary murders."

As a man he seems to find no one who will give him a good word. He is "a man of mean abilities, unbounded self-esteem, many sorrows, and an utterly abominable temper,"

1 Jeaf. N. & F. p. 262.

who "succeeded in making himself at one time pitied, and at another despised, by always having a grievance with which to bore the theatrical world in villanously [^{sic}] written pamphlets." He is "a man of extreme and aggressive variety and of a quarrelsome disposition," who "fumed under the management of Garrick, who seems to have enjoyed keeping in the background an actor who was always disputing his supremacy." He is a man who "in the course of his life performed at most of the theatres in Great Britain and Ireland, and, says the Biographia Dramatica, if his own description of himself were to be credited, was entitled to rank with the most excellent actors of the present or past times. His talents, however, were hardly above mediocrity; and though by dint of puffing he often obtruded himself on the stage in London, he was always treated with coldness and neglect. It is remarkable that he was scarcely ever connected with any theatre, without quarreling with the manager, or some person belonging to it; and perhaps there were more appeals to the public, in print, from him on his paltry disputes, than from any other person that could be pointed out."

1 Joseph Knight, D.N.B.

2 "P.P."

Only one good thing is recorded of him, his improvement of stage thunder; and even this experiment had a disastrous conclusion. Jeaffreson tells the story, which, even if apocryphal, is interesting as throwing some light on the primitive stage effects of the time. "When he was manager of the Edinburgh theatre, he constructed some improved stage thunder in a remarkable manner. He procured a parcel of nine-pound shot, and put them in a wheel-barrow, to which was affixed a nine-pound wheel. He then had ridges fixed at the back of the stage, and when dramatic emergencies required the deep rumblings of Jove, a carpenter trundled the artillery wagon backwards and forwards, over the ridges. The play was LEAR, and for a time this original apparatus answered well enough, but just as the unfortunate king was in the midst of braving the enraged elements, the carpenter's foot slipped, down he came and awful was the crash that followed; yet more awful to the manager was the consequent uproar of the house. The stage being on a declivity, the balls swept down into the orchestra with a velocity as if they had been shot from a cannon, and to escape them the venerable king leaped about with astonishing grace and agility. To add to the absurdity of the scene, the prostrate carpenter, unable to recover his footing, lay before the crowded theatre, struggling about like a vast toad in convulsions."

Lee most nearly approached success when, in 1752, he purchased the Canongate Concert Hall in Edinburgh, where "he improved himself a good manager, reformed many abuses, and is said to have been the first to raise the status and morale of the Edinburgh stage. He set his face against gentlemen occupying seats on the stage or being admitted behind the scenes, and made improvements in decorations and scenery." On April 15, 1754,^a new alteration of the Merchant of Venice, probably by Lee himself, was given with Lee as Shylock and Mrs. Lee as Portia. But reverses came, he lost five hundred pounds in the venture, and in February, 1756, was thrown into prison and his furniture sold. He then went to Dublin, under Thomas Sheridan, and later, in 1760-61, was engaged again in Edinburgh. For the remaining twenty years of his life, he wandered from theatre to theatre, quarreling, writing vituperative pamphlets, going to prison, being released only to begin again on the same weary round. As a fitting epitaph for him, this paragraph from Jeaffreson may be used:- "After having performed in a great many of the theatres of Great Britain and Ireland, and after having been introduced to many of his country's prisons under circumstances of 'temporary difficulty,' John Lee died at Bath, in the year

1 D.N.R.

1781, leaving behind him a disreputable name, some barbarous mutilations of some of our best dramatic works, and two daughters, Sophia and Harriet."

These two daughters were born in London, Sophia in 1750 and Harriet in 1757. Nothing is known of their early life, but much may be inferred from the history of their father's troubled career. The children grew up in the midst of the trials which oppressed their parents. Sophia was just six years old when her father was thrown into prison in Edinburgh. Harriet was born in London the following year. On Sophia as the eldest of six children, fell the responsibility of the family, after the mother's early death. Not only did she supply her mother's place to the younger members of the family, but she also stood by her father in all his "temporary difficulties," even to the point of accompanying him to prison. Jeaffreson writing in 1858, says of her that "the commencement of her life resembled Miss Dorrit,¹ 3. She accompanied her father into the rules of a prison, and for eight years was the sharer and alleviator of the hardships of his confinement." Sophia herself, in the preface to THE CHAPTER OF ACCIDENTS, says that "her first efforts in dramatic composition were made within the

¹ The D.N.B. gives no notice of this long imprisonment.

² Quoted by P.P.

rules of a prison, whither she accompanied her father, who for a time was confined there, through 'the perjury of an enemy and the injustice of a judge.'" Here she conceived the design of THE CHAPTER OF ACCIDENTS and Mr. Lee on his liberation being engaged at Covent Garden Theatre, she submitted her piece to Mr. Harris."

Sophia did not appear as an author until her thirtieth year. As the eldest of a family of six, she no doubt had more than her share of responsibility. She is said to have early evinced a taste for literature, but the domestic duties which devolved on her in consequence of the early death of her mother seem to have delayed the development of her powers. However, undeterred by domestic duties or debtor's prisons, Sophia at last had the pleasure of seeing produced at the waymarket, August 5, 1780, her five-act comedy, THE CHAPTER OF ACCIDENTS. The play was published in London in that year, and before the year was over, a second edition was required.

Prefixed to the play were these lines:-

"To Mrs. P-----

Oh, thou, who had'st me fearless seize the oar,
And launch uncertain on life's flutt'ring sea,
With trembling hand impell'd my bark from shore
While wond'ring at my own temerity;

Nameless, as are thy merits, still remain,
Yet let thy heart appropriate all its dues,
And oh! whate'er th' event, do thou retain
The tender titles of my friend and muse!

Should Fortune's fav'rites, circling, close her throne,
And Fame's loud trump be mute to me alone,
The pity of the world I can return,
And still at unsuccessful fiction spurn;
While Heav'n's SUPREME indulgence gives to me
Its charms combin'd and realis'd in thee!"

It is easy to see from the above lines that the world has not lost a great poet in Sophia Lee. So far as can be learned, "Mrs. P---" still remains as nameless as her merits. Sophia herself, however, was not compelled to "spurn at unsuccessful fiction," whatever that may mean, because Fortune's favorites admitted her at once as a member of their band. THE CHAPTER OF ACCIDENTS was an instant and decided success, and continued so through many seasons.

Notwithstanding the encouragement which she had received on her first venture, Sophia did not again "launch uncertain on life's fluttering sea" for several years. In 1784-5 she published THE PECESS OR A TALE OF OTHER TIMES, in three volumes. In 1786, Harriet, the younger sister, brought out an epistolary novel, in five volumes, THE ERRORS OF INNOCENCE. The next year, Sophia wrote a ballad in verse, A HERMIT'S TALE, while Harriet appeared with her first drama, THE NEW PEERAGE. For nearly ten years the sis-

ters wrote, or at least published nothing. In 1796 appeared Sophia's tragedy, ALMEYDA, QUEEN OF GRANADA, and in 1797 Harriet's second novel CLARA LENNOX OR THE DISTRESSED WIDOW. In 1797-8 appeared two volumes of THE CANTERBURY TALES for which Sophia wrote the introduction. The second volume contained Sophia's story, THE TWO EMILYS. By 1801, three more volumes were published, in which Sophia had one story, THE CLERGYMAN'S TALE. All the other tales in the five volumes were written by Harriet. Harriet's play, THE MYSTERIOUS MARRIAGE OR THE HEIRSHIP OF ROSALVA, was published in 1798. In 1804 Sophia published an epistolary novel in six volumes, THE LIFE OF A LOVER. The last production of Sophia's pen was a comedy entitled THE ASSIGNATION, performed once, in 1807 but not published. In 1826, Harriet published THE THREE STRANGERS, a play founded on her story of KRUITZNER, as one of THE CANTERBURY TALES.

1 One other title was connected with the name of the Lee sisters. In 1810 appeared "Ormond or the Debauchee," which was attributed to Sophia. "P.P." writing in 1823, mentions it unquestioningly in the list of her publications. A writer in the GENTLEMEN'S MAGAZINE for July, 1824, says of Sophia, "No work of hers ever appeared anonymously/sic_/; but as has happened with other writers of the day, her name was prefixed to a novel she never saw, and which was too contemptible to allow of her giving it notoriety by entering either a literary or legal protest against it." In the same magazine, for September 1851, just after the death of Harriet, the same writer, or one whose style is very similar to that of the earlier critic appends a note to his article on Harriet; - "The novel which was false^d published in her /Sophia's/ name, as there/ in the 1824 article on Sophia/ alluded to was 'Ormond, or the Debauchee, 1810,' which we now mention because it is still attributed to her in Watt's Bibliotheca Britannica." - 11 -

The success of Sophia's first play marked a rise in the fortunes of the house of Lee. The father did not live to enjoy the change, but from the moment of Sophia's triumph until the death of parriet, almost exactly seventy-one years later, the Lee sisters enjoyed a prosperous peace, of which the foundation was the proceeds of THE CHAPTER OF ACCIDENTS.

Sophia's early struggles with poverty and debt must have taught her some business ability. Her first step after her remarkable success was to establish herself in an assured position in life. John Lee died in 1781, and soon after his death, the sisters, "under the patronage of powerful friends set up a school in Bath, called 'Belvidere House,' which met with so much prosperity, that at the close of a little more than twenty years, they retired from business with an easy competence which enabled them to reside at Clifton, moving in the best circles of that agreeable place." They gave up their school in 1803, having not only acquired a provision for their old age, but ^{also} established a large family of nephews and nieces in life. For some time they resided in Monmouthshire, near Tintern Abbey. "A few years afterwards," says "C.C." "they took up their abode in a charming house at Clifton, and honored and esteemed for all the virtues which adorn private life, and famous for talents which had always been employed to improve while they amused, they must have spent many years of repose and enjoyment not eas-

1 Jeaffreson

ily to be overestimated."

"We have failed to discover any published memoirs of importance of this venerable lady," writes "C.C.," at the time of Harriet's death in 1851, "but we cannot help conjecturing what an autobiography she might have written, and what curious and intensely interesting memoranda of her life may possibly be in existence." Apparently no memoranda have been discovered, or at least have not been published, and it is only from occasional references that anything may be learned of the character and education of these eighteenth century ladies.

"Both these women were gifted creatures," writes Jefferson, "and without the advantages of polite education made for themselves an honourable position in literature, and (quite as difficult an achievement for the poor daughters of an unsuccessful actor) a respectable place in the society of that Bath where, at the public and most fashionable assemblies, the master of the ceremonies still commanded gallant gentlemen to desist from dancing, and to lead their partners about 'to cool.' Sophia had much of the petulant and acrimonious temper of her father, and like him was not ashamed to publish to the world the particulars of her professional jealousies and quarrels. But in her favour it must be allowed that her early education had been

neglected, and that she had never experienced those pure and domestic influences which are the best aids to the formation of a woman's character." "P.P." speaks of the similarity of the dispositions of father and daughter. "Miss Lee appears to have inherited in some degree the petulance and vanity of her parent, but the affection she displayed toward him was most exemplary." She had, however, a "rational and just view of life," which induced her to establish a seminary for young ladies at Bath, "in order to assure herself of that independence which should place her above the fluctuations of literary fame." Elizabeth Lee, the author of the articles on the Lee sisters in the Dictionary of National Biography, says that Sophia was a woman of great conversational powers and an excellent instructress, inspiring her pupils with liking and respect." Harriet too, had remarkable conversational powers, clear depth of judgment and intellect, a vigorous and comprehensive memory.

The Lee sisters were not unknown to some of the famous of their day; Jane and Anna Maria Porter, Mrs. Siddons, John Philip and Charles Kemble, General Paoli, Mrs. Padcliffe, Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Sheridan, Richard Tickell, Sir John Elliot, the elder Colman, Samuel Rogers, Sir. Thomas Lawrence, and William Godwin.

1 The identity of this writer cannot be discovered.

2 The two sisters were among the first to predict the

William Godwin met the Lee sisters in Bath, in March 1798. Godwin's wife, Mary Wollstonecraft, had died in September, 1797, leaving an infant daughter, Mary, and an older child, Fanny, daughter of Gilbert Imlay. The cares of this miscellaneous household pressed on Godwin, and, his ideas on marriage having materially changed, he thought it possible, even at a very early date after his wife's death, that he might marry again. His daughter, Mrs. Shelley notes that "instead of as heretofore, guarding himself from the feelings of love, he appears rather to have laid himself open to them." It was while in this softened mood that he met the Lee sisters, whom he much admired, especially Harriet. Mrs. Shelley says ¹ that Harriet "soon attracted his admiration and partiality; to the end of his life he always spoke of her with esteem and regard, though it was not till his papers were placed in my hands that I learned the nearer tie that he sought to establish between them. The feeling of love was awakened on their first acquaintance and his immediate desire was to study

a cont) eminence of Sir Thomas Lawrence, who in his after-life, in acknowledgment of their kindness, and as a memorial of his regard and friendship presented to them the portraits of Mrs. Siddons and John Kemble, and the more valuable portrait (one of his very best) of their friend, General Paoli." *Gentlemen's Magazine*, Sept. 1851.

¹ In a note appended to her father's diary.

her mind." Godwin was at this time forty-two years of age, while Harriet Lee was forty-one.

"He made, on returning visits to her house," writes Megan Paul, "in the course of those few days, elaborate analyses of her conversation, in which they had discussed books together, Rousseau's works, Richardson, and others, and soon made up his mind to win her, if possible, for his wife." Although they had met only four times, these elderly lovers made swift progress, at least the elderly wooer did. On his return to London, he wrote to Miss Lee, hinting that she rather expected him to keep up the acquaintance, assuring her of the degree of interest which she had excited in his mind, and urging her, if she were to visit the metropolis soon, to make his house her stopping-place, assuring her of proper chaperonage, and hoping that she might accept the invitation without sinning against the etiquette that she loved.

This letter remained unanswered. The lover was in great perplexity, for fear he had offended her. After making three drafts of a letter, he finally sent one, dated June 2, in which he says:-

"Dear Madam -

I have been extremely mortified at receiving no answer from you, to the letter I wrote soon after my late excursion to Bath. I am not sure indeed whether, in perfect strictness I was entitled to an answer. But si-

1. Life of Godwin

lence is so ambiguous a thing, and admits of so many interpretations, that with the admiration I had conceived for you, I could not sit down tranquilly under its discipline. It might mean simply that I had not been long enough your knight, to entitle me to such a distinction. But it might mean disapprobation, displeasure, or offence, when my heart prompted me to demand cordiality and friendship. My mortification has lately been increased by finding that you have been in town lately, and had left town before I knew of your presence; though having a kind of suspicion that the 'Two Emilys' would bring either yourself or Miss Lee to London, I had made some inquiries on the subject.

"I am obliged to be at Bristol next week. I remember as my greatest good fortune and pleasure in my last excursion the repeated and long conversations I enjoyed at Belvidere House. May I hope that now, having a right to call myself an acquaintance, I have not without intention or consciousness on my part forfeited the kindness I then experienced as a stranger. Whether next week shall be a week of pride or humiliation to my feelings will depend on the solution it will afford to this question.

"Present my best remembrances to your sisters, and believe me with the highest regard and esteem, yours,

"W. Godwin."

On this letter Miss Lee made marginal notes, and underlined such words or expressions as did not meet her favor. This was returned to Godwin, at the close of their correspondence. In her marginal notes she said:-

"The tone of this letter appears to me to betray vanity disappointed by the scantiness of the homage it has received, rather than mortified by any apprehension of discouragement. If any offence was given by the former letter this is calculated to renew and increase it; for it is equally presuming without being more explicit, except in two sentences so alien to the temper, or distant from the express reach of the rest, that they should be made under all circumstances to leave the letter. An alternative

proposed by the second clause presents itself to me thus: this journey to Bristol has no reference to me: as far as that is concerned he visits me simply as an acquaintance; but his title to be received as such has been lost by his forwardness to employ the privileges and claim the rights of a more endeared relation. The purpose of his journey is address to me, and it may be dictated either by humility or assurance. I doubt that the former interpretation would be given to a letter in which the same air and accent reign as in this."

She wrote, however, a civil but formal note, expressing her readiness to see him, and on his arrival at Bath on June 5th, Godwin formally paid his addresses to Harriet Lee; there is a note in his diary of a 'conference' on the subject. That the lady admitted 'regard and esteem' appears from a correspondence which afterwards ensued, and with this the lover was prepared to be content. Miss Lee herself was not disinclined to marriage, but feared what would be thought of it by her sister and the world. Almost persuaded to treat this objection as lightly as in reality it deserved to be treated, there remained what was to her a very grave question; were Godwin's own opinions such as would promise a happy marriage with a woman who held strongly her faith in God, and the divine guidance of the world?"

In the selections which Kegan Paul quotes from Godwin's letters, the lover argues with the lady to reconsider her determination. One by one he presents reasons why her atti-

tude of mind is not the best one for her to adopt. When she persists in her refusal he accuses her of bigotry, and concludes by saying that she held his personal qualities, whether good or bad, as of no account in her eyes, and concerned herself only with his creed, and adds that, if ever she is prevailed on to listen to the addresses of any other men, he hopes the success of that man may be decided on more equitable principles than his have been.

Miss Lee then wrote a letter intended to close the correspondence, in which she said that her decision was not to be changed. "I have taken from my sister," she continues, "the unpleasant task of telling you what you are unwilling to credit. She does justice to your understanding, she wishes you every good that you can reasonably demand, but recollect how improbable it is that I should cherish opinions she has not entertained long before; and even if I did, self-dependent as I am both in mind and years, how little likely is it that I should look to another for a rule either of duty or happiness...." She closes the letter thus, "My own good wishes and those of my sister attend you. Nothing further can or ought to be said by either of us. Farewell, but let it be a friendly farewell.

H.L."

This, however, did not convince Godwin, who wrote again

and again, becoming bitterer and more incomprehensible in every line, until on August 7, Miss Lee wrote a letter which was taken as final, "in which she hopes that friendly remembrance may still subsist, unchecked by 'minute misunderstandings,' and so concluded this singular correspondence. After a time, however, friendly though somewhat formal intercourse was renewed, and there is a letter extant, written in the following year by Miss Lee in reference to a literary criticism by Godwin on some new publication by her. But there is no allusion to the more intimate terms on which he had once desired to stand."

There is no doubt that Godwin's attachment to Harriet Lee was sincere, but that her refusal did not permanently blight his life, is equally evident. Providence having made one of his friends a widow in July, 1799, Godwin at once planned for a future which should include this Mrs. Reveley. He wrote her many letters and urged her to see him, and was very angry when she married another man. At the same time time he was anxiously trying to make up his quarrel with Mrs. Elizabeth Inchbald, a quarrel which had dated from the time of his marriage to Mary Wollstonecraft. These and various

similar enterprises cause him to deserve at Mr. Saintsbury's hands the title of "professor of philandering."

In 1801, Godwin met Mrs. Clairmont, and was married to her in December of that year. Godwin died in 1836 at the age of eighty, but Harriet Lee, living until August, 1851, survived by six months his daughter Mary, who was a baby at the time of this singular wooing. "Though it may be easy for either of us to marry," Godwin wrote to Miss Lee during their courtship, "supposing the present question to be decided in the negative, yet it is not probable that either of us will, elsewhere, meet with a fit and suitable partner, capable of being the real companion of our minds, and improver of our powers." Harriet Lee never married.

With the exception of the occasional new publications of the sisters, or another edition of an old favorite, or the appearance of another play, nothing that is worthy of note occurred to disturb the calm retreat of the sisters at Clifton, until Sophia Lee died, at the ripe age of seventy-four, on the 13th of March, 1824, "in the arms of that attached sister who was destined so long to survive her." Of Sophia Lee a writer said, "Miss Lee's view of life was not disappointed; an easy competence-- the unqual-

¹The English Novel, p. 170.

ified esteem of all to whom she was personally known, the affection of her family, and the respect of the public, softened her last hours, and will long render her memory esteemed."

Harriet lived for a quarter of a century after her sister had been buried in Clifton Church. The only writing she had done for many years before her sister's death was the dramatization of her story of "Kruitzner" on the appearance of Lord Byron's adaptation of it in his play, WEFNER in 1822. The next year John Murray brought out the fifth edition of KRUIZNER. Her own play, THE THREE STRANGERS, was produced in 1825. This was her last public appearance. With this exception, writes "C.C.", "her existence seems scarcely to have been recognized beyond the limited, yet not narrow circle, of her intimate and admiring friends. She met old age gracefully, and it was tenderly kind to her. By those who knew her to the last her memory is said to have retained its always remarkable vigor, and her wonderful conversational powers to have remained unabated. But no persuasions-- and must they not have been many?-- drew her into general society. We have no account of her faded cheeks and snowy locks decked out for 'midnight revelries;' no mention of her among the coteries. No; her truly venerable old age was one of honor,

dignity and repose; the proper sequence to the activity and energy of early life.

Harriet Lee died in Vyvyan Terrace, Clifton, in her 95th year, August first, 1851, "conscious of her approaching end, and devoutly happy and resigned."

GENERAL CRITICISM 1798-1913

On the appearance of the CANTERBURY TALES, the Lee sisters were recognized as important members of the literary colony at Bath. Godwin, although perhaps influenced by the personal interest he took in Harriet, looked forward eagerly to her next publications. In a letter to her dated April, 1798, he writes, "Suffer me to suppose, in any future production that you may give to the world, that while you are writing it you will sometimes remember me in the number of your intended readers."

Byron, in his preface to WERNER, February 1822, has an incorrect statement concerning the two sisters, so completely had they been neglected by his lordship, except in the matter of stealing their thunder. THE CANTERBURY TALES, he says were written (he believes) by two sisters, of whom one furnished this story and another, both of which are considered superior to the remainder of the collection. This mis-statement was corrected by Moore in Murray's edition of Byron, 1832.

A critic in Blackwood's, in commenting on Byron's new drama WERNER, steps aside for a moment from his discussion

1 Volume XII p. 170

of Byron's indebtedness to Miss Lee for the material of WERNER, to pronounce a eulogy on Harriet Lee. "Indeed," the writer says, "thus led as we are to name Harriet Lee, we cannot allow the opportunity to pass without saying, that we have always considered her works as standing upon the verge of the very first rank of excellence; that is to say, as inferior to no English novels whatever, excepting those of Fielding, Sterne, Smollet, Richardson, DeFoe, Radcliffe, Godwin, Edgeworth, and the author of Waverley." Now, this is a glorious headroll on which to be filed, but there is also much virtue in an "on the verge." The italics, moreover, are the critic's.

In 1823, "P.P." in an introduction to THE CHAPTER OF ACCIDENTS, says "Miss Lee, who we believe is still living, is the daughter of Mr. John Lee, an actor and dramatist, and was born about the middle of the last century." Imagine writing an introduction to a play, and not making sure whether the author were alive or dead.

In the obituary notices in the Gentlemen's Magazine, for July 1824, is recorded the death of Miss Sophia Lee, on March 14, of that year. In the list of her works, THE CHAPTER OF ACCIDENTS is spoken of as a comedy, "the merit of which is well known. In speaking of an early work, the

writer says that it is "marked by the vigour and fertility of mind which characterized all she wrote." In September, 1851, the same magazine notes the death, on August 1, of Harriet Lee, and praises highly her remarkable conversational powers, her "clear depth of judgment and intellect, her vigorous and comprehensive memory," and speaks of THE RECESS as "said to have been the first historical romance in English." In Littell's Living Age, for 1851, the writer, "C.C." becomes philosophical over the death of this once famous lady. "If Old Age be always-- more or less-- venerable, surely it is never so much so as when reposing in dignified retirement apart from the strife and struggle of a busy life; enjoying that rest which has been justly earned by honorable exertions, and the fulfillment of difficult duties in earlier years; and waiting the final summons with hopeful trust and calm content.

"We have rarely felt more impressed with this truth than on recently reading in the newspaper obituaries the name of Mrs. Harriet Lee, at the advanced age of ninety-five. Belonging to the generation of the grandmothers and great-grandmothers of the active, stirring, ~~standing~~, writing, ruling, prime-of-life men and women of the present day, her having tarried among us so long seen a sort of anomaly

the more strange when announced, because previously so little known even in the Republic of Letters, which is usually pretty well informed about the doings of its citizens and citizenesses."

Although admitting that Miss Lee has rather been forgotten by the rising generation, "C.C." hints that a past generation was more appreciative. "Though newer names are more familiar in our mouths than that of Harriet Lee, it is not difficult to imagine the high consideration in which she was held, both by the readers and the critics of a past generation."

In 1857, Mason Prothers, New York, published a series of Standard Tales, and, as "an appropriate commencement" of the series, issued a collection of THE CANTERBURY TALES which contained all the tales from the pen of Harriet Lee. In the publishers' advertisement appears an interesting criticism of the "Tales."

"THE CANTERBURY TALES were in fashion among the contemporaries of Lord Byron in his youth. Fashions come round again, with the lapse of years, as we are reminded daily by the revival of costumes that were in vogue a couple of centuries ago. The remarkable fictions contained in the following pages we have endeavored to reproduce in a style

that will render them attractive, as we deem that the time has arrived for them to come in fashion again. On their first appearance they passed through several editions, when editions were more a matter of fact, and less of faith, than they are now-a-days; and they have stood the test of criticism, and survived the rise and fall of new favorites, for more than half a century. We reprint them as an appropriate commencement of a series of Standard Tales, which we have in preparation as books for the Library."

Criticism of the Lee sisters in works on fiction ranges from a chapter of half flattering, half-satirical discussion in Jeaffreson's NOVELS AND NOVELISTS FROM ELIZABETH TO VICTORIA, London, 1858, to a scornful dismissal in a dozen lines in Saintsbury's volume on THE ENGLISH NOVEL, in the CHANNELS OF ENGLISH LITERATURE series, London, 1913.

Jeaffreson closes his chapter with a paean of praise of the two sisters. "On these two ladies it is impossible to look without feelings of respect, and even of admiration. Neither of them married, yet it would be difficult to point to two sisters who are, or were, greater ornaments to their sex. By faithful and affectionate exertions they endeared themselves to their numerous pupils; by per-

severing and honourable industry they raised themselves from indigence to affluence; and by their genius they produced works which delighted, instructed, and permanently influenced for the better, their generation-- as well the most remarkable members of it, as the common herd."

David Masson, writing in 1859, gives ¹ a catalogue of writers, named in the order of their appearance. "In the interval between 1789 and 1814, I count twenty novelists, of sufficient mark to be remembered individually in the history of British Prose Fiction; Robert Bage-- Dr. John Moore-- Thomas Holcroft-- Mrs. Charlotte Smith-- Sophia and Harriet Lee-- Mrs. Inchbald-- Mrs. Radcliffe-- Matthew Gregory Lewis-- Mrs. Opie-- William Godwin-- Anna Maria Porter-- Miss Edgeworth-- Miss Jane Austen-- Mrs. Brunton-- Mrs. Hamilton-- Mrs. Owneson (afterwards Lady Morgan) and the Rev. Charles Maturin." In this list of twenty names, fourteen are of women writers, and it is by no means only the women's names that have become ^{as} the snows of yesterday.

Karl Elze, a German Critic, writing ² on Lord Byron, in

¹ In his "British Novelists and Their Styles," Boston 1859
² In his "Lord Byron, a Biography," London 1873.

1872, speaks of Byron's "avowed appropriation" of the material in WERNER but does not mention the name of the original writer.

Kegan Paul's LIFE OF GODWIN was published in 1876. Fifteen years before, the names of Godwin and Harriet Lee had appeared in Masson's list of novelists of mark. In one of the letters to Miss Lee, quoted in Kegan Paul's biography Godwin says, "It is true that my establishment is a humble one, but you could not, perhaps be under the roof of a person who does more justice to your merits." Then is inserted an editor's note to the effect that "Here follows some criticism on Miss Lee's writings of no sort of interest now!"

Rayard Tuckerman notices the Lee Sisters in his HISTORY OF ENGLISH PROSE FICTION (from Sir Thomas Malory to George Eliot) New York, 1882. He mentions THE CANTERBURY TALES, indicating Sophia's tales by name and includes her almost unknown novel ERRORS OF INNOCENCE, as well as Harriet's KRUITZNER, with the usual connection with Byron's WERNER.

Wm. Edward Simonds, in his Introduction to the Study of English Fiction, Boston, 1894, makes no reference to the Lees, but in 1895, Saintsbury in his ESSAYS IN ENGLISH LITERATURE, 1780--1860, gives a passing fling at Sophia Lee and her "egregious RECESS." Miss Lee's name does not appear

in the index, but is brought in incidentally in discussing Clara Feeve, who, Mr. Saintsbury says, "found not a few imitators who were more boldly but not more wisely historical than she." Stoddard, in his EVOLUTION OF THE ENGLISH NOVEL, 1902, cites THE RECESS as an early example of the historical novel. Dawson, 1905, does not include the Lee sisters in his MAKERS OF ENGLISH FICTION, nor do Garnett and Gosse mention them in the four volumes of their ILLUSTRATED HISTORY OF ENGLISH LITERATURE, 1905. Cross, in the same year in his DEVELOPMENT OF THE ENGLISH NOVEL, devotes a paragraph to Sophia's RECESS.

Clara H. Whitmore, in WOMAN'S WORK IN ENGLISH FICTION, 1910, devotes five pages to Harriet and Sophia Lee, in a chapter which gives one page to Clara Reeve, and fifteen to Mrs. Radcliffe. In Oliver Elton's two volume SURVEY OF ENGLISH LITERATURE, 1780--1830, 1912, Sophia's RECESS is disposed of in nine lines, and Saintsbury, in 1913, in his ENGLISH NOVEL, 1913, dismisses the Lee sisters with faint praise in a brief paragraph which they must share with another novelist, Charlotte Smith. "There is nothing of real historical spirit and very little goodness of any kind in THE RECESS," he asserts. As for the CANTERBURY TALES, they are not exactly bad, but also as far as possible from consummateness."

WORKS

The fame of the Lee sisters rests on three works, THE CHAPTER OF ACCIDENTS, a comedy, by Sophia Lee, 1780; THE RECESS, or A TALE OF OTHER TIMES, by Sophia Lee, 1785; The CANTERBURY TALES, by Harriet and Sophia Lee, 1798-1801. Sophia has further to her credit a ballad, two dramas and an epistolary novel. Harriet has one epistolary novel, three dramas, and another novel.

Sophia's ballad, published in 1787, was entitled "A HERMIT'S TALE, recorded by his own hand and found in his Cell," contained 156 stanzas, dealt with border warfare, and was considered "very long and dull." Another edition appeared in Dublin in the same year.

Sophia Lee's RECESS, published in 1785, is written in the first person, and addressed to a friend of the narrator. In 1804, Sophia published an epistolary novel in six volumes, entitled THE LIFE OF A LOVER, which is said to be autobiographical, and the work of her earlier years. One writer¹ calls it "the earliest production of her girlish pen, and not thought to be the happiest, though marked by the vigour and fertility of mind which characterized all

¹ IN the Gentlemen's Magazine, July 1824

she wrote." Jeaffreson speaks of this novel as "written in an early life, which, in spite of its length and feebleness, we are inclined to place above THE RECESS, because every now and then the reader finds in it scraps of forcible description and effective painting." Elizabeth Lee says¹ of THE LIFE OF A LOVER that it was "really her earliest attempt at writing. It is supposed to contain much personal history. Madame de la Salaberry translated it into French, but it did not enjoy the success of her other productions."

Sophia wrote only two novels, THE RECESS and THE LIFE OF A LOVER, Clara Whitmore is a trifle inaccurate when she says² that "Sophia Lee wrote other novels which are said to be worse than the RECESS." THE LIFE OF A LOVER may be worse than THE RECESS but at least it is the only other novel on Sophia's list.

Of Harriet's epistolary novel, very little is known. Jeaffreson says that "In 1786, she made her debut with a novel in five volumes, entitled THE ERRORS OF INNOCENCE, a copy of which we have never seen, and therefore (though the sequitur would not strike many reviewers) we cannot pass

¹ D.N.B.

² Woman's Work in Fiction, p. 100

a critical judgment upon it."

Harriet's second novel appeared in 1797. It was in two volumes, and was entitled CLARA LENNOX OR THE DISTRESSED WIDOW. This novel was published on "the subscription plan," which, says Jeaffreson, is now, for the dignity of authorship, happily gone out of date. "Harriet was fortunate," he continues, "in obtaining a powerful band of subscribers; for in the published list there are three marchionesses, nine countesses, and a long string of titled ladies, who were well-known in the fashionable world of that period. The book was dedicated to the Duchess of York, and the dedicatory letter to that august lady is so characteristic of the times that we insert it.

TO
H.R.H. the Duchess of York.

"Madam:

As a British subject, in the most ample sense of the word, it is totally unnecessary for me to recapitulate the many virtues for which your Royal Highness is so eminently distinguished; it would add nothing to the present knowledge of society, nor would it increase that beatified refulgence which those virtues have thrown on applauding myriads. To merit the plaudits of the good is the strongest sublunary incentive to virtue; and if the voluntary effusions of a generous nation may be considered as a suitable regard, then is your Royal Highness abundantly compensated, since to every degree of merit due to supereminence in virtue, is added the voluntary and universal

approbation of every subject of the empire; nor can Fame confer a more exalted panegyric on your character than by proclaiming that the most estimable of the daughters of Britain are proud to emulate your virtues. But no language is adequate to depict that amiable conduct in domestic life, which cannot fail to secure the permanency of your Royal Consort's affection.

For the continuance of these inestimable blessings, accept, most amiable Highness, the devout and fervent prayer of,

Your Royal Highness's
Gratefully obliged,
Most faithful, and
Devoted humble servant,
Margaret Lee."

From this foolish letter, it is evident that other literary ladies besides Miss Burney lost their heads and uttered nonsense when they addressed royalty. CLARA LENNOX was translated into French in the following year, 1798. ¹ The title of the French edition is CLARA LENNOX, OU LA VEUVE INFORTUNEE. The British Museum catalogue shows only the French edition.

Of the six dramatic works of the sisters, only Sophia's CHAPTER OF ACCIDENTS achieved any lasting success, but one or two of the ^{other} plays were performed at least ten times, and Harriet's first play, THE NEW PEERAGE, OR OUR EYES MAY DECEIVE US, was given nine times at Drury Lane Theatre, with satisfactory success. This was in November, 1787. THE NEW PEERAGE was published in London in 1787, with a second edition in the same year.

1 1798?

The characters in THE NEW PEERAGE are vandercrab, a merchant and banker; Charles, his son; Lord Melville; Lady Charlotte Courtley, niece to Sir John; Miss Harley, ward to vandercrab; Miss Vandercrab, his niece; Kitty, her maid. Vandercrab had sent his son to be educated in Holland, and had not seen him for fourteen years. Charles and Lord Melville return to England at the same time; they exchange names, and Lord Melville goes to Vandercrab's as his son. Vandercrab is disgusted with him. Medley tells Vandercrab that Lord Melville is not his son. Lord Melville falls in love with Miss Harley, ward to Vandercrab, Charles having already fallen in love with Lady Charlotte at Paris. She had refused him, but at the conclusion of the play she marries him, and Lord Melville marries Miss Harley. Charles does not discover himself to his father till the last scene.

"Some parts of the dialogue are tolerably good, but on the whole this is a poor play. The improbability of the plot is not compensated by any particular advantages resulting from it. The character of Miss Vandercrab is a gross caricature-- she is only two or three years younger than Vandercrab. When she first enters there is a stage direction that she should be childishly dressed in a sash, with her

1 Genest, VI, 471-2

hair in ringlets."

Notwithstanding the success of her CHAPTER OF ACCIDENTS Sophia Lee is not heard of in the dramatic world for sixteen years. On April 20, 1796, her tragedy, ALMEYDA, QUEEN OF GRANADA, was produced at Drury Lane Theater. In the same year it was published in London. It was in five acts, and in verse, probably heroic couplet. That the play was a disappointment seems to be the general opinion. Much, no doubt, was expected of an author whose first play had run into the fifth edition, with at least another edition appearing in 1796, and one which still after sixteen years, occasionally held the boards.

Whatever the expectations, they were not realized. "P.P." speaks of this. "The promise displayed by her first composition, induced the town to form sanguine anticipations of future amusement from her productions in this line of writing, but these expectations were destined to be disappointed. An interval of about twenty years elapsed ere Miss Lee again solicited the attention of the public as a dramatist, when an indifferent Tragedy from her pen, called ALMEYDA, QUEEN OF GRANADA, was produced at Drury Lane Theatre, and dragged its slow length along for four nights only, amid the yawns and murmurs of the few spectators who after the first evening assembled to witness its performance.

Jeaffreson's criticism is a trifle ambiguous. The tragedy he says, "was dedicated to Mrs. Siddons, who performed the part of Almeyda, the Queen, and it was decidedly a success as far as public approbation was concerned; and that being said, the merciful critic would say no more."

The characters are Abdallah, regent of Granada and uncle to Almeyda; Orasmyn, his son, general of the Moors, Alonzo, son to Ramirez, in love with Almeyda; Ramirez, King of Castile; Hamlet, captain of the Moorish guard; Almeyda, in love with Alonzo; and Victoria, princess of Castile. The scene lies in a Moorish castle close to the Guadalquivir, at the time in which the Moors were in possession of Granada. Almeyda, when an infant, had been consigned to Ramirez as a hostage; he had brought her up with the greatest kindness. In the first act she is restored to the Moors. Orasmyn falls in love with Almeyda. Abdullah, whose ruling passion is ambition, wishes his son to marry Almeyda, but does not approve of the great respect which he has for her. Alonzo visits Almeyda in disguise, is discovered and sent to prison by Abdallah. Orasmyn generously sets Alonzo at liberty, notwithstanding he is aware that Alonzo is his rival. Almeyda had prevailed on Hamlet to let her see Alonzo. They enter the prison just as Orasmyn and Alonzo had left it.

Almeyda, not finding Alonzo, concludes that he had been murdered by Abdallah, and loses her senses. In the fifth act, Almeyda is brought before the Council of State. She is required to resign the crown to Abdallah, but she recovers her reason and refuses to do so. Abdallah says, falsely, that Almeyda is poisoned. Orasmyn implores his father to furnish Almeyda with an antidote. He assents to his son's request. A goblet is brought in; Abdallah first drinks himself, and then gives it to Almeyda. She drinks from the goblet, and Abdallah says with exultation that the pretended antidote was really poison. Abdallah is borne off, Alonzo enters, and Almeyda dies.

ALMEYDA bears a resemblance to Shirley's CARDINAL. Genest in discussing THE CARDINAL says, "Miss Lee in her TRAGEDY OF ALMEYDA has professedly borrowed the circumstances of the antidote, but she has not managed it quite so well; as Abdallah is knowingly the cause of his own death, whereas the Cardinal considers himself as dying, and that his taking of the poison is a matter of no importance." It is easy to see, even from the plot outline of ALMEYDA, as given in Genest, that this is the weak point in Miss Lee's tragedy, as it is equally the dramatic moment in THE CARDINAL. There is no motivation for Abdallah's taking poison;

everything was tending to the point of his achievement of his highest ambition, namely, to become ruler of Granada instead of regent. Nothing remained but to remove Almeyda from his path, which could have been done without sacrificing his own life. In Shirley's play, the Cardinal has risked all and lost all. The marriage between his nephew Columbo and the Duchess Rosaura has been broken off, Columbo has been killed by Hernando, one of the Duchess's allies, the Cardinal's plan to revenge himself on the Duchess has been frustrated by the appearance of Hernando, and the subsequent struggle the Cardinal believes himself wounded unto death. What could be more fitting than that he should complete his revenge on the Duchess by telling her falsely that she was already poisoned, and then, in offering her an antidote, give her a deadly drink? Secure in the belief that his own wounds were mortal, the Cardinal drinks first of the poisoned wine, "in greater proof of his pure thoughts" towards the Duchess. The tragedy is all the greater because the Cardinal discovers, just before the poison takes effect that his wounds were not desperate.

Miss Lee evidently owes more to Shirley than the incident of the antidote. The characters correspond: Abdallah and his son to the Cardinal and his nephew; Almeyda to the

Duchess Rosaura; Alonzo, the lover of Almeyda, to Count D'Alvarez, lover of the Duchess; Hamet, captain of the Moorish guard, and friend of Almeyda, to Hernando, a Colonel and an ally of the Duchess; Victoria and Valeria, the inevitable companions. Miss Lee as well as Shirley, would no doubt agree with Charles Lamb, that it is always difficult to get rid of a woman at the end of a tragedy. ¹ In both tragedies the heroine goes mad, recovers her senses, is told that she has been poisoned, is offered an antidote which proves to be poison. The Duchess had more reason than Almeyda for precipitating herself into this sort of turmoil. The Duchess Rosaura sees her lover's corpse laid before, while Almeyda merely fails to find her lover in the prison where she thought him confined, and imagines him dead.

"THE CARDINAL is a very good Tragedy," says Genest, but Miss Lee's is only "moderate." "The Darden maid, and the lyre of Orpheus' come with a very bad grace from the mouth of a Moor."

¹ "It is always difficult to get rid of a woman at the end of a tragedy. Men may fight and die. A woman must either take poison, which is a nasty trick, or go mad which is not fit to be shown, or retire, which is poor, only retiring is most reputable." Charles Lamb in a letter to William Godwin, Kegan Paul, bk. 2, p. 86

In 1798, Harriet published in London THE MYSTERIOUS MARRIAGE OR THE HEIRSHIP OF ROSELVA, a play in three acts, in prose and verse. Genest¹ regards it as a moderate play, which is his expression for faint praise. Of the play he says that "the title is wrong, the marriage between Albert and Constantia is secret, but it is not mysterious." Jeaffreson has a further note on this play. "In 1795, if not earlier, Miss Harriet Lee submitted a play called 'The Mysterious Marriage, or the Heirship of Roselva,' a play in three acts, to Mr. Colman, who, after due consideration, declined to place it on the stage; and without a doubt his decision was a wise one. For three years the manuscript remained in the hands of the authoress, and then in 1798, she, with the restlessness inseparable from disappointment, published the unrepresented and unrejected drama. She would have consulted better for her fame, if she had allowed it to remain in obscurity." By this we see that Harriet had also inherited from her father some of that vanity and petulance and acrimonious temper which was ascribed to her sister.

The next dramatic work was done by Sophia, in 1807, three years after the publication of her novel, THE LIFE OF A LOVER. "The last production of Miss Lee's pen was a comedy, entitled

¹ X 209

* Jeaffreson N. & N. p. 265

THE ASSASSINATION, produced at Drury Lane, in 1807. The piece was not so fortunate as its predecessors, for it was only performed once, the public thinking that much of the satire was aimed at popular characters, and therefore naturally evincing displeasure. These unfortunate personal applications were wholly unforeseen by the writer. "P.P." speaks of this play in even more scathing terms. "The audience, thoroughly disgusted with its utter want of plot, character, humor, and probability, expressed their sentiments so vehemently, that the stage-manager was compelled to make his appearance in the midst of the 4th Act to beseech them to hear the piece patiently to the conclusion; the thing was at once withdrawn, and Miss Lee has never ventured within the theatrical arena again."

The last of Harriet Lee's publications issued from the press in the year 1826, about two years after her sister's death. This was THE THREE STRANGERS, a play in five acts and in prose. It is founded on Miss Lee's story, KRUITZNER; OR THE GERMAN'S TALE, which had appeared in the fourth volume of The Canterbury Tales. On this story Lord Byron had founded his tragedy of WERNER, (in verse) which had appeared in February, 1822, "Miss Harriet Lee, in her advertisement prefixed to the THREE STRANGERS says that her

play had been written many years ago, and that when Lord Byron did her the honour to choose the tale ¹ of Krutzner for the subject of his Tragedy, it became necessary to make her play known, or incur the imputation of its being a subsequent attempt; that she therefore offered it immediately (in November, 1822) to Covent Garden; that it was accepted and the ensuing February fixed as the time for representation; that it was postponed wholly at her own desire."

The play was not acted, however, until the 10th of December, 1825, "when ² it was received with unquestionable disapprobation, though such a story as it is based upon could not fail to interest." Charles Kemble played the part of Conrad.

The publication of Byron's play, and the popularity it enjoyed under Macready's hands, invited comparisons. Jeaffreson says of Miss Lee's play, "It is written in prose; and there are many who will find amusement in comparing it with the rhythmical version of Lord Byron." Genest³ thought Miss Lee's play was "far from a bad one," but "in other respects and particularly in point of language, Lord Byron's play is superior."

¹ Jeaffreson, N.& N. p. 268

² Ibid

³ IX 346

Neither of Sophia's dramas added a whit to the fame which her first comedy brought her; she could never recapture her first fine careless rapture. It has even been suggested that the first rapture was not altogether hers. "The little dramatic talent she displayed in her last two attempts," says "P.P.", almost warrants a suspicion that she was somewhat more indebted to the assistance of others while composing this comedy, than she thought proper to acknowledge." Nor could she ever repeat the success of THE RECESS. Her contributions to THE CANTERBURY TALES, besides being inferior to Harriet's stories, are far below her own standard. As for Harriet, her gifts were evidently not at all dramatic, or at least they were not of a kind required in the closing days of the sentimental comedy.

Although the lives of the sisters were so closely knit together that it is impossible to discuss one without the other, they ~~seem never~~ to have worked together. The Gentlemen's Magazine for July, 1824, in the article on Sophia gives this sentence: "Though harmonizing in mind, the two sisters were very unlike ⁱⁿ style, nor did either ever introduce a single page into the writings of the other." In 1851, after the death of Harriet, the same magazine, in an

article on Harriet, probably by the writer of the first article, offers the same thought in almost the same words: "Though harmonizing in mind, the two sisters were unlike in style, and one did not usually assist in the writings of the other."

THE CHAPTER OF ACCIDENTS.

On August 5, 1780, THE CHAPTER OF ACCIDENTS was presented at the Theatre Royal, Haymarket, with instant and decided success. Like most plays this one was not written but re-written. "P.P." gives an account of Miss Lee's trials as a playwright in his notes in Oxberry's edition, 1834. "This piece was originally a three-act opera, and was presented in that form to Mr. Harris, the manager of Covent Garden Theatre, who, according to Miss Lee's account retained it a long time in his possession, trifling with her feelings by 'supercilious and unmeaning criticisms,' and at length suggested that she had better reduce it to an afterpiece, by cutting out the serious pieces altogether. Miss Lee disdainfully rejected, withdrew her play from his hands and offered it to Colman, Sen., of the Haymarket theatre; that gentleman recommended her to expand it from a three-act Opera into a five-act comedy, a hint she was induced to listen to; and the drama in its novel form being at length produced, (in August 1780) was received with great applause. Miss Lee soon after published it, with an ill-judged intemperate Preface, in which she incontestably proved the truth of the remark that 'hell has no fury like a woman scorn'd,' by heaping upon Mr. Harris a variety of most angry invectives for his asserted misconduct, insinu-

ating that it was all owing to her having 'neither a prostituted pen nor person to offer him.' Mr. Harris was wise enough to laugh at this ebullition of female rage, and showed how little he regarded such attacks, by bringing forward the comedy at his own theatre."

In Mrs. Inchbald's edition of the play, it is included in a volume with the following plays:

The Bank Note, or Lessons for Laddies, a comedy by
William Macready. 1
The English Merchant, a comedy by George Colman.
The School for Wives, a comedy, no name given.
Henry the Second, or the Fall of Rosamund, by
Thomas Hull.

Oxberry's edition contains, besides Miss Lee's comedy,

Wallace, a tragedy, by C. E. Walker, Esq.
King Henry V.
Much Ado About Nothing, and
Moore's Lamester, a Tragedy.

In Oxberry's edition, the time of representation is given as "nearly three hours. The half-price commences at nine o'clock."

A prologue to the play, written by George Colman, Esq.,^a and spoken by Mr. Palmer, who played the part of Woodville, gives the contemporary criticism of the play.

1 Father of W.C. Macready, Actor, Manager, and playwright.
Died 1829.

a Probably Colman, Senior.

P r o l o g u e

"Long has the passive stage, howe'er absurd,
Been rul'd by names, and govern'd by a word.
Some poor cant-term, like magic spells can awe,
And bind our realms, like a dramatic law.
When Fielding, Humour's fav'rite child, appear'd,
Low was the word,--- a word each author fear'd!
Th'll chas'd at length by pleasantry's bright way,
Nature and mirth resum'd their legal sway,
And Goldsmith's genius bask'd in open day.

"No beggar, howe'er poor, a cur can lack;
Poor bards, of critic curs, can keep a pack.
One yelper silenc'd, twenty barkers rise,
And with new howls their sarlings still disguise.
Low Banish'd, the word sentiment succeeds;
And at that shrine the modern playwright bleeds.
Hard fate! but let each would-be critic know,
That sentiments from genuine feelings flow;
Critics in vain declaim, and write, and rail,
Nature, eternal Nature! will prevail.

Give me the bard, who makes me laugh and cry,
Diverts and moves, and all--- I scarce know why!
Untaught by commentators, French or Dutch,
Passion still answers to th'electric touch.
Reason, like Falstaff, claims, when all is done,
The honors of the field already won.

"Tonight, our author's is a mix'd intent---
Passion and humour-- low and sentiment:
Smiling in tears-- a serio-comic play--
Sunshine and show'r-- a kind of April-day!
A Lord, whose pride is in his honour plac'd;
A Governor, with av'rice not disgrac'd;
An humble Priest! a Lady and a Lover
So full of virtue, some of it runs over.
No temporary touches, no allusions
To camps, reviews, and all our late confusions;
No personal reflections, no sharp satire,
But a mere chapter from the book of Nature.
Wrote by a woman, too! the muses now
Few liberties to naughty men allow;
But, like old maids on earth, resolv'd to vex,
With cruel coyness treat the other sex."

1 See Nettleton's English Drama, N.Y. 1914, pp. 277-8, 290.

In reference to this prologue, "P.P." remarks: "We must needs confess-- and we believe we have often before expressed ourselves to the same effect-- that we have very little love for these crying comedies, these mixtures of humour and sentiment, smiles and tears, sunshine and shower, as the Prologue has it; we do, in short, most powerfully and potently believe that wherever the Comic Muse is so indiscreet as to expose herself in this manner to the public gaze, 'with one auspicious and one dropping eye,' she cuts at best but a mighty queer kind of figure, and consequently the play before us is by no means a composition to our taste: still while we think it positively defective, as a comedy, we are constrained to admit that, comparatively, it is a very respectable piece of business, and that if we must perforce endure the representation of such mournful pieces of mirth and merry pieces of sadness, there are few we could submit to behold more patiently than THE CHAPTER OF ACCIDENTS.

The plot of THE CHAPTER OF ACCIDENTS is too complicated and formal to be given in detail, but since there is only a slight connection between the humorous and the serious parts, a short outline will be sufficient to give the main thread of the plot. Lord Glenmore has planned to marry his only son Woodville to his ward, Miss Mortimer. Lord Glenmore's brother-in-law, Governor Harcourt, arrives in London,

after sixteen years' absence in India, to make Woodville his heir and marry him to his own daughter, supposed to have died in infancy, but who was sent by her father to Wales, where she was cared for by an old parson and his wife, and educated as a country girl, and not as a fine city lady. For fear they might, after all, "make a little bit of a gentlewoman of her," her father, after the first year's advance, never sent "a single shilling" of his money. These plans are frustrated by the news that Woodville has a mistress, a beautiful young girl, whom he earnestly desires to marry, but who, for his sake, is refusing him, unless the consent of both their parents be obtained. Woodville is aided by his cousin, Captain Harcourt, who is secretly married to Miss Mortimer. Harcourt persuades Miss Mortimer to protest Cecilia, Woodville's mistress; Cecilia is sheltered under the roof of Lord Glenmore, who, seeing her beauty and distress offers her his hand. The Governor, meanwhile, learns that his daughter is Woodville's mistress. Glenmore plots to carry her off, and with the Governor, go to Cecilia's house, to be met only by Bridget, dressed in her mistress' cast-off clothes. The Governor believes Bridget to be his daughter, Glenmore believes her his son's choice and both are equally disgusted. She is carried away, and is easily persuaded to marry Vane, Glenmore's valet. Vane, too believes that she is the Governor's daughter. The Governor

meanwhile is admiring the pensive Cecilia, who is under the protection of Miss Mortimer, and wishes that his daughter could be like her. When Woodville is confronted by Bridget, the mistake is discovered, Grey the foster-father of Cecilia appears and claims her as his own daughter, but when all is disclosed, the two fathers join in giving their consent to the marriage of Cecilia and Woodville.

The following criticism of THE CHAPTER OF ACCIDENTS was written by "P.P.", a theatrical critic writing at the time of Miss Lee's death, in 1824. The remarks concerning the plot and the characters are almost exactly those that would be made about the play to-day.

"The plot is well-contrived, cleverly conducted, and wrought to a climax in the last act very dexterously; the characters are happily contrasted, and in no instance greatly out of nature; those of Woodville, Harcourt, Cecilia and Miss Mortimer can scarcely fail to interest the spectator's feeling, while those of the Governor, Vane, Jacob and Bridget are as well adapted to amuse his fancy. Of the dialogue it may with justice be said, that if the wit is not of the most sparkling quality, the sentiments are naturally and often elegantly expressed, though the speeches are frequently too long, and the ideas in one or two instances border a little upon indecorum,-- they^{do}, as it were, 'something smack, something grow to, they have a kind of taste;' but

these lady authors seem to have claimed a prescriptive right, from the days of Mesdames Centlivre and Behn, down to those of Mrs. Cowley and Miss Lee, to exercise a vast degree of latitude in their choice of subjects and their mode of handling them. Miss Lee's selection of a story in the present instance we cannot honestly defend upon the score of moral tendency; she wished, she says, 'to draw a female heart capable of frailty yet shuddering at vice, and perhaps sufficiently punished by her own feelings,' trusting that the female part of the audience would take warning by her heroine's misfortunes and avoid her errors; but we fear that ^{of} the novel-reading and sentimental young ladies who witness Cecilia's adventures, two-thirds think only of the reward eventually bestowed upon her, without recollecting the humiliating trials she undergoes to arrive at it, and the wholesome expressions of sorrowful self-reproach which the fair writer has taken care to make her utter. 'Tis always a dangerous experiment to place frailty in an interesting point of view, and solicit our compassion for vice, instead of rendering its aspect hateful. We do not, however, deny that Miss Lee has handled a very ticklish subject with infinite address, and that in depicting the power of intellect combined with an amiable disposition to retain possession of a man's heart after desire has been palled by possession, she has displayed much cleverness; we merely question

the prudence and good taste of selecting such a topic at all for the basis of a comedy. Every man we think who seriously considers the subject, must admit that female seduction is treated too much as a matter of indifference in this piece. Cecilia's fall from virtue is invested with every species of palliation, while Bridget's is placed in a directly ludicrous light and made a capital joke of. 'Tis true that Cecilia's determination to abandon a course of vicious indulgence commands respect, but would it not have been better, both in a dramatic and a moral sense, to have demanded our commiseration and esteem for suffering innocence?

"To the commendations we have bestowed upon the characters and language generally, one or two exceptions must be made. Lord Glenmore's abrupt offer of marriage to a woman he has not known twenty-four hours is grossly impalpable, and though he is unaware that he is addressing his son's mistress, the circumstance unavoidably excites an unpleasant feeling in the mind of the spectator. The Governor's behavior too, upon discovering his supposed daughter's seduction and the total disarrangement of his plans, is extremely singular for a man not devoid of feeling, since he appears to be utterly regardless of the ruin of his child, and alive only to the ridicule the affair will draw upon himself; in striving to render him eccentric the author forgot to make him natural. Vane, though a droll dog, is but

a bastard descendant of the knavish valets of Farquahar and Congreve, and Bridget's dialect is neither that of nature nor of art; a lamer attempt to imitate the language of vulgarity we cannot readily call to mind. Jacob's is much better, and he is in sooth the pleasantest fellow of the whole party."

Genest has little to add to his criticism. He does not give the plot of the play, perhaps because he considers it familiar to all his readers. He says, "The character of Cecilia is very interesting, and Grey's concluding speech deserves to be quoted; 'Yes, my Cecilia, you may believe him who never gave you a bad lesson, that you are now most truly entitled to esteem; since it requires a far greater exertion to stop your course down the hill of vice, than to toil slowly up toward virtue.'" Virgil would furnish an appropriate motto for this play—

Facilis decensus Averni,
Sed revocare gradum, superasque evadere ad auras,
Hoc opus, hic labor est.
Cumaean Sybil to Aeneas, v. 126 of Aen. VI."

The source of THE CHAPTER OF ACCIDENTS was pointed out by "P.P." "The general outline of this play and one or two of the characters are so evidently copied from Terence's 'Adelphi' that the resemblance will at once occur to the

classical reader, though Miss Lee, we dare aver, as little suspected that she had derived her story from Terence, as the closing sentiment of her piece from Virgil, the coincidence in both cases being purely unintentional. The truth is, she read the Latin play through French spectacles, or in other words borrowed some of her materials from LE PÈRE DE FAMILLE of Diderot, who had made himself free with the Roman dramatist, and transferred without ceremony to his own production whatever he found adapted to his purpose in the 'Adelphi'. With the precise extent of Miss Lee's obligations to the Frenchman we are not acquainted, nor indeed is it very material to enquire, but she has certainly contrived to produce, by some means or another, a very respectable performance." This gives Miss Lee's play a long and honorable ancestry, through Diderot and the "comédie larmoyante," to Terentian comedy, and back to the Greek of Menander, on whose play "Ἀδελφοί," Terence founded his "Adelphoe."

Diderot's theory of the drama was that it should be "a glorification of private virtues and domestic life." This idea he had gained largely from Lessing, who in turn derived his ideas from the English plays of middle-class life which immediately preceded his "Miss Sara Sampson," (1755) Cutting names three plays as directly influencing Lessing's

1 Introduction to edition of Lessing's "Minna von Barnhelm," p. XVIII New York 1910

work: William Congreve's *DOUBLE DEALER*, (1694); George Lillo's *MERCHANT OF LONDON* (1731); Edward Moore's *GAMESTER* (1753). "Acquaintance with them," he says, "and with Samuel Richardson's middle-class novel, *CLARISSA HARLOWE*, (1748) is reflected in sundry points of Lessing's *SARA*. Diderot was influenced by Richardson, as appears from his *ELEGY ON RICHARDSON*. He proposed a French version of Moore's *GAMFSTER*, which was never acted. Diderot was a much better theorist than dramatist. Morley regards *LE PÈRE DE FAMILLE* as a "play without any real quality or distinction," but with, however, a "certain rapidity and fire in action." The dialogue is "poor," and the father "wooly and mawkish."

Such then was the origin and character of the play which Miss Lee arranged for the English stage. In some of her incidents, Miss Lee seems to have gone back to the Latin play for her ideas, rather than to Diderot. If "P.P." had made himself familiar with the French play, he would have seen that Diderot had carried out, in advance of his criticism his suggestion to demand commiseration and esteem for "suffering innocence." The love between Sophie and Sergi, (or Saint-Albin) is pure and idyllic, while in Miss Lee's play, Cecilia possesses every virtue but one; so with Pamphila in the Latin comedy. In all three plays, the lover wishes to marry his mistress, but the consent of the father is wanting. Sostrata, the mother of Pamphila, cries:

1 Diderot and the *Encyclopaedia's*, Ch.VII. The Stage.
 2 *Adelphoe*, Actvs III,ii, ver. 330, 334.

"nostrumne Aeschinum,
nostram uitam omnium, in quo nostrae spes opesque omnes sitae
erant! qui sine hac iurabat se unum numquam uicturum diem!
qui se in sui gremia positurum puerum dicebat patris,
ita obsecraturum ut liceret hanc sibi uxorem ducere! "

And Aeschinus, after Sostrata has discovered the abduction of
the Music-girl intended for his brother and has driven him
from Pamphila's house, says ruefully,

ut ut erat ges'a, indicasse! "non me hanc rem patri,
exorasse ut eam ducerem."

Saint Albin, while pleading for his father's consent
to his marriage with Sophie, declares: "Vous êtes mon père,
et vous commandez; elle sera ma femme, et c'est un autre
empire." To this the father, still unwilling to believe
in the purity of his son's love, says, "Quelle différence
d'un amant à un époux, d'une femme à une maîtresse! Homme
sans expérience, tu ne sais pas cela." "J'espère l'ignorer
toujours," replies the son.

Woodville longs for the hour when the errors of the lover
will be absorbed in the merits of the husband."

In the ADELPHI, the two old men are brothers of entirely
dissimilar characters. Demea is married, and lives a
country life, while his brother remains single, and resides

1 Ibid Actus IV, iv, ver. 629-630

2 "Le Pere de Famille," Acte II, Scene VI.

3 The Chapter of Accidents, Act II, Scene 1.

in Athens. Diderot and Miss Lee make these two characters brothers-in-law, but their tempers are like those of the two brothers in the Latin play. The one is polished suave, courteous, a man of the world; the other is gruff, boorish, determined, disagreeable, dictatorial. The scene of each play is laid at the home of the courteous gentleman: the other is tolerated merely because he has money enough to render his presence endurable.

The contrast between country and city education appears in all three plays, with apparent advantage of country over city, until the turn of affairs makes the city-bred person appear to the best advantage, with more real virtue than the country-bred individual. In the ADELPHI, the contrast is shown between two men, one a country bumpkin, the other a courteous man of fashion. Diderot does not make so much of the contrast. His use of the pastoral element occurs only in the Arcadian love-story of Sophie and the disguised Sergi. Governor Harcourt is decidedly in favor of a country-bred daughter, until he sees in Bridget what he supposes was the result of his system of education, borrowed, no doubt, from Rousseau.

Many minor incidents are found alike in the three plays. Demea is disposed of for a time by being sent on a long and fruitless search for his son, just as Woodville is dispatched by his father on useless errands to Puzzle's chambers and

the London Tavern. The incident of the kidnapping is found in all three of the plays, as well as that of bringing the virtuous young lady and the unfortunate one under the same roof. The Music-girl must be disposed of. "What will you do with her then?" asks Demea. "She shall be at my house," answers Micio. "Pro a diuom fidem," exclaims Demea, "meretrix et mater familias una in domo!" In LE PÈRE DE FAMILLE Germeuil persuades Cecile to receive Sophie. Cecile exclaims, "Qu'osez-vous me demander? Je recevrais la maîtresse de mon frère chez moi! chez moi! dans mon appartement! dans la maison de mon père!"

In THE CHAPTER OF ACCIDENTS,³ Harcourt has thought to assist his friend Woodville by protecting his beloved Cecilia. He returns to Sophia Mortimer, and tells her that he has offered Cecilia an asylum in her name. "In my name!" says Miss Mortimer. "You amaze me, Mr. Harcourt! Would you associate your wife with a kept mistress? Bring such an acquisition into the house of Lord Glenmore, etc."

The part of Cecilia was created by Miss Farren, at the Haymarket Theatre, in August, 1780. On August 25, the play was given for the tenth time; this was Miss Farren's bene-

¹ *Adelphoe*, Actus IV, v, ver. 746.

² Acte III, Scene 1.

³ Act. II, Scene 5.

fit night. She appeared in the play again and again, and on January 14, 1797, she played it at Drury Lane. On April 8, she played Lady Teazle, her "last time of appearing on the stage." Soon after this she was married to the Earl of Derby, and "conducted herself with great propriety in her new situation." Miss Farren, it is said, was "one of the most elegant actresses that ever graced a theatre," and the "best representative of a Fine Lady." While she excelled in "Gay Comedy" she was likewise unequalled in parts of "sentimental distress," such as "Indiana, Cecilia, etc."

On May 8, 1781, the play was given at Drury Lane, and a year later, on April 23, it appeared at Covent Garden. Genest does not mention it again until eleven years later, when he announces it as "not acted for 7 years." At this performance, February 14, 1793, by the Drury Lane Company, four of the original cast appeared: Palmer as Woodville, Miss Farren as Cecilia, J. Aiken as Grey, and Bannister, Jun., who had been the original Captain Harcourt, but who now played the comedy part of Jacob. On September, 25, 1795, the play was given at Covent Garden, with Macready as Capt.

1 Genest 7-289

2 See Note 1, page 48

Harcourt. At Drury Lane, January 14, 1797, was Miss Farren's last appearance as Cecilia.

Cecilia was a popular part for an actress's benefit, with the role of Cecilia. Genest, forgetting the performance at Drury Lane in 1797, says that it had not been acted for seven years. Charles Kemble played Woodville at Covent Garden, October 15, 1805. The play was revived again at Drury Lane, with Wallack^{as} Woodville, on April 2, 1816; seven years later, Wallack appeared in his old part, with Miss L. Kelly as Cecilia, and Liston as Jacob Gawky. In Oxberry's edition of THE CHAPTER OF ACCIDENTS, 1824, the frontispiece of the play is a portrait of Mr. Liston as Jacob Gawky.

THE CHAPTER OF ACCIDENTS was published in London in 1780. Before the close of the year T. Cadell brought out a second edition. Another edition appeared in Dublin in 1781. The third London edition came out in 1781, to be followed by the fourth, in 1782, and the fifth in 1792, with another in 1796. The play was published in a number of collections:- Bell's British Theatre, vol. 34, 1797; Mrs. Inchbald's Modern Theatre, vol. 9, 1811; Dibdin's London Theatre, vol. 21, 1815; another edition, "correctly given, from copies used in the theatres, by T. Dibdin, Chiswick, 1816; Oxberry's New English Drama, vol. 18, 1824; Oxberry's Edition London, 1832.

A German translation appeared in 1788, DIE ZUFÄLLE.
Ein Lustspiel in fünf Aufzügen. Aus dem Englishen der
Miss Lee übersetzt, von Leonhardi neu bearbeitet von Schröder.*

THE CHAPTER OF ACCIDENTS has a stage history extending
from 1780 to 1823, and a publication history extending from
1780 to 1832.

Miss Lee's play has a great deal more theatrical value
than Diderot's, except in one instance, namely the opening
of the play.. LE PÈRE DE FAMILLE opens with a group of
sleepy-eyed people, trying to keep awake by playing a game.
It is six o'clock in the morning, and they have been wait-
ing all night for the appearance of the son. Miss Lee opens
her play with the conventional "information-giving" scene
between the valet and the housekeeper. She uses the card-
playing scene a little later, but with less effect. But in
every other scene, she proves herself a true daughter of the
theatre. One of the secrets of successful comedy is to keep
all the characters mystified, but to withhold no secrets
from the audience. There are a dozen such situations in
THE CHAPTER OF ACCIDENTS. Throughout the play the suspense
is sustained, until the final satisfactory climax. There
is no suspense in LE PÈRE DE FAMILLE. M. D'Auvillé seems
to hint at suspense when he remarks, at the close of the
third act, "Je suis curieux de voir ce que tout ceci devien-
dra." But no reader can feel a similar curiosity.

Miss Lee's play is arranged with a view toward the lessening the time used in shifting scenes. A scene which requires the entire stage will be followed by one or more scenes which require only a drop curtain, such as a "street," or a "hall."

Oxberry's edition gives a list of the costumes needed for the play: Governor Harcourt, grey regimental suit; Captain Harcourt, scarlet regimentals; Woodville, blue coat, white waistcoat, and breeches; Vane, country coat, flowered waistcoat, and leathern breeches; Lord Glenmore, dress suit; Grey, black ibid; Jacob, old fashioned suit of livery; servants, liveries; Cecilia, first dress, white gauze, trimmed with white satin; second dress, black crape; Miss Mortimer, pink gauze, trimmed with white satin; Bridget, first dress, open coloured gown, pink stuff petticoat, and white apron; second dress, white, trimmed with roses, blue scarf, and flowers in the head; Mrs. Warner, brown round gown and muslin apron.

The Recess.

In 1785, Sophia Lee published her historical novel, THE RECESS, in three volumes. It was a decided success. The writer in the Gentleman's Magazine, for July 1824, says that "such was its estimation, as well as popularity, that the late Mr. Tickell,^{to} whom the author was at that time personally unknown, addressed a letter to her, in the name of that ~~junto~~ of distinguished characters with whom he lived, to express the high sense entertained of its merit. It is to be remarked also, that Mrs. Radcliffe [~~sic~~] (then Miss Ward), resident at Bath, and acquainted in Miss Lee's family, though too young to have appeared herself as a writer, was among the warmest admirers of THE RECESS. Elizabeth Lee says of it: "The book was dedicated to Sir John Elliot, the physician, who had early discovered Sophia's literary talent, and it won the approval of Tickell, of Mr. and Mrs. Sheridan, and of Miss Ward, (afterwards Mrs. Radcliffe), then a resident at Bath. Lemare translated it into French, and Miss Lee received from her publisher, Cadell, fifty pounds in addition to the amount already agreed upon for the copyright."

This French translation was published in Paris, in 1787, under the title, "Le Souterrain, ou Matilde...Traduit de l'Anglais, sur la deuxieme edition, by B. de La Mare."
1Brook's Club, London - 63 -

The first volume of THE RECESS appeared in London, in 1784, & the other two volumes following. In the next year, 1785, the three volumes appeared in London. In 1804 the fifth edition was published, in three volumes. In 1837, Joseph Smith published in London an edition of the book in one volume, in which there is no indication of the former division into three parts.

THE RECESS is the story of two sisters, Matilda and Ellinor, daughters of Mary, Queen of Scots, and the Duke of Norfolk. They have spent their childhood in a secret but luxurious retreat known as "The Recess" under the care of a beautiful woman whom they knew as "mamma" but who proves to be only a distant connection of their father's. She relates to them the story of their birth, and the secret of "The Recess," and gives them papers and jewels. After her death which occurs when the twin sisters are fourteen, Matilda and Ellinor meet with the most incredible adventures, Matilda through her love for the Earl of Leicester, and Ellinor through her love for the Earl of Essex. Ellinore and Essex never marry, but Matilda and Leicester are married secretly, for fear of giving offence to Queen Elizabeth, and injuring Leicester's future. To Matilda is born a daughter Mary, who grows to womanhood and is beloved by her own cousin, Henry, Prince of Wales. The early death of a 1783 according to some references.

the Prince prevents a happy ending of the story. Matilda like a prudent mother, has done all the courting herself, and always received the Prince while her daughter Mary is absent on long rides. During this time, Mary has fallen in love with the King's favorite, Lord Rochester, the Earl of Somerset. After the Prince's death, Matilda and Mary are captured while on their way to King James to receive from him recognition of their rank, and are taken to one of Lord Rochester's seats, where shortly afterwards, Mary is poisoned by Lady Rochester, who had been the wife of that Essex who had loved Ellinor.

The story of THE RECESS is told by Matilda in a letter to a "dear and lovely friend," who may perhaps be the ambassador's daughter, Adelaide, who befriends Matilda in her illness in France, after the death of her daughter, although the identity of the "friend" is by no means clear. The manuscript is to be sent in a casket, after the writer's "ashes have been placed in a nameless grave," for the perusal of the friend whose feet have "trod lightly over those spots" in England where Matilda's "happiness withered." The friend has requested this story of Matilda's life. "Oh, why then, too generous friend, require me to live over my misfortunes?" However, Matilda feels that the record of such sufferings as hers may not be useless. "Consummate misery has a moral use, and if ever these sheets reach the public, let the re-

repiner at little evils learn to be juster to his God and himself, by unavoidable comparisons. But am I not assuming an insolent consequence, in thus admonishing?-- Alas! it is the dear-bought privilege of the unfortunate to be tedious." Then Matilda proceeds to be tedious to the extent of two hundred thousand words. Two or three times during the story she addresses her friend as "madam" and the two closing paragraphs are devoted to the one whose "youthful eyes" are to read the melancholy chart of Matilda's "voyage through life." "That my decline has been prolonged till this narrative is concluded, I do not regret," writes Matilda; "and by compliance I have evinced my sense of your friendship; I have now only to die..... Have I not said already, that consummate misery has a moral use, in teaching the repiner at little evils to be juster to his God and himself?"

In the telling of the story Miss Lee follows the Richardsonian method of the complicated narrative within narrative, letter within letter, document within document. In Mrs. Marlow's story to the two sisters, she does not disclose to them the secret of their birth, until she has told the story of her own mother's love for Lord Scroope, the birth of the two children, her mother's later marriage to Mr. Colville, the West Indian gentleman, the marriage of Lord Scroope and the birth of his son, the present Lord, Mrs. Marlow's marriage to young Mr. Colville, with the immediate discovery

that they are brother and sister. All this told before Mrs. Marlow reaches the story of Bothwell's supposed death, the imprisonment of Mary, the efforts made for her release, her secret marriage to the Duke of Norfolk, the birth of Matilda and Ellinor, the execution of the Duke, and the persecution of Mary by Elizabeth. The only possible bearing Mrs. Marlow's story has on the lives of the two heroines is that the wife of the young Lord Scroope was Lady Matilda Howard, sister of the Duke of Norfolk, whose name was given to the elder of the sisters, while the younger was named Ellinor after the duke's mother. Leicester's story tells of his marriage, the unfaithfulness of his wife, her attempt to murder him with a dish of poisoned carp, and of his cleverness in saving his own life and disposing of hers by transferring the dishes as they were served. Much of the information is given in letters: one long document presents "The Life of Ellinor, addressed to Matilda." This contains the story of Ellinor's love for Essex, and all its attendant disasters, Elizabeth Vernon's story, the dying servant's confession of the stolen casket, a letter from Lady Pembroke, introducing two letters from Ellinor in Ireland, Tracey's story of Essex and his fall from favor, another letter from Lady Pembroke, a letter from Essex in the Tower, and page after page of the wild ravings of Ellinor. Besides these, there are innumerable stories by minor char-

acters, such as that of Williams, Emanuel, Anans and Gabriel.

Although THE RECESS, when first published, appeared in three volumes, the logical division is into two parts and an epilogue, part one being the story of Matilda, part two the story of Ellinor, and the epilogue the story of Matilda's daughter Mary, with the connection with Mary, Queen of Scots to give unity to the whole. Viewed from another angle, the book may be divided into two main parts, with the story of the two sisters for one part, and the story of the two powerful noblemen, Leicester and Essex, for the other, with the figure of Elizabeth as the unifying element. From first to last the threads of the stories are woven compactly together. Leicester is the close friend of the Duke of Norfolk, and interests himself in Norfolk's behalf with Queen Elizabeth in the matter of his marriage with Mary, Queen of Scots. At the last, it is the wife of Essex who poisons the younger Mary, and completes the tragic story. The real unity of the story is blurred and obscured by the manner of telling it. If only Miss Lee had dared to strike out for herself instead of depending on narratives, letters and documents, the story would have much nearer reached what Mr. Saintsbury terms "consummateness."

The historical background of THE RECESS is extensive, including the reign of Elizabeth from beginning to end.

There is some mention of Queen Mary, and the last part of the book, the epilogue, deals with James the First. The historical events mentioned are the Reformation, the destruction of the monasteries, the return of Mary from France to England, the murder of Bothwell, the persecution of Mary by Elizabeth, the wars in the low countries, the war with Philip II of Spain, and the defeat of the Armada, the disturbances in the Netherlands, the death of Sir Philip Sidney, Irish disturbances, the execution of Mary, Queen of Scots, the execution of Essex, and the death of Queen Elizabeth.

Among the historical places mentioned are Windsor Castle, Fotheringay Castle, the Tower of London, Bolton Castle, Hubert Hall, and Kenilworth. St. Vincent's Abbey, with which the "Recess" was connected is located about forty miles from Kenilworth, and has all the air of being historical. During the course of the story, the characters, at one time or another, wander over England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales, Denmark, the Netherlands, France and the West Indies. They appear in Yorkshire, Devonshire, Ulster; they are at Tutbury, Burgham, Coventry, Warwick, Greenwich, Plymouth, Chelsea, Rouen, Cadiz, St. Jago de la Verga in Jamaica, Richmond and London. The atmosphere is pretty consistently Elizabethan, although it must be admitted that the mansion on the Thames near Richmond, where Matilda and Mary lived as next-

door neighbors of the Prince of Wales, has an air not entirely Jacobean, but rather that of Twickenham.

Over sixty historical characters are mentioned in "The Recess." In the list of sovereigns are Queen Mary, Queen Elizabeth, James the First, Henry, Prince of Wales, and his sister Princess Elizabeth, Mary, Queen of Scots, Francis the Second, and Philip II of Spain. There is the Duke of Norfolk, Duke of Anjou, Duke of Guise, Duke of Alva. Besides the Earls of Leicester and of Essex, a long list of earls is given, as containing the names of the powerful friends of Norfolk: the Earls of Shrewsbury, Derby, Redford, Northumberland, Westmoreland, Pembroke, Southampton, Arundel and Sussex. The Pope is mentioned several times. Among the Lords are Burleigh, Huntingdon, Wexford, Guilford, Sands, Brooke; there is Melvil, the Scotch ambassador to France, Murray, the Regent of Scotland, Bothwell, the younger Cecil, Sir Philip Sidney, Sir Walter Raleigh, Sir Francis Drake, and a score of others. Besides Mary and Elizabeth, the list of women's names includes the Countess of Somerset, Miss Linerick, (afterwards Lady Essex, then Lady Leicester,) Lady Jane Grey, Lady Pembroke and Lady Arundel, sisters of Sir Philip Sidney, Rose Cecil, Elizabeth Vernon, (afterward Lady Southampton,) Miss Walsingham, (afterward Lady Sidney, then Lady Essex,) and Margaret Lady Mortimer.

The historical characters who carry the burden of the

story are Elizabeth and Leicester and Essex. Mary appears only once or twice, and the Duke of Norfolk no oftener, Sir Philip Sidney woos Matilda and Sir Walter Raleigh, Ellinor. Lady Pembroke and Lady Arundel, with Rose Cecil befriend the sisters. Those who are opposed to the sisters are, besides Elizabeth, Burleigh, Lord Arlington and the Earl of Somerset, Lady Mortimer and Miss Walsingham, or Lady Essex.

There are many other ~~minor~~ minor characters: of these some may be historical, such as Henry Tracey, General Tiroen or O'Neal, Chaplain De Vere, Sir Humphry Morston; there are a number of servants: Alice and James, LeVal, Williams, Dame Margery, Emanuel and Aimor in Jamaica; as well as a long list of benefactors, Mrs. Marlow, Alithea, the Laird of Darnock and his brother and sister, Hugh and Phoebe, Dunlop the guard, Anana in Jamaica and Adelaide in France.

Of the six chief characters in the book, three are historical and three fictitious. Of the latter, Mary, the daughter, is a mere lay figure, an ingénue at the best. Although Matilda tells the story, and tries to give the impression that Ellinor is her superior, in beauty, cleverness, personality, there is little to choose between the two. Each is equally the heroine of the story. Ellinor's adventures are a bit more daring than those of Matilda, who, she confesses, was born to obedience. Matilda and Ellinor agreed

in all but one thing, namely, the character of Leicester. Ellinor considered him an unprincipled wretch, in good sister-in-law fashion. To neither of the sisters did it occur to question the advisability of being united in marriage to a man who had killed his wife only the day before. To Ellinor is assigned the part of going mad before Queen Elizabeth, in a fashion like that of Lady Macbeth, Ophelia and a feminine Hamlet, combined. Leicester's character is well brought out, however it may vary from history. He is frank, dashing, handsome, worthy in every way to be the favorite of the Queen. He has the advantage of telling most of his own story himself, and then of having the rest chronicled by his loving wife, Matilda. The story of Essex is told by so many persons that it is less forceful. But of all the characters, that of Elizabeth stands out as the most clearly drawn, and the strongest. Her career is followed from the moment of her ascending the throne of England, a young, imperious girl, till she dies, a vain, querulous, broken old woman. She is brutally frank in her likes and dislikes, not chary of speech, diplomatic, politic, shrewd in her statesmanship, egotistic, vain, credulous, impervious to criticism, loving beauty in those about her, invincible to all shafts except those of flattery,— in short, what is now the conventional Elizabeth. It is the spirit of Elizabeth which dominates the entire book.

In planning her historical romance, Miss Lee follows what is now the approved rule, that is, to make the fictitious characters play the most prominent part in the story, while the historical characters furnish the background. Her story is history with a little love introduced into it, according to the directions given by Puff in THE CRITIC: "It is a received point among poets, that where history gives you a good heroic outline for a play, you may fill up with a little love at your discretion: in doing which, nine times out of ten, you only make up a deficiency in the private history of the times."

Miss Lee has one constant formula for her incidents: with the heroine as the center, attraction is succeeded by pursuit, capture, rescue and escape. Her story resolves itself into a series of what are now known as "chase pictures," with the heroine in constant peril with equally constant escape, until, according to Lamb's resolution of the problem, she either goes mad or takes poison. A touch of Elizabethan influence is seen in the fact that in half a dozen instances the heroine or her faithful friend escapes in a page's costume. The element of coincidence is greatly overworked in Miss Lee's book: an unbelievable number of caskets weighted with gold, jewels and important papers are produced at the moment of the heroine's greatest trial, or when she is about to set off on a journey and might be in need of funds.

Miss Lee handles the great number of incidents in THE RECESS with apparent ease, and calls on any one from the Pope to the head gardener to assist in furthering her narrative.

Puff's speech in the play is answered by the question which Scott uses at the beginning of KENILWORTH, "No scandal about Queen Elizabeth, I hope?" There is no scandal about Queen Elizabeth either in KENILWORTH or in THE RECESS, but there is a great deal of information concerning the lady in both. THE RECESS was published when Scott was about fourteen years old, and he might very easily have read it either then or later. "C.C." writes in 1851, thirty years after the appearance of KENILWORTH, "that "it has been said that Scott was indebted to this novel for many suggestions for his KENILWORTH; and he, so rich in gifts that were all his own, would probably have been the first to have acknowledged his obligations." However willing he may have been, the obligation is not generally acknowledged. Mickie's ballad of GUNNOR HALL is given all the credit as the origin of KENILWORTH, which no doubt it deserves. But in some details, THE RECESS at least may claim priority over KENILWORTH. Such incidents are the secret marriage of Leicester, the fear of Elizabeth's anger, the young wives, Amy and Matilda, coming secretly and in disguise to Kenilworth Castle, Elizabeth's offer of her hand to Leicester, her indignation at the discovery of his marriage, the meeting be-

tween Elizabeth and each of the young women. The descriptions of Kenilworth Castle and the revels held there during the Queen's visit form an interesting part of both stories.

Miss Lee in her chronology does not err more than Scott does in his. The famous visit to Kenilworth took place in 1575. Since the Duke of Norfolk had joined his interests with Mary in 1568, and he was beheaded in 1572, when his daughters were about two and half years old, Matilda could have been only a little more than five years old at the time of the Queen's visit. According to Miss Lee, Matilda was about seventeen years old when she was married to Leicester. That must have been in 1586; and as Leicester died in 1588 Matilda crowded a good deal of suffering into two short years. Her daughter was born after Leicester's death, on board a vessel bound for Jamaica, on which Matilda was a prisoner. At the time of Mary's betrothal to Henry, she was, her mother said, just sixteen years old. But Henry speaks of the approaching marriage of his sister Elizabeth to the elector, and departs to attend the ceremony. Princess Elizabeth and the Elector Frederick were married in 1613, (THE TEMPEST,

1 The apartments specially fitted up for Amy Robsart were in Cumnor Hall: for Matilda, a suite, connected with that of Leicester, was prepared in Kenilworth Castle.

from which Matilda quotes a speech of Miranda's was performed at the nuptials,) and Mary, if born in 1588 or 9 would be about twenty-five years old. But, with a few exceptions the chronology is fairly well arranged.

THE RECESS as a historical romance, shows, besides its historical background, the two romantic elements, Gothicism and sentimentalism. It is however, more sentimental than Gothic. The eyes of the characters are "drowned in tears;" when the Duke of Norfolk sees his infant daughters, born under such an unlucky star, "tears of paternal affection flowed gracefully down his cheeks;" he received his death sentence "with a fortitude which melted Lord Shrewsbury, who pronounced it, into tears." Lady Scroope "spent many days, and would every one, had it not afflicted her lord, in weeping over" the orphaned children. Even the stern Leicester weeps. When he announces to Matilda the execution of her mother, Mary Queen of Scots, Matilda declares that he "sunk at my feet, and hiding his tears with my robe, swelled with sobs that almost cracked my heart-strings." Phoebe's "gushing tears would often relax the strings of her lute." As for fainting, and swooning, and sinking senseless, and being revived by prompt bleeding, these are the inevitable consequences of tidings of grief or joy, sight of friend or foe, increase of peril or timely arrival of aid.

The Gothic element is seen largely in the descriptive passages. The RECESS is a Gothic structure. It "could not be called a cave, because it was composed of various rooms; and the stones were obviously united by labor; yet every room was distinct, and divided from the rest by a vaulted passage with many stairs, while our light proceeded from small casements of painted glass, so infinitely above our reach that we could never seek a world beyond; and so dim, that the beams of the sun were almost a novelty to us when we quitted his retirement." St. Vincent's Abbey "had all the gothic magnificence and elegance." It was erected upon the ruins of a monastery, destroyed at the Reformation. St. Vincent's Abbey was as well provided with mysterious passages, carved chests, and unused rooms as was Northanger Abbey. The connection between the Abbey and the RECESS would have driven Catherine Morland mad with joy. The housekeeper "preceded us to a store-room on the ground floor, and, opening a press, unfastened a false back, which conducted us into a closet, dark but for our torches. She then lifted a part of the floor, fitted very neatly, and discovered a narrow pair of stairs, down which we went, leaving her behind, and effectually secured ourselves by bolting it firmly on the inside. We passed through several subterraneous passages built on arches, and preserved from damp by cavities which passed through every statue that

ornamented the garden, till at last we reached our prison." That last little utilitarian touch about the damps and the statues would have been used by Mrs. Radcliffe to produce a marvellous supernatural effect, miraculously easy to explain away; but Miss Lee had not profited by the lesson offered in THE CASTLE OF OTRANTO, and Miss Ward was still at Bath, enjoying her morning visit to the Pump room, without a thought of her terrifying waxen image and musical statues which she was to invent a little later. Miss Lee uses neither Horace Walpole's "supernatural," nor Mrs. Radcliffe's "explained supernatural,"--- at least, not in THE RECESS."

The description of a heap of ruins shows the influence of Walpole. "On turning round to observe how the entrance was hid, we perceived a high raised tomb, at each corner of which stood a gigantic statue of a man in armour, as if to guard it, two of whom were now headless." One seems to see here the waving of Alphonso's plumes and to feel the weight of his helmet.

An occasional use of the elements is made during the course of the story. "At the turn of the night, a dreadful storm of thunder, lightning, wind, and rain, broke over us; and the terrors natural to my sex, on such occasions, were doubled on that finding the whole party were set on by banditti." The moon often peers out to play her accustomed part. "The pale gleams of the moon seemed every moment to people the dungeon they glanced through."

Miss Lee does not confine her powers of description to ruined abbeys and stately castles. She revels in sunrise and sunset, quiet gardens and stormy seas.

"We found ourselves in a noble cloister. We flew into the garden it ordered, and how strong was the impression of the scene before us! From the mansion, which stood on a hill, spread a rich and fertile valley, mingled with thickets, half-seen or clustered hamlets, while through the living landscape flowed a clear river,

-----and to the main
The liquid serpent drew his silver train.

The sun was sinking, involved in swelling waves of gold and purple, upon whom we we almost gazed ourselves blind: for though we had often read and heard of his effulgence, the Author of universal being can alone display it. Imagination, madam, may sometimes surpass the wonder of art; but those of nature leave all imagination far behind." Miss Lee had not read her Rousseau for nothing.

"Nature seemed to tinge the woods with deeper verdure--the translucent stream meandered in majestic silence, undisturbed by noisy bargeman. Innocence seemed to rest under the shade of the willows which everywhere fringed the margin, and the empurpled sun diffused the repose he seemed hastening to partake." The hyper-critical might find in this too much of the "pathetic fallacy," but it is an attempt at seeing nature, and an attempt made a dozen years

or more before Wordsworth, five years before Mrs. Radcliffe began to write a line, and ten years before she wrote those descriptions of the Apennines, and the South of France, which Catherine Morland and all the world admired.

Stopford Brooke, in his ENGLISH LITERATURE, speaks of "the passionate, close, and poetical observation and description of natural scenery in Scotland." In Scotland, he says, "it is always the scenery of their own land that the poets describe." A curious commentary on the truth of this statement is the fact that the truest, most vivid, most picturesque descriptions in THE RECESS are Miss Lee's delineations of the scenes in Scotland....There is no such trace of the influence of Pope and the heroic couplet as is seen in the first quotation above. She gives a description of a storm at sea off the coast of Scotland that is terrible in its intensity, without a trace of Gothicism or sentimentalism. At the close of the description she writes, "The sea ran high, and the grey dawn presented to our eager eyes a coast, which we were informed was that of Scotland, at no great distance; an old castle appeared on a sharp projection of the land, whose solid battlements seemed proof against every attack of art and nature: but the shoals, rocks and surf that intervened threatened to make us ever behold it at a hopeless distance, unless we could interest the compassion of its owners."

That is written by one who knew just how the coast of Scotland appeared to one approaching it. Another touch of realism is found in this paragraph. "A dreary winter passed away in this remote castle, through every aperture of which the keen and howling wind poured unrestrained; and the vast ocean swelled with frequent storms," or this, "From the dawn of the morning till night blackened the ocean, did one or the other watch, with eager expectation, the promised vessel." But when she returns to England, Miss Lee at once loses her realistic touch, although she is trying to see beauty in the mountains. "Nature's gigantic phalanx, impassable mountains, present their formidable summits in long array, overawing every inferior guard; while, in their vivid hollows, happiness reposes on the bosom of her mother, Nature." One bit of description seems to show actual observation: "the wild ringlets of her auburn hair played on her youthful face, as the yellow leaves of Autumn curl over a latter peach."

The allusions, except to historical matters, are not many. Reference is made to the furies of Orestes, and to Philoctetes; like the latter some one found that his "equivocation furnished a terrible punishment." There are several from the Bible: the resignation of Abraham, Jezebel, the strength of Goliath, Judith. This mention of Judith is more than an allusion: the whole scene is planned exactly after the story of Judith and Holofernes. Ellinor, held in the Irish camp,

gives the Irish general a drink drugged with laudanum, takes his cloak and steals from his tent, and escapes, "a second Judith." The phrase, "Aut Caesar, aut nullus," is quoted, one or two lines from Pope, a sentence from THE TEMPEST, the "tongues in trees" speech from AS YOU LIKE IT; and a reference, to Brutus's Portia, who "could have swallowed fire" completes the Shakespearean allusions.

The critic who writes on the novel is interested in THE RECESS as one of the earliest if not the first attempt at writing the historical novel. Jeaffreson gives the first place to DeFoe, with ~~this~~ MOMOIRS OF A CAVALIER, which deceived the Earl of Chatham in to thinking them a real account of the civil wars. Walpole tries to give a historical background to THE CASTLE OF OTRANTO, by announcing in the preface to the first edition, that "the following work was found in the library of an ancient Catholic family in the north of England. It was printed at Naples, in the black letter, in the year 1529." It was written, he asserts, between the time of the first crusade, 1095, and the last, 1243. Beyond this, there is no trace of history. In 1777, six or seven years before THE RECESS, Clara Reeve began her story of THE OLD ENGLISH BARON, thus, "In the minority of Henry the Sixth, King of England, when the renowned John, Duke of Bedford, was Regent of France, and Humphry, the good Duke of Gloucester, was Protector of England, a worthy knight called Sir Philip Harclay, returned from his travels to

England, his native country;" and not another word of history is mentioned. Mrs. Radcliffe, who began to write a few years after the appearance of THE RECESS, has a slight touch of history to some of her ~~works~~. THE MYSTERIES OF UDOLPHO opens with the mention of the year 1584 as the time of the story, and takes no further notice of history.

The critics generally give a very grudging acknowledgment of the claims of THE RECESS as being the first in the lists. The Gentleman's Magazine for 1824 is perhaps the most certain, calling THE RECESS "the first romance in the English language which blended history with fiction, and enriched both by pathos and descriptive scenery." By 1851, the same magazine weakens a trifle. "THE RECESS is said to have been the first historical romance in English." "C.C." thinks that THE RECESS "may justly be considered the pioneer of the historical romance." Cross says that "the year when the new historical novel began to have the air of a distinct species is 1783, when Miss Sophia Lee published the first volume of THE RECESS to be followed in 1786 by two more volumes." These dates are not quite correct, the three volumes appearing in 1785, but Mr. Cross is even more mistaken in his further criticism. "It is a tale of the time of Queen Elizabeth into which are brought most of the court worthies. Its heroine, who is a daughter of Mary Queen of Scots, and the Duke of Norfolk, is, of course, as preposterous as Prévost's son

to Cromwell. The part of most sustained interest is that which unfolds the character of the Earl of Leicester, who is banished and recalled by his queen, intrigues with Lady Essex, and removes his wife by contriving that she eat by mistake a dish of poisoned carp, which she has prepared expressly for him." From this, no one could guess that Lady Essex and the wife poisoned by the carp were one and the same person, but such is the case. Leicester married the widow of the Earl of Essex and it was she who contrived against him.

This criticism was published in 1905; in 1913, Holliday, discussing ENGLISH FICTION FROM THE FIFTH TO THE TWENTIETH CENTURY, evidently saves time by borrowing Cross's carping criticism, because here, too, "the Earl of Leicester, intriguing with Lady Essex, poisons his wife with a dish of carp which she had intended for him."

The fact that two or three of the critics mention only one herein, when there are two of equal rank in the book, makes one suspect that, having put their hands to the plow, they turned back.

By the middle of the nineteenth century, the critics were beginning to look upon THE RECESS as out-of-date and old-fashioned, but having a great deal of merit. "C.C." in 1851, says: "It is a book which, judged even by the modern canons of criticism, displays many admirable qualities. Somewhat verbose it is, and replete with minute details; but in those days a good novel was a feast never complained of for the

tediousness of its courses; it is full of high-wrought romantic incidents, verging on the debatable ground between the improbable and impossible; but sixty or seventy years ago we suspect the delicate flavor of the genuinely simple story would have been voted insipid and unpalatable. While, with these drawbacks-- to modern readers-- THE RECESS is still remarkable for the brilliant imagination it displays, the true and powerful historical coloring which is maintained throughout; and last though by no means the least charm-- since it is one in which so many modern would-be-novelists rail-- for a lucid and euphonious style which shows that composition had been studied as an art."

Jeaffreson gives the contrast between the critical attitude towards THE RECESS in 1785 and 1858. "THE RECESS is unartistic and faulty in the extreme; the facts of history are not treated even with a pretence of respect; and the structure of the tale is very clumsy. Any novel reader who has been nurtured on Scott and Kingsley will be safe to fall asleep in a fair, honest, and persevering attempt to get through its pages. Yet we know many elders now living who confess to having read it in their youthful days, over and over again, with enchained interest. And here and there can be found an old gentleman who declares, with a voice of angry defiance, that all modern novels are wretched trash and that no fiction worth reading has been written since the

publication of Miss Lee's RECESS.

Among the characteristics of THE RECESS may be noted the childhood element, and the recording of personal memories, as used later by Coleridge, Wordsworth and DeQuincey. The tone of the entire story is relaxing instead of bracing. The gloom of the Gothic romance and the languor of the sentimental novel proved too much for Miss Lee's genius, and for all those who followed her, until the appearance of the Great Unknown. The personal side is contrasted with the institutional-- the Church against Mary Queen of Scots, Elizabeth the woman against Elizabeth the Queen, the exigencies of war, religion and politics against the personal happiness of man and woman.

In that the story gives a view of the entire reign of one sovereign, with its historical, institutional and personal demonstrations, THE RECESS shows epic elements. The lyric elements appear in the subjectivity of the individual narratives. There is no trace of the pastoralism of the eighteenth century. Although it is aristocratic rather than democratic, the book shows a hint of the humanitarianism which was found in Crabbe and Goldsmith. "If benevolence drew Mrs. Marlow abroad, she made us always her companions, and gave her alms but through our hands; ordering us ever to add some mite of our own, in proportion to our means. Avarice is rarely the vice of youth; at least, if I may judge

by my own heart; for the chief joy of receiving, to me, was that of giving." Even more significant is this: "I gathered into the abbey such of their children as were weakly and deformed, and while those blessed with florid health pursued the track of labor, the others were instructed in tapestry, point, reading, writing and music, according to their sex and age."

As having some connection with the influence of Harriet Lee's work on Byron, it is interesting to discover in Sophia's work the note of Byronic fatalism, the desire for solitude, the egoism, the longing for death.

THE CANTERBURY TALES

Two volumes of THE CANTERBURY TALES appeared in 1797; Three other volumes followed, within a year or two. In 1801, G. and J. Robinson, the London Publishers who had brought out the first volumes, published the entire series of five volumes. Of this series, volume I is of the third edition, volumes II and III of the second edition, 1804; and ~~IV~~ and ^{are} volume V is of the first edition. Of the volumes in the Library of the University of Kansas, Volume I is of the fourth edition, 1804; volume II is of the third edition, 1803; volume III is of the third edition, 1804; and volume IV is of the second edition, 1803. Volume V is missing. Another edition of THE CANTERBURY TALES was published in 1831, comprising volumes XII and XIII of a series called Standard Novels. In 1857 appeared a New York edition of Harriet's tales, published by Mason Brothers. The preface states that "the first volume of the CANTERBURY TALES was published in 1797, and was followed, at intervals of a few years, by four other volumes of striking and popular fictions, under the same title. The great merit of the work, however, belonged to Harriet Lee; and in the later editions, as the tales, with the exception of the first three in our volume, were wholly distinct, the productions of the two sisters were separately published."

THE CANTERBURY TALES are related by a group of travellers

snowbound at an inn in Canterbury while on the road from Dover to London. The introduction is given by Sophia Lee in the rôle of poet. While waiting for the coach at Dover, a "sharp-visaged barber," a man of "taste," and interest in the arts, escorts the poet to the tomb of another poet, Churchill. Seated in the coach, the poet fabricated "a brief poetical history of England to help short memories," and awakes to find that the coach has reached Canterbury, and that supper is "ready to be put on the table." The discomforts of the inn recall to the poet's mind, the sorrows of poor Shenstone, whose "warmest welcome" was at an inn. Having discovered that the snow will prevent their journeying to London, the poet surveys his companions and takes a mental portrait of them, as did the other poet at Canterbury, long ago. There were seven travellers; an old gentlewoman, superstitious, devoted to her spectacles and her knitting; a young lady from London, in "the bloom of nineteen;" a cross on her bosom showed her to be a catholic, and a peculiar accent an Irish-woman..... Love and romance reigned in every lineament." A French abbé devoted himself to the young lady; a portly Englishman "engrossed both candles," while he read from his newspaper. The most interesting of the group was an aged clergyman, "whose age and infirmities challenged regard, while his aspect awakened the most melting benevolence." The seventh of the group was an officer, "in the middle of life,"

"martial and athletic in his person; of a countenance open and sensible." The poet, whose coat was threadbare, suggests that "each of the company would relate the most remarkable story he or she ever knew or heard of." To this request, the curly Englishman objects, and goes yawning to bed. This leaves the poet in a rage. "A charming tale ready for the press in my travelling desk-- the harvest I might make could I prevail on each of the company to tell me another-- Reader, if you ever had an empty purse, and an unread performance of your own, burning your pocket, and your heart, I need not ask you to pity me."

Morning finds the travellers in a more complaisant mood, and, as did the first Canterbury pilgrims, they draw lots to determine the order in which they should appear. "On purpose to torment me," the poet continues, "my old competitor, the Englishman, drew number one; the second lot, however, fortunately was mine; the third, the Frenchman's, the fourth the Old Woman's, the fifth the Young Lady's, the sixth the officer's and the venerable Parson had the seventh."

The first volumes proved so successful that others were added. Having heard from all the members of the first group, the authors were compelled either to invent more characters, or dispense with the machinery altogether. They really combined the two plans, doing away with the Canterbury group, but still depending on an imaginary narrator for each story.

At the end of volume three, Sophia announces, at the close of the clergyman's tale, "The Poet's Conclusion: The voice of my most favorite companion suddenly ceased, and I awoke--- yes, reader, , courteous or uncourteous, I really awoke--- from a species of day-dreams to which I have all my life been subject: and if you should find these as pleasant as I have done, why we may henceforward recite tales without going to Canterbury, and travel half the world over without quitting our own dear fire-sides." The reader might think the lack of courtesy appeared in the falling asleep rather than in the waking. Since the clergyman's tale was penned by Sophia herself, and she fell asleep over it she ought not blame the gentle reader if he too nods over the prosy tale. VolumeIV welcomes the "courteous reader" to fresh fields and pastures new. "Should you be good-naturedly disposed, you will not inquire minutely where the travellers were picked up by whom the following stories are related: but will continue to ramble on, with me, through the regions of imagination, without much anxiety as to the object of the journey provided the road prove but pleasant."

The tales in the last two volumes were written by Harriet, VolumeIV contained Krutzner or the German's Tale, and Claudina, or the Scotsman's Tale. Volume V contains stories by a new group of narrators; Mary Lawson or the Landlady's Tale; Stanhope, or the Friard's Tale; Julia, or the Wife's Tale. Two stories in the last two volumes are worthy of

special notice: Krutzner, and Mary Lawson. The latter story, surrounded by the clumsy machinery of a found manuscript, is to modern taste at least, the best of the series.

Harriet seemed to feel some need of explaining the use of the title, THE CANTERBURY TALES. Mrs. Dixon¹, the landlady, is startled to find in her own experiences the possible source of literary material. "Who would dream of writing such an old story as that?" she asks her literary lodger. "Dear sir,, there are a hundred such in the world, Take my word for it, it will pass for a mere Canterbury Tale." "With all my heart," responds the lodger. "I have not the least objection-- prosing old stories are proverbially called Canterbury Tales, and therefore mine claim that title." Clara Whitmore. In WOMAN'S WORK IN FICTION, quotes from the preface to a complete edition of the Tales published in 1832, in which Harriet Lee wrote:

"Before I finally dismiss the subject, I think I may be permitted to observe that, when these volumes first appeared, a work bearing distinctly the title of Tales, professedly adapted to different countries, either abruptly commencing with, or breaking suddenly into a sort of dramatic dialogue, was a novelty in the fiction of the day. Innumerable TALES of the same stamp and adapted in the same manner to all classes and all countries, have since appeared; with many of which I presume not to compete in merit, though I think I may fairly claim priority of design and style."

¹ In Mary Lawson, or The Landlady's Tale. — 92 —

John Hall-Stevenson, the friend of Sterne, wrote, in 1763, a series of tales called CRAZY TALES. In 1785, the Edinburgh Review announces TALES OF THE CASTLE, by F. Robinson. If the word TALES is used again until the appearance of the Canterbury Tales, it must have belonged to a very obscure production. In 1797 appeared THE CANTERBURY TALES. Below is a table of similar collections of stories with the word "Tales" as part of the title, which followed the work of the Lee sisters.

- 1796-98. Tales....., in Cheap Repository Tracts,
Hannah More.
- 1799, Tales of Terror, Mathew Gregory Lewis.
- 1801, Tales of Wonder, " " "
- 1803, Rural Tales and Ballads, Bloomfield,
- 1802, Moral Tales, Maria Edgeworth.
- 1804, Popular Tales, " "
- 1806, Simple Tales, Mrs. Opie.
- 1807, Tales from Shakespeare, Charles and Mary Lamb.
- 1808, Romantic Tales, Mathew Gregory Lewis.
- 1809, Tales of Fashionable Life, Maria Edgeworth.
- 1812, Tales in Verse, Crabbe.
- 1818, New Tales, Mrs. Opie.
- 1819, Tales of the Hall, Crabbe.
- 1819, Tales, Felicia Hemans.
- 1827-30, Tales of a Grandfather, 4 series, Sir Walter Scott.

No wonder that Harriet, in 1832, feels called on to protest a little concerning her claims of "priority of design and style," in the face of such sincere flattery.

The twelve stories which make up the Canterbury Tales are all of the romantic type: Gothic buildings and ruins, secret passages, tombs and terrors, lighted lamps, rushing winds, moonlight at any and all times, form the setting for the stories. The influence of Mrs. Radcliffe is shown in

most of the stories, particularly the two written by Sophia. In *THE TWO EMILYS* appears a musical statue which bears more than a faint resemblance to the one which startled Mrs. Radcliffe's Emily. Everything is Gothic that can be made so. The time had long past when, as Scott said, Gothic was used "to express whatever was in pointed and diametrical opposition to the rules of good taste." No one, in 1797-8 could possibly know that Catherine Morland in *NORTHANGER ABBEY* had, in 1796, been frightened to death by a laundry list. The time had not come yet when Lady Juliana (in Susan Ferrier's *MARRIAGE* in 1818,) must endure her friend's taunt, because of her ignorance of the latest fête, "Lord, my dear creature, how Gothic you are!" The Lee sisters were not the ones to discard a well-tried formula, although Harriet came near doing it in "Mary Lawson."

Sentimentalism still prevails in all the stories: the men shudder and sigh, the women weep and faint, but fortunately, all the ladies are blessed with countenances, the loveliness of which "even tears did not disfigure."

Harriet Lee said of the work, that it was "professedly adapted to different countries." In *The Traveller's Tale*, Montford goes to Paris, sees the Carnival in Venice, rambles round Italy, traverses the south of France, and crosses the Pyrenees, (a Roland for Mrs. Radcliffe's Oliver, the Appennines) into Spain. *The Poet's Tale* treats of life

in "the gay and dissolute reign of Charles the Second, and follows the fortunes of the hero Arundel through France, Italy, "Switzerland," and back to England. This tale contains a dissertation on patronage worthy of Dr. Johnson, whose patron, by the way, had the honor of acting as 'utor to one' of Miss Lee's characters.

The Frenchman's Tale, Constance, depicts the horrors of the days in France after the death of Louis Seize; the scenes are laid in the vicinity of the Marquis de Valmont's estate in Languedoc, and a château on the shores of the Mediterranean, while faint echoes of the disturbances in Paris reach the ears of the country folk, until at last they too suffer the dreadful consequences of war. The Old Woman's Tale, called Lothaire: a Legend, is a tale within a tale, arranged by means of a found manuscript, containing the story of Lothaire, "the trusty and well-beloved page of Louis IX." A slight indication of the changing attitude towards the Gothic story of terror is shown by the fact that Miss Lee permits the Baron, who is reading the story, to fall asleep over "the extravagant story he had been reading," because he had learned the outcome of the tale from another scroll.

The Young Lady's Tale, or the Two Emilys is the longest of the stories, containing nearly a hundred thousand words.

It takes the reader from Ireland to Italy, and back to Ireland again. An earthquake at Messina is one of the important incidents of the story. In this book, the "deportment of domestics" is modelled after that of the servants in "The Castle of Otranto." Beatrice, an Italian maid, who cannot forget "her father's dear little dwelling at the foot of the Alps," talks in that sprightly fashion which Horace Walpole fondly ~~imagined~~ would be approved by Shakespeare.

The Officer's Tale or Cavendish, takes the hero from "the dear delights of St. James's" on a campaign in America, is attacked by Indians, shows kindness to an Indian brave, who in turn befriends his protector and watches over him during his life among the savages. This part of the story is like Campbell's Gertrude of Wyoming, which was written ten years later. In the Clergyman's Tale, young Henry serves as a volunteer under "the gallant Wolfe," "the first commander of his time, now on the point of undertaking the memorable expedition against Canada." A great part of this story is told in letters.

A part of Krutzner, or the German's Tale is laid in Silesia during the Thirty Years' War. The Scotsman's Tale, or Claudina presents scenes at the cottage of a Lutheran pastor in Sweden, in St. Petersburg, and in England.

The last three stories, The Landlady's Tale, The

Friend's Tale, and The Wife's Tale, are held together by a slender connecting thread of a story concerning Mrs. Dixon's lodger, "young Mr. Villars." These tales seem more typically English: with the exception of an excursion into Italy and Switzerland, the scenes are English, in London, Clifton and Bristol and other places which the Lee sisters had actually known.

Of the Canterbury Tales, Clara Whitmore says, "there is little character drawing. Any one of the stories might have been told by any one of the narrators, and before the conclusion the authors dropped this device." Although not entirely successful in their attempt, the sisters tried hard to make the stories in some way represent the one who tells the story. To a certain degree, they succeed. They did not drop the device of narration. They continued the use of it until every one of the seven members of the group at Canterbury had told his or her story. It was evidently the popularity of the first seven stories that created a demand for others of a similar style. Harriet and Sophia could not get far enough away from the hobility to allow their stories to be told by one of the lower classes, although Harriet seems to make one attempt in her Landlady's Tale. The Lee sisters never dreamed how funny a Tony Weller could be, or they might have allowed the coachman to

tell a story. And think what a tale might have come from the lips of that poetical barber, whom Miss Lee permits us to meet, only to lose him forever, just because his "distinction was so like a barber."

Harriet Lee herself has pointed out the cause of the popularity of these tales and at the same time the reason for their present importance. It was not the fact that they continued the Gothic and sentimental traditions a few years longer, but it was because, as Miss Lee may be permitted again to observe, "when these volumes first appeared, a work..... either abruptly commencing with, or breaking suddenly into, a sort of dramatic dialogue, was a novelty in the fiction of the day." Miss Lee and her sister Sophia were at least among the first to realize that a story could be told in less than three volumes, (although any one who has waded laboriously through Sophia's *The Two Emilys*, will doubt whether Sophia had the courage of her convictions.)

Harriet was by far the better story teller of the two. Some of her dialogue has the crispness and naturalness of the best dramatic dialogue. There are of course many passages where the old, labored, stilted dialogue of sentimentalism blocks conversation, but this may be forgiven for the sake of what is good. Clara Whitmore says that "these Tales represent the beginning of the modern

short story."

Byron's use of Harriet Lee's Kruitner has made it the most famous story in the collection. Except for the introduction of the unimportant character, Ida, Byron reproduces Miss Lee's story in his WERNER, a tragedy in blank verse. In many instances he has done a little more than change the actual words of the dialogue into verse, not always to the improvement of his original.

Byron himself was open in his acknowledgment of his plundering. In his preface to WERNER, written in Pisa, February 1882, Byron says, "I have adopted the characters, plan and even the language, of many parts of this story. Some of the characters are modified or altered, a few of the names changed, and one character (Ida of Stralenheim) added by myself: but in the rest the original is chiefly followed. When I was young (about fourteen, I think,) I first read this tale, which made a deep impression upon me, and may, indeed, be said to contain the germ of much that I have since written. I am not sure that it ever was popular^o or at any rate, its popularity has since been eclipsed by that of other great writers in the same department. But I have generally found that those who had read it, agreed with me in their estimate of the singular power of mind and conception which it develops. I should also add conception, rather than

execution: for the story might, perhaps, have been developed with greater advantage. Amongst those whose opinions agreed with mine upon this story, I could mention some very high names: but this is not necessary, nor indeed of any use, for every one must judge according to his own feelings. I merely refer the reader to the original story, that he may see to what extent I have borrowed from it; and am not unwilling that he should find much greater pleasure in perusing it than the drama which is founded upon its contents."

Byron had begun a drama upon this tale in 1815, but the early version was never completed. However, it is easily seen that the subject had been of long-standing interest to Byron. Saintsbury traces the Byronic hero back to Mrs. Radcliffe's Schedoni; Professor Raleigh says that "the man that Lord Byron tried to be was the invention of Mrs. Radcliffe." Caroline F.E. Spurgeon, in a preface to the King's classics edition of THE CASTLE OF OTTANTO, wishes to give Walpole, "credit for the first sketch of the dark, handsome, melancholy, passionate hero of the Byronic poems." Not forgetting what Harriet Lee owes to Walpole and Mrs. Radcliffe, Byron's own words bear testimony to the fact that Harriet Lee's Kruitzner contained the germ of all he wrote and from her

work directly comes the Byronic hero.

A criticism of the chief character in the story and in the play, written at the time of the appearance of the play, says that "Werner-- we mean Krutzner-- is admirably drawn. Who does not recognize in him the portrait of too common a character? The man of shining talent, ardent mind, powerful connections, brilliant prospects, who, after squandering away all in wanton self-indulgence, having lived only for himself, finds himself bankrupt in fortune and character, the prey of bitter regret, yet, unrepentant, as selfish in remorse as in his gaiety."

Would there be such inconsistency in adding a third name to the portrait, and label it "Krutzner--Werner--Byron."

As a final word on the Canterbury Tales, a critic in Blackwood's said, "It would not, perhaps, be going too far to say, that the Canterbury Tales exhibit more of that species of invention which, as we have already remarked, was never common in English literature, than any of the works even of those first-rate novelists we have named, to whom Coleridge grants the invention of one of the three perfect plots is praise indeed."

1 Vol. XII, p. 710

CHRONOLOGICAL LIST
OF IMPORTANT DATES IN THE LIVES OF
SOPHIA AND HARRIET LEE

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- 1750---Sophia born in London
- 1757---Harriet born in London.
- 1780---Aug. 5, "Chapter of Accidents," Haymarket
 Aug. 25, Miss Farren's benefit, "Chapter of Accidents,"
 tenth time at the Haymarket
- "Chapter of Accidents" published, London
- "Chapter of Accidents" 2nd edition, T. Cadell, London
- 1780-81-2 Established school, Belvidere House, Bath.
- 1781---Death of Father, John Lee, at Bath.
- May 8, "Chapter of Accidents" at Drury Lane
- "Chapter of Accidents," published in Dublin.
- "Chapter of Accidents," 3rd edition, London.
- 1782---"Chapter of Accidents," 4th edition, London.
- 1784---"The Recess" first volume.
- 1785---"The Recess", three volumes, London.
- 1786---"The Errors of Innocence."
- 1787---French Translation of THE RECESS, by B. de La Mare.
- Nov. 10, "The New Peerage?" Drury Lane. Acted nine
 times.
- "The New Peerage" published.

1787---"The New Peerage" second edition.

"A Hermit's Tale"

"The Hermit's Tale," published in Dublin:

1788---Translation of "Chapter of Accidents" into German,
Die Zufälle.

1792---"Chapter of Accidents," fifth edition, London.

1793---Feb. 14, "Chapter of Accidents," Drury Lane Company

1795---Sept. 25, "Chapter of Accidents," Covent Garden.

1795 (?) "The Mysterious Marriage" submitted to Colman, who
declined it.

1796---April 20, "Almeyda, Queen of Granada," Drury Lane.

1796---"Chapter of Accidents" another edition, London.

1797---Jan. 14, "Chapter of Accidents," Drury Lane.

"Clara Lennox"

"Chapter of Accidents in Bell's British Theatre,
vol. 34.

1798-8 "Canterbury Tales," two vols.

1798---March, Godwin meets Harriet and Sophia at Bath.

1798---April, Harriet receives first letter from Godwin.

June to August, Courtship of Harriet Lee and
William Godwin.

August 7, Final refusal of Godwin by Harriet.

"The Mysterious Marriage," published.

"Clara Lennox" translated into French.

1799---"Canterbury Tales," 2nd edition.

1800---The Two Emilys; translated into French.

- 1801---"Canterbury Tales" 5 vols.
- 1802---June, "Chapter of Accidents," Drury Lane.
- 1803---Retired from teaching
- 1804---"The Recess" 5th edition, 3 vols. London.
 "The Life of a Lover", 6 vols.
- 1805---Oct. 15, "Chapter of Accidents" Covent Garden.
- 1807---Jan. 28, "The Assination," Drury Lane.
- 1810---"Ormond, or the Debauchee," attributed to Sophia
- 1811---"Chapter of Accidents," in Mrs. Inchabald's Modern
 Theatre, vol. 21.
 Byron begins tragedy, "Werner" founded on Harriet
 Lee's "Kruitzner."
- 1816---April 2, "Chapter of Accidents," Drury Lane.
- 1816---"Chapter of Accidents," edition by T. Dirdin, Chiswick
- 1818---"Chapter of Accidents," Oxberry's New English Drama,
 vol. 18.
- 1822---Nov. Byron's "Werner, or the Inheritance," London.
 Nov. Harriet sends "The Three Strangers" to Covent
 Garden.
- 1823---Nov. 13, "Chapter of Accidents" at Drury Lane.
 "Kruitzner" 5th edition, John Murray, London
- 1824--- March 13, Death of Sophia at Clifton.
 "Chapter of Accidents," The London Stage, vol. 2.
 "Chapter of Accidents," in Oxberry's New English
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- 1825---Dec. "The Three Strangers" acted 4 times, Covent
 Garden.

1826---"The Three Strangers" published.

1830---Feb. 10, Bath, Macready as "Werner" in Byron's
play.

1830-31 "Werner" at Drury Lane, 17 times.

1832---"Canterbury Tales" complete edition.

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1837---"The Recess" London.

1851---August 1, Death of Harriet, at Clifton.

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