

MARIA EDGEWORTH: FICTION IN THE SERVICE OF EDUCATION

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WANDA PENN

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I hereby recommend that the thesis prepared
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be accepted as fulfilling this part of the requirements
for the Degree of Master of Arts.

L. M. Ellison

In Charge of Thesis

L. M. Ellison

Director of Department

Accepted:

W. H. Lock

Chairman, Committee on Graduate Study

50932

PREFACE

The purpose of this study has been to show that Maria Edgeworth intended all her writings to teach worthy lessons. In accomplishing this purpose, I have classified her writings into three types--pedagogical theory, short stories, and novels--, and have examined the didactic theories presented by each type. Attention has been given to the tendencies in fiction and education during Miss Edgeworth's era as well as to the influence upon her of her father and her friend Thomas Day.

I am grateful to Dr. L.M.Ellison for the suggestion of the topic of my study and for his patient supervision of this thesis. My sincerest gratitude is also extended to the library staff of this college and to Miss Opal Williams, Librarian at the East Texas State Teachers College, Commerce, Texas, for their kind assistance in my research.

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MARIA EDGEWORTH: FICTION IN THE SERVICE OF EDUCATION

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The frank, brutal, and often indecent passages in the novels of Richardson, Fielding, Smollett, and Sterne were not to continue far past the middle of the eighteenth century. By that time the English novel was firmly established as an important form of writing, but the predominant characteristics were subject to change. Change came, not as a conscious endeavor by any one group of writers, but as the result of conditions in England. The reign of George III was marked by important economic and social changes which in turn influenced literature. With the exception of the deterioration in the condition of the poor, the changes were for the better. A practical religion was revived, social manners became more decent, pity was more easily evoked by human suffering, and culture was diffused more widely. Society, as portrayed by the powerful sentimentalism of Richardson, the more critical and intellectual interpretations of Fielding, and the ironic crudeness of Smollett and Sterne, were not wholly bad. The novels of these men were strongly colored, also, by the new characteristic ~~didacticism~~. Richardson taught Christian doctrine in Pamela and Clarissa, even though both books represented English life truthfully. The vague characters of Sterne and the

brutal tones of Smollett overshadowed Fielding's effort to exhibit altruistic truth.

Before Sterne had finished his Tristram Shandy, the movement to use the novel for the purpose of instruction was again under way. Goldsmith published his wholly didactic Vicar of Wakefield as the first novel of the new group. Goldsmith's delicacy of nature and reverence for womanhood made him shun the vulgar and the coarse, and continue to reconcile the reader with human nature where good predominates over evil. As a natural result came the moralistic story of the vicar, Dr. Primrose, whose faith in the right and firm optimism led him to find, even in prison, "a common nature to appeal to, minds to instruct, sympathies to bring back to virtue, souls to restore and save."¹ His opinion was that prisons made men guilty when they did not find them so.

Goldsmith's start in religious moralism was followed by Hannah More's religious tracts. Her first effort at didactic writing was rather a forced process, since naughtiness and total indifference to the needs of others marked her attitude during the first three and one-half decades of her life. David Garrick's death in 1779 caused her to look at life differently. She gave up drama and became a philanthropist and reformer. She, with the help of her sisters and the local minis-

¹ John Forrester, Life and Times of Oliver Goldsmith, pp. 234-235.

ter, organized Sunday schools and, later, regular schools for the poor. In these schools she emphasized the teachings of the Bible and the catechism. In 1823, after she had written "An Estimate of the Religion of the Fashionable World", "Structures on the Modern System of Female Education with a View of the Principles and Conduct Prevalent among Women of Rank and Fortune", "Essay on the Character and Practical Writings of Saint Paul", and "The Spirit of Prayer", her reward came as strong adverse criticism. The criticism, however, could not change her belief that every person could not, even with education, become a philosopher or a scholar.² Her work was for the people of her generation, and she is hardly remembered today except for a few "shrewdly worded, sensible tracts on moral and religious subjects". At the time that they were written, these tracts were circulated at the rate of about two million copies yearly.³

The influence of the French Revolution reached England and turned Romanticism to theory and doctrine. Social wrongs inspired a continuous stream of literature, from William Godwin's Caleb Williams to Lord Byron's Prisoner of Chillon. The novel was influenced both directly and indirectly by Rousseau as the exponent of the Revolution. By this influence the

² Dictionary of National Biography, XI, pp. 861-867.

³ Robert Bracey, Eighteenth Century Studies, pp. 37-38.

novel was turned into the field of theory and propaganda. Since the reading public accepted the theories promulgated as warrantable accounts of things as they really were, there was no end to theorizing. Many phases of society were brought under criticism, including marriage, government, and private property. Perhaps no single follower of Rousseau was a stronger theorist than William Godwin, whose writings portrayed the evil influence of laws. He accused man of being the destroyer of man. His Political Justice embodied his theories and served as a background for his two important novels, Caleb Williams and St. Leon. Holcroft, another theorist, pictured mankind in "bliss, sans government, sans laws, and above all sans property". His Anna St. Ives and Hugh Trevor were early but full and popular expressions of the Revolutionary philosophy. The philosophy of Rousseau's Emile, plus a "curious hotch-potch of a story", gave significance to Henry Brooke's Fool of Quality in which educational theory was first found.

With the advent of educational theory, a national interest was felt in the advance of education. The establishing of a national educational organization in England had been a slow and complicated matter.⁴ The difficulty in the process

⁴ Ellwood P. Cubberley, The History of Education, p.613.

of development was the lack of state control. Practically no effort toward public education had been made before the middle of the eighteenth century. About that time began the first charitable and philanthropic movement to extend a knowledge of the elements of learning to the poorer classes of the population. This movement was sponsored by the church and the upper classes of society. The rise of the novel and newspapers, and the printing of political news and cheap scientific pamphlets, contributed toward arousing an interest in the education of those who could not afford to pay the fees. State aid for schools was established in Ireland in 1831, but came later in England.

Throughout the advance in education, women were neglected in the provisions for public instruction. Except for the endeavors of Mary Wollstonecraft, little interest was shown in the problem before 1800. A girl was regarded as singular and too practical if she displayed knowledge and learning.⁵ Woman's education was directed solely toward making her a greater physical delight for her husband. Blushing modesty, delicate health, helplessness, and ignorance⁶ were her other desirable qualities. Regardless of this feeling toward educated girls, Elizabeth Montague offered to

⁵ John William Adamson, A Short History of Education, p. 229.

⁶ Madeline Linford, Mary Wollstonecraft, p. 9.

found and endow a college for women in 1775. She asked Mrs. Barbauld to be superintendent, but Mrs. Barbauld was horrified at the idea of women's becoming prominent, and refused the place. That plan was abandoned, and seventy-five years passed before any practical steps were taken toward organized education for women. Woman had all the penalties of life and few of its honorable privileges.⁷ "She was allowed to have feelings, but not the discretion of their proper government--that would have been too high a prerogative for her. Thus Clarissa Harlowe complains in many a letter that her father and family regard her as a disobedient and unnatural girl because she refuses to place her tenderest emotions entirely at their disposal."⁸ Even Rousseau objected to the education of women on the same basis with men. He said that women were "specially made to please men,"⁹ and the more they resembled the male sex the less power they would have over men. Mary Wollstonecraft replied to this objection by saying, "This is the very point I am at; I do not wish them to have power over men, but over themselves".¹⁰

It was Mary Wollstonecraft, "more than any other one person, who laid the first stones of that rough and painful

⁷ Madeline Linford, Mary Wollstonecraft, p. 8.

⁸ Van Meter Ames, Aesthetics of the Novel, p. 156.

⁹ Madeline Linford, Mary Wollstonecraft, p. 10.

¹⁰ Allene Gregory, The French Revolution, and the English Novel, p. 236.

road that has led to the enfranchisement of women and, among civilized races, an almost universal recognition of their rights as human beings". The student of the feminist movement inevitably finds that Mary Wollstonecraft was the founder¹¹ and greatest pioneer of the movement. Her principal writing, Rights of Women, was a bold and original production in its day. Her plea for a greater effort at understanding women, for more virtue on the part of both men and women, and her opposition to Rousseau's picture of woman in Emile, came from her recollections of her own home life with her unhappy parents and the influence of the two men who were fathers to her two daughters. She felt the need for the assertion of woman's rights; and she will".....perhaps hereafter be found to have performed more substantial service for the cause of her sex, than all the other writers, male or female, that ever felt themselves animated in the behalf of oppressed and injured beauty."¹²

During the latter part of the eighteenth century, a special class of novels grew up which had as their aim a reformation of the methods used in the instruction of the young. These novels were called pedagogical novels. The proper way of bringing up youth had been a leading theme in English prose literature since the Renaissance. Whereas the early systems

¹¹ Madeline Linford, Mary Wollstonecraft, p.10.

¹² William Godwin, Memoirs of Mary Wollstonecraft, p. 56.

of education had been based on the study of the classics, as fitting a boy to take his proper place in formal society, eighteenth century educational theory emphasized the place of nature and experiment in the child's development. "A favorite plan of a novelist devoted to this form of propaganda was to set in opposition two children, one brought up in the conventions of society, and the other in the freedom of nature, and show the advantages of the latter in all points."¹³

Henry Brooke's The Fool of Quality was the first English example of the pedagogical novel. The book describes the childhood and education of an ideal nobleman. It sets up a pattern of natural education and simple virtue. It is one of the "first novels containing a rational and sympathetic study of childhood..... The book is, if not ahead of its time, at any rate, on the very crest of the wave of progress, in all its ideas, and in its freedom from all sorts of cant and affectation"¹⁴. It denounces existing conditions and dreams of the future like a true Revolutionary novel, but the melodramatic discussion of rewards and penalties makes it seem childish, like Mrs. Behn and Mrs. Haywood. This book is, however, infinitely superior to the moralistic stories that were in vogue then and later, not excepting the 'improving' fiction of Maria Edgeworth. Brooke portrayed boyhood more realistically than any other writer prior to

¹³ William Vaughn Moody and Robert Morris Lovett, A History of English Literature, p. 295.

¹⁴ Henry Brooke, The Fool of Quality, Introduction, p.XXX

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Thomas Hughes. Thomas Day's Sandford and Merton is, perhaps, the greatest technical example of the pedagogical novel. No reader of this story can miss the educating purpose,--the return to nature,--nor the contrast between the two children of different classes of society. These novels convincingly elucidate the merits of the theories of education which they contain.

In the same way that Rousseau's Social Contract revolutionized the social structure of France and helped to cause the French Revolution, his Emile influenced a great change in the educational system of England. He hoped to keep the world from thinking, in order that he might make people believe with him that human nature is good, and only man-made convention causes evil. That belief led him to write his true pedagogical novel of theory, Emile. The boy Emile was to be brought up without restraint, allowing nature to have free range. His father's tutoring was the main human influence in his life. In contrast to this idea of freedom, George Meredith, in Richard Feverel, shows the folly of rearing a boy with systematized training. Mrs. Brunton followed Rousseau's example by producing two books of theory, Self-Control and Discipline. Not all books of educational theory advocated complete freedom from restraining influences; Practical Education, by Richard Lovell and Maria Edgeworth, contained perhaps the first plan of education that would fit into the present system of supervised individual instruction.

A conflict between the wants and needs of children as expressed in the novel changed the pedagogical novel from the field of pure theory to the fictionized tract. The model stories and didactic talks to the boys put Thomas Day's Sanford and Merton into this category. Like Rousseau he approved small classes, with more personal interest shown each child, but he was singular in showing and utilizing the interests of a child's healthy wonder.

Madame de Genlis' Tales of the Castle contains numerous moralistic stories told for the edification of children. These stories, written for Madame de Genlis' own daughter, were woven into the various episodes in the life at the castle. Her "enchanting lessons incessantly tend to inspire universal philanthropy; to draw the most amiable, and therefore the most just pictures of virtue; to soften the asperities of the passions; to teach gentleness, benevolence, fortitude; justice¹⁵ toward ourselves, charity toward others".

Mrs. Elizabeth Inchbald's aim was hardly as broad. Her novels, A Simple Story and Art and Nature, are simple, didactic, pathetic, and individualistic tracts on education. She showed no interest in the world at large, or in any section of society. She hardly even concerned herself with the family, but rather with two or three individuals whose interactions form the whole of her book. Even when her heroines are

¹⁵ Madame la Comtesse de Genlis, Tales of the Castle, I, Introduction, II.

languishing under false accusations, little sympathy is shown by the author. She had a stern code of right and wrong, and any laxness of opinion, whether sincere or insincere, met her disapproval. Miss Milner, in A Simple Story, receives a sympathetic characterization, owing to the harsh treatment that she had received at the boarding school.

The greatest writer of pedagogical novels for children and not just about them was Maria Edgeworth. The idea was new, since Mrs. Barbauld and Dr. Watts were the only people of prominence who condescended to that level. Miss Edgeworth "introduced the story for children, which was not a tract, but the literary answer to 'Tell me a story', that exploitation of nursery tales told by mothers from the immemorial"¹⁶. They were written from the level of child thought and from the point of view of those to whom they were addressed.

As compared with the characters in the books published during the fifty years preceding their advent, Maria Edgeworth's were real children, and not mere lay figures named to represent them, or pegs upon which to hang appropriate moral and religious sentiments. Moreover, they were generally well-bred and reasonable children, who were early taught patience, self-control, and the necessity of bearing the consequences of their follies and mistakes--three important lessons which can never be without effects in after-life.¹⁷

However, her children are almost too self-denying and ready

¹⁶ R. Brinley Johnson, The Women Novelists, p. 286.

¹⁷ Irish Literature, III, p. 994.

to give up. Her purpose was to do good with her writings, which "exhibit so singular an unison of sober sense and exhaustible invention". George Saintsbury, in speaking of the group of late eighteenth century novelists, says:

Hardly a single one of our company, with the possible exception of Maria Edgeworth, can be said to be purely normal; and even her normality was somewhat interfered with by her father's eccentricities, by circumstances of this and that kind, and, not least, perhaps, by an absence both of critical supervision and creative audacity in herself.¹⁸

¹⁸ Cambridge History of English Literature, XI, p. 316.

CHAPTER TWO

MARIA EDGEWORTH'S PERSONAL RELATIONS TO THE MOVEMENT FOR EDUCATIONAL REFORM

The full significance of Maria Edgeworth's place in the history of English thought is only realized in correlation with her heredity. The Edgeworth family entered Ireland during the reign of Queen Elizabeth, about the year 1583. They were of English origin but inter-married in Ireland, until the eighteenth-century family was known as Irish. The history of the family from the time of their entrance into Ireland until the birth of Maria Edgeworth in 1767 is one of intense interest. Good fortune was not always theirs. Irish rebellions and financial reverses were constant terrors, and not even religious or matrimonial stability was always enjoyed. Some members of the family were faithful Protestants; some were loyal Catholics; some were happily married; others experienced great marital unhappiness. The secular and ecclesiastical histories of Ireland are filled with the names of Edgeworths who filled important places.

The energetic and restless spirit of Richard Lovell Edgeworth made him particularly suited to active life, but the discharging of the duties of a landowner was as active¹ as he ever became. His parents had been strong believers in

¹ He finished a law course at the Temple, but was never admitted to the bar.

education, but little formal training was his. After his daughter Maria began to show literary tastes, he spent his time supervising her productions, writing some himself, and caring for his tenants. His family returned to the Irish estate, Edgeworthstown, when Maria was fifteen years old. He immediately began building and planning alterations of all kinds, but was careful to stay always within his income. He never used middlemen in dealing with his tenants, and he always left a year's rent in their hands. "Go before Mr. Edgeworth, and you will surely get justice", became a saying in the neighborhood.² He made no distinction between those of his tenants who were Catholics and those who were Protestants. His interest in Ireland prompted his taking part in one rebellion. Maria, writing to Mrs. Ruxton, her aunt, tells of her father's inviting a group of householders to his home for a meeting to consider how they could best defend their property.³ They brought firearms and gave them into his care.

Shortly after the birth of the son Richard in 1764, Richard Lovell Edgeworth resolved to educate him according to the system of Rousseau; and in order to give the system a fair trial, the father and son, accompanied by Thomas Day, went to France. However, there was another attraction in

² Augustus J.C.Hare, Life and Letters of Maria Edgeworth, I, p. 12.

³ Ibid., I, p. 28.

France. Miss Honora Sneyd was, in the opinion of Mr. Edgeworth, superior to all other women. But Mrs. Anna Maria Elers Edgeworth was still living. With Thomas Day, who had transferred his attention to Elizabeth Sneyd, he left for France. Regardless of the mixed motives that had taken Mr. Edgeworth abroad, the living Mrs. Edgeworth was sent for within a few months. She found the young Richard dressed "without stockings, with his arms bare, in a jacket and trousers such as.....were novel and extraordinary", and growing into a hardy and fearless child.⁴ While the boy was develop-⁵ing into a typical child of nature, the older Richard was exercising his engineering skill by constructing a bridge for wheelbarrows across a ravine, and contriving a ferry-bridge near Lyons.

Mr. Edgeworth was extremely fortunate in his selection of his four wives, for not one attempted to quiet his domineering spirit. He came nearer to unhappiness with his first wife, Maria's mother, than with any of the others. He said of her: "My wife was prudent, domestic, and affectionate; but she was not of a cheerful temper. She lamented about trifles; and

⁴ Grace A. Oliver, A Study of Maria Edgeworth, p. 51.

⁵ Emily Lawless, Maria Edgeworth, p. 51:

With the assistance of Richard Lovell Edgeworth's own report, we can still picture to ourselves the luckless little lad being solemnly led up and introduced by his father, the 'young and gay' philosopher, to the elder and more famous one (Rousseau), who then and there marched him off for a walk by way of testing his character and general capabilities.

the lamenting of a female, with whom we live does not make home delightful".⁶ His admiration for Honora Sneyd did not decrease after their marriage, and after her death, he wrote Maria a long letter, still praising her. Elizabeth Sneyd had attended her sister with devoted care, and in less than eight months became the third wife of Richard Lovell Edgeworth, as her sister and predecessor had requested. During the seventeen years of their married life, Mr. Edgeworth never saw her out of temper, and never received from her an unkind word or an angry look.⁷ His fourth wife was even younger than Maria, and lived many years after her husband's death in 1817. Mr. Edgeworth said that he was happy in all his married life, but only considerate, weak-willed women could have made that true. He was positive at all times that he was the master of his own household, yet he was kind and loving toward his family. Joanna Baillie wrote to Sir Walter Scott that Mr. Edgeworth was "strange mortal with little tact but more conceit.

Thomas Day's admiration for Mr. Edgeworth was strong enough to withstand the trying ordeals of seeing the two Misses Sneyd, to whom he had paid court, become the second and third wives of Edgeworth. During the time of Edgeworth's interest in Honora, while his first wife lived, Day was also in-

⁶ Grace A. Oliver, A Study of Maria Edgeworth, p. 31.

⁷ Ibid., p. 104.

terested. He was not aware of Edgeworth's feelings, and, since Edgeworth was a married man with a family, Day confided in him. He even trusted Edgeworth with the declaratory letter in which Day explained the terms upon which he could be induced to offer his heart and hand to any woman. Seeing that the terms included absolute submission to his rule in dress, and abscention from all forms of music, poetry, light literature, and "epistolary correspondence", Miss Sneyd refused. She probably found the messenger more interesting than the message. "Mr. Day's regard for Honora Sneyd died with her rejection",⁸ and was soon transferred to her sister Elizabeth, who stipulated that if she abstained "from all the pleasures and lighter accomplishments of life, Mr. Day should on his side endeavor to acquire some of those graces of personal deportment of which he stood so manifestly in need". For this reason he went to France and went through severe torture to try to make his limbs more pliable. His efforts proved of no avail, and when he returned to Lichfield, Miss Elizabeth Sneyd not only refused him but declared she had liked him better as the rough philosopher that he was.⁹

His subsequent matrimonial endeavors are interesting. Before the affairs with the Misses Sneyd had failed to bring him a wife, Day had adopted two little girls from a foundling hospital, with the idea of proving his belief that environment

⁸ Grace A. Oliver, A Study of Maria Edgeworth, p. 51.

⁹ Emily Lawless, Maria Edgeworth, pp. 12-13.

is stronger than heredity. His idea was to educate them into ideal women and to marry the one that better fulfilled his ideal. But neither of the girls acquired the high quality of stoicism that he demanded. They could not overcome the womanly fear of mice and guns. One of the girls actually lacked the required mental faculties. After both girls failed to qualify and the Misses Sneyd had rejected his suits, he married an heiress who agreed with his "ascetic programme of life", and placed her fortune out of his reach. Even death came to Thomas Day as an experiment in education. The colt that he attempted to ride for the first time failed to respond to his management by kindness alone; Mr. Day's head was crushed when the colt threw him, and he died fifteen minutes later.

Soon after he was married to Miss Milne, the heiress, Day bought an estate upon which he wished to try his ideas of farming. He had read books on the subject of farming, but the experiments were doubtful and unprofitable. His lack of the power of supervision naturally made the experiment a financial failure. He had always been swayed by philanthropic motives; therefore, the great injury to his fortune did not worry him; he was satisfied with having given employment and religious training to the poor.

¹⁰ Grace A. Oliver, A Study of Maria Edgeworth, p. 59.

Mr. Day left one pedagogical novel, Sandford and Merton, in which is found "a good deal of cleverness, of talent, of developing ideas, of preparing them, and of introducing them into the minds of children"¹¹. This book is still among the best children's books in the language, in spite of its quaint didacticism. It succeeded in forcibly expressing Day's high sense of manliness and independence, and his sterling qualities of character. The influence of Rousseau's Emile is obvious, but it is modified by Day's study of British morality. Mr. Day intended to make Sandford and Merton a short story to be included in Edgeworth's Harry and Lucy, but it proved to be a three-volume work itself.

In spite of the sternness of his voice, there was sympathy in his countenance as Thomas Day administered to Maria Edgeworth's inflamed eyes and restored her sight after a doctor had given up. Day's strength of character, his metaphysical inquiries, and his eloquent discussions interested Maria. She obediently swallowed the tumblerful of tar-water that Day prescribed for her each morning. "His excellent library was open to her, and he directed her studies. His severe reasoning and uncompromising truth of mind awakened all her powers; and the questions he put to her, and the working out of the answers, the necessity of perfect accuracy in all her words, suited the natural truth of her mind; and, though

¹¹ Grace A. Oliver, A Study of Maria Edgeworth, pp. 73-74.

such strictness was not always agreeable, she even then perceived its advantage, and in after-life was grateful for it". In later years Maria, recalling Day's peculiarities said, "He always talked like a book, and I do believe he always thought
12
in the same full-dress style".

A period of great mental development in the life of Maria Edgeworth was influenced by Thomas Day, but she was a disciple of her father. While she was still a mere school girl in years, she became his active helper. He associated her with his own work at Edgeworthstown. She rode with him on his rounds, kept the accounts of the whole expenditures on the estate, and helped with the care of the other children. The numerous younger brothers and sisters were never a bother to her, but rather a stimulus, a rest, and an amusement. Had her father and step-mother not forbidden, she would have converted herself into the playfellow, slave, and maid-of-all-work for the children. She was given the especial care of her brother Henry. It was for his education and pleasure that some of her first stories were written. Her father was essentially a utilitarian who attempted to direct her thoughts and imagining. "He checked that superabundance of sentiment which would endanger her clearness of mind; he kept her stimulated and encouraged to write, by his advice, criticism, and approbation;

¹² Grace A. Oliver, A Study of Maria Edgeworth, p. 73.

but it is feared that he clipped the wings of fancy, and harnessed Pegasus once again, as the rustics did in ancient myth. When she failed in her novels to inspire her characters with romantic interest, it was because the paramount influence of her father asserted itself¹³. Her naturally modest and timid disposition led her to place implicit confidence in her father's judgment. She owed her power of concentration and her humor to his early supervision of her study. Thus "masculine and feminine qualities of mind were.....hers in an unusual degree". "The influence of Mr. Edgeworth in behalf of method, industry, and constant application, was good; but what would have been the career of his gifted daughter, unhampered by the treadmill in which the self-assertion and domineering criticism of her father condemned her to work? Pity and conjecture are alike wasted in regret at the manner in which Mr. Edgeworth made her write, or in fancying what her life would have been untrammelled by the foot-rule which he applied to her soaring genius and gay imagination."¹⁴

¹³ Grace A. Oliver, A Study of Maria Edgeworth, pp. 67-68.
¹⁴ Ibid., pp. 533-534.

CHAPTER THREE

FICTION IN THE EDUCATION OF THE YOUNG CHILD

A critical survey of Miss Edgeworth's writings reveals that she wrote to satisfy each of three purposes. Her first purpose was fulfilled when she and her father embodied their plan for the education of children in two volumes of Practical Education. Although their plan was not entirely original, it was sensible and practical. They took choice bits from other writers and wove them into a work of their own. Secondly, she sought to supply the demand for a combination of pedagogy and fiction in stories where children might find reading material suited to their varying tastes.¹ Miss Edgeworth wrote her Parent's Assistant, Moral Tales,² and Popular Tales to meet this demand. Her third type of writing, intended for adults, included her novels, in which morals were forced into the background, but by no means neglected. In none of her writings is edification absent. One critic says:

It will be our fault if mental and moral improvement, a desire to gain knowledge, to be good, and to do good--are not promoted by the pen of Maria Edgeworth. But in her anxiety to teach profitable lessons to those who had already assumed the responsibilities of life, Miss Edgeworth did not forget the objects of her early care, to whose instruction she had devoted the first fruits of her clear and practical intellect.

¹ Mrs. Sherwoods The Fairchild Family, Little Henry and His Beaver, and The Little Academy are of that type.

² This book is not available.

It is the purpose of the present study to analyze Miss Edgeworth's writings in these three categories with a view to determining their relation, first, to social history, second, to the history of English prose fiction, and, third, to the development of educational theory. Since Miss Edgeworth had occasion to visit in London and Paris as well as numerous smaller towns and estates and had friends in America with whom she corresponded, her interest in social history and customs is well justified and her important place in English as well as Irish literature is established. With Richard Lovell Edgeworth as her father and Thomas Day as her special friend, Maria could not have escaped being a disciple of educational reformers and having her works saturated with educational theory.

Rousseau's educational writings are theories pure and simple, but the Edgeworth books on education are splendidly practical. Instead of pure theory, Miss Edgeworth shows that "other creatures only think of supporting themselves; but man is allowed to ennoble his nature, by cultivating his mind and enlarging his heart"³. Her plan was not to include formal education alone. Friendships based on a mutual knowledge of virtues were to be included in that education which Miss Edgeworth believed would give independence and energy by teaching

³ Mary Wollstonecraft, Original Stories, p.5

young people neither to admire nor to despair, without reason. The power of reasoning was one of Miss Edgeworth's strongest traits. "The strengthening of the reasoning obviously tends to fix principles of truth and humanity on a solid and simple foundation."⁴ "Music, drawing, works of usefulness and fancy, all amuse and refine the mind, sharpen the ingenuity, and form, insensibly, the dawning judgment. As the judgment gains strength, so do the passions also; we have actions to weigh, and that delicate sense of propriety, which gives grace to virtue."⁵ Miss Edgeworth understood the true objectives of education, and her ideas were practised on the younger children in her family. She was about six years old when her father and Mr. Day went to France to study

Rousseau. She had heard education discussed all her life. It is hardly possible that Edgeworth and Day made the trip to France as a result of a sudden and ill-considered desire; neither Edgeworth nor Day was the kind of person who does things of importance without deliberation. By the time that Maria began to help her father formulate their conception of and plan for the education of children, the ideas had been tested in the lives of several of the Edgeworth youths. Whether the ideas were thoroughly sound or whether the children were unusual because of heredity and environment, remains to be investigated. It is impossible to say positively that eith-

⁴ Mary Wollstonecraft, Original Stories, p. XVIII.
⁵ Ibid., p. 54.

er view is wholly correct.

Outside the realm of pure pedagogy, Miss Edgeworth had a definite conception of the process of the edifying of the child through his own reading. She believed that happiness and virtue were to be attained partially through the child's endeavors. Readers had been exhorted "to lay aside their prejudices, and arm themselves against the shafts of malice or misfortune, by invulnerable patience; they were urged to see that this state only was happiness, and that this happiness was in everyone's power"⁶. To talk of happiness and virtue and prejudices to grown, mature people is acceptable, but the youth that Miss Edgeworth intended to help would be confused by the terms. She knew also that long, abstract discussions hold no interest for young readers, and so she wrote short but frankly didactic stories for them.

There are two collections of the stories of this character. The Parent's Assistant, as the name implies, was intended for very young readers whose parents needed help in the process of educating their children. This book contains sixteen stories, for children of elementary school age. Miss Edgeworth did not forget the high school or academy pupils. Her volume called Popular Tales contains short stories and novelettes that were expected to appeal to them, both in story and in moral. Moral Tales would belong with this group,

⁶ Samuel Johnson, Rasselas, p. 81.

while Early Lessons should be classed with the former group. Harry and Lucy would fill either requirement, since Mr. Edgeworth and Maria planned to complete the life-stories of those two characters. Thus the volumes in the series would coincide with the interests of the reader as he progressed. The series was never finished.

Miss Edgeworth believed that even adults could be improved and edified by didactic reading. Her Tales of Fashionable Life, which also contains separate stories, appeals to mature readers. A similar appeal to adults is found in every one of her novels. "The way to render instruction most useful cannot always be adopted; knowledge should be gradually imparted, and flow more from example than teaching."⁷ Therefore, the Edgeworth novels which were intended for adult readers are filled with didacticism. The characters in them are often mere types of virtue or vice, and the evolution of the action appears artificial rather than inevitable. However, her moral purpose is always realized. She held with Pestalozzi that "man is only happy and secure in this world, when he is so developed as to be able to fill well that place in society in which he can legitimately lay claim"⁸. Therefore, she portrayed various types of characters as they filled, well or poorly, their places in society. However, she never quite submerged the artist in the pedagogue. "Her delineation of

⁷ Mary Wollstonecraft, Original Stories, p. XVIII.

⁸ Pestalozzi, Leonard and Gertrude, p. 174.

Irish peasant life", says one critic, "has rarely been surpassed. Though a slightly didactic tendency runs through all her stories, it is lightened by humor and appreciation of character, and it is not allowed to overweigh the claims of the story-teller. The interest of her novels, apart from their intentionally moral aims, lies rather in vivid characterization, and in singularly apt dialogue, than in incident."⁹ Neither dialogue nor characterization, regardless of their effectiveness, can, however, take the writings of Maria Edgeworth entirely out of the category of pedagogical writing.

The terms "pedagogical" and "pedagogics" have been used in reference to Miss Edgeworth and her writings. What do these terms imply? The term "pedagogue" has acquired a different shade of meaning as it has been used through the course of time. In classic antiquity a pedagogue was a slave who attended children to school, to the theater, or on their outings. Some pedagogues acted only as companions or chaperons, while others instructed the children in nature study and moral education. As the word has continued in good usage, its meaning has changed to a slight degree. Today an instructor of young people is a pedagogue. This does not necessarily mean school-master or teacher; any one who instructs, either formally or informally, may be called a pedagogue. In modern educational circles the word is frequently used in a derogatory sense, to mean a conceited, narrow-minded teacher. Mod-

⁹ Nelson's Encyclopedia, IV, p. 230.

ern practice has not put such a ban on the words derived from the same root as "pedagogue". The interest in the science of the teaching profession and the theory of education and its application in securing the best results in instruction and teaching make "pedagogics" and "pedagogical" not only correct words but desirable units of a modern vocabulary.

Although Mr. Edgeworth and Maria were not directly connected with schools, they were "pedagogues", and had a great interest in pedagogics. Miss Edgeworth was truly an instructor of young people through her writings and her daily endeavors. As before stated, the education of the younger members of her family was largely under her supervision. Her father depended upon her judgment as to the proper training for the other children; and this judgment was not untrained; the pedagogical books of Madame de Genlis and Mrs. Barbauld were among the first reading that the young Maria did.

Miss Edgeworth early realized that pedagogical influences start even in the nursery. Some of her earliest writing was to help her father temper Rousseau's teachings with his own ideas into that two-volume work called Practical Education. This writing is the most important pedagogical production of the Edgeworths. Naturally Maria wrote as her father suggested, but it is interesting to note that Mr. Edgeworth attributed sixteen of the twenty-four chapters to her.¹⁰

¹⁰ She wrote the chapters bearing the following titles: Toys; On Attention; Servants; Acquaintances; On Temper; On Rewards and Punishments; On Sympathy and Sensibility; On Vanity, Pride, and Ambitions; Books; On Public and Private Education; On Female Accomplishments; Masters, and Governesses; Memory and Invention; Taste and Imagination; Wit and Judgment:

As a product of both minds, Practical Education has positive merit. Though the book was intended for only the higher classes of society, the authors hoped that it might be useful in all affairs of common life, and that it might lead to the establishment of good character and a more permanent prosperity. Mr. Edgeworth, after thinking carefully about the plans of Rousseau and others, realized that experimental education was yet in its infancy, and that a boundless space for improvement remained. In the preface to Practical Education, he stated that he and Maria had no intention of attacking the theories of former writers. Their aim was to try their ideas on real children who needed educating and to profit by the experience. For that reason, the book bears the title Essays on Practical Education. Concerning the purpose of the book and method in which it was written, Mr. Edgeworth says:

We have warned our readers not to expect from us any new theory of education, but they need not apprehend that we have written without method, or that we have thrown before them a heap of desultory remarks and experiments, which lead to no conclusions, and which tend to the establishment of no useful principles. We assure them that we have worked upon a regular plan, and where we have failed of executing our design, it has not been for want of labour or attention.¹¹

Since playthings and toys are the first interests in

¹¹ Richard Lovell and Maria Edgeworth, Practical Education, I, Introduction, viii. All references in this chapter are to this work, unless otherwise stated.

the life of a child, they merit primary consideration in a discussion of a child's development. As soon as a baby is old enough to notice anything, parents begin to consider toys to occupy its time. The need of gratifying the eye "with glittering objects, if this is necessary, may be done with more safety by toys of tin and polished iron; a common steel button is a more desirable plaything to a young child than many expensive toys; a few such buttons tied together, so as to prevent any danger of their being swallowed, would¹² continue for some time a source of amusement." The paint on toys, provided it is of the most coherent type to protect the child's mouth and stomach from the lead and other chemicals, makes the buttons even more desirable. The common habit of breaking toys does not result from the love of mischief, but from the hatred of idleness and a desire "to see what his playthings are made of, and how they are made, or whether he can put them together again if the parts are once¹³ separated." The child is innocent in his endeavors and should not be scolded, but pitied. Those adults who have never tried the experiment are astonished to find how laborious the finding of employment for children from three to six years old really is. Blocks of wood of various shapes and sizes, balls, pulleys, wheels, strings, and strong little carts, propor-

¹² Richard Lovell and Maria Edgeworth, Practical Education, Vol. I, p. 7.

¹³ Ibid., Vol. I, p. 1.

tioned to their ages, and to the things which they want to carry in them are safe playthings. Dolls as the usual toys for girls serve both a good and a bad purpose. They help to cause the girl to love neatness in dress and to want to make things for herself and her doll. This very admirable desire may result in an undue love for fashion and finery unless it is guarded and directed. After a child has outgrown the button, blocks, and doll stages, toys of surprise are quite good. All children love tricks and surprise games. There is, however, a serious danger even in these games. A child must not be encouraged nor allowed to think himself superior when he works the tricks quickly and successfully. Toys and games must be cautiously kept as amusements only, for the young, growing child.

When a child is old enough to have tasks and slight responsibilities assigned to him, a new era in his life begins. The age of actual education begins, but it often lacks a happy beginning. With his cardboard, substantial but not sharp scissors, wire, wax, etc., he soon imagines that he can make boxes, desks, and such like. His plan is soon shattered when the program is attempted, but the minor errands, which are assigned to him to be done at home, are easily mastered. These teach him judgment and prudence, but they soon give way to the hard and disagreeable task of education. The child comes to know that his father and other people have knowledge and enjoyable responsibilities that are obtained by education.

The child's natural instinct for acquisition makes the process of education come as a natural result.

One of the first educational tasks is that of learning to read. This is no play matter; it is really the most dreadful of tasks. There are all the letters to be learned, with the many different sounds. This is almost too much for a child. He sounds a letter correctly in one word and is praised for his accurateness; he gives the same sound to the same letter in another word and is sorely condemned. His concept of learning immediately takes a more pessimistic tinge. Miss Edgeworth suggests a semiphonetic alphabet, plus a cheerful countenance on the part of the instructor, as helps toward alleviating the disagreeableness of learning to read. She realizes, however, that parents and teachers may fail to respond very readily to the idea of a phonetic alphabet lest they should have to relearn something. Six or seven minutes per day is the time that she believes would be necessary to¹⁴ teach the alphabet to both parent and child.

As a child learns to read, he automatically learns to spell and to use the words that he knows. Children have always learned to spell by how a word looks on a page rather than by how it sounds when spelled aloud. The more a child reads and writes, the more likely he is to learn the combination of the letters in the words that are continually before

¹⁴ Richard Lovell and Maria Edgeworth, Practical Education, Vol. I, pp. 51, 56, 58.

his eyes. The range of a child's knowledge should strictly determine his vocabulary. He should know the meaning of the words that he uses. Miss Edgeworth's practical plan is that the child be asked to explain the meaning of words that one who is his elder considers too mature for him. He will quickly perceive his error, if he is attempting words beyond his stage of progress, and will thereafter be more careful in his choice of words. A series of general meanings is better for children than vocabulary by rote. Grammar has no place in the life of a young child in Miss Edgeworth's opinion, but patience and time in the building of a vocabulary are imperative. A tutor or a parent should never lack the time to explain difficult words.

Another of the early tasks for a child is arithmetic. As soon as the rather easy units are learned, Miss Edgeworth advises that the child be taught to represent ten by a black pebble among white ones; a hundred may be denoted by a red stone or a pebble of unusual size or shape. In writing numbers showing the digits, lined paper is good. One column may be used for the units, the next to the left for the tens, and so on. The addition of these numbers is much easier for children than subtraction. In the example of forty-six (46)

¹⁵Richard Lovell and Maria Edgeworth, Practical Education, Vol. II, p. 155: Rules of grammar repeated, knowledge of map locations and even latitude and longitude of the principal cities in Europe are "all useful articles of knowledge, but are not the test of a good education."

subtracted from ninety-four (94), the Edgeworth plan suggests that the teacher:

Tell him (the pupil) that though six cannot be deducted from four, yet it can from fourteen; and that if one of the tens which are contained in the (9) ninety in the uppermost row of the second column be supposed to be taken away, or borrowed, from the ninety, and added to the four, the nine will be reduced to eight (eighty) and the four will become fourteen. Our pupils will comprehend this most readily; they will see that six which could not be subtracted from four, may be subtracted from fourteen, and they will remember that the the 9 in the next column is to be considered only 8. To avoid confusion, they may draw a stroke across the nine and write a small 8 over the 9 and proceed to the remainder of the operation. Beginners understand this method quite readily.¹⁶

A service would be rendered toward improving the art of education if parents would keep a list of the books that their children read and enjoy, and the ages at which the book served. The task of selecting the proper books for a child is as great as that of getting the proper toys. The knowledge gained from books has never been intended to make the pupil read Greek like an ancient Grecian, or French like a native of Paris, but it is aimed at enabling him to trace the progress of mankind in knowledge and refinement.

Parents are now convinced that thebooks which children read make a lasting impression upon them; but they do not consider spelling books, and grammars, and exercise-books, as books, but only as tools for different purposes: these tools are often very mischievous; if we could improve them we should get our work much better done.¹⁷

In order that a child may understand literature, a knowledge

¹⁶ Richard Lovell and Maria Edgeworth, Practical Education, Vol. II, pp. 69-70.

¹⁷ Ibid., Vol., II, p. 9.

of heathen mythology is almost imperative. The first mythological descriptions that a child reads should be the best of their kind. Therefore, the Edgeworths name Ovid's Metamorphoses as being the best introduction to classic mythology. Morris' translation was their choice for children. Mortimer's Student's Dictionary and Brooke's Gazeteer were also to be available for children. The novels of Madame de Genlis, Miss Burney, Mrs. Opie, Mrs. Inchbald, and, of course, Richardson and Fielding are all that the Edgeworths considered worth reading. Miss Edgeworth advised mothers to furnish a list of the books that her daughter had read to the prospective husband.

What may parents expect of the person who teaches their child to read, write, and count? The tutor should never deceive the child by trying to make him believe that reading, writing, arithmetic, and spelling are easy, for the tutor knows that they are not easy for a beginner. The child will, sooner or later, strike the briars and thorns. The child must realize that the tutor is his friend, but the tutor must not sacrifice the child's welfare for his friendship. One of the first disagreeable tasks for the tutor is to look over the child's writing and have him correct every error in spelling and legibility, for these bad habits, once contracted, can scarcely be cured. Another great problem that a tutor has always faced is that of individual instruction.

The manner in which children are first instructed must tend either to increase or diminish their timidity, or their confidence in themselves, to encourage them to undertake 18 great things, or to rest content with limited acquirements.

A slow tutor who lacks sympathy for his quick pupils serves only as a disadvantage. He continues to make grave mistakes in forming a judgment of a child's interest and attention, for he cannot understand how his vivacious pupils go to work. For this reason, a tutor often gives a pupil "so much trouble and pain, that he grows silent from finding it not worth his while to speak. It is for this reason that children appear stupid and silent with some people, and sprightly and talkative with others. Those who hope to talk to children with any effect must, as Rousseau observes, be able to hear as well 19 as to speak". A matter of serious consideration in the affairs of tutors of all times has been the matter of repeating material.

A teacher should proportion the number of repetitions to the temper and habits of his pupils, else he will weary instead of strengthen the attention. When a thing is clear, let him never try to make it clearer; when a thing is understood, not a word more of exemplification should be added. To mark precisely the moment when the pupil understands what is said, the moment when he is master of the necessary ideas, and, consequently, the moment when repetition should cease, is perhaps the most difficult thing in the art of teaching.²⁰

The expression on the pupils' faces usually tells when a thing

¹⁸ Richard Lovell and Maria Edgeworth, Practical Education, Vol. I, p. 114.

¹⁹ Ibid., Vol. I, p. 125.

²⁰ Ibid., Vol. I, p. 129.

is understood, but often a teacher, especially an old-fashioned teacher, becomes so absorbed in his teaching that he forgets to observe the faces of his pupils. Another bad effect of repetitions is that pupils become careless about paying attention, for they know that the teacher will repeat. The schoolmaster can never hope to be successful with his repetitions or any phase of teaching if his pupils are only partially under his government. He occupies a peculiar situation; he is left the power to punish, while the parents reserve the right to reward.

The schoolmaster can not have sufficient time during that portion of the year that children spend in school to fulfill his duties. Parents often lack the habits of tolerance and co-operation, and after the teacher has cautiously exalted work, allow idleness during vacations. The pupils, as well as the teacher, have always realized the great waste of²¹ time, but the pupils have not been willing to sacrifice to prevent waste. The quality, as well as the quantity, has been considered, but a schoolmaster has always been expected to give too much for the poor pay which he has received. Parents are often disappointed at the amount of real knowledge that the child acquires in the two thousand hours between Christmas and Christmas, but the problem has never been solved.

It is not from idleness, it is not from stupidity, it is not from obstinacy, that children frequently show an in-

²¹ Richard Lovell and Maria Edgeworth, Practical Education, Vol.II, p.11: "One-half hour's vigorous application is worth a whole day's constrained and yawning study."

disposition to listen to those who attempt to explain things to them. The exertion of attention, which if frequently required from them, is too great for the patience of childhood.²²

The greatest slaves in school, however, are not the boys but the master and his assistants.

Parents of Miss Edgeworth's era had two choices in the educating of their children--either to supervise the education themselves or leave it entirely to some person of supposed intelligence and skill. Those parents who chose to supervise often became discouraged over the heavy responsibility, but:

Parental care and anxiety, the hours devoted to the instruction of a family, will not be thrown away. If parents have the patience to wait for their reward, that reward will far surpass their most sanguine expectations; they will find in their children agreeable companions, sincere and affectionate friends. Whether they live in retirement, or in the busy world, they will feel their interest in life increase, their pleasures multiply by sympathy with their beloved pupils; they will have a happy home.²³

If the child was educated at home, he was to be taught obedience and the love of truth as well as the practice of telling it. Obedience has been called the virtue of childhood. It had to be a habitual virtue. Patience and activity are still required of parents and teachers if orders are so issued that obedience will follow. "Whenever it becomes necessary that a child should do what he feels disagreeable, it is better to make him submit at once to necessity, than to create

²² Richard Lovell and Maria Edgeworth, Practical Education, Vol. I, pp. 92-23.

²³ Ibid., Vol., II, pp. 432-433.

any doubt and struggle in his mind, by leaving him a possibility of resistance." ²⁴ A boy who tells a falsehood to avoid some pain or to gain some trivial gratification would perhaps tell the truth if he were sure that he could bear the pain or do without the gratification. Few commands should be given by a tutor or parent, but those issued should be strenuously adhered to. The governess, or tutor, or teacher, must either agree with the child's parents in all points regarding the child's training or should know how to convince them by sane argument. She must, with strict integrity, conform her practice to the parents' theories if she cannot win her own point.

Eighteenth century parents had to give serious consideration to whether their child would be educated in a public school or under a tutor. Most parents believed that the function of education was to preserve the mind from prejudices rather than to prepare the child for the adoption of any system. Whether education was to be public or private depended largely upon the financial and social ratings of the family. In the lives of the children of the wealthy, education might be wholly a matter of personal, hired tutors, but the child of the less wealthy families could have both public and private education. The private education came early in the child's life when his habits were being fixed, and pre-

²⁴ Richard Lovell and Maria Edgeworth, Practical Education, Vol., I, p. 219.

pared him for life in a public seminary. The learned languages and arts and sciences were taught better in large public schools, but parents did not expect the moral standards of the child to be improved there. Those schools that were called public were advantageous in effacing the rustic and correcting the faults of provincial dialects. Schools like Eton or Westminster in England were better than local schools, for they offered associations with people of wider localities and knowledge. In the local schools, the pupils were all too near the same station in life. Prejudices continue to be more easily harbored in a small, local school. One great disadvantage in public schools was that so many boys were sent there as a last resort for their mental and social diseases. These boys were stubborn and obstinate, and were not congenial with boys whose tempers, morals, and habits had been carefully directed and guarded. The child who has been properly trained at home will, if later sent to a public school, usually prove himself superior in intellect and in conduct. "A private preceptor who undertakes the instruction of several pupils in the same family, will examine with care the different habits and tempers of his pupils; and he will have full leisure to adapt his instructions peculiarly to each."

Parents who have patiently endeavored to discover the

²⁵ Richard Lovell and Maria Edgeworth, Practical Education, Vol. I, p. 99.

wants and needs of their sons are amply repaid by having honorable, trustworthy, and loving sons. To prevent the acquiring of many bad habits and the forming of a bad reputation is the responsibility of parents, since "it is scarcely possible for any one, who has not constantly lived with a child, and who has not known the whole rise and progress of these apprehensions" to give a child justice. ²⁶ Parents, however, often make the child "alternately their idol, and their plaything....they imagine that he is unlike all other children in the universe, and that his genius and his temper are independent of all cultivation". ²⁷ They must cease to do this, and guard him during the age of imitation when bad examples are so easily followed. When his habits, his power to choose, and his fortitude to abide by his choices are all well founded, the parents' responsibility is greatly lessened.

When a son separates from his father, if he has been well educated, he wishes to continue his own education: the course of his ideas is not suddenly broken; what he has been joins immediately with what he is to be; his knowledge applies to real life; it is such as he can use in all companies; there is no sudden metamorphosis in all the objects of his ambition; the boy and the man are the same individual. Pleasure will not influence him merely with her name, or by the contrast of her appearance with rigid discipline of scholastic learning; he will feel the difference between pleasure and happiness, and his early taste for domestic life will remain or return upon his mind. His old precepts

²⁶ Richard Lovell and Maria Edgeworth, Practical Education, Vol. I, p. 198.

²⁷ Ibid., Vol. I, p. 202.

and new motives are not at war with each other; his experiences will confirm his education; and external circumstances will call forth his latent virtues...A desire in some degree to repay the care, to deserve the esteem, to fulfill the animating prophecies, or to justify the fond hopes of the parent who has watched over his education, is one of the strongest motives to an ingenious young man; it is an incentive to exertion in every honorable pursuit.²⁸

While the boys are becoming honorable men, Miss Edgeworth²⁹ and her father would not have the girls neglected. Besides the power to reason, the female accomplishments were not to be forgotten. The standard for female education had changed since the days of Griselda, when patience and submissiveness were her only desired qualities. The young lady of Miss Edgeworth's time could play a little, draw a little, and speak a little French. These accomplishments for females were resources against ennui.

Women are peculiarly restrained in their situation, and in their employments, by the customs of society: to diminish the number of these employments, therefore, would be cruel; they should rather be encouraged, by all means, to cultivate those tastes which can attach them to their home, and which can preserve them from the miseries of dissipation.³⁰

Much depended upon a young woman's accomplishments. They became as necessary as her fortune, and were sometimes considered as a part of her fortune. "Next to beauty, they are the best tickets of admission into society which she can produce;

²⁸ Richard Lovell and Maria Edgeworth, Practical Education, Vol. II, pp. 165-166.

²⁹ The Edgeworth opinions concerning the female character and understanding had been fully described in Letters for Literary Ladies.

³⁰ Practical Education, Vol. II, p. 175.

and everybody knows, that on the company she keeps depends the chance of a young woman's settling advantageously in the world.³¹ Since the young women of the common classes, innkeepers' and tenants' daughters, have learned to dance, draw, and sing, female accomplishments have lost their distinction. Reasoning powers and a taste for science and literature have taken the place of graceful dancing and such as the most admired female accomplishments, and a study of the fine arts is used only for its broadening effect. Those women who had developed the power of reasoning had their sensibilities engrossed by the proper objects, and greater happiness was forthcoming.

A man in a furious passion is terrible to his enemies, but a woman in a passion is disgusting to her friends; she loses the respect due to her sex, and she has not masculine strength and courage to enforce any other species of respect.....We wish to educate women so that they may be happy in the situation in which they are most likely to be placed. So much depends upon the temper of woman, that it ought to be more carefully cultivated in early life; girls should be more inured to restraint than boys; because they are likely to meet with more restraint in society.³²

It is necessary that women bear their own burdens and try to see that others receive justice. One of a woman's strong points rather than defects has been her hesitation before making decisions.

While sons are being taught honor and girls are developing reason, worth-while habits must be developed to take the

³¹ Richard Lovell and Maria Edgeworth, Practical Education, Vol. II, p. 178-179.

³² Ibid., Vol. I, p. 212.

place of the uncontrolled emotions. True charity must take the place of pity, which is a natural, spontaneous emotion felt by children. Pity can not be said to be benevolent until the child is capable of reasoning. Even persons of the most enlarged understanding find it necessary to be extremely cautious in charitable donations, lest they should do more harm than good. "Children cannot see beyond the first link in the chain which holds society together."³³ The children of the late eighteenth century had no money to give and naturally gave of their father's fortune. In this way there was no privation nor self-denial, and the real purpose of charity for the giver was lost.³⁴ Actual experiences, with as much judgment as the child can exert, teaches charity much better than any book that has been available for children to read during or since Miss Edgeworth's time. Miss Edgeworth taught that the heart and the understanding can be educated at the same time by well-regulated sympathies, use-

³³ Richard Lovell and Maria Edgeworth, Practical Education, Vol. I, p. 428-429.

³⁴ Unless proper objects of charity are selected by the parents, children have no opportunities of discovering them; they have not sufficient knowledge of the world to distinguish truth from falsehood in the complaints of the distressed; nor have they sufficiently enlarged views to discern the best means of doing good to their fellow creatures. They may give away money to the poor, but they do not always feel the value of what they give: They give counters; supplied with the necessities and luxuries of life, they have no use for money, they feel not privation, they make no sacrifice in giving money away, or at least none worthy to be extolled as heroic. When children grow up, they learn the value of money, their generosity will then cost them rather more effort, and yet can be rewarded only with the same expressions of gratitude, with the same blessings from the beggar, or the same applause from the spectator. Ibid., Vol. I, p. 366.

ful and agreeable habits, and benevolent affections. Her idea was expressed later by the American poet Lowell, when he said that it is not what we give but what we share, for "the gift without the giver is bare". The reward for charity, says Miss Edgeworth, comes from self-satisfaction; sympathy and sensibility look for no applause, for they are enjoyed enough. All children should be taught that the giving of money is not the only way of helping people.

The proper use and the true value of money is one phase of a child's education that remains outside of books and is to be taught by the dear teacher, Experience. The cost of the operation of a household must never be kept as a secret for parents alone. The child should realize early why everything that he wants cannot be had. When a child is sent to a public school, however, he should be provided with pocket money enough to make him feel equal to the others. This must be carefully watched lest money, rather than intellect, become the criterion for honors. For this reason, if for no other, the allowance for a boy at school must be moderate.

Most parents think that their sons are more disposed to extravagance than their daughters; the sons are usually exposed to greater temptations. Young men excite one another to expense, and to a certain carelessness of economy, which assumes the name of spirit, while it often forfeits all pretensions to justice. A prudent father will never, from any false notions of forming his son early to good company, introduce him to associates whose only merit is their rank or fortune. Such companions will lead a weak young man into every species of extravagance, and then desert and ridicule him in the hour of distress.³⁵

³⁵ Richard Lovell and Maria Edgeworth, Practical Education, Vol. II, p. 401.

Young men are tempted to a greater extent in a financial way than girls, and, for lack of a better occupation, they often turn to games of chance. The laboratory or work-bench would keep the boy away from gambling, but good luck visits him often enough to keep him at it.

To prevent children from acquiring a taste for reverie, let them have various occupations both of mind and body. Let us not direct their imagination to extraordinary future pleasures, but let us suffer them to enjoy the present. Anticipation is a species of reverie; and children who have promises of future pleasures frequently made to them, live in a continual state of anticipation.³⁶

The disrupting effect upon habits and morals of those who engage in gaming is enough to condemn the practice, but even from "an economic point of view, it is prudent to calculate how many thousands lavished on the turf, lost at the gambling-table, might have been saved to the heirs of noble and wealthy families by a judicious education."³⁷

In stead of allowing gaming and other idle occupations to fill the life of the youth, Miss Edgeworth advocates the substitution of creative thinking and invention. "Since we perceive that memory is chiefly useful as it furnishes materials for invention, and that invention greatly abridges the mere labor of accumulation, we must examine how the inventive faculty can be properly exercised. The vague precept, by cul-

³⁶ Richard Lovell and Maria Edgeworth, Practical Education, Vol. II, p. 326.

³⁷ Ibid., Vol. I⁴, p. 169.

tivating the memory and invention of young people at the same³⁸ time, will not inform parents how this is accomplished." "In-³⁹vention is the new combination of materials", and one who invents is not necessarily an abnormal person. Miss Edgeworth believed that an invention might be made by anyone who would pursue an observation through all its consequences. The lack of interest in worth-while things has prevented many inventions. "The various species of enthusiasm necessary to make a poet, a painter, an orator, or a military hero, may be in-⁴⁰spired, without a doubt, by education." A keen imagination helps to make inventing easier by lifting one out of the level of manual labor.

The lack of culture has paved the way for ignorance and superstitions.

Would it not, however, be imprudent in education to permit that early propensity to superstitious terrors, and that temporary suspension of the reasoning faculties, which are often essential to our taste for the sublime?.....The early associations which we perhaps have formed of terror, with the ideas of apparitions, winding-sheets, and sable shrouds, should be unknown to children. The silent solemn hour of midnight should not to them be an hour of terror⁴¹

Whenever a child has expressed a positive belief or like or dislike, he should always have been questioned as to why he has that idea. The school is largely responsible for a child's

³⁸ Richard Lovell and Maria Edgeworth, Practical Education, Vol. II, p. 256.

³⁹ Ibid., Vol. II, p. 261.

⁴⁰ Ibid., Vol. II, p. 307.

⁴¹ Ibid., Vol. II, p. 285.

beliefs, but thoughts of idleness and superstition have often been founded in home training. Vacations and holidays are the times when home membership should show education to an advantage, and it is a combination of those two that has made the statement remain true that what one is at forty depends upon what he was and did at ten.

As we take a perspective view of Practical Education, we find that the pedagogy therein presents a definite philosophy to be followed by parents of children of the pre-school age. The child's nursery must be a quiet happy place where the playthings are simple, sturdy, harmless articles. His nurse is to follow the parents' ideas or else win them to her views. Her duties necessitate a person of strong character and sympathetic understanding, but we must not forget that the child's nurse is often its own mother and not a hired servant. And the nurse well may be the mother, for then she can train her child as her own ideas urge. Miss Edgeworth knew that many parents lack definite convictions as to proper education. Regardless of who the nurse is, whether parent or hired nurse, the requirements for a well trained child are the same. The child must be taught obedience, orderliness, cleanliness, cheerfulness, and fair play. Unless these qualities are carefully instilled into the habits of the young child, the school child will always be a disappointment to himself and his friends.

After a child has been carefully supervised for the first six years, the education process is only started. In modern educational phraseology the big task before him is the mastery of the fundamental processes. By this term we mean reading, writing, and arithmetic. Miss Edgeworth discussed the importance of these fundamentals as basic studies upon which the entire educational system is dependent. The Edgeworths ranked reading as one of the better pastimes for all individuals. The practice of keeping one's personal accounts is the surest way of keeping them accurate, said the Edgeworths. In this way, arithmetic and a knowledge of figures are learned. By telling specifically how these subjects should be taught, Miss Edgeworth started the consideration of methods in the field of education. She offered no definite method of teaching writing; but throughout her works, the good penman is praised.

Miss Edgeworth joined a practically new group of writers when she favored the movement for co-education. Her chief writing on that subject is found in her novels, which were written much later than Practical Education. Even then her ideas were not so positively and openly stated as those of Mary Wollstonecraft or Elizabeth Montague, but a lengthy discussion is given in Practical Education of the educating of girls as well as boys. The Edgeworths saw ahead far enough to lay stress on reasoning and practical studies for girls

rather than the purely aesthetic interests of music, art, and such. The views expressed in Practical Education may seem primitive to-day, but they are vitally important as a part of the beginning of a program started more than a hundred and twenty-five years ago.

CHAPTER FOUR

FICTION IN THE EDUCATION OF THE ADOLESCENT

The Honorable Emily Lawless, in her book on Maria Edgeworth, says that one has no difficulty in imagining Miss Edgeworth's stories as having been written by a Pre-Victorian ¹child. In order to justify or disprove this statement, the Pre-Victorian era needs to be examined. The nineteenth century opened during a period of rapid transformation. England was changing from an agricultural and mercantile nation into an industrial one. The large farms were divided into many smaller divisions, and manufacturing cities grew at many easily accessible locations. This transformation wrought social changes and necessitated political reorganization.

The first step toward that reorganization was not taken until 1832, when the first "Reform Bill" was passed. The Romantic period in literature is said to have ended at that date, and the Victorian Age to have begun. Literature turned from the study of nature to the study of man. The rise of democracy gave impetus to the study of man, and the common man at that. The scientific spirit prevailed and exerted a profound influence upon human thought in all its departments. Individualism, which had preceded the Victorian Age, was the one quality that held its place on into the new era.

¹ Emily Lawless, Maria Edgeworth, p. 51.

Maria Edgeworth had begun her work well back in the eighteenth century, and was a mature woman in 1791 when she began her short stories that reflected the spirit of the Victorian Age. Her home had always been the meeting place for celebrities. Her life had been filled with popular interests, but she created one interest for herself. She was a pioneer in the field of short stories in English. In 1780, when she was a school girl in private school, her father had written to her asking that she write a story or essay on "Generosity". His request specified that the writing be about the length of a Spectator paper. Maria wrote that story, and her next effort came when she was twenty-four years old and was left in charge of the younger members of her father's household while her parents were in England. She was still timid and lacking in self-confidence. She wrote her stories for the children and not for publication. She wrote on a slate, and little visual imagination is needed to see her with the children grouped around her as she read from the slate for their benefit. If the story met the approval of that group of juvenile judges, it was transcribed on to paper, and the slate was cleaned and made ready for another story. Those stories that were transcribed were, five years later, collected into the volume known today as The Parent's Assistant. The stories are juvenile and extremely didactic, but Sir Walter Scott shed tears over the story of Simple Susan. Ten years after the pub-

lishing of The Parent's Assistant, Miss Edgeworth prepared her more mature and obviously educative stories for the volume called Popular Tales. These stories are "less romantic, but they are delightful and characteristic, and give a vivid picture of the times"². Sir James Mackintosh wrote to George More hoping that More had placed a copy of Popular Tales in every cottage on his estate, and said, "Except for the four Gospels, I think there is no book of popular morality equal to it"³. This volume fills the need when we "want literature not only for our-selves, but for simple souls, for sick and sorry people, for quiet folks laid by and wanting distraction, for village libraries, for children and servants"⁴. Both the Parent's Assistant and Popular Tales show real merit. Mr. Hardy himself, says a twentieth century critic, never wrote a more striking sketch than the history of Lane Jervas' escape from the mine in the wagon.⁵

The change in the national spirit pervading the democratic nineteenth century accomplished at least one change. People who were interested in the welfare of others began to realize the importance of social evils. Maria Edgeworth, although keenly interested in the lives of others, lived secluded from the lower classes of peasants with their corrupt and demoralizing social standards. Nevertheless, she did see

² Maria Edgeworth, Popular Tales, Introduction, p. xi.

³ Grace Oliver, A Study of Maria Edgeworth, p. 220.

⁴ Maria Edgeworth, Popular Tales, p. vii.

⁵ Ibid., p. vii.

orphans being cheated by their guardians, land agents being dishonest toward the land owners, and intellectual people being kept from their true places in society by the lack of proper education. She recognized these as evils; in fact, she felt it her duty to help people to answer the question, "Am I my brother's keeper?" She felt that the time for actual fighting as a means of settling problems was passed; and, except for a few minor references in "The Grateful Negro" and "Lame Jervas", in Popular Tales, and the very harsh treatment that one boy received in the story "The Barring Out", in the Parent's Assistant, Maria Edgeworth's stories are devoid of physical strife. On the other hand, the Edgeworth stories are filled with problems in social relationships.

One of the prevailing social evils that Maria Edgeworth strenuously opposed was slavery. The slave trade in America was at its height, and Miss Edgeworth considered it a glorious fact that slaves became free the instant they touched English soil. Regardless of that condition in England, she opposed the practice of slavery wherever it might be. In "The Grateful Negro", Hector and Caesar, two negro slaves, represent contrasting attitudes which slaves had toward their masters. Hector hoped that the time would come when he could treat his master as cruelly as he deemed that the master deserved. He regarded his serving as an imposition, but Caesar served his master with pleasure. Hector would have sacrificed anything

to exterminate an enemy, while Caesar devoted himself to the defense of his friends. Mr. Edwards, the white man that bought Caesar and his sweetheart, proved by his kind treatment that he was a friend, and that negroes could be good servants. The actual owning of slaves did not provoke Miss Edgeworth's disapproval as much as the ill-treatment that they often received. Nor were negro slaves the only slaves that enlisted her sympathy. The use made of the poor peasant by land agents impressed Miss Edgeworth as a worse form of servitude than the prevailing treatment of negroes. It was difficult for Miss Edgeworth's aristocratic nature to appreciate fully the democratic idea of equal rights to all people--negro, peasant, and land owner, alike. She realized that something needed to be done, but she was a bit pre-democratic when she said:

The question, whether society could exist without the distinction of ranks, is a question involving a variety of complicated discussions, which we leave to the politician and the legislator. At present it is necessary that the education of different ranks should, in some respects, be different. They have few ideas, few habits in common; their peculiar vices and virtues do not arise from the same causes, and their ambition is to be directed to different objects. But justice, truth, and humanity are confined to no particular rank, and should be enforced with equal care and energy upon the minds of young people of every station; and it is hoped that these principles have never been forgotten.⁶

When the education of the peasant was undertaken, his ignorance was found to be appalling. One big controversy in

⁶ Maria Edgeworth, The Parent's Assistant, p. iv.

his life was, which played the greater part, prudence or luck. He could not reconcile himself to the fact that training and effort determine one's destiny, and not chance alone. Poor, ignorant Sally believed that "education's a fine thing, no doubt; but fortune's a better, as the world goes"; and even if one goes around being good all his life, unless luck is with him, it will all amount to nothing.⁷ Goody Grope, a poor old witch-like woman, begged charity of those who had trusted more than she to industry and less to luck, and she was envious of any good that came as a result of ambition and hard labor.⁸ To the lamentation that luck failed to deal good children to some parents, Miss Edgeworth replied that some parents are more careful in their training of the children. Mr. Case, in "Simple Susan", clearly illustrates the ignorant parent's idea about child training. He attempted to change his poorly trained boy and girl into genteel youths when he was appointed to a considerable agency. Their habits were fixed, and luck did not intervene to make them desirable.⁹ The unlucky Murad, whose education had been neglected, believed that his lucky brother had "magical protection". Had Murad possessed his brother's discretion, he would not have been arrested for selling bread that he did not bake; kicked by a mule; robbed

⁷ Maria Edgeworth, Popular Tales, "The Contrast", p. 339.

⁸ Ibid., "The Orphans", p. 13.

⁹ Maria Edgeworth, The Parent's Assistant, "Simple Susan", pp. 61-62.

by one group of soldiers; shot by another group; cheated by¹⁰
 a Jew; or proved guilty of setting fire to a ship. Not only
 did some of the peasants sit quietly waiting for something
 to 'turn up', but it was whispered that the gypsies were "re-
 sorted to, secretly, by those whose educations might have¹¹
 taught them better sense".

The trouble seemed to be a lack of unity in the educa-
 tional system of England. There were many important facts
 and processes that the youth might learn, but Miss Edgeworth
 saw that no one thing was being followed to a complete mastery.
 Jervas felt repaid for his labor at transcribing notes for a
 lawyer, for he gained some new bit of information each day,
 but still he lacked a balanced education. Arithmetic was
 considered the most useful and necessary thing to be known by
 all people, and even trigonometry was studied by many young
 students. Susan's father taught her a little arithmetic, as
 far as he knew, on winter nights when there was nothing bet-
 ter to do. She learned to write without a teacher, and she
 was soon able to make out bills for the neighbors who had¹²
 bought a few rolls of her own working. Carlo felt greatly
 confused when he first heard the terms used in trigonometry,¹³
 but those words soon became quite familiar. By reading at-

¹⁰ Maria Edgeworth, Popular Tales, "Murad the Unlucky",
 pp. 261, 263, 293.

¹¹ Ibid., "The Limerick Gloves", p. 122.

¹² Maria Edgeworth, The Parent's Assistant, "Simple Susan",
 pp. 81, 111.

¹³ Ibid., "The Little Merchants", p. 319.

tentively even when no master was near to bid him read, Brian¹⁴ proved that education is a worth-while process. Lane Jervas made more progress, perhaps, than any youth that Miss Edgeworth pictured; but he lacked systematized and planned instruction, and conceit over his accomplishments almost ruined his life. His friend Mr. Y_____ saw his danger and took great pains to teach him good habits and principles which would make him a useful, respectable, and happy man. He was cured of his conceit without losing his ardor to acquire knowledge. The greatest and most abiding knowledge, in Miss Edgeworth's opinion, came to the little boy or girl who loved to stand beside the good-natured old woman's spinning wheel when she was spinning, and to talk to her. At these times she taught them something which, she said, she hoped would be remembered by them all their lives. She explained to them what is meant by telling the truth, and what it is to be honest. She taught them to dislike idleness, and to wish that they could be use-¹⁵ful.

Education included many things, but hard work with no idleness was the keynote in the didactic stories that Maria Edgeworth wrote for young readers. The children whom she pictured as being worthy of imitation were children who had work to do aside from actual book learning. One of the most

¹⁴ Maria Edgeworth, The Parent's Assistant, "The White Pigeon", pp. 118, 122.

¹⁵ Ibid., "The Basket-Woman", p. 365.

important lessons that Rose Gray learned was to put everything in its own place. She found it almost as easy to hang a coat or bonnet upon a peg as to throw it upon the floor.¹⁶ George Robinson, who was taught copying, reading, and spelling at home by his mother, pulled weeds in his small garden as his pastime.¹⁷ His constant toiling kept him from mischief and gave him worth-while training. Francisco said, "'All that I have done has been done by hard labour. I don't know how other people do things; but I am sure that I never have been able to get anything done but by patience.'" Pa-¹⁸ tience and some form of work, regardless of how meager, are always commendable. In the Edgeworth stories, idleness brings each person into bad company, and bad company invariably brings destruction and despair. The prevailing maxim is that "' It is a sin for anyone to be content to eat the bread of idleness."¹⁹

In Practical Education, Miss Edgeworth is at pains to show that gaming and cheating follow idleness. She repeated the declaration in her stories. Actual gaming is not discussed so much as evil use of money. She shows that money can not buy happiness. It is the person who treats money only as a medium of exchange and who deals fairly with other people, that is seen to prosper. The most cunning cheat is always

¹⁶ Maria Edgeworth, Popular Tales, "Rosanna", p. 211.

¹⁷ Ibid., "The Lottery", p. 183.

¹⁸ Maria Edgeworth, The Parent's Assistant, "The Little Merchant", p. 325.

¹⁹ Maria Edgeworth, Popular Tales, "Rosanna", p. 226.

detected and disgraced. Miss Edgeworth does not always show the offender exposed in his first offense; she admonishes him, however, to confess his faults before detection.²⁰ Of course, great will power is required in the confession of one's faults and in the overcoming of bad habits, but "every new effort will weaken your bad habits and strengthen your good ones".²¹ Some parents even encourage their child in dishonesty, but Miss Edgeworth shows by her stories that the honest child is happy and wins worldly goods as well as an approving conscience. One young man who had won in the fight against temptation said, "May every man, who,....., is tempted to be a gamester, reflect that a good character, and domestic happiness, which cannot be won in any lottery, are worth more than the five thousand, or even the ten thousand pound prize, let any Mrs. Dolly in Christendom say what she will to the contrary".²²

The practice of praising and rewarding children for every good deed that they do was severely criticized by Miss Edgeworth. Children lack the reason to know that rewards are not merely prizes for shrewd and cunning behavior, and it is not easy to give rewards to children which will not indirectly do them harm by fostering some hurtful taste or passion.²³

²⁰ Maria Edgeworth, The Parent's Assistant, "The Bracelet", p. 295.

²¹ Ibid., p. 286.

²² Maria Edgeworth, Popular Tales, "The Lottery", p. 206.

²³ Maria Edgeworth, The Parent's Assistant, p.V.

Miss Edgeworth often pictures a child who does a good deed in order to get a verbal or material reward. Such a child is finally defeated by his own vanity and conceit.

An interest in science and scientific inventions is to be promoted as a safeguard against evils. The child who spends his time working with science is kept from idleness, and is sure to be properly rewarded for his efforts. Mr. Edgeworth had been unsuccessful in his attempted scientific inventions, but many of his ideas had become popular before his death in 1817. Maria naturally absorbed an interest in science and pictured several children in her stories as devotees of science. ²⁴ *Lame Jervas* was thoroughly absorbed in it. With reference to his love for nature, Jervas said, "In truth, I believe I was a droll figure; for my hat was stuck full of weeds, and all sorts of wild-flowers; and both my coat and waistcoat pockets were stuffed out with pebbles and ²⁵ funguses". After Jervas had established himself with Mr. Y__, the man showed the boy a thermometer and explained its workings. ²⁵ Jervas was taught to read and write, and he paid Mr. Y__ for his teaching by keeping Mr. Y_____'s accounts.

Miss Edgeworth is at pains to instill in the young a respect for authority. A group of boys whose education had

²⁴ Maria Edgeworth, Popular Tales, "*Lame Jervas*", p. 16.

²⁵ This instrument must have been something new, for it is spoken of several times in the story.

been neglected were in rebellion against their teachers. The boys attempted a "barring out" at school. Dr. Middleton, the head-master, called the boys together and said, "You have rebelled against the just authority which is necessary to conduct and govern you whilst you have not sufficient reason to govern and conduct yourselves." He realized that he was not popular with those boys whose lives had been made easy by plenty of money and little real labor. His purpose was to do what he felt was right: teach the boys the correct standards and let them judge for themselves when they were mature enough. Young Archer, especially, resented that treatment. He only made himself ridiculous by remaining in the wrong rather than allowing himself to be taught the right. Those boys had been fretful and troublesome because they had lacked the proper education from the cradle.

Miss Edgeworth was not entirely original either in her plan or in her stories in The Parent's Assistant and Popular Tales. Each story was sketched for her father before it was written. Besides gaining his approval, which was necessary to the completion of every story, Miss Edgeworth called for outside help. She asked one of her correspondents for any good anecdotes adaptable to instructional purposes between the ages of five and seventeen years. She was not unusually

²⁶ Maria Edgeworth, The Parent's Assistant, "The Barring Out", p. 286.

particular about the type, but any story showing misfortune growing out of neglected education was desired. Although these two volumes are not so romantic as her novels, they give a delightfully vivid picture of the times. They are obviously and avowedly educational, and attempt to impart knowledge gradually from example rather than from abstract teaching. The educative principles that she taught were drawn from actual life, and were designed to teach young people neither to admire nor to despair, without reason. In her stories of this category, Miss Edgeworth clearly aimed at, and in a considerable measure reached, the needs of adolescents.

CHAPTER FIVE

FICTION FOR THE EDIFICATION OF THE ADULT

Besides writing pedagogical works with her father as co-author, and short stories for the edification of children, Maria Edgeworth wrote several novels. It was in 1800 that Castle Rackrent, her first novel, appeared anonymously. This story traces the decadence of the Rackrent family, as told by Thady Quirk, the steward. Although this was Miss Edgeworth's first attempt at novel writing, it is her greatest success in Irish characterization. Thady, perhaps the best drawn character in all her novels, is drawn from life; and it is his presence, as well as the absence of Mr. Edgeworth's supervision, that has made this the most natural and vigorous of all the Edgeworth novels. The second of her novels in which Irish national manners are painted is The Absentee, written in 1812. The Clonbrony family moved from Ireland to London because the mother hoped that through their introduction into London's social atmosphere, her children might lose their love for Ireland. It is quite natural that Miss Edgeworth, who was Irish by birth, should show these young people, as well as their mother, as total misfits in English society, while the father is represented as losing heavily in revenues from his Irish estate because he was not

there to manage. The local color and humor presented in both these novels prevent their being extremely didactic, but even Castle Rackrent, the most objective of Miss Edgeworth's writings, is not entirely free from moralizing.

The teaching of morals was Miss Edgeworth's second and greatest aim in the writing of her novels. She knew that fiction may stray far from truth, and the intended purpose of presenting true life may be lost. Her belief was that even her novels for the adult reader should teach obvious and worthy lessons, as well as entertain. She was not, however, a great believer in the educational value of the novel. In fact, Robinson Crusoe and Gulliver's Travels she held to be the only books that amused the imagination without acting upon the feelings. She admits that Crusoe's island is delightful, but she is confident that nobody would wish to take Crusoe's place there. Miss Edgeworth's own novels tell exciting stories, but the good characters remain good, and the bad are always bad. Her own Belinda (1801) presents Lady Delacour, who had once taken part in a duel, in contrast with Belinda. Lady Delacour is interesting enough, but Belinda, whose feminine charm was due to her aunt's careful supervision, found her an unpleasant associate. The subplot of this story, in which Clarence Hervey trained the lonely little orphan Virginia to become a worthy wife for him,

reminds us of Thomas Day's life. Hervey, like Day, however, was unsuccessful in training a wife; the result was that Belinda suddenly decided against Mr. Vincent, her lover, and became Mrs. Hervey. The reader may not be completely satisfied with Belinda's treatment of Mr. Vincent, but Miss Edgeworth's "lesson" was that a well trained lady should make the best marriage settlement possible. The same problem is presented in Patronage, published in 1804, which tells the story of the love affairs of Caroline and Rosamond, the two daughters of the bankrupt Percy family. These sisters are presented in marked contrast. Rosamond is volatile, while Caroline is exceedingly tender. Rosamond was made steadier by her love for Mr. Henry, but Caroline's noble nature found a perfect satisfaction in the love of Count Altenburg, whom she had doubted ever winning. The most difficult struggle of any of Miss Edgeworth's women characters was that of Leonora, in the novel by the same name, which was written in 1803. Leonora had to win her husband from Olivia, his mistress. Social custom again becomes the protagonist in Ormond, Miss Edgeworth's only novel with a masculine title. This story of the O'Shanes is the last novel that Mr. Edgeworth helped with before his death in 1817. The only novel that Miss Edgeworth wrote after her father's death was Helen,

published in 1834. It is significant to note that this story lacks the usual Edgeworthian satire and ultra-obvious didacticism. Helen's education, received under the direction of Mrs. Collingwood, enabled her to rank above Lady Davenant's daughter Cecilia, and Miss Edgeworth did not fail in Helen's case to show, as usual, the carefully trained person to an advantage over the artificial, insincere individual.

Miss Edgeworth's third purpose in her novels was to reform fashionable society by satirizing the lives of the idle and worldly. The Edgeworths themselves never cared for fashion in the usual sense. Miss Edgeworth intended her Tales of Fashionable Life to be strict satire on the lives of those people who pose above their natural station. This work, written in 1812, is a three-volume work containing five stories. In "Ennui", the first story, the evils that befell the Earl of Glen-thorn are recounted. His guardian had allowed him to become accustomed to having his wants satisfied without regard for whom he would hurt. Life had been easy for his selfish nature, but his scheme was totally disrupted when it was discovered that he was the son of Elinor, the nurse; and Christy Donoghoe, whom Elinor was posing as her son, was found to be the real Earl. The Earl had married an heiress for her money and, like Mrs. Beaumont in "Manoeuvring", which is the second story of the series, found only unhappiness. Miss Walsingham

and her brother, in this second story, are represented as carefully trained young people; and their happiness is the reward of virtues thus implanted. Madame de Fleury, the leading character in the story by the same name, grows weary of woman's subdued state and provides a school where girls are trained as homemakers. Sister Frances is the school-mistress, and the training she gives is exceedingly practical. The story "Almeria" again shows that the gift of fortune cannot be substituted for merit, and that nobody can hope to rise above his station in life by fortune alone. Honest endeavor and labor always have their reward. The plot of the story "The Dun" shows that every debt must be paid.

A superficial survey of the customs that Miss Edgeworth pictured in her novels might easily lead one to wonder how she escaped being a pessimist. The laws of England were harsh, and no person was entirely out of their reach. Conventions restrained humanity in the expression of its natural impulses on all sides. True character was lost in artifice and sophistication. Of the prevailing conditions, Miss Edgeworth said:

Hence forward you shall never appear in your natural character.--Innocent, you shall look guilty. Wise, you shall look silly,--never shall you have the use of your natural faculties.--That which you wish to say, you shall not say--that which you wish to do, you shall not do,--you shall appear reserved, when you are enthusiastic,--insensible, when your heart sinks in melting tenderness.--In the presence of those you most wish to please, you shall be most awkward,--and when approached by her you love, you shall become as a statue!

¹ Maria Edgeworth, Patronage, IV, p. 3.

That strained atmosphere is found often in Miss Edgeworth's novels. In Patronage, Mr. Percy, like Goldsmith's Dr. Primrose, was put in jail for debts that he had been cheated into acquiring. Several of the characters in Miss Edgeworth's short stories had met the same fate, and they and their families had suffered severely. A jail sentence, however, provided the victim was innocent, was no disgrace. She showed that some single vice or folly committed in a moment of weakness was the origin of each character's downfall, but she tenaciously clung to the idea that if man will act rightly, all will be well. Her belief was that it was man's privilege to do good and be happy, or do evil and be unhappy. She did not seek to justify the ways of God to man, but rather she let man receive the reward of his own acts, whether good or evil.

Miss Edgeworth likes to prove the strength of her characters by subjecting them to the severest tests. She seems to know every human weakness, though lack of stability is the only defect of character which she is unwilling to condone. She shows Helen as the one sane member of a household where she was innocent, but appeared guilty. Lady Davenant, who had been a cruel woman, expected her daughter Cecilia to be a successful wife despite her mother's influence. This was next to impossible, but by Helen's kind friendship the entire family was reunited, and Helen's reward was mar-

riage to Granville Beauclerc. Harry Ormond also has a most discouraging struggle to make. He is the ward of Cornelius O'Shane, who is known as King of Black Island. After the death of O'Shane, life seemed to hold very little for Harry. He is by nature quite fond of flattery. He wishes to be successful in the army, and Lady Annaly knows he should have a knowledge of French. She sends him a collection of French books. Harry has nobody to help him with the unfamiliar task, but perseveres until success crowns his efforts. Walsingham, the hero of Miss Edgeworth's story "Manoeuvring", had the hardest charge of any Edgeworthian character. His duty required that he stay on a sinking ship. He refused to be swerved from the execution of his duty and was saved before he was injured. Miss Edgeworth's praise for people who are strong of will but not obstinate was probably due to her unconscious knowledge that her own father was one of those persons who are born to have their own way. She found, however, that "resolution is a quality or power of mind totally independent of a knowledge of the world. The habit of self-control can be acquired by any individual, in any situation."²

Miss Edgeworth exemplified in her novels the idea that friendships are necessary to a successful life. She quoted

² Maria Edgeworth, Ormond, p. 197.

with approval the words of a German writer who said, "Love is like the moving shadows, which diminish as day advances; but friendship is like the shadows of the evening, which increase even till the setting of the sun".³ The Edgeworths counted among their personal friends such influential and important persons as Sir Walter Scott, Mrs. Inchbald, Dr. Darwin, and, of course, Thomas Day. Besides those friends whose associations might be called personal, Miss Edgeworth and her father entertained and were entertained by many important literary, political, and theatrical personages. Miss Edgeworth owed much to the encouragement which these friends gave her in her writing. On the other hand, she befriended numerous individuals, for her philosophy was that "no life is pleasing to God that is not useful to man".⁴ The Edgeworth characters owed their successes or failures to the influence of their friends. Helen proved herself a worthy friend; but it was only after they had unjustly accused Helen of intrigue that Lady Davenant and her daughter Lady Cecilia helped Helen win Granville Beauclerc. Helen's efforts, although not selfish, came near to failure in gaining the deserved reward. It was Belinda's sympathetic understanding of Clarence Hervey's problem in training Virginia, and her desire to help, that proved her capable of being a real friend, and Hervey later found her

³ Maria Edgeworth, Leonora, Vol. II, p. 290.

⁴ Maria Edgeworth, Helen, p. 69.

worthy to be his wife. The Rackrents and Clanbronzys expected more of their associates (they found no real friends) than they were willing to give in return. Caroline Percy was slow in forming attachments for herself. She first considered the happiness of her friends. Her first thought in accepting the proposal of Count Altenburg was whether or not her acceptance would cause her friends any anxiety. Ormond, whose insight into human nature was exceedingly keen, made his connections quickly. "Be my friend--at once--or not at all--"⁵ was his motto. Madame de Fleury expressed Miss Edgeworth's own idea quite forcefully when she said that good daughters make good friends.

Although Miss Edgeworth did not see fit to accept the proposal of the Swedish gentleman, M. Edelcrantz, she was a believer in love and marriage. Love, with her and her characters, was a sacred emotion and not a sensual passion. The women characters that Miss Edgeworth pictured favorably were never to regard a man's attentions as anything more than mere civility. They were supposed never to sense his interests, regardless of how plainly they were demonstrated, until he declared them in words. Caroline Percy is the character in which Miss Edgeworth's own love affair is most clearly shown. Caroline admired the French Count Altenburg from the time of his

⁵ Maria Edgeworth, Ormond, p. 66.

arrival in England, but, of course, she did not take the initiative in the matter. Miss Edgeworth planned the characterization carefully, and the reader realizes from the beginning that Caroline and the Count are intended for each other, but Caroline is represented as struggling to control what she supposed was a hopeless passion. She feared that the Earl of Glenthorn was right when he said that "men now-a-days are grown too wise to enslave themselves for women". The Earl further declared that although love occupies a vast space in a woman's thoughts, it fills a very small portion of a man's life. Men, he thought, were born for something better than to sing ditties to a mistress' eyebrows. Clarence Hervey, it is true, had grown tired of the Parisian belles with their artificial lives; his efforts at training a wife had been unsuccessful; and he found happiness only when his admiration for Belinda grew to love. Miss Edgeworth never let a marriage take place between her admirable characters until love was actually and undeniably present. Yet she had her women constantly conscious of bettering their social positions by marriage. Miss Edgeworth herself would have had a position in the Swedish court if she had married M. Edelerantz, but the need that her family had for her and the distance that would have separated them outweighed her love, and she remained unmarried.

A keen sense of right and a reverend regard for religion were stongly characteristic of the Edgeworths. Critics have doubted the sincerity of the Edgeworths' religion, but any fair-minded reader can readily see that reverence for the Supreme Being was ever present in the life at Edgeworthstown. It is true that religion as the possession of a sect is completely absent from the Edgeworth writings; Mr. Edgeworth had shown no difference between Protestant and Catholic tenants. In fact, he urged all his neighbors to be tolerant. The same spirit is shown in Miss Edgeworth's novels. Mrs. M'Crule, a former servant of Sir Ulick O'Shane, in Ormond, is the only character that Miss Edgeworth speaks of as opposing the education of Protestant and Catholic children in the same schools, and Mrs. M'Crule's opinion is seen to be born of her ignorance. On the other hand, Dr. Cambray, another character in the same book, took special pains to secure the co-operation of the Catholic clergymen in his attempts to improve the lower classes. His village school was open to Catholics as well as Protestants; and Father M'Cormack, the priest, having been assured that their religion would not be tampered with, allowed and encouraged his flock to send their children to that school. Miss Edgeworth tells of a charitable institution located in the same part of the country for the education of all children, both Catholic and Protestants, from the

ages of seven to twelve years old. Moral training was the main object in the selection of schools for children. However, it was Helen, who had not attended any school, who showed the Christian conception of love instead of fear that Miss Edgeworth wished most to teach. When Helen was a child, somebody asked if she was bred in the fear of the Lord. She promptly replied, "No, but in the love of God".⁶ Instead of religious dogma, Miss Edgeworth filled her novels with moral choices where "virtue, with poverty and famine, was on one side and vice, with affluence, love, and every worldly pleasure, on the other".⁷ Those characters whose examples we are to follow always chose virtue, and were rewarded with success.

A modern problem--divorce--is discussed at length in one of Miss Edgeworth's novels, Leonora. Written in letters more than a hundred years ago, this book is singularly modern in tone. Leonora's home is almost wrecked by Olivia, a divorcee. Divorce was, of course, considered one of the gravest of evils, and Leonora had been warned against Olivia as an immoral woman. Yet her sympathetic nature responded when Olivia said, "'Divorce according to our barbarous institutions, can not be obtained without guilt...yet to submit to live with the man I could not love, was, to a mind like mine, impossible. My principles and my feelings equally revolted from this legal prostitution.'⁸" Olivia attempted to justify her

⁶ Maria Edgeworth, Helen, p. 445.

⁷ Maria Edgeworth, Tales of Fashionable Life, Vol.II, pp.283-4.

⁸ Maria Edgeworth, Leonora, Vol.I, p. 7.

infringement upon Leonora's happiness by saying that "surely no prejudice of education or institution can be more barbarous than that which teaches a wife that she has an indefeasible and exclusive right, both to the affections and the fidelity of her husband"⁹. Leonora's mother foresaw the trouble that awaited Leonora, but the trusting daughter only replied that suspicion need not justify punishment. However, Olivia was actually guilty of intrigue, and the husband went away with her. Not even the birth of Leonora's baby awakened him; but, like all good, suffering souls of the age, Leonora bore her trouble in silence. When severe sickness came, the husband found that no nurse or mistress could take the place of the loving wife. Finding him penitent, she is happy with his promises that he will never philander again.

English women were, in Miss Edgeworth's opinion, the most charming and the most amiable women in the world. She praised them through the character of Count Altenburg who had travelled and had known many women. It was reserved for him to meet his ideal in England, "where education, institutions, opinions, manners, and the habits of society, and of domestic life, happily combined to give the just proportion of all that is attractive, useful, ornamental, and amiable, to the female character". In speaking of Caroline, he said that she was "a woman, who, to the noble simplicity of character that was once the charm of Swisserland, joined the

⁹ Maria Edgeworth, Leonora, Vol. I, pp. 137-138.

polish, the elegance, that once was the pride of France; a woman possessing a large, cultivated, embellished understanding, capable of comprehending all his views as a politician, and a statesman; yet without the slightest wish for power, or any desire to interfere in public business, or political intrigue.¹⁰ Regardless of their extremely feminine characteristics, Miss Edgeworth's women are not frail, fainting females. However, they have not abandoned the abundant and free flow of their tears. The Edgeworthian women are not easily won; they are quite stern of character. Granville Beauclerc almost gave up his suit of Helen, but Lady Cecilia assured him that "a faint heart never won a fair lady". Women, she declared, who had to know when to cry and when to control their tears, when to be stern and when to be easily pleased, did have a difficult place to fill; and without sound judgment, they were lost. Olivia, the mistress in Leonora, lamented the nameless evils that awaited the woman who dared to rise above the prejudices of her sex. Miss Edgeworth realized that the new order had meant gain for women, especially English women. It was still true, however, that "men who, from their fortune, birth, and character, might be deemed the most desirable matches, would shun alliances with the daughters of women of tainted reputation".¹¹

¹⁰ Maria Edgeworth, Patronage, Vol. III, p. 154.

¹¹ Ibid., Vol. I, p. 131.

Throughout her novels, Maria Edgeworth's predominant theory is that the gift of education is more advantageous than the gift of money, since it ensures the means both of future subsistence and happiness. By education Miss Edgeworth certainly did not mean formal schooling, for there is no mention that several of her most admirable characters had attended school at all. She did call attention to the training that her characters had been given, and in each case she showed

the victory of virtue over vice. There is no pedagogical theory in the Edgeworth novels, but Miss Edgeworth praises the honesty, modesty, and humbleness that her characters displayed. She wished for them to continue that practice under all circumstances. She might have appropriately ended each of her novels with these lines:

"'Our tale contains a moral; and, no doubt,
You all have wit enough to find it out.'"¹²

¹² Maria Edgeworth, Belinda, p. 485.

CHAPTER SIX

MARIA EDGEWORTH'S PLACE IN LITERATURE

During the three centuries preceding the time of Maria Edgeworth, the short, didactic story had been the domesticated property of preachers. Its use was to enforce morals in the lives of the listeners. In a few instances these stories were dismissed from clerical service and were effectively told in taverns.¹ The task of teaching through novels awaited Richardson's pen, and the didactic story as literature came as Maria Edgeworth's principal contribution. Madame de Genlis, it is true, had written stories, but they were for her daughter alone. It is also true that the larger number of Maria Edgeworth's short stories were written for her brothers and sisters, but her very first writing had a publisher in view.² Publication was not her sole aim, but her letters show that she was happy when a publisher accepted one of her stories. By the publication of her stories, she was able to reach more people with her moral instruction. She did not seek to appeal to grave and learned persons, as earlier novelists had done, but addressed herself to the mass of mankind who, after all, needed the moralistic training given in her works. She was certainly the first to "make domestic fiction the vehicle of great and necessary truths, and on

¹ Sir Walter Raleigh, The English Novel, p. 13.

² This was "Generosity", an essay ~~that was~~ written while Miss Edgeworth was in boarding school.

this account alone she must take a high rank, and be forgiven for trotting along by her characters like a guiding angel³ to keep them on the right track".

Mary Wollstonecraft and Harriet Martineau were both strong believers in their own sex and had been advocates of a new era for women, but Maria Edgeworth surpassed each in her own field. Mary Wollstonecraft's The Rights of Women had been considered a bold and original production, but her own life was too improper to have won approval, and much of the credit due her for her ideas has been taken by somebody else. Her ideas remain worthy despite her unpopularity. Miss Martineau fared better than Mary Wollstonecraft, even if she was discouraged in her attempted policies of political economy and advised to "study the works of a lady who with immeasurably greater abilities in every way, her predecessor in the line she considered so wholly original--the illustrating by fiction the natural laws of social welfare". "Political economy", this continues, "is far more ingeniously as well as justly illustrated in the 'Absentee' and 'Castle Rackrent', than in 'Ireland'". There is not indeed one tale of Miss Edgeworth's but conveys some useful lesson on questions which materially concern the economy of society. But the difference between the two writers is, that the moral of Miss

³ Helen Zimmern, Maria Edgeworth, p. 143.

Edgeworth's tales is naturally suggested to the reader by the course of events of which he peruses the narrative; that of Miss Martineau is embodied in elaborate dialogues of most unnatural incidents, with which her stories are interlarded and interrupted, to the utter destruction of the interest of all but detached bits of them."⁴

Miss Edgeworth occupies a singular place in the characterization of the Irish. Her family had lived in Ireland for about three hundred years. Very few families of prominence lived on their estates as continuously as the Edgeworths. The memoirs of the Edgeworths record comparatively few journeys away from Edgeworthstown, where Mr. Edgeworth was truly a leader among his Irish neighbors. He often was called upon to settle disputes. Maria usually sat and listened to the discussions and took notes on Irish peculiarities in talk, dress, and behavior. This explains why some of her works are exceedingly good characterizations, and why some others, "as are not particularly Irish, are so far inferior to those which are"⁵. This fact also explains why Castle Rackrent, Ennui, Belinda, and Ormond, her Irish novels, are worthy of their high rating. However, she was prone to collect upon one canvas the predominant features of several characters that she had known, and to give us an exaggerated and amusing rather than a just representation of the Irish

⁴ Quarterly Review, April, 1833, XLIX, pp. 151-152.
⁵ Ibid., XIII, p. 511.

character. Her characters are pictured as living during the period of decadence that actually existed in Ireland at that time. Such life stories had been found in the drama, but never in novels. It was from these stories that Scott patterned his national and psuedo-national tales.

Few people who attempt something entirely new can hope to escape some measure of criticism. Maria Edgeworth was not among these few, but she continued her endeavors to teach through her writings. She did not attempt to write a history of her characters; therefore, the criticism directed against her must of necessity assume some form other than a questioning of facts. She did endeavor to combine entertainment with instruction, and on the whole, she succeeded. Most criticism of Miss Edgeworth's work has lamented the repressive critical supervision by her father; it has been the fashion to regard his influence as deplorable. But undoubtedly she derived a stimulus from his powerful mind, and it is more reasonable to say that she owed her success to his genius. It was he who planned her course of didacticism for her. One can hardly object seriously to this didacticism, since "a moral was uppermost in Miss Edgeworth's mind", and for this she often attempted playing the part of Providence⁶ and twisting the narrative to fit the moral. Throughout her

⁶ Helen Zimmern, Maria Edgeworth, pp. 117-118.

writings it is almost possible to distinguish between those passages that have been tampered with by her father and those where she has been allowed free play. Even after her father's death, when she was fifty years of age, she finished his Memoirs by drawing from them moral and didactic conclusions.⁷ Nevertheless, Maria Edgeworth's new type of story, with life-like characters and ever-present moral, found a hearty reception by many critics.

The question naturally arises as to what kind of reading these peculiarly didactic stories are. No writer of her time was less revolutionary and more typical of the age than was Maria Edgeworth. Her mission was to teach, and in this she never failed. "As a rule, however, her style is easy, finished, flexible, and at times racy, and while seldom rising to eloquence, never sinking to tameness."⁸ Money was not her object in writing, and publication was not her goal at the beginning of her career. Thomas Day objected to women as writers, and, had he lived, Maria Edgeworth would probably never have become known. She took the material other writers had declared worthless and wrote those stories which show a certain something that was possessed by very few writers of her class. Her stories are not perfect examples of good writing, for too often the plot is clumsily and coldly continued, the proportions not well maintained; but the work

⁷ She continued her father's practice of telling only such incidents as illustrated some admirable human quality, as courage, truthfulness, and kindness.

⁸ Helen Zimmern, Maria Edgeworth, p. 179.

abounds in masterly delineation of character. "Her pen is not dipped in vinegar and wormwood, as was the pen of Thackeray and sometimes even that of George Eliot. Without snob-bishness, without envy, she writes quite simply, and absolutely objectively, of that which surged around her." She never lost sight of the pleasure of her reader, and there is that freshness about her stories that readers are quick to respond to because so many of her characters were real. She tried always to keep the reader's point of view.

The effort would be wasted in attempting to qualify Maria Edgeworth as a major writer, and rate her along with Dickens, Thackeray, or even George Eliot. Miss Edgeworth's range of subject-matter was not extensive, and her aim was always the same--to teach. Her morals are obvious but wholesome. She did not attempt to be a reformer; neither did she apply herself to the correction of the vices and abuses so prevalent among the people. She did not magnify those evils, even though she did emphasize them throughout her novels. "She was neither a Utopian purist nor a sentimental innocent; nor can she belie a natural tendency to make her ethics rather a code of high-minded expediency than a high principle for its own sake only. Throughout her writings she shows that from law as well as high motives, good actions are the best; but she never suffers her characters to rest in the reward of a

⁹ Helen Zimmern, Maria Edgeworth, pp. 127-128.

quiet conscience. Her supreme good sense was always mingled¹⁰ with a regard for the social proprieties." Her long list of writings marks a successful career, and her numerous letters tell of a happy life. So it is quite natural that the death, on May 22, 1849, of perhaps the greatest didactic English novelist might be spoken of as the arising from the banquet of life where she had been a happy guest.

¹⁰ Helen Zimmern, Maria Edgeworth, pp. 41-42.

APPENDIX A

A REVIEW OF MARIA EDGEWORTH'S TALES OF FASHIONABLE LIFE

(Quarterly Review, August, 1809)

In the Quarterly Review for August, 1809, pp. 146-154, we find a review of Maria Edgeworth's Tales of Fashionable Life. The article offers worthy contemporary criticism, and may be quoted in its entirety.

If the importance of a literary work is to be estimated by the number of readers which it attracts, and the effect which it produces upon character and moral taste, a novel or a tale cannot justly be deemed a trifling production. For it is not only that a novel even of the lowest order always finds more readers than a serious work, but that it finds readers of a more ductile cast, whose feelings are more easily interested, and with whom every impression is deeper, because more new. Productions of this kind, therefore, are by no means beneath the notice of the reviewer, but fall very peculiarly within his province. The customers of the circulating library are so numerous, and so easily imposed upon, that it is of the utmost importance to the public, that its weights and measures should be subject to the inspection of a strict literary police, and the standard of its morality and sentiment kept as pure as the nature of things will admit.

Miss Edgeworth, however, has more honourable claims to critical notice, and such as cannot be allowed to the ordinary class of manufacturers of novels. Though not perhaps what is called a fine writer, she possesses a considerable share of genius and originality; and has shown, in her Treatise on Education, talents, which if not equal to that subject, are at the same time much superior to the task of fabricating books of mere amusement.

As a writer of tales and novels, she has a very marked peculiarity. It is that of venturing to dispense common sense to her readers, and to bring them within the precincts of real life and natural feeling. She presents them with no incredible adventures, or inconceivable sentiments, no hyperbolical representations of uncommon character, or monstrous exhibitions of exaggerated passion. Without excluding love from her pages, she knows how to assign to it its just limits. She neither degrades the sentiment from its true dignity, nor lifts it to a burlesque elevation. It takes its proper place among the other passions. Her heroes and heroines, if such they may be called, are never miraculously good, nor de-

testably wicked. They are such men and women as we see and converse with every day of our lives; with the same proportionate mixture in them of what is right and what is wrong, of what is great and what is little. Rejecting the commonplace sources of artificial interest, Miss Edgeworth derives her attraction from a genuine display of nature and a certain tone of rationality and good sense, which is the more pleasing, because in a novel it is so very new. The charm of probability by which her stories are so strongly characterized, is effected not only by an undeviating attention to nature, but by producing her under the forms in which she most usually presents herself, neglecting those which, though more imposing, are less frequent. Miss Edgeworth not only paints to the life, but loves to take subjects generally considered as dry and unproductive; such as are supposed unfit materials for fiction, because even in real life, they do not excite any warmth of interest. Character, for instance, seldom strikes till it is formed and finished; till it is matured into lights and shades so strong, as to mark it even to the transient observer. It is therefore character in this state only, which novelists in general think it worth their while to pourtray; but Miss Edgeworth loves to represent it even in its first elements, to trace the progress of its formation, to mark the effect produced upon it by influences, which, however real, have no connection whatever with the striking or the romantic, and to conduct it finally to a consummation neither of abandoned vice nor faultless virtue, but of that mixed good and evil, to which any other artist would despair to give interest and effect.

This development of character is often so exquisitely managed, as to leave the readers of romance no regret for the shining improbabilities to which they have been accustomed; but on the other hand, it cannot be denied that it is sometimes of so dull and homely an execution, as to leave no sentiment of tolerable complacency towards the design. To support, however, in any degree, the interest of a tale of fiction, and yet to devest it of the romantic tone to which fiction seems always to have owed its chief allurements, implies powers of no ordinary kind; and that on the whole, Miss Edgeworth is at least as interesting as the majority of her wonder-dealing rivals, there are perhaps few of her readers, who will not readily allow. To our shame, however, we must acknowledge, that we always think her most agreeable when she deviates a little from her rigid realities, and concedes to the corrupted taste of her readers some petty sprinkling of romantic feeling and extraordinary incident.

The sober and didactic texture of her tales is obvious-

ly well adapted to the purpose of moral instruction, and her avowed aim in them is to illustrate the principles laid down in her Treatise on Education. If the moral tendency of novels is ever an object of great importance to the public, it must be peculiarly so when they are written with the professed aim of establishing a set of principles. Into the merits of our author in this respect, it is therefore natural, with some anxiety to inquire.

We never much admired the tone of Miss Edgeworth's morality. It is a striking fact, that in a treatise in which she professed to give a summary of the duties of tuition, she purposely excluded from her system all reference to the subject of religious instruction. We recollect to have heard that in the cards of advertisement which a fashionable teacher in Paris distributed to the public, after a statement of the several languages and accomplishments which she was prepared to communicate to her pupils, a postscript was added, that any religion might be taught which the parents might prefer. Miss Edgeworth went a step beyond this: she seemed to take it for granted that parents had no preferences of that kind, and no wish that their children should have them.

It was not to be expected that where the proper foundation was laid, there should be any firmness or elevation in the superstructure: the morality of Miss Edgeworth, as detailed in her Treatise and in her Tales, is accordingly a system of manners regulated by prudence and a sense of propriety, having little connection with the heart, and rarely leading to any difficult or important efforts of virtue. There is little in her standard of moral duty to which every man of common discretion and average goodness of disposition does not naturally conform; and scarcely anything in the motives which she proposes, of a nobler source than a regard to worldly and selfish interests.

It is in vain to offer by way of defence, that the sphere of a novelist is confined; that in works of a trifling kind, it would be absurd to attempt to establish the foundations of moral obligation, or to inculcate with effect the more important duties. Such observations, though we should admit them to be true, are not applicable to the case in question; for our complaint is not that Miss Edgeworth has confined her instruction to matters of small importance, but that so limiting it, she at the same time leads her readers to suppose that they are receiving a complete lesson of morality, by neglecting to remind them that there are duties more sacred than those which she prescribes, and motives more commendable than those which she inculcated.

It is doubtless allowable to take partial views of a subject, but in so doing care ought to be taken that they are understood to be partial; otherwise it is not an incomplete, but an incorrect picture which is exhibited.

This censure applies in our opinion, generally, to all the literary works of the author before us, and it is by none more justified than by that which forms the subject of the present review. In some of her other productions, however, there is so much compensating merit, as almost to blind the severity of criticism to this great deficiency; but the tales before us have no claim to such favour. We have found in them a much greater predominance than in any of her other works, of that flatness and insipidity into which her peculiar vein of fictitious narrative is apt to lead, and on the whole consider them as decidedly inferior to any thing we had before seen from her.

The volumes under review, form, as we are told by Mr. Edgeworth in a preface with which he furnishes his daughter, part of a series of works of which the Moral Tales were the first, and of which there are more to come, all illustrative of some principles detailed in the Treatise on Education. The immediate object of the present work, is to display the errors of fashionable education, and the follies of fashionable life. It consists of five tales, very unequal in length; the first and second volume each containing single tales, and the rest being comprised in the third.

Of these tales, we give the decided preference to that contained in the first volume. It is entitled 'Ennui'; and gives an ingenious account of the causes, progress, and cure of that prevalent epidemic. These are exemplified in the case of a young peer, who, indulgently educated, and left at an early age master of an immense fortune, plunges without control into fashionable enjoyments, and throughout the whole of his splendid career, finds himself tired and dissatisfied without knowing why. With good natural parts and a feeling heart, he is believed by himself and by others to be destitute of both, because these qualities had never for an instant been roused into exertion. To call them forth was obviously the secret of expelling 'ennui'; but it was a secret, which, having no friend to teach him, he is made to learn from experience. He visits his paternal estate in Ireland; and we, who knew how often our own ennui had been relieved by a journey to that country under the guidance of Miss Edgeworth, followed him with pleasure, and with very sanguine hopes of his recovery. His malady is relieved by the vexations and comical incidents of an Irish journey.

Difficulties and privations, however, slight, are new to him, and rouse him from his apathy. He arrives at his castle, and is awakened to still further exertion, and therefore to still further enjoyment, by the ambition of preserving his importance among his peasantry, and of repressing the insolence of neighboring proprietors. A tolerably strong love-fit is the first incident which leads towards a permanent cure. Miss Edgeworth, with all her contempt for common-place love-stories, is still a woman, and is not displeased to attribute some wonders to the passion. She therefore makes him fall in love with a witty Irish woman.--Of this lady we will give the author's own character:

High-born and high-bred, she seemed to consider more what she thought of others, than what others thought of her. Frank, candid, and affable, yet opinionated, insolent, and an egotist: her candour and affability appeared the effect of a naturally good temper; her insolence and egotism only those of a spoiled child. She seemed to talk of herself purely to oblige others, as the most interesting topic of conversation; for such it had always been to her fond mother, who idolized her ladyship as an only daughter and the representative of an ancient house. Confident of her talents, conscious of her charms and secure of her station, Lady Geraldine gave free scope to her high spirits, her fancy and her turn for ridicule. She looked, spoke, and acted, like a person privileged to think, say, and do, what she pleased. Her raillery, like the raillery of princes, was without fear of retort. She was not ill-natured, yet careless to whom she gave offence, provided she produced amusement; and this she seldom failed, for in her conversation there was much of the raciness of Irish wit, and the oddity of Irish humour.--Vol.I, p. 136

Lady Geraldine without participating in the flame of her admirer, does him a much greater favour by drawing him into conversation, making him exert his natural talents, and both telling and convincing him that he is not a fool. In the progress of this intimacy, he finds his 'Ennui' considerably subsided; and he has not a single attack of it during the whole period of the Irish rebellion, owing to the activity into which he is compelled, in order to preserve his life from assassination, and his loyalty from suspicion.

Still, however, the ease and enjoyment derived from his title and estate, produce a recurrence of the symptoms, when he fortunately makes the discovery that he is the usurper of the honors of another, whose place he has by the deceit of a nurse occupied since infancy; and the Earl of Glenthorn at once sinks

into Christopher O'Donoghoe. Poverty, co-operating with another very violent and most inopportune love-attack induces him to study the law. He enters the office of a special pleader, and from that moment loses his 'Ennui' for ever. If we find any readers among the gay inhabitants of Lincoln's Inn, or the Temple, this may appear to them so violent an outrage upon probability, as to throw considerable discredit on some of our preceding remarks. Perhaps entering on the business with real earnestness, and having nothing else to depend upon, may impart interest even to precedents and entries. However that may be, we are told that they were of singular benefit to the ex-peer, who at the end of the usual period of study, finds that he has lost his 'Ennui' and gained a considerable portion of valuable technical knowledge. Upon the strength of this he marries the fair inciter of his diligence, her friends having very wisely suspended their consent until he should have proved of himself a decided convalescent.

This story, of which we have given but a very summary sketch, is not ill conceived, and is on the whole very well told. The following extract will convince our readers, who well know how successful the author is in depicting Irish character and manners, that she is not less so in her sketch of the North Briton.

Lord Glenthorn, during his residence at his Irish castle, among other methods of relieving 'Ennui', had recourse to that of giving away money to his indigent tenants.--His agent, a philosophic Scotchman, disapproved of his liberality.

'Was quite angry (says Lord Glenthorn) with Mr. M'Leod my agent, and considered him as a selfish hard-hearted miser, because he did not see, to sympathize with me, or to applaud my generosity. I was so much irritated by his cold silence, that I could not forbear pressing him to say something.--"I doubt then," said he, "since you desire me to speak my mind, my Lord, I doubt whether the best way of encouraging the industrious is to give premiums to the idle".

'But idle or not, these poor wretches are so miserable that I cannot refuse to give them something; and surely when one can do it so easily, it is right to relieve misery, is it not?'

Undoubtedly, my lord, but the difficulty is to relieve present misery, without creating more in the future. Pity for one class of beings sometimes makes us cruel to others. I am told that there are some Indian Brahmins so very compassionate that they hire beggars to let fleas feed upon them; I doubt whether it might not be better to let the fleas starve.'

'I did not in the least understand what Mr. M'Leod meant; but I was soon made to comprehend it by crowds of eloquent beggars who soon surrounded me: many who had been resolutely struggling with their difficulties, slackened their exertions, and left their labour for the easier trade of imposing upon my credulity. The money I had bestowed was wasted at the dram-shop, or it became the subject of family quarrels; and those whom I had relieved, returned to my honour, with fresh and insatiable expectations. All this time my industrious tenants grumbled, because no encouragement was given to them; and looking upon me as a weak good-natured fool, they combined in a resolution to ask me for long leases or a reduction or rent.'

'The rhetoric of my tenants succeeded in some instances; and again, I was mortified by Mr. M'Leod's silence. I was too proud to ask his opinion. I ordered, and was obeyed. A few leases for long terms were signed and sealed; and when I had thus my own way completely, I could not refrain from recurring to Mr. M'Leod's opinion!

'I doubt, my lord,' said he, 'whether this measure may be as advantageous as you hope. These fellows, these middlemen, will underset the land, and live in idleness, whilst they rack a parcel of wretched under-tenants.'

'But they said they would keep the land in their own hands and improve it; and that is the reason why they could not afford to improve before was, that they had not long leases.'

'It may be doubted whether long leases alone will make improving tenants; for in the next country to us there are many farms of the dowager Lady Ormsby's land, let at ten shillings an acre, and her tenantry are beggars; and the land now at the end of the leases is worn out, and worse than in their commencement.'

'I am weary of listening to this cold reasoning, and resolved to apply no more for explanations to Mr. M'Leod; yet I did not long keep this resolution: infirm of purpose, I wanted support of his approbation, at the very time I was jealous of his interference.'

'At one time I had a mind to raise the wages of labour; but Mr. M'Leod said--'It might be doubted whether the people would not work less, when they could with less work have money enough to support them.'

'I was puzzled, and then I had a mind to lower the

wages of labour, to force them to work or starve. Still provoking Mr. M'Leod said--'It might be doubted whether it would be better to leave them alone.'

'I gave marriage portions to the daughters of my tenants, and rewards to those who had children; for I had always heard that legislators should encourage population.

'Still Mr. M'Leod hesitated to approve: he observed 'that my estate was so populous, that the complaint in each family was, that they had not land for the sons. It might be doubted whether, if a farm could support ten people, it were wise to birth twenty. It might be doubted whether it were better for ten to live, and be well fed, than for twenty to be born, and to be half-starved.'

'To encourage manufactures in my town of Glenthorn, I proposed putting a clause in my leases, compelling my tenants to buy stuffs and linens manufactured at Glenthorn, and no where else. Stubborn M'Leod, as usual, began with--'I doubt whether that will not encourage the manufacturers at Glenthorn to make bad stuffs and bad linen, since they are sure of a sale, and without danger of competition.'

'At all events I thought my tenants would grow rich and independent if they made every thing at home that they wanted. Yet Mr. M'Leod perplexed me by his 'Doubt whether it would not be better for a man to buy shoes, if he could buy them cheaper than he could make them. He added something about the division of labour, and "Smith's Wealth of Nations". To which I could only answer, Smith's a Scotchman.

'I cannot express how much I dreaded Mr. M'Leod's I doubt, and it may be doubted.'--Vol. I. pp. 101-106.

On the tales contained in the two last volumes we can not bestow much praise. If it were required to make a choice between them, we should prefer 'The Dun' which, in the example of Colonel Pembroke, who by his thoughtless neglect to pay his tailor, brings a whole family into deplorable want and misery, gives a just and severe rebuke to hard-hearted fashionable debtors. The Colonel is reformed; and it may be useful to other gentlemen who labour under the same infirmity, to learn where a cure is to be had. He meets the daughter of his creditor in a brother, and being shocked to find that she has been driven thither by his neglect to discharge his debts, becomes thenceforward a very accurate paymaster. Miss Edgeworth's morality is of a reasonable kind, and does

not require too much. We therefore do not find that the Colonel's reformation extended any farther.

'Almeria' is a tale intended to exhibit the absurdity and danger of imitating the fashionable frivolities of our superiors in rank; and if it were not too dull to be read, it might do a great deal of good.

The story of 'Madame de Fleury' is of a very unambitious kind. Its chief object is to convey several minute practical lessons to charitable females of rank, who undertake to superintend the education of the children of the poor. It is also intended to shew that the rich and the great may in their turn be sometimes indebted to the objects of their benevolent care; a truth sufficiently obvious, but as a moral not very important. Few ladies of fashion have any reason to expect the vicissitudes of fortune to which the French revolution exposed Madame de Fleury; and at the same time all events 'it may be doubted', whether a hope of recompence is a very exalted motive of charity.

'Manoeuvring', which occupies the whole of the last volume, is a detail of the machinations of Mrs. Beaumont, a lady who expends an immoderate quantity of Machiavelism and intrigue in projects of family connections; and also in securing to her family the fortune of an old gentleman who never had a thought of disposing of it otherwise. The mortifications and defeats to which her circuitous policy perpetually exposes her, constitute the moral of the tale, which, though not ill conceived, as far as the character of Mrs. Beaumont extends, is on the whole, not extremely interesting.

The old gentleman is one of the most fatiguing personages we ever remember to have encountered, even in a work of amusement. A splenetic, rough-mannered, good-humored, benevolent oddity, is a character of such trite conception, that it is to be found in the dramatis personae of almost every play or novel of the last century. We do not, however, in the whole class, recollect to have seen a worse specimen than Mr. Palmer. He always thinks proper to swear by St. George. Reading in the newspapers an account of a naval victory, 'A most gallant action, by St. George!', exclaimed Mr. Palmer. 'These are the things that keep up the honour of the British navy, and the glory of Britain.'

'Rule Britannia, Britannia rule, the waves,
'Britons never will be slaves!'

Had the manoeuvres of Mrs. Beaumont been concerted for the purpose of escaping from this old gentleman, instead of attracting him, they must have been allowed to be pardonable.

We are not sorry to hear the determination announced in the preface of the work, to favour the public with more tales. We think that is within the scope of Miss Edgeworth's talents, to be amusing and instructive in a very high degree. If, in the 'Tales of Fashionable Life', she has not exactly attained this praise, the failure is to be imputed rather to a defect of judgment than of powers.

APPENDIX B

EXTRACT FROM THE REVIEW OF MEMOIRS OF RICHARD LOVELL EDGEWORTH

(Quarterly Review, July, 1820, pp. 510-549)

(Mr. Edgeworth's ancestry, his many marriages, and his influence upon his daughter have been discussed; and the writer, whoever he may be, finishes his criticism by attacking Mr. Edgeworth's religion.)

We now arrive at the last scene of Mr. Edgeworth's long, and in reference to the good he has done in his own family and neighbourhood, and to the stock of rational amusement which his works have given the world, we may add somewhat useful life.

His serenity and composure during his last moments were exemplary. We wish we could add that they gave us any reason to hope, that they were founded in a spirit of Christian confidence.--We regret to say, that they do not, and that Mr. Edgeworth's life leads us additionally to fear, that the omission of all peculiar expression of reverence for the Christian revelation, in the productions of him and his daughter, arises neither from accident nor from an opinion of its being extraneous to their subject, but simply and plainly because they did not believe in that Revelation--a moral heathen might have died as Mr. Edgeworth did. 'I die', said he, 'with the soft feeling of gratitude to my friends and submission to the God who made me.' Gratitude to man, but no gratitude to God,--no future fears, no future hopes--but a dry submission, to what is inevitable.

Mrs. Honora Edgeworth's death, so highly eulogized by the biographers, is merely philosophic; and the manner in which Mr. Edgeworth himself bears the loss of a beloved daughter is very remarkably stated by Miss Edgeworth. 'In sorrow the mind turns for comforts to our earliest friends.'

--Vol II., p. 129.

This may be true of those who are not Christians; but the minds of Christians certainly do not turn to early friends of this world; and every Christian's own experience must have taught him that it is in sorrows of this nature, that one peculiarly feels how vain all earthly friendship is, and how naturally and fondly the mind clings to the hopes of a future state. She proceeds--

'He went to that sister whom he mentions in the first

part of these memoirs as the favourite companion of his childhood. Their friendship continued a blessing to both in every circumstance of life. With her he had all that could be done for his consolation by sympathy, by the strong charm of similarity of character, and the stronger charm of association with scenes of youth and early affection.' 'But, as he said, for real grief there is no sudden cure, all human resource is in time and occupation.'

Now the word 'human', thus printed, is the only hint which we have been able to discover in these volumes that either of the authors believe, in their own minds, that there can be any other than human resources; and the care taken to put it in italics, shews, in Miss Edgeworth, a desire to go as far as she could towards leading us into a belief, that her father had divine resources of consolation: we must confess, however, that the introduction of the word, in this manner, only serves to confirm our original suspicions, and further, a little to disgust us at the appearance of equivocation which it bears.

In describing the equanimity with which Mrs. Elizabeth Edgeworth sees her approaching fate, (vol.II, p. 178) her husband attributes it with great approbation 'to good sense forming just estimates of every object which lies before it and regulating the temper and conduct;' but not a word about religion; good sense, temper and conduct is all in all.

In vol. II, p. 386, we find, in a paper addressed to his children, what may be almost considered as Mr. Edgeworth's profession of faith, and account of his ministry in this particular point.

'I now write in my seventy-second year, and I think it a duty owing to my children, to let them know the means which have been taken to cultivate their understandings, to give them a sense of religion, a profound veneration for the unknown cause of their existence, and a sincere and practical submission to those decrees which are to us, in our present state, inscrutable. I wish to prove to my children that pains have been taken to give them moral habits, generous sentiments, kind tempers, and easy manners.'

Not a word of a future existence!--A veneration for an unknown cause! a submission to inscrutable decrees!--morality, generosity, temper, and good manners! these constitute Mr. Edgeworth's notion of religion--what is all this but mere pagan philosophy. Nay, it falls short of what we read

in Plato or Cicero. Why is there no mention of piety, of gratitude to God, of confidence in a Saviour, of hopes of futurity, to be found in this summary of the religion which Mr. Edgeworth taught his children?--The omission can hardly be accidental, for he descends to notice temper and manners; and the question admits, we fear, but of one answer.

If Mr. Edgeworth is to be believed, the lesson he received from his own mother was not much better than that which he has given to his children; in her death-bed admonition to her son, she is represented as saying--'If there be a state of just retribution in another world, I must be happy, for I have suffered during the greatest part of my life, and I know that I did not deserve it by my thoughts or actions; '--(vol.I.p.103) thus very illogically and very impiously asserting her own right to happiness if there be a just retribution; and thus putting as a doubtful question what a Christian mother in such circumstances would have felt and inculcated as an eternal truth. But we have seen enough of Mr. Edgeworth's way of telling stories, to believe that the hypothetical form of this proposition may have been supplied by himself.

In vol.II. p. 514, we find 'that the pleasure attached to the mere feeling of existence is sufficient to create man's attachment to life'. This sentiment seems to us to be consistent only with a belief that we shall not exist after this life; but, (whatever may be thought of this inference,) it is most remarkable and most important to this subject, that in developing and explaining Mr. Edgeworth's feelings on this point, Miss Edgeworth does not drop a single hint as to the probability of a future state of existence; and in discussing, very much at large, the progress of the human mind--its gradual improvement even to the last moments of life, and the gratification and pleasure which such a continually improving state of existence gives,--not the slightest allusion to a continuance of that existence and of that improvement beyond death has escaped her pen. This cannot be mere accident--nothing but the most studied care could have prevented some thoughts of futurity intruding themselves into such a dissertation. Nay, the case is still stronger--for she is silent on this point, on an occasion in which, if she or her father believed in futurity, she could hardly in fair reasoning have omitted to notice it. She observes,

'That old men continue to believe, that they shall live to-morrow as they have lived today, and though increasing infirmities, or the deaths of those who are of the same age, warn the old that they cannot last beyond a certain term; yet

the mere IRRATIONAL habit prevails so far as to counteract much of that apprehension which might otherwise embitter the latter years of life.

'These things my father pointed out to us as some of the beautiful provisions which have been made in our nature for the tranquility of age.'--(Vol.II. p. 413.)

We appeal to the candour of our readers, whether this view of the subject does not seem to consider that existence ends with this world, and that the most effective consolation of the frail creature who cannot last beyond a certain term, is the irrational habit of thinking that his annihilation is not quite so near as other people see it to be. Here again Miss Edgeworth is far behind the pagan philosophers; for they do not hesitate to place the hopes of an immortal life among 'the most beautiful provisions which have been made in our nature for the tranquility of old age.'

It is true, indeed, that a passage from the preface to the second edition of 'Practical Education' is quoted (Vol. II. p. 404) as disavowing 'the design of laying down a system of education founded on morality exclusive of religion;' and, in page 405, is repeated a letter to Dr. Rees, in answer to some criticism on this subject in the Encyclopedia, in which Mr. Edgeworth says,

'That he is convinced that religious obligation(--observe the periphrasis--) is indispensably necessary in education of all descriptions of people in every part of the world, and that religion, in the large sense of the word, is the only bond of society.'

Now in the first place, we presume that religion here could, of best, only mean religion according to the definition just before given, and which we have seen, is anything but Christianity; but for fear any doubt should exist upon that point, the words, 'large sense of the word' and 'in every part of the world,' are introduced to place Christianity in the same line with Judaism, Mahammedanism, Brahminism, and those superstitions which degrade human nature, though they all act as some degree of restraint on human vices, 'in every part of the world.'

And even if he had given the word religion a better meaning, what is his conclusion--that it is necessary to salvation? No; that it leads to a future state? No; but that it is the only bond of society--a mere political engine.

Miss Edgeworth is so sore upon this subject, that there is nothing, in the way of innuendo and inference and circumlocution, omitted, to give what, we fear, must be felt to be a false colouring to it; for instance, in page 4 of vol. II, she states that--

'Many distinguished members, and some of the most respected dignitaries of the established church, honoured Mr. Edgeworth with their esteem and private friendship. This could not have been had they believed him to be either an open or a concealed enemy to Christianity, or had they conceived it to be his design to lay down a system of education founded upon morality, exclusive of religion.'

And she proceeds to instance the solemnity with which, as magistrate, he administered an oath, and his receiving the confession of a papist criminal, when party bigotry denied admittance to the Catholic priest. Now instead of all this argumentation, and these facts from which we are to draw such favourable inferences, why does not Miss Edgeworth say in one sentence, 'my father was a Christian, and he brought me and his other children up in the belief of a future life and a redeeming Saviour! These two lines would have rendered unnecessary an hundred pages of shuffling.

And what does the acquaintance of dignitaries of the church prove, their external esteem, and, in the ordinary meaning of the words, their private friendship?--nothing to this point: No one ever supposed, that Mr. Edgeworth was so notorious and offensive an infidel as to deserve to be put out of the pale of society; there was nothing in his manners or conduct in society, as to religion, to justify any peculiar observation upon him; and even as an author, his fault is that of omission; and, indeed, if he had not been put forward as the Bacon of education, and as a model for husbands and fathers, it would not have been necessary for us to go into this subject with so much earnestness, an earnestness which we confess is much increased by the evasions and equivocations with which we see, or fancy we see, that his real sentiments are disguised.

What proof of Christianity is the decorous administration of an oath? It may be a proof of a general supposition of a Supreme Being. It may be a proof of good taste, good sense, propriety and obedience to the laws; but nothing more. What proof is the charitable attendance on a Catholic criminal?--Of a kind heart, and nothing more; for if it proved any thing beyond this, it would prove that Mr. Edgeworth was a papist, and believed the peculiar superstitions of that sect. Miss Edgeworth must have been hard pushed for evidence when she has recourse to such as this.

But she collects all her force to assure us that--

'No man could be more sensible than he was of the consolatory fortifying influence of the Christian religion, in sustaining the mind in adversity, poverty, and age; no man knew better its power to carry hope and peace in the hour of death to the penitent criminal...Nor did he ever weaken in any heart, in which it ever existed, that which he considered as the greatest blessing that a human creature can enjoy--firm religious faith and hope.'--(vol. II. p. 407)

These sentences, if they stood alone, written spontaneously, and untainted by all the shifts and equivocations on the subject which we have observed, would be perhaps considered as satisfactory; but we have been put on our guard, and must look at them more narrowly.

In the first place we observe that Mr. Edgeworth, when defending himself on this very charge, says nothing like this; he never, we believe, distinguishes the Christian religion, from 'religion in its large sense, and in every part of the world;' and we might, therefore, if necessary set his own against his daughter's evidence. But it is not necessary; she does not say a syllable about his own personal faith in this doctrine; she says of him what might be said by any deist or infidel, that the worldly effect of the Christian religion is obvious and highly advantageous to society; she dwells upon its human effects, which every man sees and acknowledges, namely, its power of sustaining the mind in adversity and sorrow and its support to the condemned criminal--its consolation to those who rely upon it. These are mere facts, which every one sees, and which Hume or Voltaire would deny, and that is what Mr. and Miss Edgeworth do not affirm. To see and acknowledge the effects of anything in third persons is one thing; to feel the effects one's self is another; the former is but the exertion of common observation and common candour; the latter is the distinction of a Christian.

It will not, we hope, be thought, that we have invidiously or unnecessarily introduced this subject. It forms so prominent a feature in Miss Edgeworth's work and in Mr. Edgeworth's life, that we could not pass it over in silence, and we could not mention it without stating our impressions, and the reasons which produced them. We should have not imputed it as blame (though we should have regretted it as a misfortune) if the minds of Mr. and Miss Edgeworth had been so constituted as not to be able to believe in the great doctrines of Christianity--belief is not in our own power; and if they were not Christians, we should applaud the good sense and delicacy with which in their former works, and indeed in this, they have taken care not to give any offence by the ostentatious production of infidel

opinions--but when we see, what we think, a design to induce us to believe the thing which is not --to represent Mr. Edgeworth as a Christian, and to justify as Christian doctrines and practices things which are certainly not so--when we find a system of education reflecting the Christian doctrines from its schools, and yet are told that the author of that system is a Christian, it becomes a duty to pull off the mask, under which Mr. Edgeworth's system and principles might be received without that caution and suspicion to which, in this particular, they are liable.

If, after all, we have been mistaken as to Mr. Edgeworth's religion, it is the fault of himself and his daughter. Three words would, as we have already said, have rendered all this discussion unnecessary; three words may yet clear up the difficulty, and if Miss Edgeworth, in her next work, is able to say, with confidence, my father was a Christian, she will do a pipus office to his memory, and no inconsiderable good to mankind; and no one will be more pleased than ourselves to find that her inaccurate modes of expression had confirmed an error into which her father's own avowals had originally led us.

We have now done our painful task; and, on the whole, our greatest objection to the work is, that it must lower Mr. Edgeworth's reputation, and not raise that of his daughter. There is much to blame, and little to praise in what they, with a mistaken and self-deceptive partiality, record of him--his own share of the work is silly, trivial, vain, and inaccurate; hers, by its own pompous claims to approbation, fails of what a more modest exposition would have obtained, and might have been entitled to. Mr. Edgeworth had some ingenuity, great liveliness, great activity, a large share of good sense, (particularly when he wrote,) of good nature, and of good temper--he was a prudent and just landlord, a kind husband, (except to his second wife,) and affectionate parent; but he was superficial; not well founded in any branch of knowledge, yet dabbling in all:--as a mechanic he shewed no originality, but some powers of application--as a public man he was hasty, injudicious, inconsistent, and only not mischievous; in society we must, notwithstanding Miss Edgeworth's dutiful partiality, venture to say that he was as disagreeable as loquacity, egotism and a little tinge now and then of indelicacy could make him; but with all these drawbacks, his life was, as far as we have heard or seen, on the whole, more useful, more respectable than the representation which is here given of it. For his reputation these two volumes of biography ought to be forgotten. It is a mistaken tribute of vanity and filial piety, which almost justifies the superstition of our German ancestors, that monuments were onerous to the dead.

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