

Literature, &c.

British Magazines for October.

Blackwood's Magazine.

THE LIFE OF A DIPLOMATIST.

[Blackwood opens this month with a criticism on a work entitled "Diaries and Correspondence of James Harris, first Earl of Malmesbury, by his Grandson." The following is an account given by the Earl of a personal interview with the celebrated Catharine of Russia.]

"I have come to represent to your imperial majesty the critical situation in which our affairs are at present. You know our reliance on you. We venture to flatter ourselves that you will avert the storm, and reassure us as to our fears of having lost your friendship." If the expressions were not in print, we should scarcely have thought it possible that such cringing language could have been used. The ambassador, of course, is but the mouthpiece of his government. The blame must fall, not on the intelligent servant, but on the feeble masters. Who can wonder if the daring and haughty spirit of Catharine scoffed at the remonstrances, and despised the interests of a country, whose cabinet adopted language so unfitting the dignity and real power of the mighty British empire? The expressions of this dialogue would have been humiliating to the smallest of the "square-league" sovereignties of the Continent. The answer of the empress was precisely what she might have addressed to the envoy of Poland or the Crimea. "Sir, you are aware of my sentiments relative to your nation; they are equally sincere and unvariable. But I have found so little return on your part, that I feel I ought not to consider you any longer among my friends."

To this haughty tone, what is the reply of the ambassador?

"It is in the hope that those sentiments were not entirely effaced, that I wished to address myself directly to your Majesty. But it was not without fear that I approached you. Appearances only too strongly prove the impressions which you have received from our enemies."

Here follows the remarks of the Reviewer:—

And so goes on the dialogue, like the scene in a play, see-sawing through six intolerable pages. How differently would Pitt's cabinet have acted, and how differently did it act! When the Russian councils menaced the seizure of even a paltry Turkish fortress on the Black Sea, the great minister ordered a fleet to be ready as his negotiators; and though the factiousness of Opposition at the time prevented this manly demonstration of policy and justice, the evidence was given, in the reign of Paul, when a British fleet crushed the armed neutrality—that trick of French mountebanks imposing on the ambition of the north—and restored Russia to so full a sense of the power and the honor of England, that she sent her fleet into her safe keeping at the approach of Napoleon's invasion, and has been her fast and honorable ally ever since. "Cromwell's Ambassador" is the true one for England at all times. A stout British squadron sent to the Baltic in 1780 would have wonderfully solved the difficulties of the British negotiation, have completely cleared the empress's conscience, have enlightened Count Panin's brains, and have convinced even the wily Potemkin himself that the art of political delusion was too dangerous a game to be tried against England.

But the true value of history is to instruct the future. We are now in nearly the same relative position to France in which we were sixty-four years ago relative to Russia. We are exhibiting the same flatulencies which we exhibited then, and we shall be fortunate if we escape the same consequences. A strong fleet sent to the Mediterranean would do more to calm the elements of strife, effectually than all the remonstrance of our negotiators. Or, if the French were foolish enough to provoke a battle, a repetition of the 1st of June or the 21st of October would be the tranquilizer of a restless people, who can never suffer Europe to rest in peace but when they themselves have been taught the miseries of war.

In justice to the cabinet of 1780, it must be acknowledged that the personal tone of the ambassador was criticised; and we thus find him making his diplomatic apology to Lord Stormont, then secretary for foreign affairs.

"I have often been conscious of the remark your lordship makes, and have myself felt that I was not acting up to the character of an English minister, in bestowing such fulsome incense on the empress. But here, too, I was drawn from my system and principles by the conduct of my adversaries. They ever addressed her as a being of a superior nature; and as she goes near to think herself infallible, she expects to be approached with all the reverence due to a divinity." No excuse could be more unsatisfactory. If other men choose to bow down, there would have only been the more manliness, and the more effect too, in refusing to follow such an example.

In 1783, the ambassador obtained permission to return to England. His correspondence at the period immediately previous, is remarkably interesting; and it is striking to see that the successive secretaries for the foreign department, under all changes of administration, formed the same view of the substantial policy of England. When, in 1783, Fox assumed the foreign seals, he thus writes to Harris, in the course of a long letter on the foreign policy of the cabinet:—"You will

readily believe me, that my system of foreign politics was too deeply rooted to make it likely that I should have changed it. Alliances with the northern powers ever have been, and ever will be, the system of every enlightened Englishman."

In the year following Sir James Harris was appointed by Pitt to the Dutch embassy, to which he had been previously nominated by Fox, his friend and political leader. The appointment by the new cabinet was thus the strongest testimony to his talents. His letters from the Hague contain a very intelligent statement of the parties and principles which agitated Holland in 1787. The object was the establishment of a democracy and the extinction of the Stadtholderate, or at least its suppression as a hereditary dignity. The court of France was busy in this democratic intrigue; and its partial success unquestionably added new combustibles to the pile on which that unfortunate monarchy, in the hour of infatuation, was preparing to throw itself. The ambassador's language on this occasion is characteristic and memorable. In one of his dispatches to the Marquis of Carmarthen, then secretary of state, he thus says:—

"The infamy and profligacy of the French make me long to change my profession, and to fight them with a sharper instrument than the pen. It must be with those (not our swords but our pens) that we must carry our mediation through, if we mean it should be attended with any success. There are strong reports of a popular insurrection in France."—"Si Dieu voulait les punir par ou ils ont peche, comme j'aime-rais la justice divine!" The remark was natural; it was almost prophetic; and it was on the eve of realization. In 1789, but two years after, the Revolution began.

These volumes contain a great deal of extremely curious material, especially important to every man who may in future be employed in the foreign service of our diplomacy. They supply a model of the manner in which those offices may be most effectively sustained. We have already expressed dissatisfaction at the submissive style used in addressing the Russian empress. But in other instances, the language of the ambassador seems to have been prompt and plain. It is remarkable that England has, at the present time, at a condition of European affairs bearing no slight resemblance to that of the period between 1783 and 1789. It is true that there will be no second French Revolution; one catastrophe of that terrible extent is enough for the world. But there are strong symptoms of those hostilities which the Bourbons were endeavoring to kindle against this country, for at least a dozen years before the Revolution which crushed their monarchy.

Without any provocation on the part of England, any actual claim, or any desire whatever of war, this country finds itself suddenly an object of perpetual insult on the part of all the active minds of France. The cry from every organ of public opinion seems to be, war with England, whether with or without cause. A violent clamour is raised for our national ruin; the resources of France are blazoned in all quarters; and the only contemplation popular in France is, how most suddenly and effectually French armies may be poured on our shores, our fields ravaged, our maritime cities burned, and our people massacred. It must be hoped that this detestable spirit does not reach higher than the Jacobin papers, and the villains by whom that principal part of the French press is conducted. Yet we find but little contradiction to it in even the more serious and authentic portion of the national sentiments. In such circumstances it is only right to be prepared. We find also the still more expressive evidence of this spirit of evil, in the general conduct of the agents of France in her colonies—a habit of sudden encroachment, a growing arrogance, and a full exhibition of that bitter and sneering petulance, which was supposed to have been scourged out of the French, by their desperate defeats towards the close of the war. All this insolence may, by possibility, pass away; but it may also go on to further inflammation, and it may be necessary to scourge it again; and this discipline, if once begun, must be carried through more effectually than when the Allies last visited Paris. The respect felt for the French king and his prime minister, as friends of peace, naturally restrains the language with which aggression deserves to be reprobated. But the French government, if it desires to retain that respect, must exhibit its sincerity in making some substantial effort to preserve peace. No man of sense in Europe can believe in the necessity of the seizure of Algiers, not in the necessity of the war with Morocco. But every man can see the influence of both on the freedom of the Mediterranean. The seizure of the British consul at Otaheite shows a spirit which must be summarily extinguished, or the preservation of peace will be impossible. In the mean time, we hear from France, nothing but a cry for steam ships, and threats of invasion. We ask, what has England done? No thing to offend or injure; there is not even an allegation of any thing of the kind. But if war must come, woe be to those by whom it is begun! The history of all the wars of England with France, is one of French defeat.

We have beaten the French by land, we have beaten them by sea; and, with the blessing of Heaven on the righteous cause, and our own stout hands, we shall always beat them. We have beaten them on the soil of the stranger—we have beaten them on their own. From the fourteenth century, when English soldiers were masters of the half of France, down to Waterloo, we have always beaten France; and if we beat her under Napoleon, there can be no fear of our not beating her under a race so palpably his inferiors. All England deprecates war as useless, unnatural, and criminal. But the crime is solely on the head

of the aggressor. Woe to those who begin the next war! It may be final.

The late visit of the Emperor of Russia to this country, which so much perplexed the political circles of both France and England, now probably admits of elucidation. The emperor's visit has been followed by that of the ablest and most powerful diplomatist in his dominions, the Count Nesselrode, his foreign minister. For this visit, too, a speedy elucidation may be found. The visits of the King of Saxony, and the Princes of Prussia and Holland, also have their importance in this point of view; and the malignant insults of the French journals may have had a very influential share in contributing to the increased closeness of our connexion with the sovereignties of Germany and Russia. The maxim of Fox, that the northern alliances are the true policy of England, is as sound as ever. Still, we deprecate war—all rational men deprecate war; and we speak in a feeling which we fully believe to be universal in England, that nothing would be a higher source of rejoicing in Great Britain than a safe peace with France, and harmony with all the nations of the world.

From Blackwood's Magazine.

A TENDER CONSCIENCE.

[This is the title of an article in this sterling periodical. It is too long for our paper, but we take from it the following extracts.]

Alas, Eusebius, that anything should take the name of this nice sense that is not replete with goodness, that is not the true ducter substantum! The prophet of an evil which wounds his very soul will take offence if it come not to pass and spare not. Was not Jonah grieved that the whole city was not destroyed as he had said? That nice and inner sense was more ingenious on the side of bold justice, than prodigal to mercy; and so had he not "a conscience void of offence," and thus this honorable feeling not always acts unfettered, but is intercepted and hurried on, spite of itself, into courses of action in which there is too much of passion, and, plunging into error with this outward violence, is forced upon ingenious defences. The story of Pisto is in point. He thought to act the conscientious judge, when he condemned the soldier to death who had returned from forage without his companion, under the impression that he had killed him; but as he is upon the point of execution, the man supposed to have been murdered returns, all the soldiery present rejoice, and the executioner brings them both to the presence of Pisto. And what did the conscientious Pisto? His conscience would not so let him put by justice; so, with a surprising ingenuity of that nice faculty in its delirium, he orders execution upon all three—the first soldier, because he had been condemned—the second, who had lost his way, because he was the cause of his companion's death—and the executioner because he had disobeyed his orders. He had but to pretend to be greatly grieved at his vagary, to have the act lauded as an instance of Roman virtue. I look upon the famed Brutus, when he thought it a matter of conscience to witness, as well as order, his son's execution, to have been a vain, unfeeling fool or a madman. Let us have no prate about conscience proceeding from a hard heart; these are frightful notions when they become infectious. A handful of such men are enough, if allowed to have their way, to enact the horrors of a French Revolution. All this you know, Eusebius, better than I do, and will knit your brow at this too serious vein of thought. I will come, therefore, a little nearer our common homes. You shall have a scene from domestic life, as I had, the other day, from a lady with whom I was conversing upon the subject, who tells me it is a veritable fact, and took place some seventy years back. "It will want its true power," said my friend, "because that one solitary trait could give no idea of the rich humour of the lady, the subject of this incident—her simplicity, shrewdness, art, ignorance, quickness, mischief, made lovely by exceeding beauty, and a most amusing consciousness of it."

Seventy years ago, too, it happened—there are no such ladies in the better ranks of society now. She lived at Margate. It came to pass that the topping upholsterer there got a new-shaped chest of drawers from London—the first that had appeared in Margate—and gave madam, she being one of the high top families, the first sight of it. With the article she fell in love, and entreated her husband to buy it; but the sensible gentleman, having his house capably and fully furnished, would not. The lady still longed, but had not money enough to make the purchase—beggd to have her quarter advanced. This was not granted. She pouted a little, and then, like a wise woman, made up her mind to be disappointed, and resumed her more than wonted cheerfulness; but alas, she was a daughter of Eve, as will be seen. Christmas-day came—it was the invariable custom of the family to receive the sacrament. Before church time she sent for her husband. She had a sin on her conscience—she must confess before she could go to the altar. Her husband was surprised. "What is it?" "You must promise not to be very angry." "But what is it? Have you broken my grandmother's china tea pot?" "Oh, worse than that." "Have you thrown a bank note in the fire?" "Worse than that." "Have you run in debt to your abominable smuggling lace woman?" "Worse than that." "Woman!" quoth he sternly, and taking down an old broadsword that hung over the chimney piece, "confess this instant," and he gave the weapon a portentous flourish. "Oh! dear Richard, don't kill me, and I'll tell you all at once. Then I, (sob,) I, (sob,) have cribbed (sob) out of the house every week to

buy that chest of drawers, and you've had bad dinners and suppers this month for it; and (sobbing) that's all." He could just keep his countenance to say—"And where have you hid this accursed thing?" "Oh! Richard! I have never been able to use it; for I covered it over with a blanket ever since I had it, for fear of your seeing it. Oh! will you forgive me?" You need not be told how she went to church with a "clean breast," as the saying is. It is an unadorned fact. Her husband used to tell every merry Christmas to his old friend guests. Here you have the story, Eusebius, as I had it thus dramatically (for I could not mend it) from the lips of the narrator.

Is it your fault or your virtue, Eusebius, that you positively love these errors of human nature? You ever say you have no sympathy with or for a perfect monster—if such there be—which you deny, and aver that if you detect not the blot, it is but too well covered; and by that very covering, for aught you know to the contrary, may be all blot. You would have catalogued this good lady among your "right estimable and lovely women!" and if you did not think that chest of drawers must be an heirloom in the family, you would set about many odd means to get possession of it. Yet I do verily believe that there are brutes that would argue thus. You may sin, madam, against your Maker, for you shall not sin against me. Is there not a story somewhere of a wretched vagabond at the confessional—dreadful were the crimes for which he was promised absolution; but after all his compunctions, contortions, self cursings, breast beatings, hand wringings, out came the sins of sins—he had once spit by accident upon the priest's robe, though he only meant to spit upon the altar steps.

I have not yet told you the story for the telling which I began this letter; and why I kept it back I know not—it is not for the importance of it; for it is of a poor simple creature. But I must stay my hand from it again; for here has one passed my window that can have no conscience. It is a great booby—six foot man-boy of about nineteen years. He has just stalked by with his insect-catcher on his shoulder; the fellow has been with his green net in the green fields, to catch butterflies and other poor insects. Many an hour have I seen you, Eusebius, with your head half buried in the long blades of grass and pleasant field weeds, partially edged by the slanting and pervading sunbeams, while the little stream has played its song of varied gentleness, watching the little insect world, and the little golden beetles climbing up the long stalks, performing wondrous feats for your and their own amusement—for your delight was to participate in all their pleasures; and some would, with a familiarity that made you feel akin to all about you, walk over the page of the book you were reading, and look up, and pause, and trust their honest legs upon your hands, confident that there was one human being that would not hurt them. Think of those hours, my gentle friend, and consider the object for which that wretch of a booby is out. How many of your playmates has he stuck through with pins, upon which they are now writhing! And when the wretches come murder-laden, his parents or guardians will greet him as a most amiable and sweet youth, who wouldn't for the world misspend his time as other boys do, but is ever on the search after knowledge; and so they swagger and boast of his love of entomology. I'd rather my children should grow up like cucumbers—more to belly than head—than have these scientific curiosity noddles stuck upon their poles of bodies, that have't room for hearts, and look cold and cruel, like the pins they stick through the moths and butterflies, and all innocent insects. Good would it be to hear you lecture the parents of these heartless bodies, for their bringing up, and picture, in your eloquent manner, the torments that devils may be doomed to inflict in the other world on the cruel in this; and to fix them writhing upon their forks, as they pin the poor insects. What would they do but call you a wicked blasphemer, and prate about the merciful goodness of their Maker, as if one Maker did not make all creatures? Yet what do such as they know of mercy but the name? These are they that kill conscience in the bud.

Men's bosoms are like their dwellings—mansions, magnificent and gorgeous—full of all noble and generous thoughts, with room to expand—or dwellings of pretensions, show, and meanness—or hovels of all dirt and slovenliness; yet there is scarcely one in which conscience does not walk in and out boldly, or steal in cautiously, though she may not always have room to move her arms about her, and assert her presence. Yet even when circumscribed by narrowness, and immured in all unseemly things, will she patiently watch her time for some appropriate touch, or some quiet sound of her voice. Her most difficult scene of action, however, is in the bosom of pretension; for there the trumpet of self-praise is ever sounding to drown her voice, and she is kept at arm's length from the touch of the guilty hearts, by the padding and the furniture that surround them. But oh, the hypocrites of this life—they almost make one weary of it; they who walk with their hands as if ever weighing, by invisible scales, with their scruples of conscience their every thought, word, and action, "Shall I portray the disgusting effigies of one?" "Niger est—hunc tu, Romane, caveto." I will, however, tell you somewhat of one that has lately come across my path; and I will call him Peter Pure; for he is one of those that, though assuming a quietness, is really rabid in politics, and has ever upon his lips "parity of election" and the like cant words. A few years ago his circumstances not being very flourishing, he got the ear of our generous friend of the Grange; through his timely assistance, and a pretty considerable loan, he overcame his difficulties, and is now pretty well to do. At the last contest