

of disposition, and a gentleness of manners, with an inborn gaiety of heart, that shone ever in her bright blue eyes, and glittered on the pearly teeth of her glad smile, might well be said to have been her natural gifts from God.—These lovely endowments guided her amusements, directed her studies, and finally stamped her literary and social character. Lively, and kind, and frank in her demeanour, every body approached her with confidence; and, quick in observation, she read minds and manners with a readiness and clearness of deduction, that gave to her youth a precocious experience; peopling, I might say, her imagination with a variety of subjects, and perfecting that presiding judgment over those tenants of the brain, which afterwards gradually but rapidly gave to them a local habitation and a name, in the estimation of an approving world."

Our young authoress's first essays were very early—Tales, both in prose and verse; but intended only for her sister's ear, or, at most, for the little family work table.

Mrs. Porter had become a resident in London, when Anna Maria brought out the first work really sanctioned by herself; namely, the "Hungarian Brothers." Though still, in age, a mere girl, genius and her surprising observation gave her a foresight now into character, and a felicity in pouring it, with an elegant fluency of language, which few ever attain, and being in a rarely composed, though small society, which her respected mother daily drew around her children, the young authoress had only to look from side to side for attractive manners and high-toned motives of action; and putting them together in the pure crucible of her own principles, produce that beautiful gem, of a bright promise, which we have just named. It rapidly ran through several editions, and has been a stock work ever since. The narrative is founded on the fraternal affections, for a lesson of virtue was always the motive of her authorship.—The scene of "The Hungarian Brothers" is laid in Hungary, Germany, and the adjacent wilder countries. In one of the latter, she gives a peculiarly interesting account of the terrific mines of Istria. The brothers are young military men, who served under the command of the justly renowned Archduke Charles, during the famous campaigns against republican France. General Moreau, the great antagonist of the Archduke in those hard-fought fields, chanced to meet Miss Anna Maria Porter's romance in a French translation; and was so delighted with the fidelity to the real facts, added to the deep interest of the dramatic tale she had connected with his battles, that he ever afterwards gave it a place in his travelling library.

The next work of the successful authoress was the historical tale of "Don Sebastian, or the House of Braganza." Her preface tells us that "history and tradition supplied her with ample materials." And we find her making good use of them; conducting her readers with the hero over more than half the world; namely, Portugal, Spain, Africa, Syria, Arabia, Persia, and then to South America, the then newly-discovered hemisphere.

"The Recluse of Norway" succeeded the above. Its drama is laid in Norway and Spain. The prominent characteristics of the hero are impregnable probity, and gratitude for past benefits. And the two sisters, Anastasia and Ellesif,—who, in point of their natural and contrasted graces of grave and gay, are like the soft shadow and gentle light to each other,—we find a beautiful picture of mutual affection. Though no human being ever had a more modest estimation of herself in every respect, than the young historian of this charming twain, and herself would have been the last of all models in her own eyes; yet none who knew her well, and who read the character of Ellesif—its simplicity, its truth, its *useful* delight in all that made her sister be deemed "first and fairest;" its joy in her happiness, and in promoting that of all around her; its balmy, gladdening spirit, diffusing comfort when needed, and smiles everywhere,

whenever she appeared;—none could read this lovely picture, and not say, "Out of the fulness of the heart, the pen hath indeed spoken; and in Ellesif, the author has unconsciously drawn her own sweet and engaging character."

Three years after this publication, she wrote "The Knights of St. John;" a romance of the sixteenth century, in which she introduces the famous siege of Malta. The theme of the story is the friendship of the knight Giovanni with Cesario Adimosi, a noble Genoese; a friendship like that between Jonathan and David.

Miss Anna Maria Porter's next work was "The Fast of St. Magdalen;" the scene lies chiefly at Florence, amid "Vahombrosa's multitude of leaves;" and the elysian wildernesses of *Il bel Deserto*. The family of Medici are the principal personages of the story, and the domestic virtues the subject; amongst which, an instance of love and meekness mutually triumphing over a very distressing personal defect, is most affectingly and impressively portrayed.

To this justly popular work, "The Village of Mariendorf" succeeded, in 1821. Holland, and far-stretching Germany, are its countries; filial piety its subject, in the persons of Rupert Roselheim to a virtuous but unfortunate mother, and of Meeta Mulhdenore to a venerable and persecuted father. The maternal character is finely drawn in Madame Roselheim; and, in truth, the authoress could not have had a more admirable model than in that of her own estimable parent.

"Roche Blanche, or the Hunter of the Pyrenees," followed the preceding novel in the course of the next year. Its sublime scenery, and events, belong to the magnanimous struggle of the Hugonots, during the oppressive influence of the Guises against them in every part of Europe; bringing both public and private virtues into full action, fraught with all the Christian graces. And so lively are the creatures of the author's imagination wrought up with the persons who actually existed at the time, we have some difficulty in distinguishing between the children of her fancy and the children of fact. Amongst the former are two sisters, Aigline and Lolotte: the first, all that can be devoted, in such a relationship; the last, a beautiful being, with an estranged intellect, but of a most absorbing interest. We mention Sir Walter Scott in terms of intimacy with Miss Anna Maria Porter, for their mothers were friends in Scotland; and when a "reckless youth" himself, he often nursed the little future poetess on his knee.

About the time of this last work's publication, the writer's health became more than usually delicate; which her anxious mother ascribing to the low situation of her cottage, (a pretty ivy-mantled spot, on the banks of the Thames at Ditton, where she had been living with her daughters for several years;) she hastened to quit it for another little abode of a similar description, but on a hill, at Esher; a neighbouring village, about two miles from their former long-endured home.

At Esher, in the autumn of 1826, the sisters together published two volumes, entitled "Tales round a Winter's Hearth." Anna Maria's quota were three: "Miss Mackay," a border tradition; "Lord Howth's Rat," an Irish legend; and "Jeannie Halliday," a Scottish fact: which latter sweet tale has never been surpassed, in simple pathos, purity of feeling, and nature of effect. Like the ballad of "Auld Robin Gray," it goes direct to the heart. Miss Wilkinson, the accomplished singer, set Jeannie Halliday's touching song, "That anely Star," to her own fine voice, and often sung it with answering sympathy.

Our authoress's next work was one on modern manners; those of the country parlour, and the town drawing-room. In which, solicitous to discriminate between the safe and the dangerous in the gay dance of our fashionable societies, she strove to draw the just line before the steps of her young cotemporaries; showing them at which points in such so