

SUNDAY AFTERNOON.

OLYMPIA MORATA.

BY AGNES M. NACHAR.

VITTORIA.—"With these ladies
Was a young girl, Olympia Morata,
Daughter of Fulvio, the learned scholar,
Famous in all the universities;
A marvellous child, who, at the spinning wheel
And in the daily round of household cares,
Has learned both Greek and Latin, and is now
A favourite of the dukes and companion
Of Princess Anne. This beautiful young Sappho
Sometimes recited to us Grecian odes
That she had written, with a voice whose sadness
Thrilled and o'er-mastered me, and made me look
Into the future time, and ask myself
What destiny will be hers."

JULIA.—"A sad one surely,
First kills the flowers that blossom out of season;
And those precocious intellects portend
A life of sorrow, or an early death."

Longfellow, by the divine spell of his poetic genius, has made the brilliant Court of Ferrara of the sixteenth century live again before us in his last new poem, "Michael Angelo," now being published in the "Atlantic Monthly." "Renée of France, the Duchess of Ferrara," the friend of Margaret of Navarre, and, like her, the enlightened and earnest patron of literature and of those "new opinions" in religion then beginning to stir in men's minds to a mighty revolution, he places before us in the womanly charm and "grace of manner and behaviour" that "makes her beautiful beyond the reach of mere external beauty;"

"and in heart
So noble and devoted to the truth,
And so in sympathy with all who strive
After the higher life."

Then there are the "many learned men" still left, though Clement Marot has gone and "Ariosto is no more," and the "devout and honourable women," "full of noble thoughts and aspirations after noble things;" and last, not least, the "marvellous child" Olympia Morata, to whom as many descriptive lines are given as to the duchess herself. Many who read these lines without knowing the after history of this young girl will like to hear something of her remarkable career; the pure and noble, though short and clouded life, in which the sad augury put into the mouth of Julia was, too truly fulfilled.

Olympia Morata was born at Ferrara in 1526—a stormy time, when new thoughts and aspirations were waking up in revolt against the long-established powers of tyranny and superstition. Even in her childhood Olympia's life felt the unsettled character of the times. Her father, a man highly esteemed both for his learning and his integrity, and a warm adherent of the reformed faith, had come to Ferrara as tutor to the young princes of the house of Este, brothers of the reigning duke. Having published a book, in defence of the reformed doctrines, too advanced for even that liberal atmosphere, he was obliged to leave it for a time and teach at Venice, Vicenza, and other places, whence he was finally allowed to return to Ferrara when his daughter Olympia had reached her eleventh year. In the meantime, the eager and enthusiastic child, growing up in a frugal household, and, as Longfellow says, "in the daily round of household cares," with a delicate mother and four younger children at home, had made wonderful progress in the classic tongues, and had even begun the study of science and philosophy, as well as elocution. The fame of her youthful attainments soon spread in a city like Ferrara, and at twelve years of age she was chosen by the Duchess Renée as companion in study of her young daughter, the Princess Anna d'Este. The attractions of court life by no means checked Olympia's ardour for study. She attended—probably with the Princess Anna—the lectures at the university, where ladies seemed to have been admitted without difficulty; those of her own father, of Celio Curione, and of the celebrated Chilianus, under whom she made rapid progress in Greek. She wrote dialogues in Greek and Latin, after Plato and Cicero, translated Boccaccio into Latin, and studied philosophy and the art of public speaking under her father's special recommendation, who declared, in a letter to her on the subject, that he would "rather hold his tongue than speak harshly, inarticulately, or unpleasantly." But she learned still more precious lessons under the guardianship of her royal friend. It was probably before her father's return to Ferrara that Calvin had for a time sought refuge there, but the influence of his teaching was still strong at court, and Olympia learned to study her Bible, and to draw from it the "living water, of which if a man drink he shall never thirst again." The influence of her own and her father's friend—Celio Curione, a learned and pious refugee from Savoy—helped also to strengthen her faith in Christ and quicken her personal piety.

At the age of sixteen Olympia, from being a student, was advanced to be a lecturer in the university, an honour unparalleled even in these days of "higher education." It may reasonably be doubted whether we shall ever see a young lady of sixteen occupying a chair at Harvard or Yale, or even Cornell; yet Olympia Morata, three centuries ago, lecturing on the Paradoxes of Cicero at the world-renowned University of Ferrara, and lecturing, we may be sure, with the early matured dignity of her earnest character, seems to have excited no perceptible shock of surprise or suspicion of unfitness. In those days, we are told, "there was no notion of rivalry between the sexes, any more than between classes in the State, but all were at liberty to do their best."

For three years more Olympia continued to lead her tranquil student life, and to exert, at the court and the university, the influence of her noble and cultured womanhood. But with her nineteenth year came a change in the political atmosphere of Ferrara, brought about by the watchful jealousy of Rome. Ercole was urged to purge his court of

the heretics who abounded there, and notwithstanding the strong sympathies of the duchess he yielded to the pressure. Olympia, being known to be one of the obnoxious class, was obliged to leave the court, and even in her own home, saddened by her father's failing health, was subjected to a most worrying espionage, till she was almost afraid to be seen reading her Bible. Then came the death of her father, her teacher and friend, and Olympia was left to care for her invalid mother and her little brother and sisters. But amid such altered circumstances she scarcely seemed to regret the more brilliant life she had left behind. For she writes, "God has kindled in me a desire to dwell in that heavenly home in which it is more pleasant to abide one day than a thousand years in the courts of princes."

But though Olympia's nobler resources made her independent of courtly pleasures and luxuries, they did not make her insensible to the blessings of a true-hearted love. A German student of medicine, a certain Dr. Andrea Grunthler, who had taken his doctor's degree at Ferrara, had fallen in love with Olympia, not apparently standing in any awe of her erudition, and Olympia as warmly returned his love. They were speedily married, and the young doctor went to seek a home where his wife and he could breathe more freely; his short absence being intensely felt by the young wife. "You would not believe me," she wrote, "if I were to tell you how I long for you; nothing so hard or difficult that I would not willingly do it to give you pleasure, yet I bear anything for your sake more easily than your absence."

The young couple settled first at Augsburg, Olympia taking with her her little brother, that she might herself carry on his education. Having little congenial society at Augsburg, Olympia found solace and occupation in translating the Psalms into Greek verse. Ere long, however, they left Augsburg for her husband's native town in Franconia, bearing the unphonetic name of Schweinfurth. Here their domestic happiness was too soon disturbed by the ravages of war. Schweinfurth fell a prey to one of the "filibustering" expeditions of the times, and the plague came to add to the miseries of the inhabitants. Dr. Grunthler was prostrated by this dreadful disease, probably caught in his ministrations on others, and was restored by his wife's devoted nursing, only to escape with her, for his life, from a pillaged and burning city. With torn garments and bleeding feet, they found a brief refuge at Hamelberg, where, however, the people were afraid to allow them to remain more than four days. Tossed from place to place, they at last found a settled abode at Heidelberg, where Grunthler received from the Elector Palatine an appointment in the university. Olympia, ever thoughtful for the misfortunes of others, made it her first care to seek a servant among her fellow-sufferers, the refugees from Schweinfurth. Her own heaviest loss was that of her precious library and the greater part of her manuscripts. Her literary friends sent her presents of books to replace those lost in the burnt city, and she employed her own leisure in transcribing her lost poems from memory. Here in peace and quiet and religious liberty, in the beautiful city by the Neckar, she could have lived happily enough with her beloved and devoted husband. But the shocks she had undergone had undermined her constitution, and consumption had set its insidious touch on her frame. So long as her failing strength permitted, she continued to write loving letters of Christian cheer and encouragement to the Ferrara friends still suffering for their faith. To her old friend and teacher, Celio Curione, she wrote, with a last effort, that he must not grieve when he should hear the news of her death; "for I know that my life itself will only begin after death, and I wish to be dissolved and be with Christ."

Her husband, left so desolate by her death, describes it with a tender eloquence which shows a soul worthy of the wife he had won. "When she was almost dying, waking a little out of sleep, I saw her look pleased and smile softly. 'I saw just now,' she said, 'a quiet place filled with the fairest and clearest light.' When she could speak no more, through weakness, 'Courage,' I said 'dear wife; in that fair light you will dwell.' Again she smiled and nodded her head. A little while afterward she said: 'I am quite happy.' When next she spoke, her eyes were already dim. 'I can scarcely see you any longer,' she said, 'but everything seems to me full of the most beautiful flowers.' They were her last words. Soon after, as if overcome by sweet sleep, she breathed forth her soul."

So passed away, in her twenty-ninth year, a woman quite as remarkable in her day and generation as Margaret Fuller was in hers, and as truly a martyr to her zeal for truth as many who suffered a shorter, sharper doom. In enlightened tolerance she was far before many of her contemporaries, whom in simple, earnest piety and love of Christ, she was in no way behind. Here is a passage from the remains of her writings collected by her friend Celio Curione, which would do no discredit to the most enlightened writer in The Christian Union to-day. "About the sacraments I know there is amongst Christians a great controversy, which would easily have been settled long ago if men had taken as their counsellor, not their own vanity, but Christ's glory and the good of His Church, which is advanced by concord."

In the quiet old University Church of Heidelberg—a fitting resting-place for her mortal dust—the traveller can still find a plain gray stone, on which, aided perhaps by some wandering ray of sunlight falling amidst the still medieval repose and "dim religious light," he can trace for himself the inscription that records the name, the learning, and the virtues, of the truly noble lady, Olympia Morata.

LONDON SUBURBS.

The suburbs of the metropolis, all of them full of historical and interesting associations, and most of them within the memory of living men full of historical mansions, are fast losing, with their fields and woods, the old and distinctive flavour. Kensington has long since been built over; there are no longer fields at Notting Hill; Shepherd's Bush, in whose thickets the footpads used to be in wait for those who had escaped the highwaymen of Hounslow Heath, is a labyrinth of mean streets and "jerry-built" houses. On the south side London has spread itself out, for fifteen miles

across the Surrey hills: There is little left of the sweet rusticity of Dulwich; Clapham and Wimbledon have their commons still; but they are now great towns; Forest Hill has lost its forest, and Renge its hanging woods. On the west there are houses as far as Brentford, Kew, and Richmond; on the east the old village of Stratford-on-the-Avon has become a great town of sixty thousand inhabitants, and the leafy little secluded villages which stand upon the southern edge of Epping Forest are united by rows of mean, hideous, monotonous terraces and villas.

The way in which new suburbs spring up is like the dreams of a Western speculator whose imagination is let loose upon a plotting paper, and month after month the green fields and still villages become more distant from St. Paul's. The tavern which to-day stands in its own grounds, wrapped up in ivy and masses of flowers, where we may escape the noise of the city in rural privacy, may soon be transformed into a vulgar "public," serving pots of washy ale over the counter, and the bowers around it be swept away to make room for shops and cottages.

At one outpost of London is an Elizabethan mansion—real Elizabethan and real mansion—which has a dignity and genuineness about its grandeur not common in these days of veneer and affectation in buildings and nomenclature. It has been the manor for generations, and up to last year it held a position of lofty isolation in its park, where the hawthorns and limes almost hid it from the outside world. But in twelve months it has become an anomaly. New homes, new shops, and a railway have surrounded it. What was country a year ago is now an integral part of the city, and the old manor-house, with its glory unimpaired, has suddenly become an anachronism.—*W. H. Siddons, in Harper's Magazine for July.*

A SWEDISH SERVANT.

We found her at an employment office, just arrived from Sweden. As I noticed her sunny hair and blue eyes and strong, free step, I thought of what some one said of Jenny Lind: that she ought to have been called the Swedish Lioness, rather than the Swedish Nightingale, from the freedom and strength of her bearing. Not able to speak a word of English, she sat looking at me with such confident blue eyes that no one could feel otherwise than kindly towards her, when the world seemed to her such a fair, honest place.

She held out a little book, printed in Swedish and English, by which we were to converse together. I looked it over, and saw that it contained directions, given to servants in their own country, by which they were to conduct themselves. Among other things, they were told to "step softly, move lightly, and desire nothing."

After I came to know more of her intensely social nature, I often wondered how she survived the first few weeks, when we never attempted anything more in the way of conversation than "cup," "plate," etc. At length, in an outburst of desperation, she exclaimed, "I want to talk!" So did we, but the difficulty was how to begin. She solved it herself by asking if we knew George Washington and Benjamin Franklin. We, in return, asked if she knew Linnaeus and Swedenborg, to both of which questions she replied in the affirmative, and also recognized, with delight, a picture of Luther. After this, conversation became easy; she was so very apt and eager. She was soon able to give a little account of her voyage: telling us how she, with a hundred other girls, came as steerage passengers, on a great steamer; and how, in leaving, they sang together the Fatherland song; and how the passengers on the upper deck all clapped their hands, as well they might if the other voices were like hers. They had great luncheon baskets; but she lost hers overboard, in a storm, and also her hat. "Now I must every day say to some one, 'Please give me a little bread.'" In the storm she thought, "By and by I die." It is wonderful, the courage of these girls, starting alone for an unknown world. Some of her friends in Sweden, she said, thought that to come to America they would have to travel through the earth. But she had been taught otherwise at school; taught also to knit, embroider, crochet, and make baskets. The dress she had on she had not only fitted for herself, but had made the woollen cloth for it, and had woven her plaid shawl. She wore generally, on her head a little black shawl. One day she said to me, touching it, "Every woman in Sweden all the same."

She readily understood that we enjoyed hearing about her country, as she took so much interest herself in learning everything possible. She soon began to tell us about the Lapps, as the most curious little people in the world; very short, but wearing tall, pointed hoods, made of reindeer skin. She always talked with great enthusiasm about the "reindeer," as she called the reindeer; said that if a man had a thousand reindeer he was rich; that the Lapps travelled about all the time, only lassoing some reindeer and travelling on to find moss for them, the reindeer furnishing them with all their food. When they went to church they left their babies outside in little holes in the snow, sewed up in skins. They themselves wore one garment of skin. Swedish babies had a little knit garment, that covered them all over, arms, legs, and feet. Lapp babies were always cold, and the Lapps were very, very poor. I asked, "Why not come to Boston?" She answered, "Oh, Lapp say Lapland good." She mocked their funny ways of talking, in monosyllables. They could not open their mouths, she said; it was so cold. She used to mock, too, the peasants' walk,—stiff, ungainly strides; crouching as they went along, because it was so cold. It was very different from reading these things in the geography to hear them from one who had actually seen them, and touched the little cold Lapp babies.—*Caroline E. Leighton, in July Atlantic.*

GERMANY has twenty universities, with a total of 25,520 students.

It is not difficult to get away into retirement, and there live upon your own convictions, nor is it difficult to mix with men, and follow their convictions; but to enter into the world, and there live firmly and fearlessly according to your own conscience—that is Christian greatness.