

A GENTLEWOMAN OF THE OLD SCHOOL.

SHE lived in Georgian era too,
Most women then, if bards be true,
Succumbed to routs and cards, or grew
Devout and acid;
But hers was neither fate, she came
Of good West-country folk, whose fame
Has faded now. For us her name
Is "Madam Placid."

Patience or Prudence—what you will,
Some prefix faintly fragrant still
As those old musky scents that fill
Our grandams' pillows,
And for her youthful portrait take
Some long-waist child of Hudson's make,
Stiffly at ease beside a lake
With swans and willows.

I keep her later semblance placed
Beside my desk—'tis lawned and laced,
In shadowy sanguine stipple traced
By Bartolozzi;
A placid face, in which surprise
Is seldom seen, but yet there lies
Some vestige of the laughing eyes
Of arch Piozzi.

For her e'en Time grew debonair,
He, finding cheeks unclaimed of care,
With late-delayed faint roses there,
And lingering dimples,
Had spared to touch the fair old face,
And only kissed with Vauxhall grace
The soft white hand that stroked her lace,
Or smoothed her wimples,

So left her beautiful. Her age
Was comely as her youth was sage,
And yet she once had been the rage—
It has been hinted,
Indeed affirmed, by one or two,
Some spark at Bath (as sparks will do),
Inscribed a song to "Lovely Prue,"
Which Urban printed.

I know she thought; I know she felt;
Perchance could sum, I doubt she spelt,
She knew as little of the Celt
As of the Saxon;
I know she played and sang, for yet
We keep the tumble-down spinet
To which she quavered ballads set
By Arne or Jackson.

Her tastes were not refined as ours;
She liked plain food and homely flowers,
Refused to paint, kept early hours,
Went clad demurely;
Her art was sampler-work design,
Fireworks for her were "vastly fine,"
Her luxury was elder-wine—
She loved that "purely."

She was renowned, traditions say,
For June preserves, for curds and whey,
For finest tea (she called it "tay"),
And ratafia;
She knew for sprains what bands to choose,
Could tell the sovereign wash to use
For freckles, and was learned in brews
As erst Medea.

Yet studied little. She could read,
On Sundays, "Pearson on the Creed,"
Though as I think, she could not heed
His text profoundly,
Seeing she chose for her retreat
The warm west-looking window-seat,
Where, if you chanced to raise your feet,
You slumbered soundly.

This, 'twixt ourselves, the dear old dame,
In truth, was not so much to blame;
The excellent divine I name
Is scarcely stirring;
Her plain-song piety preferred
Pure life to precept. If she erred,
She knew her faults, her softest word
Was for the erring.

If she had loved, or if she kept
Some ancient memory green, or wept
Over the shoulder-knot that slept
Within her cuff-box,
I know not. Only this I know,
At sixty-five she'd still her beau,
A lean French exile, lame and slow,
With monstrous snuff-box.

Younger than she, well-born and bred,
She'd found him in St. Giles', half dead
Of teaching French for nightly bed
And daily dinners;
Starving, in fact, 'twixt want and pride;
And so, henceforth, you always spied
His rusty "pigeon-wings" beside
Her Mechlin pinners.

He worshipped her, you may suppose.
She gained him pupils, gave him clothes,
Delighted in his dry bon-mots
And cackling laughter;
And when, at last, the long duet
Of conversation and picquet
Ceased with her death, of sheer regret
He died soon after.

Dear Madam Placid; others knew
Your worth as well as he, and threw
Their flowers upon your coffin too.
I take for granted,
Their loves are lost; but still we see
Your kind and gracious memory
Bloom yearly with the almond tree
The Frenchman planted.
From "Old World Idylls," by Austin Dobson.

THE ADVENTURES OF A WIDOW.

By EDGAR FAWCETT, author of "A Gentleman of Leisure," "A Hopeless Case,"
"An Ambitious Woman," "Tinkling Cymbals," etc.

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SHE sent for Kindelon at once, but before her message could possibly have reached the office of *The Asteroid*, he presented himself.

He had recently seen the article, and told her so with a lover-like tenderness that she found balsamic, if not precisely curative.

"It is fiendish," he at length said, "and if I thought any man had done it I would thrash him into confessing so. But I am nearly sure that a woman did it."

"Miss Cragge?"

"Yes."

"You can't thrash her, Ralph. But you can punish her."

"How?"

"Through your own journal—*The Asteroid*. You can show the world just what a virago she is."

"No," he replied, after a reflective pause, "that can't be."

"Can't be!" exclaimed Pauline, almost hysterically reproachful. *The Asteroid* can call the *Herald*, the *Times*, and the *Tribune* every possible bad name; it can fly at the throats of politicians whom it doesn't endorse; it can seethe and hiss like a witch's caldron in editorials about some recent regretted measure at Albany! But when I ask it to defend me against slanderous ridicule it refuses—it—"

"Ah," cried Kindelon, interrupting her, "it refuses because it is powerless to defend you."

"Powerless!"

"*Qui s'excuse s'accuse*. Any attempted vindication would be merely to direct the public eye still more closely upon this matter. All evil things hold within themselves the germ of their own destruction. Let this villainy die a natural death, Pauline; to fight it will be to perpetuate its power. In the meanwhile I can probably gain a clue to its authorship. But I do not promise, mind. No, I do not promise!"

"And this is all!" faltered Pauline. "Oh, Ralph, according to your argument, every known wrong should be endured because of the notoriety which attaches to the redressing of it."

He looked very troubled and very compassionate as he answered her. "The notoriety is in many cases of no importance, my love. If I were coarsely assailed, for instance, I should not hesitate to openly confront my assailant. But with a pure woman it is different; and with some pure women—yourself I quote as a most shining example of these latter—it is unspeakably different! The chastity of some names is so perfect that any touch whatever will soil it."

"If so, then mine has been soiled already!" cried Pauline. "Oh," she went on, "you men are all alike toward us women! Our worst crime is that you yourselves should talk about us! To have your fellow-men say, 'This woman has been rendered the object of a scandalous insult, but has retaliated with courage,' is to make her seem in your eyes as if the insult were really a deserved one! Whenever we are prominent, except in a social way, we are called notorious. If our husbands are drunkards or