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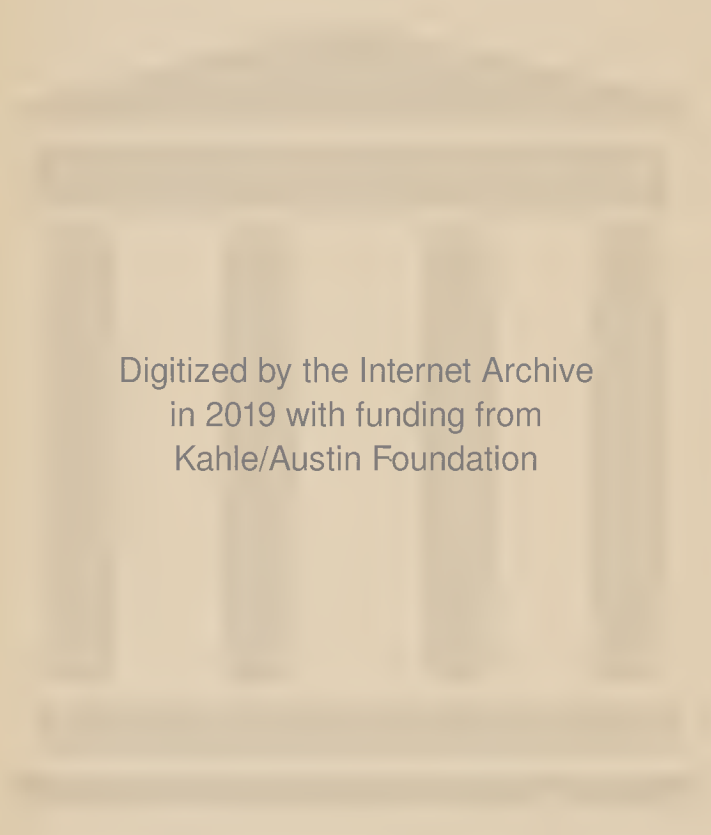
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LADY MILLER AND THE
BATHEASTON LITERARY
CIRCLE



The Vase
Frontispiece of the First Volume of
"Poetical Amusements"

LADY MILLER

AND THE

BATHEASTON

LITERARY CIRCLE

WRITTEN BY

RUTH AVALINE HESSELGRAVE

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To

GEORGE HENRY NETTLETON, Esq.

SIR,

I TAKE the liberty of laying this volume at your feet to express my sincere appreciation of your friendly counsel in the preparation of its material and your gracious encouragement in the furtherance of its publication.

I am, SIR,

Your ever Grateful

Humble Servant,

THE AUTHOR.







A NEW BALLAD

TO THE TUNE OF *NANCY DAWSON*

YE belles, ye beaux, ye wits, and all,
From concert, cotillon, and ball,
Come, come with me, attend the call
Of Miller, at Batheaston.

No roof on earth with her's can vie
For mirth, and easy pleasantry ;
Come, feast your ear, and please your eye,
With Miller, at Batheaston.

.
Old Tully's vase you there will find,
Replete with verse of every kind,
To form a wreath, the brow to bind
Of Miller, at Batheaston.

Haste, haste then all, to celebrate,
With jocund mirth and joy elate,
The easy pomp and happy state
Of Miller, at Batheaston.

Pale Envy, keep thou far away, - - -
In town thou'lt find sufficient prey ; - - -

Nor near the festive bower stray
Of Miller, at Batheaston.

But hither, pr'ythee hither flee,
Ye Muses nine, and Graces three,
And follow, follow, follow me
To Miller, at Batheaston.

*Poetical Amusements at a Villa
near Bath, I, 43.*



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FOREWORD

“She doats on poetry, sir. She adores it; I may say that her whole soul and mind are wound up, and entwined with it. She has produced some delightful pieces, herself, sir. You may have met with her ‘Ode to an Expiring Frog,’ sir.”

“I don’t think I have,” said Mr. Pickwick.

“You astonish me, sir,” said Mr. Leo Hunter. “It created an immense sensation. It was signed with an ‘L’ and eight stars, and appeared originally in a Lady’s Magazine. It commenced

‘Can I view thee panting, lying
On thy stomach, without sighing;
Can I unmoved see thee dying
On a log,
Expiring frog!’”

“Beautiful!” said Mr. Pickwick.

“Fine,” said Mr. Leo Hunter, “so simple.”

“Very,” said Mr. Pickwick.

SUCH was Mr. Pickwick’s introduction to the literary genius of Mrs. Leo Hunter. He was further honored by an invitation to a public breakfast, which Mrs. Hunter was about to give at the Den “to a great number of those who have rendered themselves celebrated by their works and talents.”

“Mrs. Leo Hunter has many of these breakfasts, sir,” her husband assured Mr. Pickwick—“‘feasts of reason, sir, and flows of soul,’ as somebody who

wrote a sonnet to Mrs. Leo Hunter on her breakfasts, feelingly and originally observed."

It is not fanciful to find for Mrs. Leo Hunter a real ancestress in Lady Miller, the presiding genius of the Batheaston literary assemblies, held toward the end of the eighteenth century. Indeed, W. H. Hutton in the *Cambridge History of English Literature* refers to Lady Miller as the "undoubted original Mrs. Leo Hunter." Without insisting too positively upon this thesis, we find in the Dickens picture an illuminating interpretation of Lady Miller; for she was in deed, as Mrs. Leo Hunter was in name, a hunter of literary lions. Caricaturist that he is, Dickens exaggerates the vanities, the literary pretensions, and the doggerel versifying, and yet presents an interesting commentary on the real Lady Miller.

It is the purpose of the following pages to present Lady Miller, the Sappho of the Batheaston *literati*, in her social and literary environment.

SIR JOHN AND LADY MILLER

JOHN MILLER, Esq., hailed from County Clare in Ireland—from Ballicasey, to be exact; a place of so little importance that it is ignored by gazetteers. His education and early career, as well as the date of his birth, are uncertain. Neither is it known when he first came over to England, but it must have been before 1760, for in that year he was serving as a cornet in Elliot's Light Horse, which the Seven Years' War (1755-1762) had called to Germany. He soon became a lieutenant, and in 1761 he is reported as a captain in the 113th Foot at the siege of Belleisle, but when the Peace of Paris was signed in 1763 he resigned his commission.

Upon the death of his brother William in 1762 he had come into possession of the family estates. The family fortunes were, however, at the proverbially Irish low tide, and the captain turned his thoughts to matrimony. Just then he made the acquaintance of a certain Miss Anna Riggs. She was pretty and sprightly enough, and moreover possessed a considerable inheritance from her grandfather, whose sole heiress she was. This grandfather, Edward Riggs of Riggsdale, County Cork, had been

for many years a member of the Irish House of Commons, a commissioner of revenue, and a privy councillor in Ireland. Her father, also named Edward Riggs, had become a commissioner of customs in London in 1741, the year in which Anna, his only child, was born. But after his death in 1748, she had been almost wholly in charge of her mother, a bustling, talkative dame of an ancient Shropshire family.

The match between Captain Miller and the heiress was made; and the marriage took place at Bath in August, 1765—three years after the death of that city's greatest *arbiter elegantiarum*, Beau Nash. As the site for their new establishment, the couple chose a charming spot, just outside the city, and across the river Avon—the Lower Avon—on the road to London.

Horace Walpole describes the place as it appeared in the following year, 1766, when rheumatism had urged him to Bath.

I dined one day with an agreeable family, two miles from Bath, a Captain Miller and his wife, and her mother, Mrs. Riggs. They have a small new-built house (Bath-Easton Villa), with a bow-window, directly opposite to which the Avon falls in a wide cascade, a church behind it in a vale, into which two mountains descend, leaving an opening into the distant country. A large village, with houses of gentry, is on one of the hills to the left. Their

garden is little, but pretty, and watered with several small rivulets among the bushes. Meadows fall down to the road; and above, the garden is terminated by another view of the river, the city, and the mountains. 'Tis a very diminutive principality with large pretensions.

Several years later another guest wrote of its location:

Now, full in view, a graceful Villa rose,
Its polish'd sides the neighb'ring oaks enclose;
Below, in circles falls a rough cascade;
A dusty mill adorns the willows' shade.

While Walpole does full justice to the natural beauties of the scene, he is inclined to depreciate the villa itself, which, though not ornate, was both artistic and commodious, and was erected at considerable cost. In fact, so expensive had the undertaking proved, that some retrenchment on the part of the builders was necessary. In 1770, accordingly, the whole family journeyed to France—Mrs. Riggs, Captain and Mrs. Miller, and their infant daughter.

In Paris a son, John Edward Augustus (Riggs-) Miller, was born, and Mrs. Riggs, the grandmother, was put in charge of the two children, while her daughter and son-in-law made a tour of Italy. They returned to France at the end of the year 1771, and evidently sought a place in Parisian society, though with doubtful success. At any rate, they failed to please Mme. du Deffand, the correspondent of Wal-

pole, for she mentions them on February 21, 1772, in the following terms :

À propos d'ennuyeux nous avons ici de vos compatriotes qui ne sont pas divertissants, un monsieur et deux dames qui reviennent d'Italie. Ils ont voulu me voir, je ne sais pourquoi, mais ce ne serait pas eux qui me donneraient l'anglomanie.

A few days later the Millers called again, but this time to announce their departure from Paris :

Mme Riggs, M. et Mme Miller me vinrent faire leurs adieux hier, c'est de tous les compliments que j'ai reçus d'eux celui qui m'a été le plus agréable. Je ne sais qui leur a dit que j'avais l'honneur d'être de vos amis, le mari se donna le bon air de me demander mes commissions pour vous. Vous ne le verrez jamais, j'en suis sûre, mais pour flatter sa vanité je le priai de vous faire mes compliments.

Though the whole family bored her, it was Mrs. Riggs who had irritated her the most, the famous Frenchwoman declared :

Pour votre famille anglaise, je vous avoue qu'elle ne m'a point plu du tout ; cette belle-mère est une jaboteuse singulièrement importune ; son début avec moi fut sur la haute métaphysique ; je me reproche de l'avoir brusquée ; je lui ai paru sans doute une vieille de très-mauvaise humeur et fort bornée ; elle m'aura bien jugée, et je ne m'en plains pas.

According to Walpole, who may have been somewhat prejudiced by these French advices, it was the continental tour which turned the travellers' heads

and quite spoiled them. Three years later—in 1775—he wrote to Lady Aylesbury :

You must know, Madam, that near Bath is erected a new Parnassus, composed of three laurels, a myrtle-tree, a weeping-willow, and a view of the Avon, which has been new christened Helicon. Ten years ago there lived a Madam Riggs, an old rough humourist who passed for a wit; her daughter, who passed for nothing, married to a Captain Miller, full of good-natured officiousness. These good folks were friends of Miss Rich, who carried me to dine with them at Bath-Easton, now Pindus. They caught a little of what was then called taste, built and planted, and begot children, till the whole caravan were forced to go abroad to retrieve. Alas! Mrs. Miller is returned a beauty, a genius, a Sappho, a tenth Muse, as romantic as Mademoiselle Scudéri, and as sophisticated as Mrs. Vesey. The Captain's fingers are loaded with cameos, his tongue runs over with *virtù*, and that both may contribute to the improvement of their own country, they have introduced *bouts-rimés* as a new discovery. They hold a Parnassus fair every Thursday, give out rhymes and themes, and all the flux of quality at Bath contend for the prizes.

While in Italy, Mrs. Miller had written to her mother in Paris a series of letters which in 1776 were published anonymously in three volumes under the title: *Letters from Italy, describing the Manners, Customs, Antiquities, Paintings, &c., of that Country, in the years 1770 and 1771 to a friend residing in France*. An extract published in the *Annual Register for 1776* describes Mrs. Miller's unavoidable meeting with the Pretender, Charles

Edward, while calling upon the Duchess of Bracciano. Being a loyal supporter of government, Mrs. Miller thoroughly disapproved of him, yet, since rudeness did not become a lady—so she explained it—she replied to his addresses courteously.

Public opinion of these letters differed. By some critics they were considered sprightly and agreeable, but Mrs. Delany mentioned them as “very conceited, they say, and not worth buying.” Horace Walpole read them as soon as they appeared and wrote to Sir Horace Mann :

I have just met with your name in a printed book, in which your politeness is celebrated. It is called *Letters from Italy by an Englishwoman*. This is a Mrs. Miller, whom perhaps you recollect. . . . The poor Arcadian patroness does not spell one word of French or Italian right through her three volumes of Travels.

In Walpole’s eyes the heinous fault lay in the presumption on the part of the Millers to literary reputation. From that time on, he could say nothing commendatory of them.

Certain it is that the return to Batheaston, some time before the end of the year 1773 (probably in 1772), introduced a new era in the social life of the Millers. They entertained extensively and sought to promote a literary atmosphere in their gatherings. Gradually most of the fashionable fre-

quenters of Bath came to be numbered among the guests at the Batheaston poetical assemblies. One visitor, the Rev. Richard Graves of Claverton, wrote :

I counted one morning above fifty carriages drawn up in a line from Bath Easton, towards Lambridge; and was at one time present at it [the assembly] with four duchesses; the duchess of Cumberland, Northumberland, Ancaster and Beaufort.

While some of the guests, such as Miss Seward and the Whalleys, became genuinely attached to their hosts, doubtless many of them accepted Mrs. Miller's invitations only because it was the fashionable thing to do, and would have ignored her elsewhere. Similarly, Horace Walpole, on being taxed with failing to recognize in London a man whom he had met at Bath, replied that he would be glad to know the same gentleman again—at Bath.

There are no records of Mrs. Miller's being socially received in London at any time. However, the Rev. Dr. Thomas Campbell mentions meeting her husband there on April 5, 1775. Mr. Miller seems to have made no particular impression and was considered only important enough for a parenthetical mention in his anecdotes.

Dined with Dilly in the Poultry, as guest to Mr. Boswell, where I met Dr. Johnson, (and a Mr. Miller, who lives near Bath, who is a dilletanti man, keeps a

weekly day for the Litterati, and is himself so litterate, that he gathereth all the flowers that ladies write, and bindeth into a garland, but enough of him) with several others, particularly a Mr. Scott who seems to be a very sensible plain man.

Boswell mentions him as among the guests upon this occasion, as well as a year later when Boswell contrived to bring Dr. Johnson to dine in the company of Jack Wilkes at the Messieurs Dilly's. Mr. Miller's acquaintance extended apparently only to his hosts, for when Johnson and Boswell were in Bath less than a month before this dinner, which was on May 15, 1776, they were not entertained at Batheaston.

The Morning Post and Daily Advertiser of February 16, 1778, included the following news item :

At a meeting held last week at Bath, for raising a fund in support of government, John Miller, Esq. of Bath Easton Villa, opened the subscription by a contribution of 200 l.

And three days later the public was informed :

The Bath subscription in support of government, amounted on the 12th of this month to a thousand pounds.

On August 24 of the same year, John Miller, Esq., was created a Baronet of Ireland.

This honor was doubtless a source of much gratification and satisfaction to Mrs. Miller. Though the title of "Lady," as extended to the wife of a

baronet, was solely one of courtesy, it was universally bestowed on her by her acquaintances, and the prestige which it implied must have made her more confident of her social position. In 1780 Sir John adopted his wife's surname as a prefix to his own, and thereafter signed himself Riggs-Miller.

Fanny Burney gives a delightfully realistic, though not wholly flattering, picture of the Miller family, as she met them in 1780, when Mrs. Thrale had carried her to Bath. It was at the home of the Whalleys in the Crescent that the introduction took place, when Lady Miller asked Mrs. Thrale to present her to the author of *Evelina*. Said Mrs. Thrale:

“Miss Burney, Lady Miller desires to be introduced to you.”

Up I jumped and walked forward; Lady Miller, very civilly more than met me half way, and said very polite things, of her wish to know me, and regret that she had not sooner met me, and then we both returned to our seats.

Do you know now that, notwithstanding Bath Easton is so much laughed at in London, nothing here is more tonish than to visit Lady Miller, who is extremely curious [select, particular] in her company, admitting few people who are not of rank or fame, and excluding of those all who are not people of character very unblemished.

Some time after, Lady Miller took a seat next mine on the sofa, to play at cards, and was excessively civil indeed—scolded Mrs. Thrale for not sooner making us acquainted, and had the politeness to offer to take me to

the balls herself, as she heard Mr. and Mrs. Thrale did not choose to go.

After all this, it is hardly fair to tell you what I think of her. However, the truth is, I always, to the best of my intentions, speak honestly what I think of the folks I see, without being biassed either by their civilities or neglect; and that you will allow is being a very faithful historian.

Well, then, Lady Miller is a round, plump, coarse-looking dame of about forty, and while all her aim is to appear an elegant woman of fashion, all her success is to seem an ordinary woman in very common life, with fine clothes on. Her manners are bustling, her air is mock-important, and her manners very inelegant.

So much for the lady of Bath Easton; who, however, seems extremely good-natured, and who is I am sure extremely civil.

Yet a week and a half later, Fanny visited Bath-easton, though the season for the poetical contests was over. Her impressions of the Villa and of the Miller family, especially Mrs. Riggs, are so vivaciously recounted as to deserve quoting at length.

Thursday, June 8.—We went to Bath Easton. Mrs. Lambart went with us.

The house is charmingly situated, well fitted up, convenient, and pleasant, and not large, but commodious and elegant. Thursday is still their public day for company, though the business of the vase is over for this season.

The room into which we were conducted was so much crowded we could hardly make our way. Lady Miller came to the door, and, as she had first done to the rest of us, took my hand, and led me up to a most prodigious fat old lady, and introduced me to her. This was Mrs.

Riggs, her ladyship's mother, who seems to have Bath Easton and its owners under her feet.

I was smiled upon with a graciousness designedly marked, and seemed most uncommonly welcome. Mrs. Riggs looked as if she could have shouted for joy at sight of me! She is mighty merry and facetious. Sir John was very quiet, but very civil.

I saw the place appropriated for the vase, but at this time it was removed. As it was hot, Sir John Miller offered us to walk around the house, and see his greenhouse, etc. So away we set off, Harriet Bowdler accompanying me, and some others following. . . .

Some time after, while I was talking with Miss W[eston] and Harriet Bowdler, Mrs. Riggs came up to us, and with an expression of comical admiration, fixed her eyes upon me, and for some time amused herself with apparently watching me. Mrs. Lambart, who was at cards, turned round and begged me to give her her cloak, for she felt rheumatic; I could not readily find it, and, after looking some time, I was obliged to give her my own; but while I was hunting, Mrs. Riggs followed me, laughing, nodding, and looking much delighted, and every now and then saying,

"That's right, Evelina!—Ah, look for it, Evelina!—Evelina always did so—she always looked for people's cloaks, and was obliging and well-bred!"

I grinned a little to be sure, but tried to escape her, by again getting between Miss W—— and Harriet Bowdler; but Mrs. Riggs still kept opposite to me, expressing from time to time, by uplifted hands and eyes, comical applause.

Harriet Bowdler modestly murmured some praise, but addressed it to Miss Thrale. I begged a truce, and retired to a chair in a corner, at the request of Miss W—— to have a *tete-a-tete*. . . .

Our conversation would have lasted till leavetaking,

but for our being interrupted by Miss Miller, a most beautiful little girl of ten years old.

Miss W—— begged her to sing us a French song. She coquetted, but Mrs. Riggs came to us, and said if I wished it I did her granddaughter great honour, and she insisted upon her obedience. The little girl laughed and complied, and we went into another room to hear her, followed by the Misses Caldwell. She sung in a pretty childish manner enough.

When we became more intimate, she said,

“Ma’am, I have a great favour to request of you, if you please!”

I begged to know what it was, and assured her I would grant it; and, to be out of the way of these misses, I led her to the window.

“Ma’am,” said the little girl, “will you then be so good as to tell me where Evelina is now?”

I was a little surprised at the question, and told her I had not heard lately.

“Oh, ma’am, but I am sure you know!” cried she, “for you know you wrote it! and mamma was so good as to let me hear her read it; and pray, ma’am, do tell me where she is? and whether Miss Branghton and Miss Polly went to see her when she was married to Lord Orville?”

I promised her I would inquire, and let her know.

“And pray, ma’am, is Madame Duval with her now?”

And several other questions she asked me, with a childish simplicity that was very diverting. She took the whole for a true story, and was quite eager to know what was become of all the people. And when I said I would inquire, and tell her when we next met,

“Oh, but, ma’am” she said, “had not you better write it down, because then there would be more of it, you know?”

She told me repeatedly how sorry she was that I had not come to Bath Easton in “vase” time, and how sorry her mamma had been.

When we were coming away, and Lady Miller and Sir John had both taken very civil leave of me, I curtsied in passing Mrs. Riggs, and she rose, and called after me—"Set about another!"

But on the following day, while drinking tea with the Bowdlers, Miss Burney records: "Fanny Bowdler congratulated me very wickedly upon my initiation at Bath Easton."

So, the Millers were never fully admitted to the select inner circles of the Blue Stockings, though they did enjoy a high degree of popularity (as well as ridicule) for a period of over six years. The termination of the assemblies came with the sudden death of Lady Miller at the Bristol Hot Wells on June 24, 1781.

Sir John had a beautiful monument of statuary marble carved by the elder Bacon and placed over her remains in the Abbey Church at Bath. Upon the marble is carved a tribute from her friend, Anna Seward, whose poetic talents were first encouraged by Lady Miller.

Devoted stone! amidst the wrecks of time
 Uninjured bear thy Miller's spotless name:
 The virtues of her youth and ripen'd prime,
 The tender thought, th' enduring record claim.

When clos'd the numerous eyes that round this bier
 Have wept the loss of wide extended worth,
 O gentle stranger, may one generous tear
 Drop, as thou bendest o'er this hallow'd earth!

Are truth and genius, love and pity thine,
 With liberal charity and faith sincere?
 Then rest thy wandering step beneath this shrine,
 And greet a kindred spirit hovering near.

As for Sir John, who had for so long basked in the glory of his wife's assemblies, he was known to literary circles no longer. Though he kept his residence at Batheaston for several years, he turned to a new career and, entering Parliament in 1784, represented Newport in Cornwall until 1790. In this latter year he published his *Speeches in the House of Commons upon the equalization of the weights and measures of Great Britain*. These were apparently his only parliamentary utterances.

No later than two months after Lady Miller's death, a company gathered at Mrs. Thrale's proposed as her successor their acquaintance Sophy Streatfield—known by Fanny Burney as "the S. S.," and portrayed by her as an amiable lady whose prime social accomplishment was the producing of real tears upon request. But Sir John remained a widower until September 9, 1795, when he was married at St. George's in Bloomsbury to the widow of Sir Thomas Davenport.

In his closing years he seems, according to the *Gentleman's Magazine*, to have deteriorated into a gossiping busybody:

For many years past Sir John's great amusement was a constant enquiring after, and as constant circulation of, the news of the day. Wherever news was to be had, Sir John was present; amongst the grave readers at Hookham's, the fiery politicians at Stockdale's, the facetious disputants of the Westminster library, or even the sapient money-hunting herd of Lloyd's coffee-house, if news was to be had, Sir John was there to glean it, and, to do him justice, was equally alert in retailing it to his friends. In this innocent method he passed his latter days.

Sir John Riggs-Miller died on May 28, 1798, and the title descended to his only son, born in 1770, upon whose death in 1825 the baronetcy became extinct.

THE BATHEASTON ASSEMBLIES

BESIDES a desire for social and literary prominence, Mrs. Miller brought back from Italy two interesting discoveries—an idea, and a vase.

The idea was a plan of poetical contests, similar to the Olympic games of ancient times, save that the modern sport tested mental rather than physical prowess. The Academy of Arcadia, founded at Rome in 1690, had inaugurated these intellectual exercises, which were conducted in five parts, each corresponding to one event in the ancient Olympics. The rewards, likewise, were purely honorary—crowns of laurel and myrtle. The Academy had spread its influence throughout Italy in the first part of the eighteenth century, largely due to its first president, Crescimbeni (1663-1728), who became a sort of poetic dictator.

The vase was an antique Roman urn, found by a laboring man in 1769 at Frascati. As a part of the ancient town of Tusculum, fifteen miles south of Rome, this had been the country seat of many wealthy Romans, Cicero among them. What could be more delightful than to imagine that this very vase had once been in the possession of the great

Tully! The Millers purchased the urn and triumphantly bore it back to England.

These two acquisitions—the idea of the poetical contests and the Roman vase—were ingeniously combined by Mrs. Miller as the foundation of a unique institution—one destined to furnish an *entrée* into fashionable society which money alone could never have afforded her.

The levee, or morning assembly, had been a popular mode of entertainment in London as early as 1745, when Hogarth pictured it in *Marriage à la Mode*. Madame du Bocage, a French lady visiting England in 1750, has described the custom as follows:

In the morning, breakfasts, which enchant as much by the exquisite viands as by the richness of the plate on which they are served up, agreeably bring together the people of the country and strangers. We breakfasted in this manner today, April 8, 1750, at Lady Montagu's [a mistake for Mrs.], in a closet lined with painted paper of *Pekin*, and furnished with the choicest movables of *China*. A long table, covered with the finest linen, presented to the view a thousand glittering cups, which contained coffee, chocolate, biscuits, cream, butter, toasts, and exquisite tea. You must understand that there is no good tea to be had anywhere but in London. The mistress of the house, who deserves to be served at the table of the gods, poured it out herself.

This does not, however, suggest a very substantial meal, and the primary emphasis of these literary

breakfasts was upon conversation. If the hostess felt that her guests would not be equal to the mental strain thus put upon them, she might furnish some form of entertainment, usually musical. However, such women as Mrs. Montagu, Mrs. Vesey, and Mrs. Ord, prided themselves upon the select and intellectual tone of their assemblies, and were correspondingly discriminating in their invitations. At these gatherings poetical compositions were read aloud, and impromptu verses were composed. The guests vied with one another in witticism and epigram, and not infrequently courtesy was sacrificed for the sake of a *bon mot*.

The breakfast as a social function had found its way to Bath from London. *Anstey's New Bath Guide*, which appeared in 1766, describes such a breakfast given in Spring Gardens by Lord Ragamuffin, lately made a peer, in honor of Lady Bunbutter. Simkin B - - n - - r - - d [Blunderhead] is enthusiastic only about the food:

Nor me did the charming Concerto of ABEL
 Regale like the Breakfast I saw on the Table;
 I freely will own I the Muffins preferr'd
 To all the genteel Conversation I heard.

The popularity of Bath as a health resort led to a complex social program, and it may well have been the press of afternoon and evening engagements

which led Mrs. Miller, quite aside from precedent, to choose the morning for her assemblies. Moreover, the morning hours would be the most inviting for a drive into the country. She wisely did not attempt to compete with the London Blue Stockings in providing elaborate settings for her gatherings. To be sure, Graves informs us that the guests were able to "amuse themselves with some capital paintings brought from Rome; with which the apartments are furnished." But there were no costly Chinese furnishings, no interiors decorated by Angelica Kauffmann. Instead, she successfully exploited the rural simplicity of Batheaston Villa. In her poem "On the Pleasures of Society at Batheaston Villa," Mrs. Miller describes the scene:

On the fair summit of a verdant lawn,
 Which Phoebus silvers with his earliest dawn,
 There stands a Bower, inclos'd in lofty shade,
 Save where it overlooks the fertile glade:—
 What though the front no stately columns boast,
 Of costly marble, brought from Afric's coast;
 Nor swelling portico, with Grecian pride,
 And sculptur'd pomp, advance its polish'd side;
 Yet blushing roses, wove with eglantine,
 In sportive garlands round the portal twine:
 There, sacred laurels spread their branches round,
 There, aged rocks with hoary moss are crown'd;
 There the clear fountains in the sun-beams play,
 Invite repose, and mitigate the day:
 There, Flora paints the ground with fragrant flowers,
 And the kind Spring bestows refreshing showers,

Teaching luxuriant branches how to shoot,
 Their produce vying with th' Hesperian fruit:
 There, fertile fields the wealthy loads sustain,
 Ceres' rich blessings rip'ning o'er the plain.

Mrs. Miller wished to become socially prominent; but she was also truly desirous of patronizing and promoting the elegant art of poetry. Perhaps, too, she sought expression for the poetic genius which she felt was hers. How could these purposes be united? How could she introduce this literary atmosphere into an assemblage of the *Ton*?

Being an energetic and resourceful woman she set about gaining her desires. She hoped to attract the fashionable society of Bath, but its members were not invariably noted for intellectual accomplishments. It was clear that some means must be found to stimulate these guests to poetic achievement—and, at the same time, to make the process enjoyable. The vase and the poetical contest idea would prove useless capital if she failed to popularize her scheme.

But Mrs. Miller had visited France as well as Italy on her travels. Hence—the device of the *bouts-rimés*! So, when Mrs. Miller's guests were invited to her Friday morning breakfast, they were requested to bring with them a six line poem having, (let us say) the rhymes: time, rhyme, lays, bays, pleasure, leisure. This was indeed something novel,

and society accepted the invitation with curious interest. The poetic offerings were ceremoniously deposited in Tully's vase, now mounted on a pedestal and occupying the place of honor in that bay-window which had caught the attention of Walpole in 1766. Later the verses were read aloud, and myrtle was bestowed on the chief poets.

Society was both surprised and pleased to discover its literary ability—and accepted the next invitation. One may be sure that the efforts of the guests did not fail to receive a full measure of appreciation from the lady of the Villa. It is not difficult to like a hostess who finds one talented—at least if one is not so critical as a Fanny Burney. And so the institution flourished.

Before long, people of truer literary merit began to accept invitations to Batheaston. The day was changed from Friday to alternate Thursdays, and a subject for the day was offered to those poets “who should prefer unshackled numbers.” The methods of conducting and judging the contests also seem to have varied from time to time. Mrs. Miller's description, written in 1775, is as follows :

It [the vase] is at present the receptacle of all the contending poetical morsels which every other Thursday (formerly Friday) are drawn out of it indiscriminately, and read aloud by the Gentlemen present, each in his turn. Their particular merits are afterwards discussed

by them, and prizes assigned to three out of the whole that appear to be the most deserving. Their authors are then, and not before, called for, who seldom fail to be *announced* either by themselves, or, if absent, by their friends: Then the prize poems are read a second time to the company, each by its author, if present, if not, by other Gentlemen, and wreaths of Myrtle presented publicly by the Institutress to each successful writer.

Philip Thicknesse, an eccentric and choleric gentleman of literary pretensions, living in Bath, somehow was never included among the Batheaston guests. Yet in his *New Prose Bath Guide* (1778) he describes the Miller assemblies as among the amusements offered at Bath.

One [amusement] is at the VILLA of Mr. MILLER, near *Bath Easton*; where, we are informed (for we never had the Honour of being present) on certain Days, a great Deal of Company meet, who possess poetical Talents, and who admire them. In one of the Rooms of this Villa, stands an antique Vase, into which the Ladies and Gentlemen put Copies of Verses, written on certain given Subjects, which being drawn out, and read by one of the Company, the Majority of them determine which Piece has the most Merit, and then the Author is called upon to avow it; this being done, the LADY of the VILLA presents the Author with a Wreath of Myrtle; and preserves the several Productions thrown into the Vase, till they are bulky enough to compose a little Volume, some of which have been published, we think, under the Title of "Poetical Amusements at a Villa near Bath."

The Genius Loci, who published *Bath Anecdotes*

and Characters in 1782, accurately appraises the poetical discrimination of many contributors to the Vase, but flatters the discernment of the Millers themselves by presuming that they have been disappointed in their experiment. The Genius is discussing the personages in attendance at a Bath public assembly:

That lady in pink sattin, who is just come in, is Lady ***
***, whom you must have heard of as the writer of some agreeable letters from Italy. She is the wife of an Irish Baronet, but who constantly resides near Bath.

To prevent the frequent interruptions from company, which their proximity to Bath must occasion, Lady *****
*****, who is of a poetical turn, contrived to form in her house once a fortnight an assembly of poets and wits.

From a Tusculan Vase placed in a drawing-room are taken little poetical pieces, or jeu d'esprits written on subjects previously given out by her Ladyship; and the author of the piece which has the greatest merit is honoured with a sprig of myrtle.

I am apt to think, that both Sir J. and Lady *****
*****, promised themselves more Attic entertainment than they really found, and that many go there who cannot in poetry distinguish between a tulip and a bulrush; but however, it is innocent in its tendency; and among invalids is a good hour's amusement, and relaxation from the toedium vitae.

A more detailed account has been left by the Rev. Richard Graves, in a reminiscence written about the year 1800. The description corresponds with other references to the Batheaston assemblies of 1780 and

1781, save that Miss Seward and Mrs. Hayley mention the prizes as being all alike—three myrtle wreaths.

The liberal minded Sir John Miller and his lady, amused the company from Bath, with regular morning assemblies, at stated times, at their beautiful villa at Bath Easton.

Lady Miller, once in a fortnight, gave out a subject for poetical composition; on which, when the company were assembled, those whom the Muses, or perhaps vanity, or the love of fame had influenced, produced their performances, and put them into an elegant antique marble vase brought from Rome, and placed on a pedestal in the bow window: when the company were seated, some young nymph put in her delicate arm, and took out a single poem, which the author, or some one who either had, or fancied he had an agreeable elocution, read to the assembly. When in this manner, the whole collection was gone through, the gentlemen retired to a contiguous apartment; where amidst a profusion of jellies, sweetmeats, icecreams and the like, they decided on the merits of the several performances; from which they selected three, which were deemed the best; and of course entitled to prizes; which her ladyship distributed to the respective authors; a pompous bouquet of flowers to the first, a myrtle wreath to the second, and a sprig of myrtle to the third. These were then usually presented, by the successful candidate, to some lady who wore them in her hair or her bosom, the next evening, to the publick rooms.

Mr. Graves alone alludes to the collations served by Lady Miller. In *Euphrosyne* he further mentions “the generous bounty of the ladies of the house” in

providing "chocolate, jellies, biscuits, and macaroons." Evidently the refreshments were both choice and bountiful. When Mrs. Hayley attended an assembly in 1781, the company concluded the morning by playing cards after the wreaths had been awarded.

The preceding quotations indicate that the various writers considered Lady Miller's gatherings in the light of pleasing social diversions, even though not of serious literary importance. Horace Walpole, on the other hand, with characteristic scorn, ridicules the whole Batheaston proceedings :

A Roman vase dressed with pink ribbons and myrtles receives the poetry, which is drawn out every festival ; six judges of these Olympic games retire and select the brightest compositions, which the respective successful acknowledge, kneel to Mrs. Calliope Miller, kiss her fair hand, and are crowned by it with myrtle, with—I don't know what.

From the poems themselves other bits are added to the general picture. The regular assembly had been omitted on Good Friday (probably in 1774), whereupon the *Bath Chronicle* had printed some scornful verses. The Rev. Mr. Graves came to the defense, declaring :

If "want of decency (as Pope
Once taught) is want of sense,"
Regard to decency, I'd hope,
Gives none but fools offense :

Whose spleen polite assemblies move ;
 For which their ill-bred wit,
 Their flimsy, dull acrostics prove
 Themselves not quite so fit.

Though bent in Nature's spight, to shine,
 Their envious rhymes obtruded
 But prove that they at joys repine,
 From which they are excluded.

Let such, retir'd with birds of night,
 Their gloomy fancies feast on,
 Nor persevere to vent their spight
 On innocent **BATHEASTON**.

The Vase was "open" only during the fashionable Bath season. It was regretted by the Millers, you will remember, that Miss Burney had not come to Bath "in vase time." A special poem celebrates "The second Time of opening of the Tusculum Vase, at Batheaston Villa" and another is composed "On the closing of the Vase for this Season." In 1779 the Vase was opened on November 25, according to a letter from Lady Miller to Dr. Whalley. In the following year she wrote him, soliciting a contribution for her opening assembly:

Bath-Easton Villa, November 3, 1780.

A continuance of your elegant poetical favours is earnestly entreated against the 21st of next month (December); the subject—'Delays are Dangerous.'

I give you the earliest notice possible, and beg you will not refuse the assistance of your charming muse, on the first day of opening the Vase for the winter season.

We had hoped we should have seen you and Mrs. Whalley before now at Bath, but suppose you are planting clumps, &c., at that elegant retreat, Langford Court. Excuse the hurry I write in, for this is the fifteenth letter I have written this day, and dinner waits. I am, &c.,

A. Miller.

During the Vase season, contributions were often sent to Batheaston by those who were unable to be present. Miss Seward implied this when she wrote:

I have almost always been so limited in the space of time allotted me for the composition of everything I have written for the Vase as to be obliged to send the first prompt copies, with all their errors on their heads.

An anonymous contributor evidently offered the following lines *in absentia*:

From Ierne's fam'd shore
 I am just wafted o'er,
 Old Lud's town demands my attention;
 Or bold I'd aspire
 To strike Clio's lyre,
 And for you rack my thoughts and invention.

Likewise the concluding lines of a poem on "Physiognomy, If always an Index of the Mind?" by the Honorable Temple Luttrell show that it must have been sent by post:

And now, my Muse! e'en go thy ways
 To Miller's Urn entwin'd with bays:
 If, by the outside of the paper,
 Its superscription, sand, and wafer,

She guesses thou'rt un-orthodox
 I'll hail her for that cunning fox
 Who reads the souls of human creatures
 By looking in their face, and features.

Mr. Miller seemed to consider it his particular function as host to compose panegyrics in honor of distinguished guests. In this manner he eulogized Madame La Baronne Diede (wife of the envoy extraordinary from the King of Denmark), and several more or less famous beauties who favored Bath-easton with their presence. Among the ladies complimented by Mr. Miller, Lord Palmerston, and others, were: Meynell, Asgyll, Johnstone, Gooche, Pitt, Haywood, Jennings, Lockhart, Tomkyns, Wroughton, Dutton, White, and Lady Emily Kerr.

But the outstanding beauty during the early days of the Miller assemblies was Lady Georgina Spencer, who became the Duchess of Devonshire on June 5, 1774. Her graces were everywhere acknowledged. The story was popularly told of a certain dustman so affected by the beauty of her eyes that he exclaimed, "Lord love you, my lady, let me light my pipe at your eyes." Several poetic effusions were written at Bath-easton in her honor, and Mr. Miller rose to the occasion grandly, extolling her charms and congratulating the Duke upon the approaching nuptials. According to Mrs. Delany, his

tribute was not accorded the enthusiastic reception its author had anticipated. Her letter to Mrs. Port is dated May 10, 1774.

Mrs. Riggs at Bath Easton (which now is called *Bath-Easton Parnassus*) has an assembly of wits where Mr. and Mrs. Miller preside; once a week (I think) or some settled time, the wits thereto belonging produce their works, judgment passes, and a prize is given to the best. Lady Spencer and Lady G. S. [Georgina Spencer] were invited to a breakfast and to partake of the poetical entertainment. Amongst other offerings of the muses, Mr. Miller read one address'd to Lady Georgina which perhaps you have seen in the Publick Advertizer, without wishing to know the author—too gross a flattery not to distress the person chiefly concerned, who blush'd, and look'd down in the utmost confusion. Said Mr. Miller, "*Sure the author of the verses deserves the prize, for having chosen so fine a subject?*" It would have been a poor compliment to have disputed that judgment in the presence of *the* person and accordingly it was agreed to and the author to be declared. "*It was I,*" (says Mr. Miller,) "*and now I will read them once again,*" which he was preparing to do, when Lady Spencer relieved poor L^y G. by making her curtsy an excuse and withdraw.

One hopes, though not too sanguinely, that Mr. Miller felt rebuked and thereafter refrained from embarrassing adulation.

Declaring that the primary object of these assemblies was amusement, Mrs. Miller banned all controversial subjects, and sought "to discourage every violation of the sanctities of Society." It was

the latter regulation which called for enforcement from time to time. Upon one occasion, after some of his verses had been consigned to the flames, Mr. Thomas Stanley felt moved to present "An Apology for Wit and Humour. To the Tune of Chevy Chase."

Good people all, a sad mishap,
 My witty muse befel;
 Condemn'd to purge her crimes away,
 Like sinful soul in hell.

.

Against a hapless bard, ye fair,
 Why all this mighty pother;
 His modest muse one meaning gave,
 Your lively thoughts another.

'Twas cruel sure to stop his mouth
 And say you'd hear no more,
 When by your tittering 'twas plain,
 Your hearts cry'd out *encore*.

.

Most gracious Queen these stanzas spare,
 Vouchsafe them long to reign;
 And grant that I may never see,
 My muse in flames again.

The *Morning Post and Daily Advertiser* of May 6, 1778, prints the following "Extract of a letter from Bath, May 2."

The poetical society of *Bath-Easton Villa*, were a little deranged on Wednesday last, by the *mal apropos* introduction of a copy of verses, which no sooner issued from

the *Vase*, than like the contents of *Pandora's* box spread an epidemic disorder on all around.—The subject of the day was *curiosity*; to which that *wag of Parnassus*, Mr. *Jek - - l*, gave a ludicrous turn in his stanzas, caricaturing most of the ladies present, and introducing them to *themselves* as female *curiosities*. The consternation this occasioned thro' the *poetic* doman, may be conceived, but cannot be expressed;—fits! tears! sighs! and reproaches! recchoed on all sides: and God knows what would have been the consequence, had not the female regent interposed her authority, and restored a little tranquility, by pronouncing a temporary banishment on the monster, whose satire had thus wantonly o'erturned the harmony of the day.

Again, late in the spring of 1781, was the even tenor of Lady Miller's assemblies disturbed, though the exact circumstances are not disclosed. On May 20, Miss Weston of Bath wrote to Dr. Whalley:

Poor Lady Miller! Upon the whole, she has been severely and hardly used. Don't you think it is possible this poem might be in some way conveyed into the *Vase* by an enemy without her knowledge? for if she had ever perused it, it is impossible to think she would have suffered it to have been read.

An account written in 1824 declares that

At length the purity of the sacred vase was sullied by the licentious wit of some unknown wag, whose satirical production, when recited, wounded the delicacy of all the blushing fair ones present, and the meetings were discontinued forever.

Since the *Vase* season regularly closed in May, there is no reason to believe that this scandal put an

end to the poetical amusements. Had it not been for Lady Miller's sudden death in June, the institution would doubtless have been continued the following winter. For, on the whole, despite these various agitations, Lady Miller's assemblies had proved highly successful in providing the social and literary diversion for which they had been designed, and many a visitor to Batheaston Villa between 1774 and 1781 shared the sentiments of this devotee of Batheaston and the *bouts-rimés*:

From Bath to Easton haste your	flight,
Prepare for scenes of sweet	delight:
MILLER, to please, exerts her	power,
And asks you to her charming	bower,
Where Nature joins, in concert	meet,
With Taste, to make the place	complete:
May joy and mirth there ever	glow,
As long as Avon's streams shall	flow.







III.

THE ‘POETICAL AMUSEMENTS’
(1775-1781)

THE activities of the Batheaston circle owed much of their reputation to Mrs. Miller’s publication of selected poems under the title of *Poetical Amusements at a Villa near Bath*. Four volumes appeared—in 1775, 1776, 1777, and 1781—and a fifth was in preparation at the time of the editor’s death. These collections were printed ostensibly as a charity benefit. In 1752 there had been founded in Bath a Pauper Charity, which flourished for a number of years, but at length languished on account of insufficient funds.

On the 20th of December 1775, a Company of Gentlemen, who had entered into a Subscription, met at the Bear Inn, and, as nearly as possible to the first plan, formed the present, to which they gave the title of the *Original Pauper-Scheme Revived*, appointed a Treasurer, and an Apothecary, to which they have since added a President, for one year; and agreed upon a Meeting of the Subscribers to be held at the Grove coffee-house at One o’clock on the first Monday in every month, and an Annual Meeting at the Bear on the 20th of December.

The president thus appointed was John Miller, Esq., who as Sir John Riggs Miller, Bart., was still

holding office in 1795, according to the *New Bath Guide* of that year. Nor did this represent Mr. Miller's only interest in local philanthropies, according to other Bath Guides,—in 1777 he was serving as a vice president of a "Humane Society for recovery of persons apparently drowned," and in 1788 he was president of a Charity School.

Poetical Amusements first made its appearance in behalf of this Pauper-Scheme, though evidently before the charity's reorganization, since Walpole mentions the book as early as January 12, 1775. Mrs. Miller's kind heart and generous nature were unquestioned. *The Gentleman's Magazine* thus announced her death :

Suddenly, at Bristol Hot Wells, Lady Miller, author of "Letters from Italy, by an Englishwoman," and of other more glorious works of charity, humanity, and goodness, which will remain more durable monuments of her virtues, and of her loss. . . . The wealthy and the indigent will have equal cause of regret; for she did not study to enlarge and multiply the elegant entertainments of the former, with more assiduity than she sought occasion to administer the comforts of the latter. Of this thousands who have visited her villa, near Bath, or who reside near its vicinity, can witness. Her merits excited some envy, but her heart retained not the sense of injuries, and she was not more easy of access, than of conciliation. Few persons in the county of Somerset could be less spared, by the sons of riches or poverty, to an early tomb; nor will any be more sincerely lamented by both.

Nevertheless, one suspects that in this instance she was equally moved by a pride in advertising her institution. Though the poems seemed to find a ready sale—the first edition of volume one was exhausted in less than ten days—the profits were not large. In 1776 only ten pounds had been turned over to the fund.

The volumes themselves contain altogether some seven hundred pages of poetical efforts. Here is one of the opening poems, which has many typical characteristics.

LAURA

Just are the praises given your calm	retreat ;
Blest scenes! (here Genius' offspring	meet)
That grace soft Avon's silver streams	below,
Which, by your verse inspir'd, more softly	flow ;
Where you, all pleasing, thro' the early	day,
Sweetly encharm, are innocently	gay ;
Whose taste the surliest cynic must	approve,
And feel his passion thawing into	love.

“Laura” is, of course, the mistress of Batheaston, who is frequently alluded to in this “poetic” fashion. Such other conventional names as Myra and Flavia were favorite terms among the contributors. Miss Seward not only referred to Lady Miller as Laura in her poetry, but addressed her by that name; and she later carried on a correspondence with Dr.

Whalley, in which she saluted him as Edwy (a character in his poem, "Edwy and Edilda"), and signed herself Julia. Such expressions of sentimentality abound in the poems. Personifications and mythological references, both often tagged with fanciful pedigrees, appear profusely. Nature and rural simplicity are ever exalted.

The Millers discouraged any verses which might give rise to jealousy or offense—poetical warnings against envy are repeatedly uttered. Mrs. Hayley reported that one of the mottoes on the urn in 1781 was Pope's:

Cursed be the verse, how well soe'er it flow,
That tends to make one worthy man my foe.

Batheaston guests seemed to regard this advice from the positive standpoint, or, as they might have expressed it:

Blest be the verse, how ill soe'er it end,
That tends to make one worthy man my friend.

Flattery and more flattery seemed to be the order of the day. Much of this was naturally bestowed upon the lady whose hospitality brought them together. As judged by these poets, Mrs. Miller was a phantom of delight. Fanny Burney found her "a round, plump, coarse-looking dame of about forty," whose air was mock-important, and whose

manners were bustling and inelegant. But to the poetic soul, she was the "sprightly Laura" of "polish'd mind," "fair amongst the fair," with "taste refin'd, and classic sway."

Her genial smiles perpetual warmth inspire,
And animate our breasts with unconsuming fire.

While basking in this pleasant adulation, the editor of the *Amusements* (in other words, Mrs. Miller—for the volumes, be it remembered, were published anonymously) felt that some apology might be expected in the preface.

Should politeness to the Institution and Institutress be found to occupy too large a portion of these sheets, the Editor must rest his justification upon the exclusion of many elegant and ingenious little pieces, (from a mere motive of delicacy) that would have done equal honour to the authors, as to the person and subject of their address.

Despite this editorial explanation, there still remains an abundance of fulsome flattery. The reader's curiosity is aroused in a poem on "Dissipation," which Edward Jerningham contributed to the fourth volume. The fifth and last stanza of this poem begins :

But on the precincts of *this* classic ground,
With her best gifts the Deity is found ;
She bids the pure of taste, th' enlighten'd Fair,
With Learning's sons, to this blest dome repair.

Six rows of stars conclude the poem, and a note modestly explains :

A few lines are here left out by the Editor, as they only consisted of a simile complimentary to the Institutress of the Poetical Society.

“Dissipation” is printed among Jerningham’s poems—but without the fifth stanza.

A delightful exception to the usual gallantry is found in a variation of the Orpheus story, by an unknown poet who possessed what many of his fellows lacked—a sense of humor.

Grim Pluto was charm’d, and swore by the Styx,
Himself to the bard thus addressing,
“That short-sighted mortals often implore
“A curse instead of a blessing.

“Once more then I’ll take your Eurydice back,
“In reward for your playing so well,
“And free you for ever from petticoat sway,
“Such charms has your music in hell.”

The quality of humor found in some of the other poems may be judged by the reader from the two following selections :

Though hard and bold as Charles the Swede,
And though like Broughton bony,
Love makes us all as meek and tame
As gentle Macaroni.

When Father Orpheus wanted sport, he
By touching his *piano forte*
Drew out his beasts by millions :

Hinds with high heads each other butted,
 Pigs "*en pas grave*" like ***** strutted,
 Cows caper'd in cotillons.

Such characteristics, the Batheaston poetry shared in common with other verse of its period. But it possessed one feature which was unique. Out of the one hundred and fourteen poems appearing in the first volume, seventy-six were *bouts-rimés*. These "little *aliens* to British Genius and British Liberty," as Mrs. Miller gushingly called them, furnished easy lessons in poetry writing, "to accommodate the Indolent and to encourage the Diffident."

Since this is apparently the first appearance in England of the *bouts-rimés*—which Walpole's "poor Arcadian patroness" spells "*Bouts Rimées*"—a summary of their development may be of interest. The form was originated in the seventeenth century (about 1648) by an obscure French poet and priest named Dulot.

Un jour, dit Ménage, Dulot se plaignit en présence de plusieurs personnes, qu'on lui avait dérobé quelques papiers, et particulièrement trois cents sonnets qu'il regrettait, plus que le reste. Quelqu'un ayant témoigné sa surprise qu'il en eût fait un si grand nombre, il répliqua que c'étaient des sonnets en blanc, c'est-à-dire des *bouts-rimés* de tous les sonnets qu'il avait envie de remplir. Cela sembla plaisant, et depuis on commença à faire, par une espèce de jeu, dans les compagnies, ce que Dulot faisait sérieusement.

The diversion became a society craze, comparable to the cross-word puzzle of today. Among the *bouts-rimés* composers were Mme. de Sévigné, La Calprenède, and La Rochefoucauld. Sarazin ridiculed the pastime in a *bout-rimé* entitled "Dulot vaincu, ou la Défaite des *bouts-rimés*." This affected their popularity for a time, but they were revived shortly after 1700 when Etienne Mallemands composed sonnets on the basis of rhymes furnished him by the Duchesse du Maine.

Concerning this French revival the *Spectator* commented:

I don't know any greater Instance of the Decay of Wit and Learning among the *French* (which generally follows the Declension of Empire) than the endeavoring to restore this foolish Kind of Wit. If the Reader will be at the Trouble to see Examples of it, let him look into the new *Mercure Galant*; where the Author every Month gives a List of Rhymes to be filled up by the Ingenious, in order to be communicated to the Publick in the *Mercure* for the succeeding Month. . . .

The first Occasion of these *Bouts Rimez* made them in some Manner excusable, as they were Tasks which the *French* Ladies used to impose on their Lovers. But when a grave Author, like him above-mentioned [Ménage], tasked himself, could there be any thing more ridiculous? Or would not one be apt to believe that the Author played double, and did not make his List of Rhymes till he had finished his Poem?

The first-rank litterateurs regarded the *bouts-*

rimés as artificial, extravagant, whimsical, and unworthy of serious attention; and the most successful examples were produced, not by men of real genius, but by *rimailleurs*.

Their English advent was hailed with much scorn and derision. Boswell records Johnson's opinion, expressed just after the publication of the first volume of *Poetical Amusements*.

Lady Miller's collection of verses by fashionable people, which were put into her Vase at Batheaston villa, near Bath, in competition for honorary prizes, being mentioned, he held them very cheap: '*Bouts rimés*, (said he,) is a mere conceit, and an *old* conceit *now*; I wonder how people were persuaded to write in that manner for this lady.' I named a gentleman of his acquaintance who wrote for the Vase. Johnson: 'He was a blockhead for his pains.' Boswell: 'The Duchess of Northumberland wrote.' Johnson: 'Sir, the Duchess of Northumberland may do what she pleases: nobody will say anything to a lady of her high rank. But I should be apt to throw *****'s verses in his face.'

It has been conjectured that the gentleman referred to was either Mr. William Seward or the Rev. Richard Graves. The verses by the Duchess—presumably her only contribution—have become famous through Walpole's ridicule of the "battered muffin." The Duchess was not, however, responsible for the rhymes assigned her and really handled them with considerable dexterity. Her poem follows:

The pen, which I now take and	brandish
Has long lain useless in my	standish.
Know, ev'ry maid, from her in	patten,
To her who shines in glossy	sattin,
That could they now prepare an	oglio
From best receipt of book in	folio,
Ever so fine, for all their	puffing,
I should prefer a butter'd	muffin.
A muffin, Jove himself might	feast on,
If eat with Miller at	Batheaston.

Variations were sometimes employed, in which two of the assigned rhymes appeared in each of a series of four-line stanzas. One versifier achieved a double *bout-rimé*, the second stanza repeating the rhymes of the first.

George Pitt—"G. P - - tt, Esq."—wrote five *bouts-rimés* for Mrs. Miller's collection and in one of these he offered a "Receipt to make a Bouts Rimées."

Take of jest and of humour, an ounce at a	time,
Mix the flowers of fancy, and tincture of	rhyme ;
To some smart repartees, add the essence of	bays,
With the sugar of sense, just to sweeten your	lays ;
Then quick lively ideas throw in at your	pleasure,
Of the spirit of wit add some drops at your	leisure.

The receipt is excellent, but unfortunately the Bath-easton cooks usually left out most of the ingredients.

Thirteen enigmas, which are also *bouts-rimés*, appear in the first volume, having such answers (fortunately listed at the end of the book) as: a shoe, gold, a letter, the Vase, a watch. At the head of

the last-mentioned enigma is the plea: "The Author humbly desires the Reader will be so good as to begin at the last Line"—and lo! the poem is equally intelligible when read from either end.

Scattered through the first three volumes are four or five acrostics on the Millers and Batheaston. The following is a fair example:

M	istaken man! to court an empty	name;
I	n toil and carnage lies the road to	fame!
L	et others, 'midst the thorns of glory	strive;
L	et them the soul of its first joys	deprive;
E	nthron'd in bliss, be thine these joys to	prove,—
R	ead these initials,—gaze, admire, and	love.

The *bouts-rimés* appeared only scatteringly in the second volume, and not at all thereafter. Several reasons may have led to this abandonment: the ridicule which they drew, the sameness of the game after the novelty had worn off, or the subsequent attendance at the assemblies of people more seriously interested in poetry.

The poetry of the last three volumes is less obvious and persistent in its praise of the Millers, and usually seeks to be elevating as well as diverting. The subjects given out at Batheaston fall into three general groups: those which have local significance, as "Bath; Its Beauties and Amusements," "La Belle Assemblée au Chateau de Batheaston"; those which deal with abstractions, as "Harmony," "Dreams,"

“The Power of Music”; and such occasional and seasonal poems as “An Elegy on the Death of Mr. Garrick,” “The Month of May,” “Christmas Gambols.” Of these three classes the abstract topics are the ones most frequently found.

The usual poetic form is the couplet, varied by occasional ballad or other four line stanzas, and irregular isolated forms. One ingenious writer, Mr. Edmund Rack, created a poem of some 125 lines, all rhyming with the title, “Speculation.” Imitations of popular poets are found to a surprising extent. The Spenserian stanza and manner appear in three poems (II, 36; II, 79; IV, 191). Shakespeare is repeatedly referred to in laudatory terms, and an occasional verse-maker adorns his lines with a Shakespearean phrase.

Two or three poems suggest the style of Goldsmith (II, 100; II, 131; III, 1), but the influence of Gray is more noticeable. On one occasion the Batheaston subject was “Elegy,” and an anonymous young lady—it must have been a young lady—contributed a poem dedicated “To Celia.” The theme is rather uncertain, but after devoting many lines to the praise of Mrs. Miller, she evidently recalled that the subject was elegy, so she abruptly announced that she would “close these lines in compliment to Gray.” To others, too, Gray and elegy

seemed to be synonymous. Two poetical aspirants appropriated that convenient phrase, so well suited to the Bath scene—"far from the madding crowd."

One can forgive all this, but it is difficult to be equally lenient toward Mr. Lister, when he parodies Gray's elegy to describe the drunken debauches of Sir Blubber (whose "body out-Milton'd the portrait of Sin"):

Till sinking drowsy in recumbent state,
 Where heaves the down in many a bolster'd heap;
 With nasal minstrelsy in tête a tête,
 Supinely stretch'd the gouty martyrs sleep!

The boast of Mayoralty, the Warden's pow'r,
 And all that Corporations have in store,
 Awaits alike th' intoxicating hour;
 The paths of drinking lead but to the floor.

Most striking of all is the frequent imitation of Milton's "L'Allegro" and "Il Penseroso." At least a dozen poems show this resemblance in a marked degree. Christopher Anstey had included two parodies of these companion-pieces in his highly popular *New Bath Guide*, published in 1766, and it is not improbable that this had suggested to Bath visitors the possibilities of further adaptations, both serious and mirthful. "The Beauties of Nature compared with those of Art" commences:

No more of trivial ART,
 By Fashion nourish'd, and from Folly born!
 Your feeble aid I scorn:
 What can your pow'r to scenes like this impart?
 Dwell in mechanic's brain;
 And ladies fond, with gaudy shapes possess,
 As thick and numberless
 As the gay crowds which people this fair scene.

and it concludes :

Can NATURE then such transport give?
 No more with ART I mean to live.

Of the parodies, one of the most extended and elaborate is by Hon. John St. J - - - n, on "Garrulity," of which the following are excerpts :

But come thou Goddess, fair and free,
 In Bath 'yclept GARRULITY!
 By old maids heart-easing mirth,
 Whom some beldam at a birth,
 With two sister Graces more,
 Miss Falsehood and Miss Scandal, bore!

Sometimes with extreme delight
 The upper town all boors invite,
 When the fiddle's joyous sound
 Makes the cotillion turn round;
 And many a dame and many a maid,
 Dancing, chatter with their blade;
 For young and old, because they've paid,
 Come forth to dance with Captain WADE,
 Till the short-liv'd candles fail,
 Then against the ball they rail,
 With stories told of many a feat,
 How each beauty got her seat,

Each was pinch'd and pull'd she said,
 And, with the crowding, almost dead:
 Thus done their tales, to bed they creep,
 By their own chattering lull'd to sleep.
 Morning lounges please us then,
 And the busy hum of men,
 Where old gouty bilious beaux,
 At the pump their ills disclose;
 Or where the rival poets throng,
 Each in the Urn to put his song;
 With store of ladies, whose bright eyes
 Rain influence, and judge the prize
 Of Wit and Verse, while both contend
 To win her Grace, whom all commend.
 There, fair Goddess, oft we'll hear
 Thy tongue incessant, pipe so clear,
 Thy prate, and chat, and revelry,
 Quirps, and cranks, and poetry,
 Such as may grace Batheaston's Urn,
 Or there, without their Authors, burn.

.

Hence, Silence! Hence, from Bath far flee.
 Detested Taciturnity!
 Come, Goddess, these delights thou'lt give,
 GARRULITY, with thee I'll live!

But before passing final judgment on the Bath-easton poesy, we must note the warning of the In-stitutress:

The candid Reader will please to recollect, whilst he turns over these pages, that they were frequently the production of a few days,—most of them of as many hours:—That they originated amidst the hurry of plays, balls, public breakfasts, and concerts, and all the dissipations of a full *Bath Season*—alike unfriendly to Con-

templation and the Muses:—That their authors did not foresee their appearance under their present form, and had for the most part little leisure to improve or to correct them.

Pity the plight of this procrastinating wretch!

The darkness visible of dawn
 Dimly proclaims the dubious morn!
 The clock goes—What? As I'm alive,
 Its moral finger points to five!
 It *strikes!* I hear the lapse of time,
 And rise to write the loitering rhyme.
 Another stroke! like solemn *Young*,
 I feel the Angel in its tongue;
 The myrtled Morning is come on,
 And nothing for the Vase yet done!

Yet how much more deserving of sympathy is the conscientious toiler, so typical of many Bath-easton guests, who mourns:

Since last Thursday se'nnight, I've not slept a wink,
 I've scarcely allow'd myself vict'als and drink,
 On your subject, Sir John, I've done nothing but think.

I try'd it, and turn'd it about ev'ry way,
 And rack'd my poor noddle all night, and all day,
 But in vain,—for I found I had nothing to say.

At last—with much labour, and patience, and time,
 I've got just one dozen of verses to rhyme:
 Here they are,—and I hope you will think them sublime.

This preamble, quite apart from the “dozen of verses” which it introduces, sufficiently illustrates the mediocrity of the Bath-easton verses. Many of

the contributors "had nothing to say," or at least no poetic talent for saying it. They deposited poems in the Vase because it was the fashionable thing to do, and doubtless Mrs. Miller published many of the verses found in the earlier volumes only because she wished to please the authors. Even then, many guests were offended because they felt that their efforts had not received due recognition.

Others, who *could* write, considered Lady Miller's exercises merely as a pastime and contributed, for the most part, hastily composed lines, without revision. Miss Seward, who took the Vase proceedings very seriously indeed, wrote:

I was reduced to six hours for the entire composition of the 'Ode to Fancy,' and when I sat down to the task at ten o'clock in the morning, had not conceived a single idea upon the subject—was obliged to send it away at four that afternoon—not one night's rest to sober my imagination for the perception of absurdities. When the blotted transcript met my sight next morning, a fine number of them stared me in the face.

But after all allowances have been made, the verses will still be found undeniably inferior. Artificiality and sentimentality—these are the two outstanding features of *Poetical Amusements*, and the designation applies both to form and to content. The contributors were not geniuses and could not transcend the popular tendency to sentiment, which they

imitated in its worst forms. The conventional environment, as well as the limitations of subject and form, inevitably produced an artificial product.

P O E T I C A L
A M U S E M E N T S

A T A

V I L L A

N E A R

B A T H.

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TITLE-PAGE OF THE FIRST VOLUME OF
Poetical Amusements

IV.

THE CONTRIBUTORS

SINCE the verses produced at Batheaston cannot profitably be discussed with reference merely to their literary excellence, it is not out of place to consider them briefly in a somewhat statistical fashion, from the standpoint of bulk :

<i>Volume</i>	<i>Pages</i>	<i>Total Poems</i>	<i>Anonymous Poems</i>
I	150	114	54
II	175	45	24
III	172	41	15
IV	219	35	3
	—	—	—
<i>Totals</i>	716	235	96

Of a total 235 poems in the four volumes, 96 are anonymous. The authorship of many others is thinly disguised by the substitution of dashes for certain letters, though in the last volume all but six poems are fully signed. The names of sixty-five contributors appear, a great majority of whom have long since sunk into a well-deserved oblivion. Unless a possible exception is made in the case of Miss Seward, one of the latest contributors, fame came to none of them through Lady Miller's volumes. But several of the verses are still interesting, either be-

cause of the persons who wrote them, or because of the circumstances under which they were composed.

It is fitting to speak first of the Millers themselves. The offerings of Mr. Miller were, as has already been suggested, eulogistic in nature. Five poems appear signed with his name, all in the first volume. Whether he proclaims, "My Laura's fair amongst the fair," or waxes enthusiastic over "a very fine Picture, representing a Tempest," painted by one of his guests, his words ever smack of hyperbole. This remarkable painting, by the way, was the work of one C. W. Bampfylde, an especial friend of Christopher Anstey and Richard Graves, but despite Mr. Miller's glowing admiration Mr. Bampfylde's art never emerged from obscurity. However, the host of Batheaston rose to his most eloquent heights in a poem dedicated to Anstey. The lines fairly drip with sentimental tears when the poet sympathizes with Cambridge over Anstey's removal to Bath.

Forsaken Cam! thy fate we mourn,
Thy fairest flower unkindly torn,
To grace proud Avon's shore:
Thy Nails lament, with plaintive sighs,
Dishevel'd hair, and streaming eyes,
Since A - - - TY'S thine no more.

Mrs. Miller's verses, also, appear only in the

first volume. Her seven poems are of three different types. The first consists of three rather stupid enigma *bouts-rimés* on: a shoe, gold, and a fly. Two poems express her personal complacency in her assemblies: "On the Pleasures of Society at Bath-easton Villa," and "The Second Time of opening of the Tusculum Vase at Batheaston Villa." This latter closes with these aspiring lines:

May each revolving sun, that gilds the skies,
 Still see the attic fire of TULLY rise:
 As the bright Phoenix, springing from the flame
 Of her enliven'd ashes, mounts to fame.

In her verses on "Dancing" and on "Painting" Mrs. Miller aimed at elegance. In the one she traces the history of dancing from Castor and Pollux down—with many a footnote—and refers casually to certain dancers "in the Opera of Castor and Pollux (as represented on the Theatre in the Palais Royale at Paris)." In the other she displays her familiarity with mythology, introduces the names of famous painters, and caps the climax in a compliment to the Royal Academy.

But what of that garrulous dame, Mrs. Riggs? Did she not join in the popular diversion? A *bout-rimé* "On Miss P—tt," appearing early in volume one is credited to Mrs. R—s. It displays the family

tendency to flattery, but has no other distinguishing marks. After this one attempted flight in the realms of poesy, Mrs. Riggs evidently gave it up and contented herself with clucking her admiration of such Batheaston songsters as could sustain themselves more successfully in that insubstantial element.

These thirteen poems by the Miller trio presumably constitute their only published efforts at verse-making. The *bouts-rimés* being omitted, they represent the average quality of poetry in the first volume of *Poetic Amusements*, though inferior to some of the contributions in the later volumes. Why, then, did the Millers cease to versify? It is not unlikely that Mr. Miller found the rigors of poetic composition too exhausting, and confined himself thereafter to oral compliments—in prose. As for Mrs. Miller, the mere difficulty of the task would not dampen her ardor. It is more probable that, as the contributions increased in number, her verses suffered—in the estimation of the judges—when compared with other lines consigned to the Vase, and failed to win the myrtle. A patroness, if not a poetess, she wisely decided to be.

But there are in the published collections, other interesting poems which claim attention. Four contributions in French, probably considered by the Batheaston stage-manager as “specialty numbers”

were furnished by Louis Dutens—though Mrs. Miller spelled it “du Tems” or “Du T—ns.” Dutens (1730-1812) was born in Tours, of a French Huguenot family, but spent much of his life travelling in England and on the continent, as he recounts in his *Mémoires d'un Voyageur qui se repose*. In England he made many influential friends. The Duke of Northumberland early became his patron, and Dutens was often the travelling companion of the Duke and Duchess. It was probably in the company of the latter that he made his first appearance at Batheaston Villa. In his early youth Dutens had composed enigmas and epigrams, and on his first visit to England twenty years before, he had translated several English comedies into French. Besides these, he had to his credit at this time the writing of a French tragedy and several poems. Hence he might really be considered a man of letters, and Mrs. Miller welcomed him joyfully. That the pleasure was mutual seems to be indicated by his unrhymed lines on “La Belle Assemblée au Chateau de Batheaston,” appearing in the first volume of *Poetical Amusements*. More successful from a poetic standpoint was his second poem, dedicated to Mrs. Miller and entitled “L'Amour jouant au Piquet avec Glycère.” It proves to be a translation of the famous song from Lyly's play, *Campaspe*.

Au piquet avec ma Glycère
 L'amour jouïoit un jour aux baisers, et perdit ;
 Il paye, et met son arc, ses flèches, ma bergère
 Le fait capot et gagne ; Amour plein de dépit
 Risque les effets de sa mère,
 Ses Colombes, ses tourtereaux
 Son attelage de moineaux,
 Et sa ceinture séduisante ;
 Perd tout cela, de sa bouche charmante
 Il joue ensuite le corail,
 L'albatre de son front, l'émail
 De son tein de lis et de roses,
 La fossette de son menton
 Et mille autres beautés nouvellement ecloses :
 Le jeu s'échausse, et le petit fripon
 Sans ressource, et tout en furie,
 Contre mes yeux, *va le tout*, il s'écrie !
 Glycère gagne et l'amour consterné
 Se lève aveugle et ruiné.
 Amour ! de l'insensible est-ce donc là l'ouvrage ?
 Hélas, pour moi quel funeste présage !

In *Œuvres Mêlées de M. L. Dutens* is found this poem under the title, "La Partie de Piquet de l'Amour et Glycère"—but without the dedication. These two Batheaston poems were presumably submitted to the Vase in 1774. Dutens evidently visited Bath a second time, for two more of his poems are included in volume three of *Poetical Amusements*, one of which is also found in his *Œuvres Mêlées*, headed "Sujet Donné à Bath-easton. En Janvier 1777. La physionomie indique-t-elle le caractère ?"

Among the permanent residents of Bath who

frequented Mrs. Miller's assemblies were the Bowdlers. The name is best known today from its association with Thomas Bowdler's expurgated Shakespeare, which was published in 1818. Thomas Bowdler was travelling on the continent from 1776 to 1781, and so was not among the Batheaston guests, who probably included both his parents and his sisters. Two of the sisters, Frances and Henrietta—called Fanny and Harriet—were very friendly with Fanny Burney during her Bath visit in 1780. Harriet, the youngest, called at Batheaston the same day as she, and afterwards Fanny Bowdler joked Miss Burney about her "initiation at Bath Easton." Harriet published two volumes of poems and essays in 1786, and in that same year *Poems and Essays by a Lady lately deceased* was first printed, for the benefit of a Bath hospital. The author of this book was Miss Jane Bowdler (1743-1784), Harriet's eldest sister, who had been an invalid for some years before her death. Fanny Burney referred to Jane Bowdler but once:

I have neglected to mention that the eldest Miss Bowdler, by a dreadful cold, has quite lost her voice—lost all possible power of speech! I have never heard of so extraordinary or so horrible a circumstance; she has been wholly dumb for three years. She seems perfectly resigned, and very mild and patient; but it is really painful to be in a room with her.

During the years that she was cut off from ordinary companionship Miss Bowdler had occupied herself in preparing the poems and essays published after her death. The volume went through sixteen editions before 1830, and was reprinted in America; but the reader of today finds the verse poor and the prose lacking in originality. There are but eight poems in the collection. One of them has the heading: "Subject, Love, for the Vase at Batheaston," and is also included in volume one of *Poetical Amusements*, though it is here unsigned. Three other poems in Jane Bowdler's volume have the same titles as Batheaston poems, and were perhaps read there originally.

Christopher Anstey (1724-1805) made his home in Bath after 1770. In 1766 he had published a clever satire entitled *The New Bath Guide*. Let Horace Walpole characterize it:

. . . for a fortnight no soul looked into it, concluding its name was its true name. No such thing. It is a set of letters in verse, in all kinds of verses, describing the life at Bath, and incidentally everything else—but so much wit, so much humour, fun, poetry, so much originality, never met together before. Then the man has a better ear than Dryden or Handel. Apropos to Dryden, he has burlesqued his *St. Cecilia*, that you will never read it again without laughing. There is a description of a milliner's box in all the terms of the landscape, *painted lawns and chequered shades*, a Moravian ode, and a Methodist ditty, that are incomparable, and the best names that ever

were composed; I can say it by heart, though a quarto, and if I had time would write it you down; for it is not yet reprinted, and not one to be had.

This in 1766—but twenty-two years later Walpole commented:

We have another example in Mr. Anstey; who if he had a friend upon earth, would have been obliged to him for being knocked on the head, the moment he had published the *first* edition of the *Bath Guide*; for, even in the second, he had exhausted his whole stock of inspiration, and has never written anything tolerable since.

Fanny Burney had anticipated meeting Anstey, but was rather disappointed when she did make his acquaintance in 1780. She said:

Mr. Anstey, I cannot doubt, must sometimes be very agreeable; he could not else have written so excellent, so diverting, so original a satire. But he chooses to keep his talents to himself, or only to exert them upon very particular occasions.

That Anstey was an early Batheaston guest is implied in Mr. Miller's poem in his honor. In 1776 Anstey published a series of epistolary verses, in imitation of his earlier success, and entitled it: *An Election Ball in poetical letters from Mr. Inkle at Bath to his wife at Gloucester*. John Anstey, in editing his father's works, declared that the theme was "suggested by a subject given out at Mrs. Miller's poetical Coterie at Batheaston." The letters are prefaced by a "poetical address to John Miller, esq.,"

which is a humorous imitation of Horace's first ode—"Maecenas atavis, edite regibus"—and contains pleasant allusions to the "cool cascade," "nodding grove," and "checkered shade" of the Batheaston retreat. The letters themselves refer to Batheaston's "more musical train" and mention the Vase procedure in the following phrase:

. . . whilst the fair virgin at Clio's command
Is dipping for rhymes with her lilly white hand.

A poem entitled *Envy* was published by Anstey in 1778. According to his son, it was designed "as a tribute of approbation, as well as an encouragement to the sale of a collection of poetical pieces, then recently published for the benefit of a well-ordered charity, by the Lady, at whose elegant villa they had made their first appearance." The collection he wished to encourage was, of course, the third volume of *Poetical Amusements*. Anstey's poem was based on Ovid (Book I, Elegy 15) and refers to the guests at Batheaston and recent Vase subjects.

There are but two of Anstey's poems in *Poetical Amusements*, and these are printed consecutively in the last volume, which appeared in 1781, though the verses were read at Lady Miller's assembly on December 3, 1778, according to the statement in Anstey's collected poems. These two poems were widely quoted and commented upon, because of

their local significance. In 1778 Mrs. Catherine Sawbridge Macaulay, a lady of Bath much admired for her *History of England*, had startled society by a foolish match with a twenty-two-year-old Scotch man named Graham—she being then fifty-two. Anstey's ode on "Winter Amusements" alludes to the affair in the following lines :

Yet, ah! where'er you bend your way,
 Let fair Discretion steer,
 From Folly's vain delusive charms,
 And Passion's wild career.

The poem was awarded the myrtle and, according to custom, the author was asked to reread his composition. Instead of so doing, Anstey drew from his pocket and read a second set of stanzas which referred more pointedly to "learned Historians and Doctors"—Graham was surgeon's second mate to an Indian man-of-war. This second poem concludes :

To you, then, ye Fair, if old Time should appear,
 And whisper a few little hints in your ear;
 "That Cupid his triumphs begins to resign,
 Your nerves are unstrung, and your spirits decline;"
 You have no other physical course to pursue,—
 Than to take—a young husband, your spring to renew;
 You may take him—I think—at about—twenty-two.
 For when both the spirits and nerves are in fault,
Platonic affection is not worth a groat;
 The conjugal blessing alone is decreed
 The truest specifick for *Widows indeed*:
 And, I trust, they will find it, as long as they live,
 The best of Amusements that Winter can give.

One wonders what Anstey's sentiments would have been, had he seen the letter referring to these poems which the Countess of Ossory received from Walpole in January, 1779:

Did you see Mr. Anstey's verses at Bath-Easton? They were truly more a production of this century; and not at all too good for a schoolboy. In the printed copy they have omitted an indecent stanza or two on Mrs. Macaulay. In truth, Dame Thucydides has made but an uncouth match; but Anstey has tumbled from a greater height than she. Sense may be led astray by the senses; but how could a man write the *Bath Guide*, and then nothing but doggerel and stupidity?

Of passing interest are the contributions of two youthful aspirants for the myrtle. A particular wreath, the editor notes, was given to the production of "Miss — Burgess, at ten years old." She was probably the daughter of James Bland Burgess, Esq., who composed four or five other poems in the collection. Master Fielding, second son of the Earl of Denbigh, made his poetic début in the first volume, at eleven years of age, and reappeared in the last volume as Hon. Charles Fielding of Harrow School. The poems of these young writers seem no whit inferior to many by more mature guests.

Another early contributor was Henry Temple, second Viscount Palmerston (1739-1802), a society man who published no volume of his own, but contributed five *bouts-rimés* and a poem on "Beauty"

to Mrs. Miller's Vase. Richard Tickell satirized Palmerston's verses in "A Wreath of Fashion":

With *chips* of wit, and mutilated lays,
See *Palmerston* finer his *Bout's Rhimeès*;
Fav'rite of ev'ry Muse, elect of Phoebus,
To string Charades, or fabricate a Rebus.

David Garrick (1717-1779), who was in Bath over a month in the spring of 1775, wrote two light poems for the Vase: one on "Simplex Munditiis" which flattered Mrs. Miller and her guests, and a second which was equally complimentary in depicting "The Pleasures of May at Batheaston," and which concludes:

Bring roses, and myrtles to crown the gay feast;
Its joy let each bosom impart:
When pleasure is giv'n, and felt by each guest,
'Tis the MAY of the Mind and the Heart.

Thomas Babington Macaulay said of Edward Jerningham (1727-1812) that his verses "were fit to be put into the vase of Lady Miller." That lady assented in advance to his words, if not to his estimate, for the opening poems in both the third and fourth volumes of her miscellany were of Jerningham's composition. Little else of his connection with Batheaston is known, though he was always dabbling in poetry, and his biographer declares that Lady Miller was forever urging him to send her something for the Vase.

A well-known figure in Bath was the Rev. Richard Graves (1715-1804), rector of Claverton, near the city. His most famous work was a novel called *The Spiritual Quixote*, but he was the author of many other writings, both in prose and poetry. Three of his poems were published in Lady Miller's collections, and in the two volumes of his own *Euphrosyne; or Amusements on the Road of Life* (published in 1776 and 1780 respectively) may be found fourteen poems which the author notes as written on "subjects given out by the Poetical Society," while others either are composed in honor of the Batheaston hostess or allude to her entertainments. Graves also mentioned Lady Miller's assemblies in *The Triflers*, a work which was published just after his death.

Rev. Robert Potter (1721-1804), who translated the tragedies of Æschylus and Euripides, composed for Lady Miller's last volume two odes—one being truly Greek in its arrangement of strophe, anti-strophe, and epode.

Samuel Jackson Pratt (1749-1814), a quondam clergyman and a prolific writer, in 1776 entered partnership with a bookseller at Bath named Clinch, and this firm published the fourth volume of *Poetical Amusements* in 1781. Pratt himself contributed three poems to this volume and also published sepa-

rately in 1779 his *Shadows of Shakespeare, a Monody on the Death of Garrick, A Prize-Poem for the Vase at Batheaston.*

While no mention is made in the Miller collections of William Meyler (d. 1821), who later originated the *Bath Herald*, according to Monkland

. . . he often contributed professedly to my Lady Miller's Vase, and occasionally carried off the "myrtle wreath," for which he sometimes competed *with himself*, by lending his brains to others, and providing young ladies and gentlemen, who had no poesy in their souls, with copies of verses for the occasion.

To this list might be added the names of many more Batheaston guests, but it will suffice to speak of but three, who were prominent contributors to the Vase in its latter days—Thomas Whalley, Anna Seward, and William Hayley.

Fanny Burney referred to Thomas Whalley (1746-1828) as "one of the best supporters of Lady Miller's Vase at Bath Easton. He is immensely tall, thin, and handsome, but affected, delicate, and sentimentally pathetic." Mr. Whalley had married a wealthy widow in 1774 and a year or two thereafter took up his residence at Bath, having purchased the center house in the Crescent. Until 1783 he divided his time between Bath and Langford Court, an estate belonging to his wife. Wickham's

Journals and Correspondence of Thomas Sedgewick Whalley, D. D., contains three letters written to Mr. Whalley by Lady Miller, and three Bath-easton poems by the same gentleman, which do not appear in *Poetical Amusements*. Two of these are playful in style; the third, on "Fancy," is more serious and dignified—as are the two which Lady Miller published. Mr. Whalley's best-known poem was a sentimental tale in five parts, which he published in 1779 under the title of *Edwy and Edilda*. It is not improbable that the publication of this volume led to his acquaintance with Miss Anna Seward (1747-1809), a young woman of Lichfield with a sentimental passion for poetry. At any rate, it was in 1779 or 1780 that there began between Mr. Whalley and "the Swan of Lichfield" a correspondence from which an ardent friendship soon developed.

It was at this time, too, that Miss Seward formed her attachment for Lady Miller, and began contributing to the *Vase*. Sir Walter Scott, in his preface to *The Poetical Works of Anna Seward*, says:

Miss Seward's poetical powers appear to have lain dormant, or to have been only sparingly exercised, until her acquaintance with Lady Miller, whose fanciful and romantic institution at Bath Easton, was then the subject of public attention. . . . The applause of this selected circle gave Miss Seward courage to commit some

of her essays to the press; and the public received with great favour the elegiac commemorations of André and of Cook.

Five poems in her *Poetical Works* can be identified as Batheaston poems. Three of these were published by Lady Miller, as was also her "Ode on Ignorance; in Imitation of Spenser," which concludes in moralizing fashion:

Youth is Life's spring, the seed-time when the mind
Fosters each new idea planted there;
If we neglect to *sow* the grain refin'd,
No *future* pains can raise an harvest fair;
And memory warm and soft in *early* year,
As yielding wax, disus'd, grows cold and hard,
Nor ought retains of each impression rare;
Which when retain'd acquire the bright reward
Bestow'd by star-crown'd Fame on *timely* studious Bard.

It has been suggested by E. V. Lucas that Miss Seward's two best-known poems, her "Monody on Major André" and her "Elegy on Captain Cook," were originally Batheaston compositions, also.

Lady Miller and Miss Seward became very warm friends, and Anna Seward played the stellar rôle in the assemblies of 1780 and 1781. After Lady Miller's death she composed, not only the Abbey epitaph, but also a longer poem, of forty-seven stanzas, "To the Memory of Lady Miller." In these verses she bemoaned the irreparable loss which the

nine Muses had sustained in "Laura's" death, and bestowed highest praise on the contributors to the Vase. The exaggerated sentimentality of the poem may be seen in the following stanza describing Lady Miller:

When Fashion o'er her threw the shining vest,
 When Pleasure round her trill'd the Syren song,
 The sighs of Pity swell'd her polish'd breast,
 The tones of Mercy warbled from her tongue;
 She bade the fires of classic lore pervade
 With charity's kind warmth, misfortune's barren shade.

Miss Seward had undertaken this composition not without misgivings, as she explained in a letter dated October 1, 1781.

Yes, my dear Mr. Whalley, the nobleness of your own heart enabled you to see Lady Miller's character in its true light. When my first emotions subsided, after hearing the sad intelligence, I felt that something of public tribute to her memory would be expected from me. But many restraining considerations arose in my mind. I imagined, amidst all Lady M.'s good qualities, notwithstanding the advantage the Muse of Elegy might receive from the singularity of the poetic institution, and its triumphs over the malignity of ridicule, that, however these circumstances might animate the death-song, there would still remain a marked inferiority of subject to those of my two former elegies; that such inferiority would produce, as I feared, an inevitable and pitied bathos in any attempt of this kind. In the fate of Cook and André the whole nation was previously interested, and perused with grateful prepossession their 'storied urns.' Lady Miller was surrounded by a hornet's nest, composed of those who were disappointed in their ex-

pectations of being summoned to her intellectual feast; and of others whose rhyming offerings could neither obtain the wreath, nor be admitted to a place in her Miscellany. Who knows not the active malice of wounded vanity 'to blot the fairest worth and blast the brightest fame?' From its venom, excellence cannot even find a repose in the grave; and it never fails to descend upon those who dare defend the claims of the deceased.

The person most influential in persuading Miss Seward to abandon her resolve to "sigh in secret" over the loss of her friend, was William Hayley. The acquaintance of these two began in a correspondence and they did not meet until December, 1781. Before long, Miss Seward became as much attached to him as to her "dear Mr. Whalley." Hayley (1745-1820) was a prosperous dilettante known as the Bard of Sussex. By 1781 he had written all of his best-known poems. Southey said of him, "Everything about that man is good except his poetry"; nevertheless, in 1790 he was offered the Laureateship, which he declined. In his later years he wrote a biography of his friend Cowper, for which he is better known than for his poetry.

Hayley's connection with Lady Miller's Vase has been much exaggerated in several accounts, which represent him as a regular supporter of the Bath-easton assemblies. As a matter of fact, he never even met Lady Miller and the poem entitled "Con-

tent," which concludes the last volume of *Poetical Amusements*, was his sole offering to the Vase. The story of this single poetic contribution as well as a sprightly account of the last assemblies is found in a series of letters between Hayley and his wife, when the latter was at Bath in the spring of 1781. He had urged her to attend one of the Batheaston assemblies and describe it to him, since he had heard various reports of the Poetical Society. Accordingly, Mrs. Hayley wrote on Thursday evening, February 18:

I have spent a very agreeable morning at Bath Easton and must (not very much against my inclination) spend such another this day se'nnight, for I am not so *great* or so fashionable, *or am literally so ridiculous*, as not to ridicule the entertainment. The house and situation are beautiful; though, as Lady Miller observed to me herself, a confined prospect; but a confined prospect, as I have reflected in my walks on the South Parade, is best suited to this season. I arrived about an hour before the ceremony began, during which time I had some pleasant conversation with Mrs. Knowles and others. There are two pretty sized rooms, I think not larger than our own, one within the other. The vase, which is in the outer room, was elegantly ornamented with laurels and pink riband, and before the base are laid three myrtle wreaths, as the prizes. At the appointed hour we were all summoned into the outer room, which is the largest: Sir J. Miller takes a young lady and carries her to the vase; she takes out a copy of verses which is given to any gentleman who will read it aloud. After the compositions written for the occasion are all read by whoever *will*, for

I must not say whoever *can*, read them, the gentlemen retire, and after deliberating, return with what they think the best copy to Lady Miller, who pronounces. And then the gentleman who is honoured with the wreath, presents it to some fair lady. Then those who like it play at cards, and the morning concludes like all other public entertainments. I must only observe that Lady M. carries round a basket, with the enclosed inscriptions rolled up; and that she *repeatedly* hoped I would honour the vase. Now, my dearest H., I am too obedient even to prefer a petition; but if you should feel disposed to honour this slight amusement with a light composition, I am persuaded you will oblige very highly, and I cannot, though I am thought not totally *dead* to the ridiculous, see any reason against it. Indeed at present it is a very elegant and a very agreeable amusement, as I said to Mr. Melmoth when I requested him to give me some verses for the vase; but he at first declined it, pleading himself too old, and said "Apply to Mr. Hayley." Upon which I observed that no one could be too old to write upon *Content*. But after many entreaties, he at last said he could not write; and if he could, he should be ashamed to have his verses appear in such company. I then began the defence of it, observing, that if you mix with the world you must associate with trifling company; and appealed to *Dodsley's Collection, Foundling Hospital for Wit, &c., &c.*, where you see the most brilliant compositions, by the first of writers, next to the most insignificant; and that Mr. Anstey, I found, had frequently honoured the vase.

A second (undated) letter from Mrs. Hayley is more naïvely persuasive:

If you have not already complied with my Bath Easton request, which I flatter myself you will before this arrives, this letter will tempt you to do it. I do most sin-

cerely wish to put some pretty verses into the vase, as I really think it is a compliment due to Lady M., and it will please all the persons that were concerned in my going thither, which many people of fortune are longing to do, and speak slightly of it because they cannot. I should not have a doubt of your compliance, if I had not mentioned Melmoth's objections, which I will *now* venture to say arise entirely from prejudice. However, I am certain he could not possibly object to your compliance with a request of your wife's, as he hardly ever refuses any of Mrs. Melmoth's; and if the verses are not already gone, if you send them by the post of Tuesday night, I shall get them on Thursday morning time enough. I really should feel very uncomfortable to go empty-handed to Bath Easton.

To these two letters the indulgent husband replied:

I rejoice you were so well pleased with the entertainment you received at Bath Easton. Your arguments with Melmoth in favor of the vase, &c, delight me; and I particularly admire your honesty in letting me know his sentiments, at the very time you are wishing me to write some idle badinage for a scene in which he would be ashamed to appear. Now, though I confess I felt a little of his reluctance at the first idea, yet as I have considered that the greatest heroes and sages have often done a foolish thing to please their wives, (and we love them the better for it,) I have resolved to imitate their example in this point at least. I have accordingly scribbled a nonsensical squib on the subject you desired, to shew you that I love to comply with every request of yours. . . . I wish it may not afford you more mortification than pleasure, by getting into the vase without obtaining the prize, which I conceive to be a very probable circumstance.

The poem arrived in season. Mrs. Hayley copied it in her own hand, in compliance with her husband's request and carried it to Bath-easton. The triumphant sequel was communicated to Mr. Hayley that very night.

A prize! a prize! my dearest Hotspur! and the very first! I was so complimented at your expense, that I did not get home to dinner till after five; for I called to shew my elegant wreath (which was pinned into my hair by the beautiful Miss Wraughton) to Melmoth, who, like every one else, admires the verses beyond description. They were read by Mr. Langrish, a son of Sir Hercules Langrish, who indeed did them justice, and entered fully into the spirit of them, which you may be sure pleased me not a little. But not to trouble and fatigue your eyes, or to add to my present fatigue, (for even honours are fatiguing) I will only add, that since the receipt of your letter yesterday, I have been almost wild with joy. Mrs. Gibbon is quite in raptures with the verses. . . . I think your Bath Easton verses will save my character, as it is observed that you *understood content*. Anne, and all Mrs. Pradington's family are wild with the honour. What says nurse?

The reply of Mr. Hayley to this outburst of delight indicates clearly that his interest in the Bath-easton institution was purely secondary:

How sincerely I rejoice in your joy, my dear Eliza, your own heart will tell you. Indeed, if the triumphant verses had any portion of elegance or spirit, they owe it entirely to my eager desire of making them the ministers of your pleasure; and as they have proved so, I will not use them so ungratefully as to disparage their merit. Your myrtle wreath hangs in triumph, as you direct, on

the favorite little horse of bronze on the chimney-piece. He seems to prance with peculiar pride in your victory. Nurse says I have the cleverest wife in the world, to contrive things so well for her husband's honour; and she is perfectly convinced no one on earth can write such sweet letters as her mistress.

Mr. Hayley evidently considered the incident closed. Not so, Lady Miller. On the fly-leaf of the Harvard University copy of *Poetical Amusements*, volume four (see illustration), is an inscription indicating that this copy had been presented to Mr. Hayley by Lady Miller. She had even corrected, by way of tactful attention, a typographical error appearing in his poem. Doubtless she intended the gift as an encouragement to further contributions. Her unexpected death, within two months of this time, terminated these plans. To Mr. Hayley remained a doubtful and unmerited distinction as the last literary lion of Batheaston.

To Mr Hayley with the
Editor's best Compliments—
Boston Bill 11th of May
1781

P O E T I C A L

A M U S E M E N T S.

V O L. IV.

LADY MILLER'S INSCRIPTION TO WILLIAM HAYLEY
From the Harvard University Copy

THE VERDICT

—Besides this, my Friend, I must next inform you of a Rage which has distinguished itself amongst our Bath Legion for *Bout Rimez* at a Lady's House near this City. Proud Knights, silly 'Squires, and bald pated Seers, beat their Brains once a Week, and weave with Penelope's Maids their Taffety Trappings. Perhaps this is owing to the Season being out; and as the offending Matter could not find Vent at the Heels, it has flown to the Head. We have Epigrams given to those who were supposed never to have read one, and Odes said to be written by those who never read anything but a Jockey's Pedigree. . . . One real serious Event has attended these Exercises of the *Bout Rimez*; a pregnant Lady was so intent on the Work, and her Imagination was so entirely engrossed with the Subject, that last Week she was delivered of a fine Boy, but unhappily marked in the Forehead with the following Words:

Wife, Strife,
 Rule, Fool,
 Scorns, Horns—what an unhappy Omen!

Your's, &c.

Julius Caesar.

IN this fashion does the *St. James Chronicle* of March 19 to 22, 1774, inform its readers of the new diversions at Batheaston Villa. Even thus early Mrs. Miller's assemblies, if not witty in themselves, were the cause of the wit in others—and they con-

tinued to serve in that capacity for several years to come.

Inspection of the *Morning Post and Daily Advertiser* for the first part of the year 1778 reveals a number of interesting references to Bath Easton. A fancy ball held by the Millers on Tuesday, January 6, was alluded to in two issues as being a social event of prominence, but usually it was the poetic exercises that commanded public attention. Certain contributors to the *Vase* were evidently so pleased with their offerings that they forwarded them to the London papers. This was the case with Sir John More, a part of whose poem on "Ancient and Modern Music Compared" appeared with the title "On Music" in the *Morning Post* of February 6, 1778, above the signature "Clio." Perhaps these lines escaped ridicule because the author omitted all reference to their previous appearance at Mrs. Miller's. Edward Drax was not so astute in printing his poem, "On Chance. Read at Bath Easton Villa," which is found in the February 21 *Post*. Some wag seized the opportunity to publish, six days later, "An Ex-tempore" occasioned "On reading Mr. DR-X's Poem on CHANCE; the subject given by Mrs. M-LL-R of BATH EASTON."

Tho' Sceptics doubt—at Bath we know,
That *Chance*, not *Order*, reigns below;
Else why 'gainst *Sense*, and *Nature's* rule,

Does M-LL-R keep the Muses school?
Chance too, oh! DR-X, makes thee a Poet;
 Who reads thy verse must surely know it!

And still another wit was inspired "*On reading the Extempore Lines in Friday's MORNING POST*" to contribute to the March 2 issue "AN IMPROMPTU":

MILLER!—as some report—has Wit at will;—but then—
 She prudent keeps an *urn*—to bury it again.

Semi-bard.

On March 1, a "Bout's Rimes" of eleven lines, based on a single rhyme, appeared. While the style and form differ from the Batheaston *bouts-rimés*, the type was doubtless an imitation. Later in the spring, April 24, the *Post* published an extract from Tickell's satirical poem entitled "The Wreath of Fashion":

[*After describing the Altar of VANITY, the Writer thus proceeds*]

On a spruce pedestal of *Wedgewood ware*,
 Where motley forms and tawdry emblems glare,
 Behold she consecrates to cold applause,
 A Petrefaction, work'd into a *Vase*:
 The Vase of Sentiment!—to this impart
 Thy kindred coldness, and congenial art.
 Here, (as in humbler scenes, from *Cards* and *Gout*,
Millar convenes her literary Rout)
 With votive song, and tributary verse,
 Fashion's gay train her gentle rites rehearse.
 What soft poetic incense breaths around!
 What soothing hymns from Adulation sound! . . .

Under the pseudonym of "Impartialist" the Rev. W. Tasker contributed to the May 5 issue of the *Post* "the Complimentary Address to Mrs. MILLER, from an ODE, on CURIOSITY, read at her Villa at Bath-Easton, on Thursday, April 30, and honor'd with the MYRTLE." Later, the whole ode was printed in a volume of his poems. In reviewing this book, the *Gentleman's Magazine* could say of this particular poem only that it "has far more philosophy than poetry, and the frequent transitions from you to thou are very offensive."

If the references in the *Morning Post* during these few months are typical of London papers for the several years in which Lady Miller's assemblies flourished, it is small wonder that the "Batheaston follies" became widely known. Moreover, the publicity was not wholly confined to newspaper columns. The *Gentleman's Magazine* printed several poetical attacks on Lady Miller's institution, among them a poem of coarse humor in which "GRUB" professes to describe the Vase and the guests. As to the latter :

. . . a more curious collection
Was scarce ever seen at a country election.

Among the would-be poets could be found the prudish old maid, and the nymph of sixteen, in a company of physicians, lawyers, and many others.

Bath captains tho' brave, no longer will range,
 Their laurels for myrtle content to exchange.

Hither gamesters and parsons together resort
 A whimsical groupe, like a puppet-show court;
 With Wilkites, this trade tho' long since flat grown is
 Batter'd beaus, and young damsels, old maids, macaronies.

Among the Batheaston subjects of January, 1781,
 was "Fun." Some young gallant who was visiting
 Bath at this time, sent to the *Gentleman's Magazine*
 a "Copy of a Doggerel Letter to a Friend from
 Bath."

Now scampering away to Bath-Easton we run,
 And the Old and the Young shew they can't write—for
fun;
 You must famish and fume to hear ricketty verses,
 And their dull authors bray 'em, which exceedingly worse
 is.
 For though earthquakes and hurricanes ravage the earth,
 Such incidents only to humour give birth.

Sometimes the titles of these poetic attacks by the
 press corresponded to subjects given out by Mrs.
 Miller, as, for example, the lines published in the
Annual Register for 1777, entitled, "Bath; its
 Beauties and Amusements." Three poems on this
 topic had just been published in the third volume of
Poetical Amusements. The excerpt which follows
 refers specifically to Batheaston. It is but just to
 add, however, that Jerningham is hailed later in the

poem as the one bright spot on the otherwise bleak poetic horizon.

But soft—behold new game appears in view—
 Observe that busy, fluttering, noisy crew!
 They're all Apollo's sons from top to bottom—
 Tho' poor Apollo wonders where he got them!
 See how they hurry to that hallow'd shrine—
 That sacred seat of Sappho and the Nine;
 Where plac'd on quarries of the purest stone,
 The red brick shines unrival'd and alone;
 Bless us—what toil, what cost has been bestow'd,
 To give that prospect—of the London road!
 Our admiration knows not where to fix—
 Here a cascade, and there a coach and six!
 Within a mystic vase with laurel crown'd—
 Hence ye profane!—'tis consecrated ground!
 Here Sappho's hands the last sad rites dispense
 To mangled poetry and murder'd sense;
 Here jests were heard, “at which e'en Juno smiled,
 “When crack'd by Jove magnificently mild,”
 Jests, so sublimely void of sense and thought,
 Poor simple mortals cannot find them out;
 Rhime,—like Scotch cousins,—in such order plac'd,
 The first scarce claims acquaintance with the last!

From these various quotations it may be seen that the poetical society was provocative only of ridicule at the hands of the press. The *London Review*, indeed, did praise the third volume of *Poetical Amusements*, though in somewhat noncommittal terms of comparison, in saying:

In justice to the several authors, as well as in compliment to the editor, it must be confessed that, as the sec-

ond volume greatly excelled the first, so this third bears away the palm from the second.

Yet this same magazine condemned an anonymous "Epistle to Mrs. M-ll-r, Institutress of a poetical Society near Bath," which had been published previously, in this comment :

If no better poets exert their talents, to do honour to Mrs. Miller's institution, than this Epistle-writer, she will have no great reason to plume herself on the success of its establishment.

Writers took it for granted that the general public would comprehend and appreciate any reference to Lady Miller, so well known was she. In "A Portrait, addressed to Mrs. Crewe," which was circulated in manuscript in 1777, Richard Brinsley Sheridan wrote of Mrs. Crewe :

In *Millar's* dialect she would not prove
Apollo's priestess, but Apollo's love.

This poem was later printed as the dedication to Sheridan's *School for Scandal*.

Satirical references to the Vase continued to appear even after Lady Miller's death, though less frequently. One of the most contemptuous is found in *Variety*, a collection of essays in imitation of the *Spectator* papers, which appeared in 1788. Miss Seward, who had contributed two essays to the volume, was greatly disturbed at its inclusion.

The Scorpion Epigram

Addressed to Sir John Millar, of Batheaston, on his elegant plan of dedicating an Etruscan Vase for the reception and encouragement of poetic Essays.

Miller! the URN in ancient times, 'tis said
 Held the collected *ashes* of the *dead*;
 So thine (the wonder of these modern days)
 Stands open day and night for lifeless lays:
 Leave not unfinish'd then the well form'd plan,
 Complete the work thy classic taste began:
 And oh! in future, e're thou dost inurn 'em,
 Remember first, to *raise a pile* and *burn 'em*.

Arguments are not needed to convince the modern reader of the inferiority of the verses and the artificiality of the institution at Batheaston, yet it is interesting to note that in this instance contemporary opinion has been accepted as final. Those who found merit or attraction in Lady Miller's assemblies were, almost without exception, persons who had been warmly received there. In later years, even some of these favored guests—Richard Graves, for example—referred slightly to the contests in which they had taken an active part. Walpole, Johnson, and Fanny Burney were among the genuine *literati* who confirmed the popular opinion of the Vase diversions. Still, Fanny Burney on revisiting Bath in 1791 regretted the many changes that had taken place since her last visit eleven years earlier, and among those friends whom she missed was Lady Miller.

Gradually the poetical institution and its founder faded into oblivion. Visitors seeing the handsome monument in the Bath Abbey Church might idly inquire concerning the one it commemorated, but little was remembered of her in the populous and ever-shifting society of Bath. To most readers of the *Original Bath Guide* of 1817, there was little meaning in the reference to Batheaston Villa on the London road, as "the once famed attic residence of Sir John and Lady Miller." Lady Miller had vanished from public notice almost as completely as the classic Vase. The latter had been purchased after her death by one Edwyn Dowding, and was placed in the public park of Bath. How or when it was removed, no one seems to know.

A mediocre institution may be of importance, not for its accomplishments, but for its influence. The Batheaston poetical society cannot claim even that distinction. No followers arose to carry on the traditions founded by Lady Miller. The wonder is that she maintained her coterie as long as she did. Today it is interesting only as a manifestation of the literary aspirations of society toward the end of the eighteenth century.







A BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

IN the preparation of this essay the foundation has been the four volumes of *Poetical Amusements at a Villa near Bath*, edited by Lady Miller. Those books to which direct reference has been made, have been mentioned in the text or listed in the notes. (Unless otherwise indicated, the place of publication was, in each case, London.) Of these, the chief volumes furnishing social and literary background were: *The Diary and Letters of Mme. D'Arblay*, *The Letters of Horace Walpole*, *A Lady of the Last Century*, *A Swan and Her Friends*. Additional acknowledgment must be made to the following: R. Warner's *History of Bath* (1801); G. Monkland's *Literature and Literati of Bath and Supplement* (Bath, 1854); A. Barbeau's *Une ville d'eaux anglaise au XVIII^e siècle* (Paris, 1904); and C. B. Tinker's *Salon in English Letters* (New York, 1915). Besides Thicknesse's *New Prose Bath Guide* of 1778, the *Bath Guides* of the following years were referred to: 1777, 1778, 1787, 1788, 1791, 1795, 1817, 1845. The *St. James Chronicle* (1769-1775) and the *Morning Post and Daily Advertiser* (January to July, 1778) were consulted in incomplete files.

An important source of general biographical material was the *Dictionary of National Biography* (1885-1900). Accounts of the Millers, which do not entirely harmonize, are given in the following: John Burke's *General and Heraldic Dictionary of the Peerage and Baronetage of the British Empire* (fourth ed., 1834—II, 170), William Playfair's *British Family Antiquity* (1811—IX, appendix, ccxxii), and G. E. Cokayne's *Complete Baronetage* (Exeter, 1906—V, 391-392). The information concerning Lady Miller in Allibone's *Critical Dictionary of English Literature* is incomplete and misleading. Obituaries of Lady Miller and Sir John appear in the *Gentleman's Magazine* of 1781 and 1798 respectively.

Interesting but unauthentic accounts of the famous Vase may be found in the *Magazine of Art* for July, 1895, *The Bath Road*, by C. G. Harper (1899), and *Notes and Queries* (series xi, V, 396).







NOTES

Page Line

- 3, 5: *Letters of Horace Walpole*, ed. Mrs. Paget Toynbee (Oxford, 1903-1905), VII, 54-55.
- 3, 11: *Poetical Amusements at a Villa Near Bath* (Bath, 1775), I, 76.
- 3, 20: This child must have been born before the continental trip, though Fanny Burney speaks of her as a child of ten in 1780.
- 4, 7: *Lettres de Mme. du Deffand à Horace Walpole*, ed. Mrs. Paget Toynbee (1912), II, 355.
- 4, 17: *Ibid.*, 362.
- 4, 27: *Ibid.*, 368.
- 5, 23: *Letters*, IX, 134.
- 5, 31: pp. 43-45.
- 6, 9: *The Autobiography and Correspondence of Mary Granville, Mrs. Delany*, ed. Lady Llanover (1861-1862), series ii, II, 217. Letter dated May 14, 1776.
- 6, 17: *Letters*, IX, 355-356.
- 7, 9: *The Triflers*, Richard Graves (1805), 13.
- 8, 5: *Johnsonian Miscellanies*, G. B. Hill (New York, 1897), II, 47. On the Sunday previous (April 2, 1775) Johnson had expressed his unflattering opinion of Mrs. Miller's *bouts-rimés*.
- 8, 11: Edward and Charles Dilly were publishers of Mrs. Miller's *Letters from Italy*, and also of three volumes of *Poetical Amusements*. The original edition of the first volume, and the fourth volume were printed by R. Cruttwell in Bath for L. Bull and for Pratt and Clinch, respectively.
- 10, 17: *Diary and Letters of Madame D'Arblay*, ed. Austin Dobson (1904), I, 381-382.
- 13, 4: *Ibid.*, 415-420.

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- 13, 8: *Ibid.*, 421.
- 14, 4: *Historic Houses in Bath and Their Associations*, R. E. Peach (1884), II, 115. An altered version appears in *Poetical Works of Anna Seward*, ed. Walter Scott (Edinburgh, 1810), II, 183.
- 14, 18: *Diary and Letters of Madame D'Arblay*, II, 34.
- 15, 10: 1798, pt. ii, 627.
- 17, 16: Cf. *Notes and Queries*, series xi, V, 245-246.
- 18, 28: *A Lady of the Last Century*, John Doran (1873), 268-269.
- 19, 24: 3d edition (1766), 101.
- 20, 10: *Euphrosyne* (1780), II, xiv.
- 21, 4: *Poetical Amusements*, I, 114-116.
- 23, 8: *Ibid.*, I, viii.
- 23, 30: p. 85.
- 24, 27: pp. 148-149.
- 25, 30: *The Triflers*, I, 11-12.
- 26, 2: *Ibid.*, II, xiv.
- 26, 19: *Letters*, IX, 134.
- 27, 12: *Poetical Amusements*, I, 97-98.
- 28, 7: *Journals and Correspondence of Thomas Sedgewick Whalley, D.D.*, ed. Rev. Hill Wickham (1863), I, 315.
- 28, 14: *Ibid.*, 334.
- 28, 17: *i.e.*, Ireland's.
- 28, 22: *Poetical Amusements*, I, 70.
- 29, 4: *Ibid.*, III, 149.
- 30, 25: *Correspondence of Mrs. Delany*, series ii, I, 587-588.
- 31, 22: *Poetical Amusements*, II, 42-46.
- 32, 24: *Memoirs of Dr. Whalley*, I, 321.
- 32, 30: *History and Antiquities of the Abbey Church of Bath*, John Britton (Bath, 1824), 151.
- 33, 18: *Poetical Amusements*, I, 26.

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- 35, 6: She also published two minor collections: *On Novelty and On Trifles and Triflers* (1778), and *Hobby Horses* (1780). These were shorter volumes of poems on the specified subjects—probably submitted at single assemblies.
- 35, 21: *Poetical Amusements*, III, ix.
- 36, 31: 1781, p. 295.
- 37, 20: *Poetical Amusements*, I, 8.
- 38, 14: *Epistle to Arbuthnot*, lines 283-284.
- 39, 6: *Poetical Amusements*, I, 147.
- 39, 18: *Ibid.*, I, v.
- 39, 28: *Ibid.*, IV, 5-6.
- 40, 19: *Ibid.*, I, 37-38.
- 40, 26: *Ibid.*, 36. By * * * * St—ly, Esq.
- 41, 3: *Ibid.*, III, 21.
- 41, 29: *Grand Dictionnaire Universel du XIX^e Siècle*, Pierre Larousse (Paris, 1867), II, 1163.
- 42, 29: No. 60. May 9, 1711.
- 43, 4: Since the early part of the eighteenth century, the form has been spasmodically revived, most prominently perhaps in a poetical contest conducted by Alexandre Dumas, *père*, in 1865. Experiments in English were made by Dante Gabriel Rossetti and his brother William. The latter recounts in a memoir prefixed to Rossetti's *Collected Works* (1866), how they practised their pens (especially in 1848 and 1849) in writing sonnets to rhymes which each furnished the other. None of these poems were included in the *Collected Works*. Most of W. M. Rossetti's poems published in *The Germ* were *bouts-rimés* experiments.
- 43, 21: *Boswell's Life of Johnson*, ed. G. B. Hill (Oxford, 1887), II, 336-337.

Page Line

- 44, 10: *Poetical Amusements*, I, 10-11.
 44, 24: *Ibid.*, 15-16.
 45, 13: *Ibid.*, 6. By G. P—tt, Esq.
 47, 17: *Ibid.*, IV, 109-110.
 48, 11: *Ibid.*, I, 118-122.
 49, 24: *Ibid.*, III, 64-69.
 50, 4: *Ibid.*, I, iv.
 50, 15: *Ibid.*, IV, 149-150. By Mr. Pratt.
 50, 27: *Ibid.*, 211. By D. Hailes, Esq.
 51, 21: *Memoirs of Dr. Whalley*, I, 334-335.
 54, 26: *Poetical Amusements*, I, 33.
 55, 12: *Ibid.*, 95.
 58, 21: *Ibid.*, 14-15.
 59, 28: *Diary and Letters of Madame D'Arblay*, I, 350.
 61, 3: *Letters*, VII, 7-8.
 61, 11: *Ibid.*, XIV, 100.
 61, 19: *Diary and Letters of Madame D'Arblay*, I, 383.
 61, 28: *Poetical Works of the Late Christopher Anstey, Esq.*, ed. John Anstey (1808), xliii.
 62, 16: *Ibid.*, xlvii.
 63, 11: *Poetical Amusements*, IV, 22.
 63, 31: *Ibid.*, 25-26.
 64, 13: *Letters*, X, 363-364.
 65, 6: In *The School for Satire* (1802), 152.
 65, 8: A. Barbeau, in *Une ville d'eaux anglaise au xviii^e siècle* (Paris, 1904), mistakes subtitles for separate poems, when he refers to Garrick's contributions as four in number.
 65, 17: *Poetical Amusements*, III, 110.
 65, 28: *Edward Jerningham and His Friends*, Lewis Bettany (1919), 4, 7.
 67, 13: *Literature and Literati of Bath*, G. Monkland (Bath, 1854), 73.

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