much time abroad, and to this Osbert owed his first visits to Italy, a country with which he immediately and irremediably fell in love.

One of the strangest and strongest characters is the Yorkshire valet, Henry Moat, who made his delightful first appearance in Left Hand, Right Hand.

The Scarlet Tree is in some sort the epitaph of the whole Edwardian generation. It is brilliantly written, in a nervous and at times elaborate prose, with many flashes of irony and an unfailing liveliness.

GOOD COMPANY

MADAME DE SEVIGNE: HER LETTERS AND HER WORLD. By Arthur Stenley. Eyre and Spottiswoode.

T is questionable whether any of the great letter-writers and diarists have been entirely free from self-consciousness. It does not detract from her literary merits that the Marquise de Sévigné seems to have been well aware of them herself, even though they were displayed, comparatively, in private. I say "comparatively" because any letter which passed by the hands of the Royal Post of Louis XIV. was censored, and, if considered objectionable, would simply disappear. Moreover, her letters during her own lifetime would be passed from friend to friend for admiration.

This is an agreeable book about an agreeable woman living in an age which was itself full of self-confidence and joy of life, but which history, the implacable adjuster, has condemned on account of lits consequences: universal hatred, military defeat, and bankruptcy. France was never "greater" relatively than in the middle of the reign of Louis XIV.,

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not even in the days of Napoleon. Seventeenth-century France was Europe, and French society was the focus of civilisation.

Madame de Sévigné, probably the greatest letter-writer of any time and any country, was in fact more than a pleasant prattler, but this somewhat staid translation of less than a sixth of her letters does sometimes make one wonder whether it was not in great part due to the events which she witnessed, the great court at which she intermittently appeared, and the purely historcal interest of her correspondence that she is accorded such a high place in French literature. This is perhaps because Arthur Stanley's express object has been to "show the famous Marquise against the background of her time"; his unobtrusive but informative comments gracefully accomplish that end.

But he also shows us a woman. The mother of an ungrateful daughter whom she loved beyond reason, Madame de Sévigné was in some degree a kind of female Pere Goriot, and it is a little disconcerting to find Mr. Stanley so generously and persistently trying to ascribe the best of all possible motives to everybody connected with his main character as well as to herself in all con-

This book, with its excellent illustrations, is not merely a pleasant footnote to history: it has a warm life of its own. Arthur Stanley introduces us to a woman of strong mind who was both a gossip and a philosopher, a great beauty and a great wit, a lover of woodland solitude and a brilliant figure in a brilliant court, a rich heiress and an anxious manager struggling with diminishing means to help her children.

-DAVID HALL

Clues Across

- 5. Excuses for crooked leaps?
- 8. In the end, a wild olive produces a flower.
- 9. Mango in the midst?
- 10. Although the bar is in confusion in the midst of unity, the result is elegant refinement.
- 11. It lies proverbially at the bottom of a well surely a contradiction in terms.
- 14. Found, naturally, in an angler's basket,
- 16. Could Daniel help giving this refusal?
- 17. Stir-un-it sounds within range of vision. 18. In front of the successful candidate I find
- a little devil.
- "I know a bank where the wild blows, Where ox-lips, and the nodding violet grows." ("Midsummer Night's Dream," Act 2, Sc. 1).
- A small fresh-water fish in bed brought up for discussion.
- 25. Angry—in fact, ready to throw things, perhaps?
- 26. Roam into the ball at Queen Victoria's
- 27. One of the gifts of the Magi.

Clues Down

- 1. Put us under the morass? This is phony!!
- "Better is a dinner of—where love is, than a stailed ox and hatred therewith." (Proverbs).
- 3. Employing in impromptu singing.
- 4. and 19. Part of the alchemist's apparatus.
- 6. Hymorous verse about milk and rice?
- 7. Have Ann to tea in order to make notes. 12. Apathetic state, yet largely hearty.
- 13. Tame ride across the circle.
- 14. Would he give you the lie?
- 15. Cheek, strangely enough.
- 19. See 4 down.
- 21. My pal at his most prosperous?
- 22. Take it away from charity and the result is rather sparing.
- 23. Grown up.



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