This same "public" found it most difficult to believe that all the paintings upon the walls had been done by one hand, and that hand a woman's! "It is lucky for you," said one admiring visitor, "that you did not live two hundred years ago, or you would have been burned as a witch."

It was on the occasion of this her sixth home-coming that she first met Miss Gordon Cumming and Mrs Bishop *(nee* Bird), both artists and travellers of no inconsiderable fame; and the meeting of these three intrepid women must have been a great pleasure to them all.

The former has since that date started a crusade in aid of the "Caxton of China"; and as she too is one of the goodly fellowship of "old maids," a few words with regard to her mission may be allowable here, especially as she is most anxious to interest all sorts and conditions of men in the noble work of Mr W. H. Murray.

She met him "by chance," as we say, in a Chinese compound, where he was engaged as colporteur to the Bible Society. Having, after great difficulties, reduced the 4000 complicated Chinese characters into 420 distinct sounds, he at first set to work to represent these sounds by embossed dots, each group of dots differently placed representing numerals, by which means a blind untaught Chinaman can read his own language in three months. A sighted Chinaman of

average intelligence generally takes six years to master the art of reading; and when Mr Murray found that a blind man was by the new system put at an advantage, he never rested until, by connecting these dots by black lines into a series of simple geometric forms also representing numerals, a sighted Chinaman was likewise enabled to read easily in that short time. It may not unnaturally be asked why this man was led to invent, what is practically an alphabet, for the blind *first* and for the sighted *afterwards.* But one of the first things which every traveller must notice on entering China is the extraordinary number of blind people. This is mostly due to one or other of four causes— leprosy, smallpox, ophthalmia, and dirt; but so superstitious is the "heathen Chinee" that many a child is purposely blinded by its parents in order that it may earn money by fortune-telling, as the Chinese believe that the blind can see into the hearts of others, and are thus enabled to reveal secrets.

To excite the interest of all Englishmen in the Chinese Reading Reform, and to gain friends for its support and its extension, is Miss Gordon Cumming's latest object in life. So we doubt not that throughout the United Kingdom the "yellow book" which she has compiled relative to this great movement will be sown and sold broadcast by her energetic efforts. To help in the evangelisation of China is

a grand work, and one in which the noblest might be proud to have a share, and it is to this end that her present labours are entirely devoted. "My sketches are all very well; interesting— yes, very— to me, and to everybody here, I daresay. But *this* is what I have come for— to tell people about Mr Murray and his numeral type,— about the blind and the sighted Chinese, who can read and sing by his methods. Wonderful! Extraordinary! Mustn't talk to you any more now; must save up my voice a bit. Come and hear me talk in half an hour."

And whatever she does she puts her whole heart into. There is nothing lukewarm about her. The twinkling honest eyes, the firm resolute step, the hearty grasp of her large capable hand, are all but the outward and visible signs of the strong, independent, yet sweet nature dwelling within that massive frame. Thus did Miss Gordon Cumming strike us as we lately met her in a crowded Exhibition Room — brimming over with missionary zeal for the millions of Chinamen who, without education, can never rise above their present miserable standards of morality and religion.

And we are told by Mrs Symonds that the qualities which distinguish Miss Gordon Cumming belonged pre-eminently to Miss North. Her large yet simple manner made friends for her every-

where. Even when travelling absolutely alone she inspired all whom she met with chivalry and respect; while she was so "infinitely kind," that respect soon merged itself into friendships that were loving and lifelong.

She had visited nearly every part of the world except South Africa, and she now determined that the Dark Continent must he represented in the picture-gallery which will henceforward immortalise her name.

In August 1882 she left England in the Grandtully Castle, and in less than three weeks was safely landed at the Cape. The variety and beauty of the flowers in this wonderful land filled her with delight. The "silver tree" gleaming in the sunlight, the gorgeous proteas, the wattles covered with golden blossoms, the aloes and pelargoniums, the red leafless lilies, and the hedges hung with rare and fragrant creepers, arrested her attention at every turn; while, anon, the miles of veldt, the bare kopjes, and the fantastically shaped rocks, made contrasts which were not wholly unbeautiful. The birds and insects of South Africa proved most interesting; but the baboons (or "black people," as they are colloquially called) made it dangerous for her to visit some of the mountain-passes alone.

Her experiences of Transvaal life are interesting to read of, but do not give us an elevated

idea of the tastes or manners of our "brother" Boers at home. Ignorant shrewdness and callous indifference to the sufferings of the lower creation are not amiable characteristics; while a self-complacent pietism, combined with a distinct lack of courtesy and cleanliness, did not, and does not, commend them, as a nation, to English ideas.

The ostriches, however, set a most excellent example of conjugal affection. "If one of a pair dies, the survivor seldom marries again."

Nine months in South Africa enabled her to make many valuable studies; but she was getting very tired and home-sick, when in May 1883 she left that country for England,

In September, however, she started off again— this time for the Seychelles Islands, where she found an endless variety of trees and ferns, glorious scenery and marvellous colouring. For several months she revelled in the wonderful foliage of primeval forests and the festooning grace of pitcher-plants and nepenthes, returning home in breaking health, but with her brave spirit still dominating all physical weakness, to arrange her new pictures in the gallery at Kew.

During the few months which she now decided to spend in England, that womanly Queen, whose tactful sympathy in every scheme for the benefit of her people, and personal interest in all workers, whether artistic, literary, or scientific, has so en-

deared her to the nation, caused the following letter to be sent :—

"OSBORNE, *28th August* 1884.

"MADAM,— The Queen has been informed of your generous conduct in presenting to the nation, at Kew, your valuable collection of botanical paintings, in a gallery erected by yourself for the purpose of containing them.

"The Queen regrets to learn from her Ministers that her Majesty's Government have no power of recommending to the Queen any mode of publicly recognising your liberality.

"Her Majesty is desirous of marking in a personal manner her sense of your generosity; and, in commanding me to convey the Queen's thanks to you, I am to ask your acceptance of the accompanying photograph of her Majesty, to which the Queen has appended her signature.

"I have the honour to be, madam, your obedient servant,

"HENRY F. PONSONBY.

"MISS MARIANNE NORTH."

Such a letter as this needs no comment. It is an honour both to the heart that indited it and the hand that received it. Its keynote is the *personal interest* of "our late Sovereign Lady Queen Victoria, of blessed and glorious memory."

It will ever be a priceless heirloom in Miss North's family, and we can easily imagine the pleasure and encouragement which it gave to its recipient.

Only once more did she cross the Atlantic— in November 1884— to paint on the spot from the forest growths of Chili. It was the last journey involved by the task which she had set herself, of painting all the biggest trees in the world, each in its respective habitat.

The *Araucaria imbricata* (or "puzzle monkey tree," as we inconsequently call it — there being no monkeys in Chili) was the primary object of her expedition; but the tangles of lapageria, with their trumpet-shaped flowers of brilliant scarlet, the great groups of *Puya chilensis,* of which there are three varieties, and the noble white cacti that abound, were not overlooked in her rambles. People did their best to persuade her from attempting to penetrate the Araucaria Forests, prophesying every sort of danger and difficulty; but no amount of discouragement availed, and, as is often the case under similar circumstances, the difficulties dwindled as they drew near. She succeeded in doing what she had set out to do, though not with such satisfactory results as she had hoped.

Returning *via* Jamaica, which appeared to her even more lovely than it had done on her visit thirteen years before, she reached England in 1885. Her last journey, alas! had indeed been taken.

After a year's labour in the Kew Gallery, where every painting had to be re-numbered, and the geographical arrangement of the plants definitely fixed, she finally, in 1886, settled down for a real "rest," in the pretty home which she had chosen at Alderley, in Gloucestershire. Every yard of her little domain was full of interest to her, and she hoped to spend many happy years in the quaint old-fashioned village.

Botanical treasures from every part of the world were constantly arriving — every day saw fresh developments in her unique garden. Stumps of trees were made into marvels of beauty, as she coaxed the honeysuckles and roses to drape them with blossom,— every bulb and plant had just the corner which best suited it. Long before the work-

men arrived in the morning the artist-gardener was at work among her flowers, planting, watering, training, with all the freshness of a youthful enthusiasm.

Truly age cannot be measured by years, and of all that is popularly considered to belong to middle life— ennui and blaseness (we can think of no better word)— Miss North knew nothing. At fifty-six her heart was as young, her interests as varied and vivid, as when she sought for the wild valley-lilies that grow in the neighbourhood of the Starnberger See.

The long toilsome journeys and incessant strain

and exposure had insidiously undermined her naturally strong physique, and in the autumn of 1838 a deep-seated disease developed itself, from which for many months it seemed impossible that she could even temporarily recover. But her splendid constitution kept it in partial abeyance for eighteen months, and in all her weakness she managed now and again to visit the garden in which she had taken so much pride and pleasure. The flowers were blooming in all the rich luxuriance of August, when she was called to leave them for ever—"transplanted" from Earth to Heaven.

JEAN INGELOW

Born at Boston, 1820.
Died in London 1897.