cess, whose education was more neglected than is that of the poorest child in England to-day. This assistance was a great boon, for, as Elizabeth strongly disapproved of the whole scheme, and would have nothing whatever to do with either the preparation or correction of the book, Agnes, for the first time in her life, had to rely entirely upon her own discretion and research.

Much, however, as she missed Elizabeth's help, she was able to carry out her plans with great satisfaction to herself and her publishers—Messrs Bell & Daldy. Of 'The Stuart Princesses' comparatively little is known by the general public, but that their lives are delineated with her wonted vigour and skill is shown by the warm greeting which the book received from all those interested in its subject.

In 1870 she was much cheered by the Queen's acknowledgment of her labours in granting her a pension of £100 per annum on the civil list, which was specially welcome as the years rolled on.

Her last visit to Scotland was on the occasion of the Scott Centenary, for which she received a special invitation from the Committee. The long journey was accomplished with comparative ease, and in meeting many old and valued friends the fatigues of travel were soon forgotten.

On her return to Southwold she completed the abridgment of Mary Stuart's life, a work involving

much time and labour; and, after leaving the MS. with Messrs Bell & Daldy, she went for a few days of rest and refreshment to Crouch End Vicarage.

In the quiet home of Mr and Mrs Fleming she greatly enjoyed her much-needed holiday, and had made all her plans for returning home on the following day, when on the Sunday morning she fell upon the stairs as she was coming down dressed for church, and, falling with her leg under her, she broke the large and small bones just above the ankle. Such an accident could not fail to be very serious; and for six weeks the brave patient was laid up at the hospitable vicarage. Her patience was remarkable, and her chief regret seemed to be for the trouble that she was involuntarily causing to her kind hosts, rather than for the suffering and confinement which she herself had to endure.

As soon as she was able to be moved with safety she returned to her own home, and bore the journey better than had been expected, looking bright and happy as she once more felt herself within its welcoming portals.

But, alas! it was but the beginning of the end. The shock to the system at her advanced age was more severe than had at first been supposed; and, one morning soon after her return, her sister Jane was much alarmed to find her inquiries answered either at random or not at all. The surgeon, who

was immediately sent for, pronounced her to be suffering from a paralytic seizure, and for many days her condition caused acute anxiety. One side of her body was permanently affected, and she, who had always been accustomed to so much exercise and independence, was now only able to walk with a stick, supported also by her faithful servant.

But though the shadow of physical and mental weakness hung over her, Agnes Strickland never once lost the bright hopefulness which had always been one of her most conspicuous characteristics. Her letters, though difficult to decipher, were full of loving cheerfulness, and, though shorter, there is in them no sign of intellectual decay.

The books, however, which had formerly given her so much pleasure were now an occasion of stumbling. They fatigued more than they profited, and ever more and more she turned to the "Old Book." This, however, was only a development of the habit of a lifetime. Even in her busiest days the Bible had been a source of real and never-failing pleasure; and now, as the burdens of life were gently slipping from her shoulders, her interest, which was fast fading in the things of earth, never failed to be aroused by the infinite variety of the one volume that is in itself a Literature. The quaint humour of the Proverbs, the lyrical beauty of the Psalms, the dramatic poetry of Job's thrilling experiences, and the many-sidedness of human life

and nature, as described by the sacred writers could still fix her attention when all else palled upon her; and above all she doubtless felt, as did her friend Guizot, "an extraordinary impression quite different from either curiosity or admiration — the listener of a language other than that of the chronicler or the poet, and under the influence of a breath issuing from other sources than human."

With the spring of the year (1874) she seemed to revive wonderfully, and we read of her driving out frequently, and even being able to take short walks. But the once brilliant intellect was now clouded, and the vivacious conversations were ended for ever. To write coherently was still possible to her, though difficult on account of failing eyesight, but she never recovered the full use of her speech.

The final revision and correction of Mary Stuart's life in its abridged form had to be delegated to her sisters, and this was perhaps the greatest trial that could have befallen her, but her cheery hopefulness never failed; and when, with the sunshine all about her, she spoke of "complete restoration," even her friends took courage and began to talk of the future.

But this improvement was only as the last flickering gleams of the sun ere it sinks below the horizon.

One morning in July she felt stronger and better than she had done since her accident, and went in

high spirits to see her sister Jane in the house adjoining. She then seemed full of renewed energy and hope, but at midnight Jane was hurriedly summoned, as Agnes was "seriously ill." That attack passed, and the patient for a time rallied, but a few days later, in the dead of night, her sister was again sent for. The end was then very near, and at six o'clock in the morning of July the 13th,

"When the sun was bright and strong,
And the dew was glittering sharply
Over the little lawn;
When the waves were laughing loudly
Along the shore,
And the little birds were singing sweetly
About the door,"

the summons came.

The terrible suffering of those last few hours had for the time marred the beauty of her face; but when, three hours later, her sister Jane went into the death-chamber the pained expression had vanished, and apparently years younger, more beautiful than ever, Agnes Strickland lay in the calm restfulness of a dreamless sleep.

Long and happy had the days of the years of her pilgrimage been. By temperament and disposition she was born to be loved, and few writers have made— and kept— so many true friends.

But she was unspoiled by praise even in the zenith of her fame, and as Ruskin says—

"To be heroic in happiness, to bear yourself

gravely and righteously in the dazzling of the sunshine of morning, not to forget the God in whom you trust when He gives you most, not to fail those who trust you when they seem to need you least, this is the difficult fortitude."

They buried her in the parish churchyard at Southwold, and a simple marble monument marks the spot where Agnes Strickland lies. Her sister, Elizabeth, who only survived her for nine months, died and was buried at Tilford, in Surrey.

The lives of the two sisters were so closely entwined that much that has been written of Agnes might as truthfully have been written of Elizabeth, though her more masculine character and irritable temper did not secure for her as many loving and sympathetic friends as fell to the lot of Agnes.

Being the two seniors of the family, the other sisters were naturally much influenced by their examples, and Jane's unselfish help was often enlisted when their literary labours were especially arduous.

Sarah and Susanna both married happily; but, as her biographer says, "Agnes was fully aware that the pursuit of literature was unfavourable to a purely domestic life, and that, if she had married, that pursuit must of necessity be given up. The infelicity of celebrated literary women in the married state forms a heavy list. That some

exceptions may be found is certain; but, indeed, it cannot add to the comfort of a husband if his wife's time is so occupied. A female author is wiser to remain unmarried." Jane, who in 1805 was supposed to be dying of bronchitis and asthma, survived her more brilliant relatives for several years, and her 'Life of Agnes Strickland,' written with such evident pride and pleasure, shows that, even in their father's house, the clever women of the family were appreciated as heartily as in the large outside world which for so many years they benefited and adorned.

EPILOGUE

MARY LAMB.

From an oil-painting by W. Hazlitt, in the possession of Mr C. Elkin Mathews.

EPILOGUE.

THAT women have done much good work in the world would scarcely be denied by the most inveterate misogynist, but the work of *single* women is not so universally recognised.

All across the ages their influence is clearly traceable, and in these later days no scheme is carried into execution, scarcely perhaps initiated, in which they have no share.

Old maids and earthworms! The combination may seem incongruous, but Darwin's words with regard to the latter are singularly apposite when applied to the former: "Worms have played a "more important part in the history of the world "than most persons would at first suppose. They "are extraordinarily numerous, and for their size "possess great muscular power. Worms prepare "the ground in an excellent manner for the growth "of fibrous-rooted plants and for seedlings of all "kinds." Does not this exactly describe a certain class of old maids? What would the world be