

**In and About Drury
Lane, and Other
Papers**

VOL. II.

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LIFE IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY.

But for Pepys and Evelyn we should know but little of the social life of the seventeenth century. A host of letter writers—Walpole, Mrs. Delany, and Mrs. Montagu, at the head of them—may be said to have photographed the next century for us. Lord Malmesbury, Lord Auckland, and some others succeeded; and now we are beginning to have revelations exclusively of the first years of the nineteenth century. The most important contributor to our knowledge in this respect is the late Sir George Jackson, whose volumes, ably edited by his widow, will afford us samples of the times in which our grandmothers were young and had swains at their feet—unless war called them away.

Gay people on the Continent had a bad time of it when war broke out in 1803, and the French government issued orders for the arrest of all English persons on whom hands could be laid. Bath expected to be more brilliant than ever by the return of the absentees; but their difficulty was *how* to return. All who were in France were made prisoners. A precipitate flight of crowds of English travellers from Geneva took place. They were not safe on any part of the Continent; but some, in disguise and on foot, reached Berlin, others got to the sea and arrived in England; but Bath was not sensible of any increase in numbers or gaiety, for the times were out of joint, though dowagers still played whist and young couples danced minuets.

Many of those who were shut up at Verdun chafed under the restraint as intolerable. Some, however, bore it philosophically, others gaily. A few took to French mistresses; other few to French wives. The French officials made 'a good thing' out of those who had money, granting them partial liberty for so many days or hours, according to the 'consideration.' Two or three, having spent hundreds of pounds in their bribes, at last took 'French leave,' and were lucky in not being recaptured. Their course is not to be commended. We have a higher opinion of Sir Sidney Smith, who, when a prisoner in the Temple, refused to have his parole, used to tell the governor to be vigilant, as he would be off on the first opportunity, and ultimately kept his word, broke prison, and found his painful way to England.

The seriousness of the times and their events little affected the Prince of Wales. He was indeed thought to be ill in the early part of 1804; but the illness arose, it was said, from the fact that the Prince and the Duke of Norfolk had been so drunk, for three whole days, that the former at last fell like a pig, and would have died like one, but for prompt and copious bleeding. How rude the 'first gentleman' could be, when he chose, to his wife, is well-known. At a drawing-room, held by Queen Charlotte in June 1807, when the Prince and Princess of Wales were present, he took no notice of the Princess. Turning his back upon her, he stood between her and the Queen, and as long as the Princess remained he kept up a conversation with his sisters, thereby preventing them from addressing a word to his wife. This feeling against his wife he paraded everywhere. He was jealous of her popularity—quite unnecessarily, for she made herself ridiculous, and the subject of scornful criticism,

by her lavish display at evening parties of her protuberant beauties. At these parties, the Prince would stare at ladies whom he knew, without speaking to them. His condescending speech was addressed only to his first wife, Mrs. Fitzherbert, and her sister, Lady Haggerstone. The first of these ladies lived at Brighton with the state of a queen and the spirit of a goddess of mirth. Meanwhile, his Royal Highness flirted with his 'future Duchess,' the Marchioness of Hertford. One of Queen Fitzherbert's merriest tales related how a man had sent to her some lemonade powders he had invented, on the ground that they were highly approved and constantly used by the Marchioness in question.

In 1802 Bath was surprised by a visit from the Duke of York. He brought the Duchess with him, and left her there next day. Her friends reported that she had been bitten in the hand by one of her numerous pet dogs, and that the wound was privately pumped upon daily. But the public story was, that his Royal Highness had lost 200,000*l.* at play, and had been compelled to break up his town establishment. The scandalous story of the Duke and Mrs. Clarke, a mistress, who sold places and commissions, is pleasantly balanced by an incident respecting a son of the Duke of Clarence and his mistress, Mrs. Jordan—Lieutenant Fitzclarence, in 1809. He was in Spain with our army in that year, and he reversed La Fontaine's fable of the mule who was always talking of his mother the mare, but said little of his father the ass. The lieutenant was the foolish aide-de-camp of a foolish General Shaw, who was always showing him about to the Spaniards as the King of England's grandson.

That grandson was about to be despatched on a mission to the Continent in 1813, but ministers changed their minds. They were afraid he would write every thing to his father, who would publish it in Bond Street; and so the gentleman was kept at home to sun himself in the bow window at White's.

The grandest fête of sixty years since was the one given by the Prince, at Carlton House, in 1811. The King was in such ill health and the Princess Amelia in such a precarious condition that it was often deferred; and Jekyll remarked that no one could ever again say, 'Fixed as fate!' At length it came off, and, for one happy invited guest, made a hundred mad who were not invited. The Queen and Princesses declined to be present; but Louis XVIII. and the sad-looking Duchess of Angoulême appeared there, and the Prince received the former as a sovereign *de facto*. 'I am only a Comte de Lille,' said Louis modestly. 'Sire,' said the Prince, 'you are the King of France and Navarre;' and he treated his guest accordingly. Both the Prince's wives (Mrs. Fitzherbert and the Princess of Wales) sat at home by themselves; but the 'favourite' was honoured by a command to attend the festival. One of the Prince's ideas was to divorce his second wife and shut her up in Holyrood House for ever. This grand fête, it may be added, was soon forgotten in the excitement caused by the fight that was to come off between the Baltimore negro, Molyneux, and the chief of English boxers, Tom Cribb! It was a time, moreover, when later hours began to be fashionable. We hear of a ball lasting from twelve till eight; and of another at which the majority of dancers kept it up till ten in the morning.

We go back a couple of years, in order to remark that in 1809, while there was no lack of enjoyment among optimists, the press saw the worst side of everything; and the 'Times' especially denied or explained away our victories generally, and that of Talavera in particular. The public seem to have been almost as ill-informed as to what was being done abroad as they are now by 'our own correspondents,' who are sent to describe battle-fields or other troublesome matters, and who write columns on the boiling of their eggs and the obstinacy of their laundresses. 'It is too much,' says Jackson, 'to hear the victory of Talavera called in question by the "Times;" a victory as honourable to British arms and British generalship as any they ever achieved. That paper should be offered up as a sacrifice to the manes of the heroes who fell on the Alberche. I have not patience to read it.'

In 1814 the Prince Regent had a narrow escape for his life. On one of his evenings of *ennui* he sent for George Colman to come from the King's Bench, where he was a prisoner, to amuse him. Court jester and prince, they passed the night, drinking and fooling, till six o'clock, when his Highness was carried to bed in an apoplexy, from which he only recovered at the cost of seven and twenty ounces of blood! He was as near death at this critical juncture as a man could be and yet live. His constitution, however, carried him through. When the allied sovereigns entered London he was ready for all the duties and eager for all the pleasures that the occasion offered; but he shocked some people on one occasion by presiding at a public dinner on a Sunday.

That English society wanted refinement in the first decade of the present century is not to be disputed. When Mr. Jackson returned from long diplomatic service abroad in 1806, he dined one day at Lord Westmoreland's. The guests were chiefly Russians. They were as much out of their element in English society as the young diplomatist says *he* was after the sociability, ease, and elegance of the society at foreign courts to which he had so long been accustomed.

Some of that foreign society was quite as free as it was easy. Jackson and other Englishmen at the Prussian court were admitted to the morning toilette of Madame de Vos, the King of Prussia's *grande maîtresse*. While under the hands of her hairdresser she laughed and flirted with the English lords and gentlemen, who paid tribute to her beauty by making her presents of wine and tea, and other English matters, which she greedily accepted. There are three things, says the Welsh proverb, which always swallow and are never satisfied—the grave, the sea, and a king's concubine.

Austerlitz killed Pitt as surely as Trafalgar killed Nelson. Each died for his country, but that country mourned more deeply for the great admiral, stricken down in the battle where he was the victor, than it did for the great minister who died of a broken heart. The last book he read, at Bath, was Miss Owenson's (Lady Morgan's) 'Novice of St. Dominic.' That now unreadable romance, Pitt said, he could not lay down till he had finished it, and thence did the 'Novice' come to be the rage for a time. People almost fought to obtain it at the libraries, and nothing in literature was talked of but a book which has long since fallen out of literature and of memory altogether. People, too, fought

for another novel, 'A Winter in London,' in which fashionable life was illustrated by an incapable whose name and whose work are equally wrapt in oblivion.

Fox did not long survive his great rival Pitt. He died on the 13th of September, 1806. A week previously, when he was already dying, he transacted public business. He gave an audience in his bedroom to George Jackson, with instructions as to how the latter was to act on his new mission to Germany. There was a mixture of the solemn and the ludicrous in the scene. When Jackson was announced Mrs. Fox, in complete deshabelle, was in the room. In her flurry she slipped into a closet, and, as the interview was prolonged, the lightly-draped lady kept signalling to Mr. Fox, as if he alone could hear her, by little coughs and murmurs, to warn him not to over-exert himself, or to dismiss the envoy, that she might be set free. At a moment when there was a pause in the conversation between the minister and his agent the fair captive tapped at the panel, asked if the young gentleman was not gone, and complained of being cold. The dying statesman looked at Jackson with a languid smile, and with friendly wishes bade him farewell—as it proved, for ever.

Descending to minor legislators, we meet with an Irish M.P., who, being told that the favour he asked would be granted on condition of his supporting government, replied that he would not give his *constant* support for so paltry a favour. The Irish member obtained the favour, and voted twice for government in payment for it. This was better diplomacy than Sir Charles Stuart's (Marquis of Londonderry), who, when named to a post in Germany, told people that he was going to Spain, by way of

being diplomatic. We were unlucky in our leading diplomatists generally at that time. Lord Aberdeen may serve as an example. He went to Toplitz, as English ambassador, and had the bad taste and idiotic indiscretion to say one day, openly at dinner, that he could not bear the undertaking, and would not go on with it to keep the crowns on the allied heads! One qualification was necessary to even a decently moderate success, namely, the ability to speak French; but Lord Aberdeen not only could not speak two words of French, but had the folly to tell everybody who addressed him in that language that he hated it. There was in some persons as much bad taste in acts as there was in others in words; and it is not without surprise that we hear of gentlemen sightseers who would pass the morning amid the horrors of a field of recent battle, and the evening at the play, philandering with ladies and talking an infinite deal of nothing. On another occasion, we hear of the gayest and most gigantic of picnics, where luxury abounded, while, within a few miles, French soldiers were dropping dead with hunger as they slowly retreated.

Mrs. Fitzherbert was in the early part of the century the Queen of Brighton, if not of England, and she was popularly called 'Mrs. Prince.' She certainly was one of the most queen-like women that ever lived; and stood in favourable contrast with Lady Holland, who is justly described as fussy, almost rude, straining at effect, and losing it in the very effort. There was another lady then in England striving to be effective, Madame de Staël; and she (who horrified Henry Brougham) was pronounced by female critics as 'too anxious to glitter to be intrinsically good.' A still more remarkable woman of that day was Lady Caroline Lamb. She was at a party at Lady

Heathcote's, had been flirting and quarrelling with Lord Byron, and therefore 'stabbed herself with a knife at supper, so that the blood flew about her neighbours.' When she came to, after a faint, a glass of water was handed to her, but she smashed the glass and cut herself with the pieces. 'A little discipline,' said Francis Jackson, 'will bring these school-girl fancies into order.' A good deal of disorder was to be found at breakfast as well as at supper-tables. Lady Caroline Hood was, probably, counselled not to go to the Regent's 'breakfast'; but ladies will, under certain circumstances, disregard friends and doctors also. Lady Caroline went, and had only herself to blame when she had to be carried away wrapped up in blankets.

Mrs. Fitzherbert's conduct at Brighton was not always in the best taste. Mrs. Gunn, the bathing-woman, invariably addressed her as 'Mrs. Prince'; but the latter did not live at the level of that dignity. She held afternoon gossips in her little drawing room, hung with black profiles (her *salon aux silhouettes*). Only guests of distinction were admitted here to exchange the stories of the day for piquant anecdotes and a cup of tea. There, too, M. le Prince was a subject of discussion. His sayings and doings were pretty freely handled. It was all done with gusto and elicited much mirth; but some visitors, who were glad to be there, professed to think it all very naughty and in the worst taste.

The fair one who had the reputation of being fairest where all were fair—the reigning queen of beauty in fact—was Miss Rumbold, daughter of Sir George. She was a 'dashing' beauty; but if to be beautiful was not common, to be dashing was to be fashionable. Accordingly, we find Miss Rumbold attended so

little to the hints and admonitions of the Bishop of Durham, that the love of showing off an amazingly fine ankle prevented more than one offer from among the crowd of her adorers. The same pretty vanity was strong in the Princess Charlotte, at a later period, but Prince Leopold was not kept thereby from being a suitor. It may be concluded that gentlemen were, after all, not so particular as the adorers of Miss Rumbold, if Texier truly said of his daughter (whose beauty he was always praising in her presence) that there were five hundred lords, any one of whom would have been the happiest of men to have her for his own.

The utmost regularity was not incompatible with much eccentricity in many of the foremost individuals of the time. One of them, the Duke of Bedford, arranged his movements for a whole year in advance; and if one went wrong, his Grace was put out for six or eight months together. The silent Duke was under the thumb of his rattling Duchess, who used to laugh at his announcement, on starting for a long journey, of the precise moment of his return, and what dishes were to be ready for him on his arrival. He would be there, D.V., of course; but in any case, there he would be. The Duchess was as irregular as the Duke was the opposite. His obedience to her was that of Jerry Sneak. She would cry out in a room full of people, Johnny, do this; Johnny, do that; Johnny, I did not see you bow to such a person! Speak to him directly, and speak German, Johnny—and Duke Johnny answered not, but like a good boy, unhesitatingly obeyed.

Lady Holland, fanciful, sharp, and impertinent, did not attract Jackson's brother Francis. Clever, he allowed that wayward

lady to be, but not a wit of the quality she would fain have been thought. 'There is too much effort—a straining after effect in all she says and does; and the effect is not always what she wishes or imagines it to be.'

In behalf of some of the fine ladies of the time, government officials cheated their own revenue department without scruple. Jackson was, one day in 1810, amused to find the 'subs' at the Foreign Office very anxious, at Lord Wellesley's suggestion, to devise means of getting a box of shoes which had been sent from Spain, for Lady Holland, but which had been seized by the Custom House officers. Lady Holland was capricious, and as often insolent as civil; but she was not mean, like Lady Hyde Parker, who gave a ball to a crowd of guests and sent them home without supper. By the way, when there was a ball at Buckingham House, in the opening years of the century, no guests under the rank of earls' sons and daughters were invited; but this exclusiveness had to be laid aside.

Nearly sixty years ago there was a queen of hearts in London who broke as many as she could, voluntarily or involuntarily. She was a Miss Acklom, daughter of a Nottinghamshire squire. Down at Exmouth, amid the loveliness and the idleness of the place, the nymph and a gallant officer named Tilson fell in love, or seemed to do so, with each other. The warrior, at all events, was deeply smitten, and marriage was to plunge him still deeper in love; but, almost at the church door, the cruel nymph declined to go further. The lover went straightway abroad. After a while, Miss Acklom was subdued by another wooer, Mr. Maddox; the beauty consented to become his wife. As the time of the nuptials drew near the lady's grandfather died. She went

into mourning, and came out of it with an announcement of a quality to put her lover into it; namely, that she had changed her mind. Like Tilson, Maddox sought solace in going to the stirring scenes abroad. Jackson wrote from his quarters at Dijon, in 1814, that the swain so ill-treated by Venus was 'trying his luck with Mars, as an amateur.... From being a very handsome and lively-tempered young man, he has become quite the reverse.' While two lovers were despairing a third presented himself. He was no other than that Lord Althorpe, who became so distinguished in the House of Commons as a statesman and a minister. My lord was accepted. Just as the marriage was about to take place this third lover's grandmother died; whereupon the nymph put on mourning and went down to Bath to live in retirement. Old Mrs. Jackson prophesied that Miss Acklom would, on coming out of mourning, jilt the heir to an earldom as she had done 'poor Maddox.' George replied that Tilson had recently returned to England, a general, and 'this perhaps may win her smiles again.' Lord Althorpe proved to be a successful swain. Esther Acklom married him, about a month after Mrs. Jackson had presaged that she would play this lover false. The wedding was celebrated in April 1815, and in little more than three years the once volatile nymph was carried to her grave, leaving a childless widower to mourn a good wife's loss.

The great scandal in high life within the first ten years of this century was the elopement of Lord Paget, afterwards the celebrated Marquis of Anglesea, with Lady Charlotte, wife of Henry Wellesley, nephew of the subsequently famous Arthur, and better known to us as the first Lord Cowley. All the world of fashion had seen what was going on except the lady's

husband. The guilty parties pleaded uncontrollable passion. The seducer abandoned his wife and eight children, the lady left a husband and four children; but she asked Mr. Arbuthnot to break the matter gently to their father. Lord Paget, who had told *his* father that he had sought death in battle in order to avoid the social catastrophe, was challenged by Colonel Cadogan, Lady Charlotte's brother. The Colonel declared that one of them must die; but Lord Paget declined the chance on the ground that his life was devoted to the Colonel's sister. To this lady he was married in 1810, in which year his union with his first wife was dissolved, and that lady became Duchess of Argyll.

Provincial fine society was somewhat rough but hearty; 'all very friendly and hospitable; but as regards stuffing it would be difficult, I confess, to excel them.' The allusion is to a Northumbrian high sheriff's dinner party. At Brighton, described in 1809 as a dangerous rival to Bath, we are at a ball given by a Mr. and Mrs. Parker, 'good people who have more money than sense or acquaintances, but who made up for the latter deficiency by giving balls to all whom they did not know and the few whom they did.' Illustrious strangers went to dance, eat suppers, and drink champagne, and perhaps laugh at Mrs. Parker, who told everybody on coming in, and by way of compliment, that she had been disappointed of *the flower* of her party—some three or four personages who could not come. The lady was, after all, not such a fool as she looked. There was good satirical humour (when she went up to Lady Boyne, who was then in deep mourning for her daughter) in her request to the exemplary mother to open the ball! And apropos to Brighton, now so rich in vehicles, we smile at the record of the

extortion of Brighton chairmen in 1809, and how they were brought to their senses by an ex-coachman to a gentleman. Jehu bought the old blue coach of the Blackburns, with the cock and trumpet upon it, which had been the glory of Bath; putting a pair of horses to it, the owner conveyed people all over the town at a shilling per person for the trip, before midnight, and one-and-sixpence after. While the chairmen stood upon their rights, earning nothing, this clever coachman whipped up a very pretty little fortune.

One of the most pushing and successful men in Bath in 1809 was Sigmond, who, after being a footman in Germany, set up as a dentist in the City of Hot Waters. His wife had been his mistress. The two together made more dash and lived at more expense than almost anybody in that city. They once invited the Duke of Gloucester to a grand supper, and he so far accepted the invitation as to send one of his gentlemen to represent him. People of better standing than the footman-dentist and his married mistress hardly behaved better. The mother of Sir George Jackson remembered Mrs. Piozzi and Dr. Johnson at Bath, and she could not imagine how Mrs. Piozzi could tolerate so coarse and bear-like a person as the Doctor; though the Doctor's coarseness was matched by the lady's levity. 'Their manners,' Mrs. Jackson wrote to her son, 'were more disgusting than pleasing to most persons ... they both ought to have been ashamed of themselves.'

Sixty or seventy years ago locomotion was considered rapid when the Newcastle mail left that northern town on a Monday morning and reached London on the ensuing Wednesday at 5 A.M. In these days of electric cables and telegraphs, it is amusing

to read of the method taken by a Rothschild to obtain news. We had not then got so far as sending or receiving news by carrier pigeons. In February 1807 Jackson arrived in London from Munich. The head of the Rothschild firm, hearing of the arrival, waited on the diplomatist, and, as the latter said, probed him dexterously to elicit any secrets he might possess relative to Prussian financial difficulties and state affairs generally. The Government was as ill off occasionally as the financier. They at one time depended on the French papers for news from abroad, and for the loan of these, ministers were indebted to the charity of the editor of the 'Times.'

Looking into private life, we find various illustrations of its character. While war was raging abroad the waltz conquered the prudens of Bath, who, after gracefully battling against it, embraced it and their partners therein with a sort of ecstasy. Those were the days of heavy postage; and we read of a lady who thought to cheat the revenue by stuffing a hare sent to a friend, with letters, which that friend was to hand over according to the addresses. The ingenious method failed, inasmuch as the cook who received the hare tossed all the rumpled and blood-stained letters with which it was lined into the fire.

While Mr. Jackson had the affairs of the world to set down on paper, and often rose from the table where he was writing despatches only to catch a hasty glance at a battle, or to be off in a hurry, hardly pressed by a victorious foe, he was overwhelmed with commissions from thoughtless people. Some asked him to purchase for them carriages and horses, others hammers and nails; and, wrote his mother, 'If in the

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