

THE CURIOUS LADY'S
GUIDE

TO MARRIAGE

1811-1820



The ACT OF UNION, 1801

Previous to the The Act, our good Country enjoyed a measure of National Sovereignty. Power was held by our Protestant Gentry and wielded from the Parliament House in College Green. While Parliament was in session, Members flocked to Dublin to their richly decorated mansions. A lively social scene blossomed, along with much Boost to the Capital's Trading Classes.

Catholic Emancipation was a hotly debated topic. The dismantling of the Penal Laws now permitted the vote to some Roman Catholics. The French Revolution and the Irish Rebellion of 1798 resulted in a British fear that the Irish would ally their power with the French. It was proposed to unite the Parliaments of Britain and Ireland to exclude that possibility. Accordingly, The Act of Union dissolved the Irish Parliament and created the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland. Despite some opposition, the Bill was passed. Bribery, namely the awarding of New Peerages to increase the vote favouring the Bill, played a part.

Now that Parliament no longer sits in Dublin, the social life of the city is in decline. Many Peers have sold their large town houses. The Streets do not bustle with colour as once before they did. But life for Ireland goes on.



A NEW GENERAL POST OFFICE

It is with great joy that we celebrate the opening of the new General Post Office located on Sackville Street. This magnificent building will facilitate much correspondence in the years to come.

THE CURIOUS LADY'S
GUIDE
to *marriage*

CONTAINING DETAILS ON

Getting Engaged

- The Season
- To See and Be Seen
- The Fashionable Lady
- Graceful Gowns
- Artful Artifice
- Calculating your Worth
- Eligible Bachelors
- Handling a Proposal
- Your Wedding

Being Married

- Your New Neighbours
- Your New Home
- Keeping Yourself Occupied
- Keeping Your Husband Entertained
- Pregnancy and Childbirth
- Child Rearing
- Heartless Husbands
- Dangers of Divorce
- Surviving Widowhood

Staying Single

- Traits of Spinsterhood
- The Lonely Governess
- The Religious Life
- The Canny Courtesan
- Daughter of Sappho
- Artistic Fulfilment
- A Talent for Discovery
- A Talent for Writing
- A Daring Disguise

With information that far exceeds any thing of the kind yet published.



It's time ...

Even though the recent *Act of Union* has led many of our nobility to close the doors of their grand Dublin houses, and society has moved to London, our Assembly Rooms, balls, soirées and country gatherings still ring out with music and chatter.

Even though the streets of Dublin are quieter now and Cork's economy, waxing during the Napoleonic Wars, is now on the wane, the linen drapers are still selling silks and dancing shoes, and the vintners their brandy and wine.

getting engaged

And you dear reader, from the moment you were born, you have known that it is your duty to marry well. Years spent dreaming in the school room, learning female accomplishments have been leading to this moment. Our Irish capital no longer bustles with the best of society, but men and women are still meeting and their fathers still arranging marriages. And now, it is finally your turn ...

... It is time to come out.



PRESENTATION

Young ladies from good families may be invited to St James Palace to make their debut at a Queen's *Drawing Room*. While it is an undoubted honour to be presented to Her Majesty, be assured that the experience is also exceedingly stressful.



The occasion will require a formal court dress with a full hoop under your gown. This does not sit well with the newly-fashionable higher waistlines and you will look most unbecoming. You will be expected to stand waiting for countless hours for your name to be announced. When you are called approach Her Royal Highness and make a deep curtsy. As you are dismissed, curtsy once more and walk backwards out of the royal presence. Endeavour not to trip on the train of your gown.

Of late, Queen Charlotte has been unwell, and has not held the customary number of Drawing Rooms. Pray do lose heart if this occurs: forgoing a formal Court presentation will not prohibit you from Coming Out.

SOCIETY

Your entry to society will begin at the start of the season which coincides with the sitting of parliament. Since the *Act of Union*, Irish peers with seats in the House of Lords now spend the season in London. Naturally, all who can, follow them there.

While the highest of the *Bon Ton*, the elite of society, will be found in London, there is great gaiety in our Irish cities and provincial towns. The Assembly Rooms, theatres and private house-parties will provide much opportunity for meeting a suitable beau.

The Courts of Assizes, held twice annually in local towns, are ideal occasions to interact and find a husband. In Dublin, the Castle is the main social venue. Although some have expressed disdain regarding the quality of recent guest, we suggest that an evening's entertainment provided by the Lord Lieutenant and his wife will be an opportunity to meet the right type of suitor.

"A Levée at the Castle, attended as usual by pimps, parasites, hangers-on, aide camps, state officers, expectant clergymen, hungry lawyers, spies, informers, and the various descriptions of characters that constitute the herd of which the motley, petty, degraded and pretended Court of this poor fallen country is made up. Alas, poor Ireland."
SIR VERE HUNT 4th June 1813



EXPENSE

Your family will have the burden of equipping you in suitable attire. Ball gowns, walking dresses, riding habits and accessories must be provided.

There will also be the expense of renting a house in a fashionable quarter, and the necessary rounds of entertainment. Balls, supper parties, soirées and the related charges for musicians, food, claret and carriages, will take their toll on your family's finances.

It is hoped that you will enjoy this round of gaiety, but be under no illusion as to the purpose of all the merriment. You have a job to do - namely that of securing a proposal. You will be less of a burden to your family if you can limit the time you spend annexing a husband to just one season.

coming out



the season



NOVEMBER

Your DEBUT



There will be lots of DANCING

DECEMBER

JANUARY

Strive for MODESTY yet do not shy from male attention - you DO need to find a husband.



FEBRUARY

Pay no heed to those who deem themselves superior and pass cruel comments.

NEVER show off



MARCH

Don't be afraid to show your ACCOMPLISHMENTS

But never sing more than one or two songs consecutively and refrain from songs descriptive of masculine passion.

MAY

Take every opportunity to SEE AND BE SEEN

but do take care to be appropriately chaperoned.

Be mindful of your reputation, once lost, it is LOST FOREVER

APRIL



PINPOINT A PARTICULAR PROSPECT

As the Season draws to an end, you may find yourself drawn to a specific individual. Cultivate his company. Chase off competition

JUNE



ENGAGEMENT

Be sure to send your wedding announcement to the newspapers

it's not official until the world knows

JULY



VENUES

You will find numerous public Assembly Rooms around the country. In the capital, there is a fine establishment on Cavendish Row. In Cork, the Assembly Rooms are located on Georges Street, and in Belfast at the corner of North Street & Waring Street. Ladies of good standing may attend public balls, but take care not to frequent such gatherings with regularity.

Do not dance from the time you arrive until the hour you leave, as it may give the sad impression that you have few opportunities for dancing. It is desirable to attend such public gatherings as a member of a large party. By accessing a requisite number of dancing partners from within your own circle you will avoid that unpleasantness of being addressed by any objectionable individuals.

PARTNERS

When a gentleman who has been properly introduced requests the honour of dancing with you, do not refuse unless you have a previous engagement. If a gentleman presumes to ask you to dance without an introduction, you will of course refuse by using the phrase "I must decline, sir, not having the honour of your acquaintance." His unforgivable rudeness ought to be punished by your refusal to be subsequently introduced.

It is understood that to dance more than one dance with a particular gentleman denotes an unusual interest in that party. Take care of your reputation in this regard.

STYLES

Let your dancing be quiet and unobtrusive. Pay attention to the dance, but not so much that you appear unsure of the steps.

You may stand up for any country dance with no fear of censure. However, we beg you to exercise caution if considering the new indecent whirling-dance of the Germans - The Waltz.

This questionable style requires the gentleman to actually place his hand on a young ladies waist. This intimacy ill agrees with any woman of delicacy. None but a husband and wife can, with any propriety, be partners in the Waltz.

AUDIENCE

One does not attend the theatre to watch a play; one goes to scrutinise one's acquaintances and to display one's finery. As a person of quality, you will take a private box for the Season. The poor will be seated in the galleries while young men and 'women of pleasure' will be happiest in the pit. On occasion, those in the pit might extend uncalled-for comments to your party. The Theatre Royal in Cork, have circumvented this problem by screening the boxes from view.

It is not necessary to arrive for the start of the performance, nor do you need to stay in your seat for the duration. In fact, it is customary to visit friends in their boxes. Do not let the noise from the players interfere with your conversation. Theatre staff are on hand to courier love notes and other missives.

PERFORMANCE

If you wish, you may follow the activity on stage. Some actors are first-rate. None more so than Mrs Siddons, who astonished us some years past with her portrayal of Hamlet. More recently, we welcomed the soprano, Madame Catalina who delighted us with the oratorio of the Messiah

All theatres offer two nightly performances: a dramatic play and a comic pantomime or sentimental story. Shakespeare revivals are presently in fashion and speciality acts with jugglers, tumblers and animals are always popular. If you are dissatisfied with the performances feel free to pelt the actors with rotten fruit and vegetables. Conversely, if you enjoy a certain song or routine, you may call for it to be performed again and again.

DISCRETION

The theatre attracts all sorts. It is accepted that men will bring their mistresses, often procuring them a box in full view of their wives. You will have a good view of all of this offstage entertainment from your box. But do remember that the audience can also see you.

One might wish that there was a method of dimming the candles and numerous chandeliers which continuously light our theatres. A system which illuminates only the stage might lessen the distractions of the rest of the room.

dancing

theatre

Under the immediate Patronage of their Graces the Duke and Duchess of Richmond.

PUBLIC ROOMS, RUTLAND SQUARE

SUBSCRIPTION ASSEMBLIES

THE First Subscription Assembly will take place on Tuesday Evening the 16th February, 1812. Their Graces the Duke and Duchess of Richmond have been pleased to notify their intention of being present.

SUBSCRIPTION TO 1ST, 2ND & 3RD ASSEMBLIES

Ladies 15 shillings
Gentlemen One Guinea

SINGLE TICKETS

Ladies 7s 6d
Gentlemen 11s 4d



We remarked with pain that the indecent foreign dance called the Waltz was introduced at the English court on Friday last ... it is quite sufficient to cast one's eyes on the voluptuous intertwining of the limbs and close compressor on the bodies in their dance, to see that it is indeed far removed from the modest reserve which has hitherto been considered distinctive of polite females. So long as this obscene display was confined to prostitutes and adulteresses, we did not think it deserving of notice; but now that it is attempted to be forced on the respectable classes of society by the civil examples of their superiors, we feel it a duty to warn every parent against exposing his daughter to so fatal a contagion.

THE TIMES OF LONDON, summer, 1816



ROYAL HIBERNIAN THEATRE

THURSDAY THE 31ST DEC and FRIDAY 4TH JAN

THE Performance will commence with Wonderful feats of activity, by Mr. Brown; HORSEMANSHIP by Master Woodford and Mr. C. Smith; Clown, Mr Barrett.

The Ballet of LITTLE RED RIDING HOOD

After which for the first time in this Kingdom, Mrs Southby will go through her unequalled performance on the TIGHTWIRE.

The whole to conclude with the New Comic Pantomime of MOTHER BUNCH & THE YELLOW DWARF.

Harlequin, Mr Pearce, Yellow Dwarf, Mr Bryson; Columbine, Miss Taylor and Clown, Mr Cooke.



NEW THEATRE, ROSS

For the BENEFIT of

Mr. DAVISON.

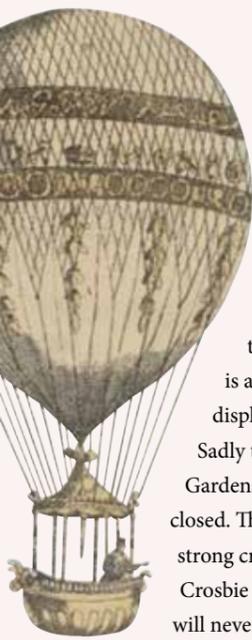
On WEDNESDAY, November 27th

The Belles Stratagem

A Grand Masquerade

The Recruiting Sergeant

Reel,



PLEASURE GARDENS

Promenading and taking the air in an outdoor space, is an excellent activity for displaying oneself to advantage.

Sadly the beautiful Pleasure Gardens in Ranelagh have been closed. Those who made up the 30,000 strong crowd to witness Richard Crosbie and his homemade balloon, will never forget the sight of it sailing into the air.

The Rotunda Gardens on the north side of the city are now most popular. Concerts take place from eight to ten o'clock on Sundays. One may enjoy the waterfalls, grottoes and mazes for the entrance fee of one shilling. This fee supports Dr Bartholomew Mosse's Lying-In Hospital for poor women of Dublin city.

PARKS AND BASINS

Stephen's Green boasts numerous walks of elegance and taste. Recently the space has been closed to all but those who own a house on its perimeter. Keys may be rented from the Commissioners if one desires access.

The nearby Coburg Gardens are open to all. Accessed through the south side of the Green, through the Royal Horse Bazaar, the gardens used to be the lawn to Clonmell House. The Earl of Clonmell - or Copperfaced Jack as he was known - sold his house and garden after *The Act of Union*.

The City Basin is another elegant and sequestered place of relaxation. The Basin, adjacent to Mr Guinness' brewery at St James' Gate, is planted with hedges, limes and elms, and boasts beautiful green walks between.

In Cork, the Mardyke Walk or the South Mall are excellent locations for making a promenade.

CARNIVAL

Those of a more adventurous spirit might be tempted to attend the infamous Donnybrook Fair in Dublin.

This fortnight Summer festival of music, food, theatre and athletic competition delight and thrill in equal measure.

Exotic acts from Europe and America make frequent appearances. Over the years we have welcomed Levi Leach, the contortionist, and a French lady called Madame Tussaud, who displayed curious historical figures which she had made of wax.

Be warned, there is an unfortunate emphasis on licentious behaviour and displays of enhanced sexuality. You may be offered match-making services or even an unlawful marriage ceremony! A defrocked priest, who goes by the pertinent yet vulgar moniker 'Tackem', will wed any couple for a fee.

LUXURIES

The taste for the exotic is still exceedingly popular. The purchase of imported luxury goods - particularly from France - demonstrates that you are a woman of taste and standing. Do not think that you must travel to France or London to obtain such necessities. Many of our local shops carry a delightful range of Irish and imported goods which are bound to tempt you. Jewellers, milliners, linen drapers, glovers and glass & china merchants flourish alongside a vast number of ready-made clothing warehouses.

Sir John Carr, a visitor to our country reported Dame Street to be 'the great focus of fashion, bustle and business and is lined with noble shops and buildings'. He was similarly impressed with Grafton Street, describing it as 'a sort of London Bond Street'.

FASHION

It is important to keep abreast of the latest goods and styles. The best magazines for this are *The Lady's Magazine*, *La Belle Assemblée*, and *Ackermann's Repository*. The subscription rate is considered quite high (some costing as much as sixpence!) but their content - particularly the illustrated fashion pages - make for essential reading.

You may save money by sharing the issues among other ladies of your circle. Or less expensive sources of information will be *The Dublin Evening Post* and *Walkers Hibernian Magazine*.

REFRESHMENT

Godey's of number 10 Grafton Street have long provided the best confectionery and sweetmeats. We were most saddened to hear of the death of Mrs Godey and feared the establishment would close its doors. Thankfully her son in law, John Eliot has lately taken over the business. Mitchell and Son run another excellent confectionery establishment on this street also

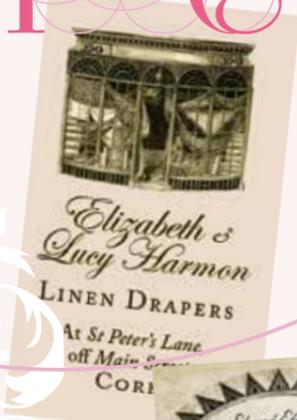
If you are desirous of purchasing a box of dainty delicacies, take care as you alight from your carriage or otherwise arrive in this vicinity. Grafton Street is beset with beggars preying on the fashionable elite. These ruffians have been known to affect a sudden rush on innocent shoppers as they to enter or leave a premises, frequently snatching away the recent purchase.

promenading

"I have seen it filled with very genteel company and, a greater number of pretty women than I ever saw together in another town"
SAMUEL DERRICK on the MARDYKE WALK



shopping



REVOLUTION

When we look back upon the ponderous fashions of our grandmother's youth, we cannot but see that the advantage is on our side. Gone are those stiff, heavy piles of hair and the folds of brocade which so weighed the wearer down and disguised her true, essential being. Now, our light, flowing modern gowns allow for our natural form to be appreciated.

This modern style owes its graceful appearance to ideals of the ancient past. Inspired by the modern Republic of France, we now dress in loosely falling draped fabric, simply gathered under our bust as homage to those ancient republics of Greek and Rome.

BOURGEOISIE

Taste and poise come naturally to a lady - she will know what to wear whatever the occasion.

However, of late, our circles have been pervaded by increasing number of wealthy industrialists and newly ennobled classes. Those young ladies who come from such backgrounds may find themselves at a loss as how best to dress for polite society.

There is nothing that shows a lack of breeding more, than being worried about one's appearance. It is for those ladies that the following words of advice are offered.

FABRIC & HUE

Young ladies of a fair complexion will find pastel shades of pale pink, mint greens and soft yellows to be the most flattering. Those with darker colouring can wear stronger shades. If you are uncertain about what suits you best, or, have a unlimited budget, you may opt for white. White will suit every lady on any occasion.

Fabrics should be light and translucent: muslin or cotton for day; silk for evening. Do not fear that white will appear excessively plain. Embellishment, such as embroidery, hand painting or printing with sprigs of leaves and flowers, will add interest.

UNDRESS

Undress or *déshabillé* is a simple type of gown worn for mornings. This loose style is comfortable for activities such as letter-writing, sewing or reading.



HALF DRESS

A slightly more formal outfit suited to afternoon activities such as promenading and calling.



FULL DRESS

Full dress is the most decorative in your wardrobe. Worn for balls, pleasure gardens and evening engagements.



PLAIN GIRLS

Those not blessed with beauty, must not deceive themselves that they may rectify the deficiency by gay or sumptuous attire. A caprice of this sort, in a plain woman, will only render her defects more conspicuous. She, who may have been regarded as a pleasing girl in an unobtrusive robe of simple elegance, may be ridiculed and despised when bedecked in inappropriate fancy.



PLUMP GIRLS

Should a young woman of majestic character seek to dress for appropriate apparel, she should choose styles to correspond with her graver and more dignified *mien*. Her robes should always be long and flowing and more ample in their folds than those of her lissom sister. She should avoid frills, ruffles and all unnecessary embellishments.



SHORT GIRLS

Feathers are much in vogue and often a mark of graceful taste. Short women must take extreme care. A little woman befeathered can resemble a Bantam hen.



The above advice is taken from the excellent and lately published 'THE MIRROR OF THE GRACES: OR, THE ENGLISH LADY'S COSTUME', an invaluable guide for any young woman.



costume

Chemise



Stays

MODESTY

With the flimsy often transparent fabrics used in the make up of modern gowns, your cotton undergarments will assume an importance sacred proportion. A decent covering of one's form is the sign of your delicacy and will shelter you from the gaze of unwelcome eyes.

Your stays must be light and flexible, yielding to your shape, yet supporting it at the same time. Some spirited ladies favour a pair of pantalettes (two cotton columns of fabric for the legs, attached at the waist with laces). Our advice would be to avoid such racy garments. Any item of clothing resembling a gentleman's trouser must be repugnant to the refinement of the fair sex. We have also heard of instances whereby the laces come undone, allowing the wearer to lose a pantalette creating unimaginable scenes of embarrassment for all who witness the calamity.

Gown



Pantalettes

DECORUM

The disgraceful contrivance of dampening one's gown to increase its transparency is practiced only by courtesans and women of ill repute. No proper lady will indulge in such licentious behaviour. In fact, you might prefer some extra protection and opt for an invisible petticoat. This tight, flesh-coloured stocking is worn under your chemise and petticoat and affords a total covering of your form. Its constricting nature will restrict your walking, but it will prevent that horrific occurrence of the fabric of your gown becoming trapped in the cheeks of your buttocks.

PATRONISED BY LADIES OF THE FIRST DISTINCTION
 MRS MORRIS respectfully informs Ladies, that she continues to make very large supplies of her celebrated Patent Invisible Petticoats, Opera Underdresses, Drawers and Waistcoats, for the ensuing summer; which are now ready, in the greatest variety of shapes for the inspection of Ladies, made of both India Cotton and Spanish Lamb's Wool; articles which cannot fail to meet the highest approbation of every Lady in Europe, as they tend not only to add to the comfort and pleasantness of the wearer, but likewise to improve the shape, elegance and figure of the person.



THE TROUBLE WITH ANKLES

There is a beauty in a fine ankle, which can assure the gazer that the whole of the woman is possessed of the same exquisite grace. While a heavy leg will hint at a ponderosity of body, leading the viewer to conclude an equal heaviness in mind and feelings. In general, a thick leg cannot be disguised or amended and the only hope is to dress the petticoats so long that there is hardly a chance of the offending ankle being seen.

THE CASTLETOWN BONNET

A sturdy straw bonnet is still very much in favour. The best are made at Lady Louisa Connolly's school for the poor, based in the disused kennels and other outbuildings at Castletown House, Kildare. The bonnets are so praiseworthy that even the Queen and the Royal Princesses possess one!

KEEPING WARM

Winter dresses may be made of satin, Genoa velvet, Indian silks and fine twilled woollen kerseymere. The warmth these fabrics afford is highly needful to preserve health during the cold and damp of winter.

To wear a gossamer dress, with bare neck and naked arms, in a hard frost is to lay oneself open to the untimely ravages of rheumatisms, palsies, consumptions and death. Even a momentary blast from the East may pierce your flimsy robes, wither your bloom and lay you low.

A shawl is a simple addition to any ensemble and will provide immediate warmth. The most desirable shawls come from India and are embellished with a paisley or chintz design in a variety of shades.

SPENCER

Another acceptable options for keeping warm is the spencer. This high waisted jacket will cover your chest while not spoiling the line of your gown. This garment originated as a men's jacket and is named for Earl Spencer who requested a 'tail-less' tail-coat to facilitate his fondness for standing in front of an open fire. Choose strong colours, to contrast with your paler gown, and for a modern look you may adopt some military motifs and braiding.



Parasols have always been popular as an aid to preserve a pale complexion.

The umbrella is a similar device - but employed to provide shelter from rain. In the changeable Irish climate you may find this contraption particularly useful.



*Cream Embroidered Muslin Empire Gown
with neck detail and Puffed Sleeves*



*Embroidered Muslin Gown
with Train,
tied with high Waist Sash*



*Embroidered Muslin Gown
with Train & Matching Shawl*



*Cream Silk Empire Gown
with Central Embroidered Panel
in Golden Silks*

