

Most of us will have heard of the fairy-tale matches achieved by the Gunning sisters from Castlecoote House. Untitled and of modest means, these beautiful Irish girls married into two of the highest families in the land. Devotees of the romantic novel may dream that they too will ascend a similar height. We would urge you to be practical and assess your prospects with realism. In case you are in any doubt as to your worth, please take our quiz to evaluate your true expectations.

how many feathers in your cap

Birth, breeding and bankruptcy

AN UNMARRIAGEABLE ARISTOCRAT

Spare a thought for the sorry plight of Miss Mary King, youngest daughter of the Earl of Kingston. At 16 Miss King was seduced by and eloped with her mother's cousin. Her family intervened. Her father fatally shot the scoundrel but considering his daughter's marriage prospects now ruined, reduced her dowry from £8,000 to £300.

A BEAUTIFUL BIGAMIST

Sophia Connor, wife of the Earl of Annesley's gardener, caught the Earl's attention. Annesley carried her off to Dublin kindly reconciling Mr Connor for the loss of his wife. In 1797 Sophia and the Earl married and produced a family. On the Earl's death in 1802, his 'widow' submitted a claim for her first-born to inherit the Annesley estates. The case was dismissed with the title and fortune passing to Lord Annesley's brother. The lady now resides in Paris. It is not known how Connor, the gardener has fared.

A MONEY-LENDER'S DAUGHTER

Miss Anna May, daughter of moneylender Edward May, married George Chichester, the Marquess of Donegall in the Marshalsea Debtor's Prison where Chichester was temporarily residing. While full details of the agreement are unknown, the marriage allowed the Marquess to pay his debts. While we admit the Marchioness to be a well-mannered, pleasant woman who acquits herself with grace, there is currently some question over the validity of the marriage as the lady was under age when they married. This renders the union illegal, and bastardises their children irreparably. The tale is currently engendering much debate in polite circles.

YOUR FACE

is it:

- (a) scarred by smallpox
- (b) plain yet pleasing
- (c) a vision of loveliness

YOUR MANNER

are you:

- (a) an undisciplined hoyden
- (b) spirited and lively, yet conscious of the consequence of your station
- (c) graceful and modest

YOUR INTERESTS

are you concerned with:

- (a) newfangled notions on the rights of women
- (b) politics and improvement
- (c) painting, music and the arts

YOUR DOWRY

is it:

- (a) modest (£1,00 or thereabouts)
- (b) respectable (£10,000 or thereabouts)
- (c) substantial (£20,000 or thereabouts)

YOUR FAMILY

are you:

- (a) the daughter of lord
- (b) the daughter of a gentleman
- (c) the daughter of a tradesman

have you:

- (a) no sisters
- (b) two sisters or less
- (c) three sisters or more

YOUR FAMILY HOME

is it:

- (a) in the country surrounded by parklands
- (b) in a fashionable part of the city
- (c) in a provincial town

has it:

- (a) been in your family for more than three generations
- (b) been bought or built by your father or grandfather
- (c) ever been a place of commerce

YOUR FAMILY'S WEALTH

is it:

- (a) derived from a well-run estate with profits invested wisely
- (b) being constantly frittered away through mismanagement and gambling
- (c) arising from the profits of a commercial enterprise

To calculate your results simply add up the amount of As, Bs or Cs in your answers.

MOSTLY A s

Your family might be impoverished and you may have the plainest of countenances, but thanks to your family's lineage and standing in society you are a brilliant catch.

MOSTLY B s

While all of society knows that your grandfather was in trade, your nouveau-riche status is partly overlooked. You have some acceptance in polite society. By continuous vigilance as to how you comport yourself you might receive an offer from a younger son.

MOSTLY C s

You might be an heiress. You might even have a beautiful face, but your family's lack of status and your low rank will forever place you outside society. Accept the first man that offers for you.



WHO ARE THE MOST ELIGIBLE MEN? ➡