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ANNE SEYMOUR DAMER







*A Kneller, RA pinxit*

HONBLE ANNE DAMER



# ANNE SEYMOUR DAMER

*A WOMAN OF ART AND FASHION*

1748-1828

By

PERCY NOBLE

LONDON

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TO

Mrs. FREDERICK ERSKINE JOHNSTON



## INTRODUCTION

ANNE SEYMOUR CONWAY, or as she is better known, Anne Seymour Damer, has more than ordinary claims to live in History; during her long and eventful life, she was the centre of a circle in which rank, wealth, fashion and science were all gathered together. She was not only the friend of artistic and literary people, but was a sculptor of no mean repute, and, although she has left no literary record, she was a well-read woman, a student of Herodotus, Pliny, and Virgil, and possessed one of the finest libraries in London.

Her life is a pleasant one to look back on. Irreproachable in moral character, she was of a fascinating and amiable disposition showing an exemplary patience during the short period of her unhappy married life. From the date of her husband's tragic death, her life seems to have been unclouded by any troubles except the death of her beloved parents.

## ANNE SEYMOUR DAMER

At a very early age she showed strong literary and artistic talent. In regard to her art she was extremely ambitious. She is one of the few women in the history of the world who has taken up the hammer and chisel, and, although her work may now appear rather rough and unfinished, in her day her success was highly praised. Whatever her rank in art may be, her position in society was excellent; of a gay and lively disposition, she chose her friends from every class, and not so much for their rank and station, as for their talents and high character.

Although her father, General Conway (a man of strong character), was devoted to her, he and her mother were prevented from taking the personal interest in her education, which they otherwise would have taken, owing to their frequent absences from England during a great part of her childhood. She was therefore constantly left under the care of Horace Walpole, her father's devoted friend and cousin, who was responsible for the soundness of her early training, and watched over her dawning intellect with the greatest solicitude.

Mrs. Damer was a woman of strong affection.

## INTRODUCTION

For her father, whom, with her usual enthusiasm, she was wont to magnify into a hero, she had great admiration; to her mother, whom at her father's death she took to live with her, and upon whom she lavished much care and attention, until death broke the filial link, she was always dutiful and affectionate. Among those who claimed her friendship, besides Horace Walpole, were the Misses Berry and their father, David Hume, the historian, Sir William and Lady Hamilton, Lord Nelson, Napoleon and Josephine de Beauharnais, Queen Charlotte, the Princess of Wales, afterwards Queen Caroline, Charles James Fox, Georgiana, the beautiful Duchess of Devonshire, Sir Joshua Reynolds, Garrick and his wife, the Cosways, Mrs. Siddons, Miss Farren, who became Countess of Derby, Ceracchi and Bacon, the sculptors, from whom she took lessons, Erasmus Darwin, the poet, and Canova.

In whatever Mrs. Damer undertook, we find an amount of daring and spirit which is quite uncommon amongst ordinary women. Although she had associated with and received some instruction from David Hume, then in the height

## ANNE SEYMOUR DAMER

of his Toryism, she was far too enthusiastic to be a Tory, and when quite young she became an ardent Whig. Conceiving that a great name and even great work may be achieved by a woman, she despised the mere distinction of noble descent; she never lost an opportunity of warming and exercising her enthusiasm, and it was this spirit that made her so active a Whig.

Mrs. Damer lived in a period of history so full of remarkable events, that in her old age she was able to look back upon her life as an interesting drama which had been played before her eyes; during this eventful time she had seen all the vicissitudes of war and revolution in other countries, and in her own country great social changes which she had viewed with the eyes of a most intelligent spectator.

Had she only preserved her letters and papers, how interesting might the memoir of this remarkable woman have been! Unfortunately, she left instructions that all her papers and letters should be destroyed at her death; it has therefore been difficult to trace the events of her interesting life. This short biographical sketch has been arranged



## INTRODUCTION

from a few autograph letters and papers lent by connections of Mrs. Damer's and others, and from biographies and memoirs of her contemporaries, all of whom appear to have appreciated the charm of her influence, and to have held her in great admiration. The following works have been used for reference, and in some cases extracts have been made from them :—

*Horace Walpole's Letters.*

Allan Cunningham's *Lives of Painters.*

*Lady Mary Coke's Letters*, edited by the Hon. J. A. Home, 1889.

*Letters of Lady Sarah Lennox to Lady Susan O'Brien*, by the Countess of Ilchester and Viscount Stavordale, 1902.

*Queens of Society*, by G. and P. Wharton.

*Letters of Madame D'Arblay* (Fanny Burney).

*Letters and Diary of Miss Berry*, by Lady Theresa Lewis.

*The Creevey Papers*, edited by Sir Herbert Maxwell.

*The Diary of Mrs. Philip Lybbe-Powys*, edited by Mrs. E. T. Climensson.

## ERRATA

- Page 11, lines 11 and 17, *for* 1741 *read* 1747.
- „ 11, line 18, *for* 1745 *read* 1746.
- „ 23. Conway House was situated at the end of Warwick Street, now called Warwick House Street, leading from Cockspur Street to Carlton House Terrace.
- „ 56, line 26, *for* horses *read* hearses.
- „ 77, line 19, *for* these *read* three.
- „ 84, footnote, *for* Verochino *read* Verocchio.

## CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
INTRODUCTION, . . . . .	vii
I. HER BIRTH AND CHILDHOOD, . . . . .	1
II. HER FATHER, . . . . .	10
III. HER MOTHER, . . . . .	17
IV. GIRLHOOD, . . . . .	23
V. IN SOCIETY, . . . . .	32
VI. HER MARRIAGE, . . . . .	41
VII. HER HUSBAND'S DEATH, . . . . .	58
VIII. HER WIDOWHOOD, . . . . .	66
IX. HER ART, . . . . .	75
X. THE WESTMINSTER ELECTION AND PRIVATE THEATRICALS, . . . . .	92
XI. FRIENDSHIP WITH THE MISSES BERRY, . . . . .	107
XII. LISBON, . . . . .	118
XIII. AT HOME, . . . . .	133
XIV. DEATH OF LORD ORFORD, . . . . .	141
XV. FRIENDSHIP WITH NELSON, . . . . .	150
XVI. STRAWBERRY HILL, . . . . .	162
XVII. PARIS, . . . . .	174
XVIII. HER MOTHER'S DEATH, . . . . .	186
XIX. LEAVES STRAWBERRY HILL, . . . . .	193
XX. YORK HOUSE, . . . . .	205
XXI. THE LAST YEARS OF HER LIFE, . . . . .	216
INDEX, . . . . .	227



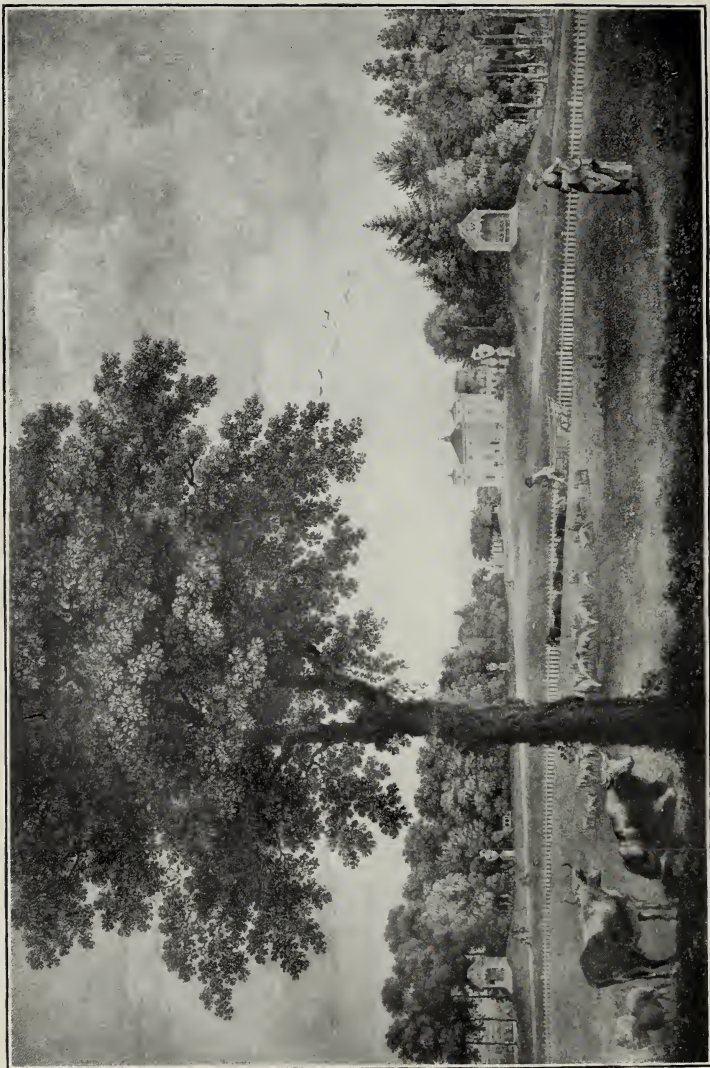
## ILLUSTRATIONS

PORTRAIT, BY ANGELICA KAUFMANN, . . . . .	<i>Frontispiece</i>
COOMB BANK, KENT, FROM AN OLD PRINT, . . . . .	<i>To face page 1</i>
LATIMERS, BUCKINGHAMSHIRE, . . . . .	,, 3
FIELD-MARSHAL THE HON. HENRY SEYMOUR CONWAY,	,, 10
PARK PLACE, BERKSHIRE, FROM AN OLD PRINT, . . . . .	,, 15
BUST OF CAROLINE, COUNTESS OF AILESBUURY, BY ANNE SEYMOUR DAMER, . . . . .	,, 17
SHELL-SEAT AT STRAWBERRY HILL, . . . . .	,, 20
ANNE CONWAY WITH DAVID HUME, . . . . .	,, 26
PORTRAIT BY SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS, . . . . .	,, 33
THE ABBEY HOUSE OF MILTON, DORSETSHIRE, FROM AN OLD PRINT, . . . . .	,, 41
PORTRAIT AT CAME HOUSE, DORSETSHIRE, 1768, . . . . .	,, 48
STATUE—AS THE MUSE OF SCULPTURE, BY G. CERACCHI, IN THE BRITISH MUSEUM, . . . . .	,, 54
PORTRAIT, FROM A PRINT AFTER ANGELICA KAUF- MANN, 1810, . . . . .	,, 60
PORTRAIT, FROM A MINIATURE BY R. COSWAY, R.A.,	,, 66
STATUE OF GEORGE III., BY ANNE SEYMOUR DAMER,	,, 75
MASKS OF 'THAME' AND 'ISIS' ON HENLEY BRIDGE,	,, 79
BASSO-RELIEVO, 'CORIOLANUS,' BY ANNE SEYMOUR DAMER, . . . . .	,, 82
BASSO-RELIEVO, 'ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA,' BY ANNE SEYMOUR DAMER, . . . . .	,, 83

# ANNE SEYMOUR DAMER

THE WESTMINSTER ELECTION, 1784, FROM A PRINT BY ROWLANDSON, . . . . .	<i>To face page 92</i>
PORTRAIT, BY R. COSWAY, R.A., . . . . .	,, 98
BUST OF MISS MARY BERRY, BY ANNE SEYMOUR DAMER,	,, 107
BOOK-PLATE DESIGNED BY AGNES BERRY, 1793, .	,, 110
PORTRAIT, ENGRAVED BY HOPWOOD, . . . . .	,, 120
BUST OF MISS FARREN AS THALIA, BY ANNE SEYMOUR DAMER, . . . . .	,, 135
9 UPPER BROOK STREET, LONDON, 1906, . . . . .	,, 137
THE HON. HORACE WALPOLE, AFTERWARDS EARL OF ORFORD, . . . . .	,, 141
BUST OF ANNE SEYMOUR DAMER, CARVED BY HERSELF,	,, 145
BUST OF LORD NELSON, BY ANNE SEYMOUR DAMER,	,, 150
STRAWBERRY HILL, MIDDLESEX, FROM AN OLD PRINT,	,, 162
PORTRAIT, ENGRAVED BY WALKER, . . . . .	,, 176
BUST OF SIR JOSEPH BANKS, BY ANNE SEYMOUR DAMER, . . . . .	,, 188
VIEW OF TWICKENHAM, INCLUDING YORK HOUSE, FROM AN OLD PRINT, . . . . .	,, 205
SNUFF-BOX PRESENTED BY NAPOLEON BUONAPARTE TO MRS. DAMER, 1815, . . . . .	,, 210
PORTRAIT IN OLD AGE, ARTIST UNKNOWN, . . . . .	,, 216
SUNDRIDGE CHURCH, SEVENOAKS, KENT, . . . . .	,, 221





COOMB BANK, KENT

*From an old print*



## CHAPTER I

### HER BIRTH AND CHILDHOOD

ANNE SEYMOUR CONWAY was born at Coomb Bank, Sundridge, Kent, in 1748. She was the only child of the Honble. Henry Seymour Conway and his wife, Caroline, Countess of Ailesbury. Coomb Bank belonged at this time to Anne Conway's grandfather, Colonel the Hon. John Campbell of Mamore, who succeeded his cousin as fourth Duke of Argyll in 1761, and who rebuilt the house, which, however, does not appear to have been a very convenient one, for Miss Mary Berry, when visiting it in later years, writes: 'I think it unites every possible discomfort.' At the time of her visit it was the residence of Miss Conway's uncle, Lord Frederick Campbell, then married to the widow of the Lord Ferrers who was hanged at Tyburn for the murder of his steward. In later years this unfortunate lady was burnt to death by falling into the fire at Coomb Bank.

The Campbells had bought this estate from the

## ANNE SEYMOUR DAMER

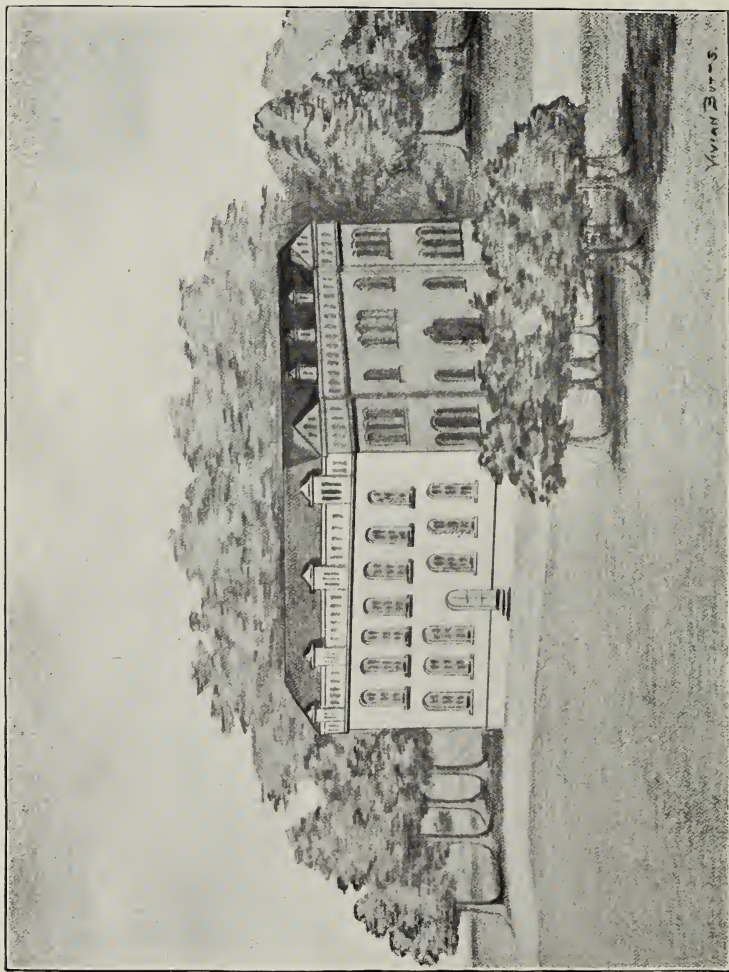
Islay family only a short time before Miss Conway's birth, and in the church at Sundridge, which is situated about three-quarters of a mile from Coomb Bank, there are many tablets to the memory of members of the Campbell family.

Soon after the birth of their daughter, Mr. Conway and Lady Ailesbury went to live at Latimers,<sup>1</sup> in Buckinghamshire, which they rented furnished from Mrs. Cavendish for three years. At that time it does not seem to have been an attractive abode; Horace Walpole, writing to George Montagu on September 28, 1749, says: 'I saw Cheneys at a visit I was making to Harry Conway at Latimers. This house which they have hired, is large and bad and old, but of a bad age, finely situated on a hill in a beech-wood with a river at the bottom, and a range of hills and woods on the opposite side belonging to the Duke of Bedford. They are fond of it, but the view is melancholy. In the Church at Cheneys, Mr. Conway put on an old helmet we found there; you cannot imagine how it suited him, how antique and handsome he looked; you would have taken him for Rinaldo!'

After a subsequent visit, on July 5, 1755, Walpole described it to Richard Bentley: 'Latimers belongs to Mrs. Cavendish, I have

<sup>1</sup> Now called Latimer, the residence of Lord Chesham.





LATIMERS, BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

*Reproduced by permission of the late Lord Chesham*

## HER BIRTH AND CHILDHOOD

lived there formerly with Mr. Conway, but it is much improved since ; yet the river stops short at a hundred yards just under your eye, and the house has undergone a Batty-Langley discipline : half the ornaments are of bastard Gothic, and half are Hallet's mongrel Chinese. I want to write over the doors of most modern edifices, "Repaired and beautified, Langley and Hallet, Churchwardens." The great dining-room is hung with a paper like mine, but not shaded properly.'

At Latimers Anne Conway remained for three years, under the care of her parents, and with her half-sister, Lady Mary Bruce, who was Lady Ailesbury's daughter by her former marriage with Charles, third Earl of Ailesbury.

Early in 1751 Mr. Conway was ordered to Minorca, where he stayed some time, making a trip to Italy on his way home. He wrote constantly to his wife, who during his absence stayed at her father's place, Coomb Bank. On his return Mr. Conway brought with him presents to his wife and daughters. Among them, Horace Walpole says, was an animal called a 'Jeriboo' (*i.e.* probably a jerboa): which he described in his letter to George Montagu, August 28, 1752—'Mr. Conway has brought Lady Ailesbury from Minorca, but originally from Africa, a "Jeriboo,"

## ANNE SEYMOUR DAMER

to be sure you know what that is, if you don't, I will tell you, and then I believe you will scarce know any better. It is the composition of a squirrel, a hare, a rat, and a monkey, which altogether looks very like a bird. In that it is about the size of the first, with much such a head, except that the top of the nose seems shaved off, and the remains are like a human hair-lip; the ears and its timidity are like a hare. It has two short little feet before like a rat, but which it never uses for walking, I believe, never but to hold its food, the tail is naked like a monkey's, with a tuft of hair at the end; striped black and white in rings. The two hind legs are as long as Granville's with feet more like a bird than any other animal, and upon these it hops so immensely fast and upright, that at a distance you might take it for a large thrush. It lies in cotton and is brisk at night, eats wheat and never drinks; it would, but drinking is fatal to them. Such is a 'Jeriboo.'"<sup>1</sup>

That must have been a delightful pet for little Anne Conway who throughout her life showed great devotion to all sorts of animals.

Mr. Conway was not allowed to remain long at home after his return from Minorca; in the following year (1752) he was ordered to join his

<sup>1</sup> Letter to George Montagu, August 28, 1752.

## HER BIRTH AND CHILDHOOD

regiment in Ireland, whither he was accompanied by Lady Ailesbury. On their departure they left Anne Conway, then five years old, in the charge of her godfather, Horace Walpole, under whose care she remained for some time. Her parents were much distressed at leaving their little daughter, and did not wish to be away from home at this time, as Mr. Conway had just purchased from the Princess Dowager of Wales the beautiful estate of Park Place in Berkshire, where they did not settle until 1756. Horace Walpole writes to Sir Horace Mann, May 15, 1752: 'I cannot deliver your message to Mr. Conway, for he and Lady Ailesbury are gone with his regiment to Ireland, which is more especially unpleasant now, as they have just bought one of the most charming places in England, Park Place, which belonged to Lord Archibald Hamilton, and then to the Prince.'

During the time Anne Conway was under the care of Horace Walpole, he frequently mentions her in his letters to Mr. Conway and to Lady Ailesbury. In one letter he writes: 'You know how courteous a Knight I am to distressed virgins of five years old, and my Castle-gates are always open to them'; in another: 'I shall tell you some stories of her understanding that will please you.'

## ANNE SEYMOUR DAMER

The following verses were addressed by him to her, accompanied by a present of shells :—

‘O nymph, compared with whose young bloom  
Hebe’s herself an ancient fright ;  
May these gay shells find grace and room  
Both in your baby-house and sight !  
Shells ! What are shells ? you ask admiring,  
With stare, half pleasure, half surprise ;  
And fly with Nature’s art, inquiring  
In dear Mama’s all-speaking eyes.  
Shells, fairest Anne, are playthings, made  
By a brave God called Father Ocean,  
Whose frown, from pole to pole obeyed,  
Commands the waves and stills the motion.  
From that old sire and daughter came,  
As like Mama, as blue is blue ;  
And like Mama, the sea-born dame  
An urchin bore, not unlike you.  
For him fond Grand-papa compels  
The floods to furnish such a state  
Of corals and of cockle shells,  
Would turn a little lady’s pate.  
The chit has tons of bawbles more ;  
His nursery stuffed with birds and sparrows ;  
And littered in its azure floor  
With painted quivers, bows and arrows.  
Spread, spread your frock, you must be friends ;  
His toys shall fill your lap and breast :  
To-day the boy this sample sends—  
And some years hence he’ll send the rest.’

Writing to Mr. Conway on April 16, 1756, Walpole says : ‘ You never tell me now of Missy’s bon-mots. I hope she has not resided in Ireland



## HER BIRTH AND CHILDHOOD

till they are degenerated into bulls!<sup>1</sup> In a letter to Mr. Conway, dated September 23, 1755, he writes jokingly: 'Make my compliments to Lady Ailesbury. I own I am in pain about "Missy"; as my lady is a little coquette herself, and loves crowds and admiration, and court life, it will be very difficult for her to keep an eye on "Missy." The Irish are very forward and bold, I say no more; but it would hurt you both extremely to have her marry herself idly; and I think my Lord Chancellor has not extended his matrimonial foresight to Ireland. However, I have much confidence in Mrs. Elizabeth Jones (Miss Conway's nurse). I am sure when you were here she would never let "Missy" whisper to a boy that was old enough to speak.'

By this letter he appears rather over-anxious regarding his god-daughter's matrimonial prospects, as at this time she cannot have been more than eight years of age.

In the year 1757, Anne Conway was present at the marriage of her half-sister, the Lady Mary Bruce, with Charles, third Duke of Richmond. Horace Walpole describing this wedding, says: 'The Duke of Richmond has given two balls, in

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Conway was appointed Secretary to Ireland in 1755, and he and Lady Ailesbury were then at Dublin Castle. Horace Walpole always spoke of Anne Conway when a child as 'Missy.'

## ANNE SEYMOUR DAMER

honour of his approaching wedding with Lady Mary Bruce. 'Tis the prettiest marriage in the world; youth, beauty, riches, and all the blood of all the kings from Robert Bruce to Charles II. They are the prettiest couple in England, excepting the father-in-law and mother.' This Duchess of Richmond was a great beauty, and, judging by her portraits, was certainly better-looking than her sister, Anne Conway, but Horace Walpole considered that 'Lady Ailesbury was more handsome than her pretty daughter.' Great devotion existed between the sisters, which lasted till the Duchess's death in 1796.

A short time after her marriage, the Duchess returned to Park Place, where she stayed with her mother and sister, during the absence of the Duke, who had gone on an expedition to the coast of France, under the Duke of Marlborough.

The Conways were not permitted to remain long at Park Place, the home in which they were so interested; in 1761 General Conway was in command of the British forces in Germany, under Prince Frederick of Brunswick. During the campaign Lady Ailesbury and her daughter Anne remained at the Hague. On July 20, 1761, Horace Walpole wrote to Lady Ailesbury: 'Could I have believed that the Hague would so easily compensate for England? nay—for Park

## HER BIRTH AND CHILDHOOD

Place,' and in the following year, on March 5 : ' We and the new Czar (Peter III.) are the best sort of people on the earth. I am sure, Madam, you must adore him ; he is willing to resign all his conquests, that you and Mr. Conway may be again settled at Park Place. . . . If Miss Conway does not come back with *soixante et douze quartiers*, and the hauteur of a Landgravine, I think I shall still be able to run down the precipices at Park Place with her, this is supposing we have any summer.'

On leaving the Hague, Lady Ailesbury took her daughter to Paris, where, at the close of the campaign they were joined by General Conway ; it was on this visit to Paris that they became acquainted with Madame du Deffand, a dear friend of Horace Walpole, who introduced Lady Ailesbury to her. To Lady Ailesbury, when in Paris, he wrote : ' If Miss Conway has a mind to be in the fashion on her return, she must take some David or other to teach her the new twang, twing, twang of the guitar.'

This musical instrument had just come into great vogue in London, while the Conways had been absent on the Continent.

# ANNE SEYMOUR DAMER

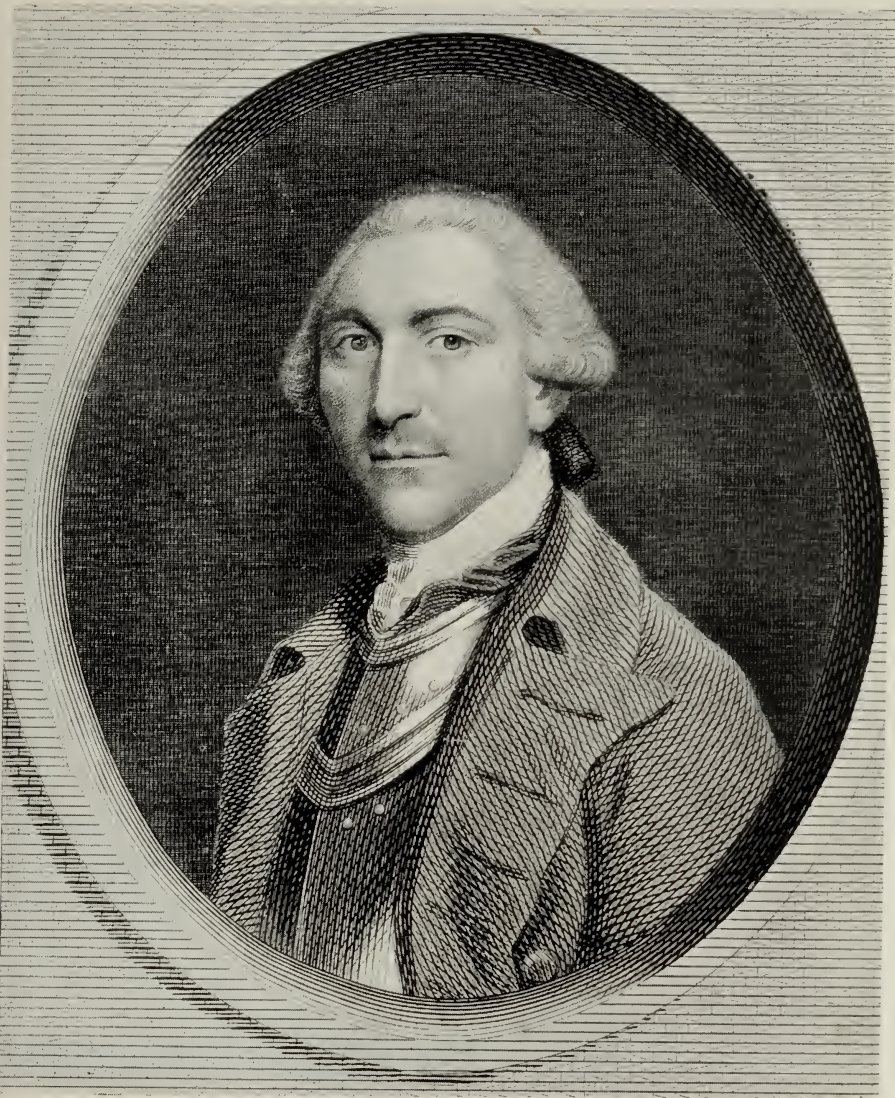
## CHAPTER II

### HER FATHER

ANNE CONWAY inherited a good deal of her ability from her father, Henry Seymour Conway ; born in 1719, he was the second son of Francis Seymour who had assumed the name and arms of Conway, and was elevated to the peerage as Baron Conway. Henry Seymour Conway's mother (Lord Conway's third wife) was Charlotte Shorter, a daughter of Alderman Sir John Shorter, Lord Mayor of London.

Mr. Conway was a remarkably handsome man, a skilful and gallant soldier, a clever statesman, a man of great taste, and possessed of a strong understanding.

He was educated at Eton at the same time as his brother Francis, who became the first Marquis of Hertford, and was for some time Ambassador at the Court of France and also Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland. On leaving Eton, Mr. Conway travelled on the Continent with his cousin, Horace Walpole. Between them there was a life-



FIELD-MARSHAL THE HONOURABLE HENRY SEYMOUR CONWAY

*From a print, engraved 1798*



## HER FATHER

long devotion, which lasted till Conway's death. The poet Gray also accompanied them on this journey.

In 1741 he began his military career, joining the British Army in Flanders; he was present at the battle of Fontenoy, where he was taken prisoner, but, as Horace Walpole writes at the time, 'he distinguished himself very highly.' In several other engagements he appears to have attracted much notice for his bravery. On his release towards the end of the year 1741, he returned home to console his 'fair widow,' as Horace Walpole remarks in a letter to George Montagu. The widow referred to was Lady Caroline Campbell, widow of Charles Bruce, Earl of Ailesbury, whom he married on December 19, 1741, his wife retaining her first husband's title. In 1745 he was present at the Battle of Culloden, where he was given the command of a regiment. In 1749 Mr. Conway went to Minorca, and visited Italy on his way home. Lady Ailesbury remained at home with her parents and her daughter, Anne Conway, who was only a year old.

Two years after he went to join his regiment in Ireland, and Lady Ailesbury went with him. In 1759 he became Lieutenant-General, and General in 1772, when (October 22) he was

## ANNE SEYMOUR DAMER

appointed Governor of the Island of Jersey. Horace Walpole, writing of this appointment, says: 'He acted in his diminutive Islet with as much virtue and popularity as Cicero in his larger Sicily; the zeal indeed with which he entered upon the discharge of his new military duties kept pace with the ardour with which he had fulfilled his previous and more important obligations to the State.' In 1793 he became a Field-Marshal.

He was equally well known as a statesman. In 1741 he was elected M.P. for Higham Ferrars, subsequently representing Penrhyn, St. Maws, Thetford, Bury St. Edmunds, and finally Wendover in 1775. One of his earliest efforts in the House of Commons was his opposition to the Government on the question of the legality of general warrants; for supporting this measure he was dismissed from his post as Groom of the Bedchamber to His Majesty, and also from the command of his regiment. This treatment he felt to be both harsh and unjust, but he bore it with his accustomed philosophy. Horace Walpole writes on May 14, 1764: 'Mr. Conway is turned out of the King's Bed-chamber and out of his Regiment. His temper, patience, and resignation are beyond example. His calmness and content prove how much his mind is at ease.'



## HER FATHER

He would not bear his sufferings with such fortitude if his conduct had not been as pure as virtue itself.' The following lines on his dismissal appeared in the *Gentleman's Magazine* :—

'Should future annals the strange story tell,  
How honour, valour, wit and Conway fell;  
Should they declare dismission was his lot  
(Though neither coward, traitor, rebel, Scot),  
With generous pride our children will disdain  
To feel a stigma on our Monarch's reign:  
So great his goodness and so just his praise,  
They'll not believe 'twas done in George's days.'

At this time he appears to have been rather pressed for money, and both his brother, Lord Hertford, and his cousin, Horace Walpole, offered to assist him; fortunately, at the psychological moment, the Duke of Devonshire died and bequeathed to him a legacy of £5000 as a testimony of his friendship and admiration. Horace Walpole, writing to Conway of this legacy, says: 'You might despise the acquisition of £5000 simply, but when that sum is a public testimonial of your virtue, and bequeathed by a man so virtuous, it is worth a million.'

The following year, on Grenville's dismissal from power, General Conway was appointed Secretary of State for the Northern Department; and sworn a member of the Privy Council, while 'Lady Ailesbury was received at Court most

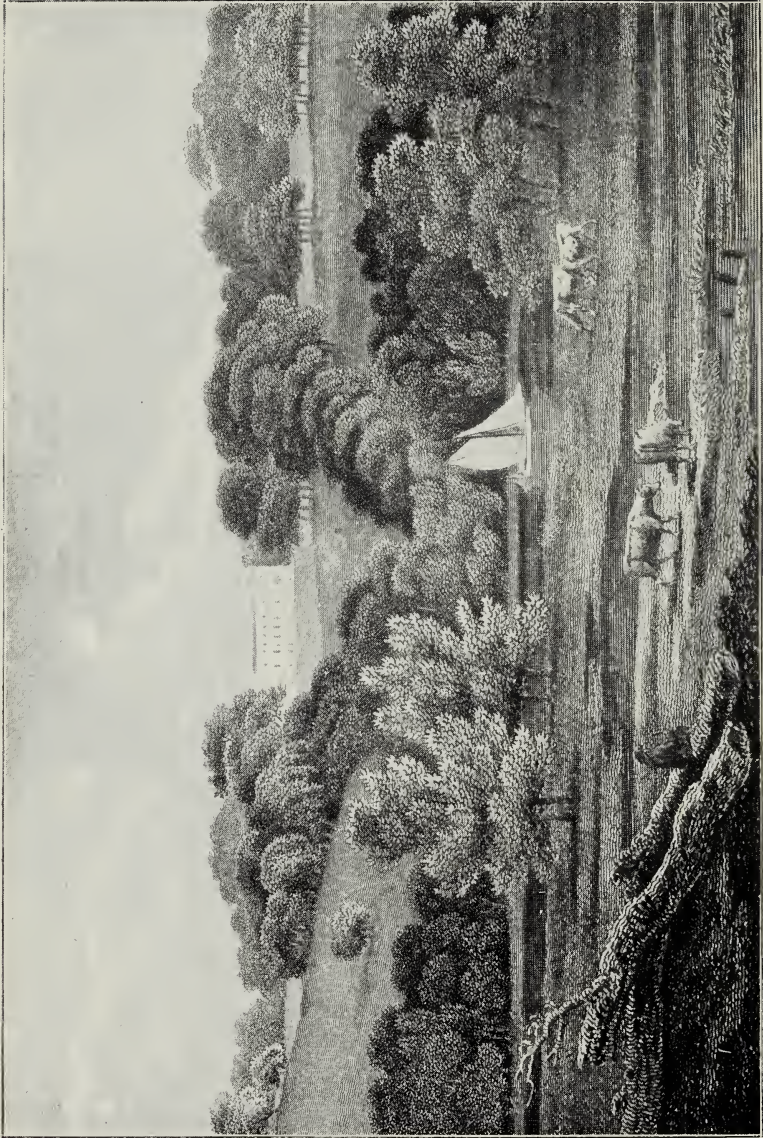
## ANNE SEYMOUR DAMER

benignly, a circumstance you will not dislike,' writes Horace Walpole to Lord Hertford. He resigned his office of Secretary of State in 1768.

During his Governorship of Jersey in 1775 the American War of Independence had broken out. To Conway it was reserved to point out in the House of Commons that the people of England were convinced of the folly of continuing this war. In 1782 he therefore moved an Address to the Throne, praying that the war on the Continent of North America might no longer be pursued for the impracticable purpose of reducing the inhabitants of that country to obedience. In 1766 he had foretold the mischief that Grenville's fatal Stamp Act would occasion, and 'the effect of his speech was incredible,' wrote Walpole. It proved fatal to Lord North's administration, as on this motion Lord North's majority was reduced to the extraordinary figure of one, the numbers being 194 to 193. On the decision Lord North resigned, and in November the Commissioners signed the preliminaries of peace, Great Britain reserving only Canada and Newfoundland on the American continent.

The American colonies were irrevocably gone, and the creation of the United States was a turning-point in the world's history. After this brilliant success, which Charles James Fox de-





PARK PLACE  
*From an old print*

## HER FATHER

scribed as 'saving his country,' General Conway retired altogether from public life, passing his remaining years in peaceful tranquillity, in beautifying his charming estate, Park Place, at Henley, and in cultivating science and literature.

He wrote a comedy entitled *False Appearances*, which was performed by a talented company of amateurs at the Duke of Richmond's house, his daughter, Mrs. Damer, speaking the epilogue 'with inimitable spirit and grace.' This play was afterwards produced at Drury Lane, where it met with some success.

He died at Park Place on July 9, 1795, having only returned from his London house (Conway House, Soho) on the preceding day; he was deeply mourned by his widow and daughter and his large circle of friends. Writing to Miss Berry, Mrs. Damer expresses her apprehension as to how Horace Walpole would bear the bad news: 'He never seemed to apprehend it.' He did not long survive his old friend, dying in London not quite two years afterwards, on March 2, 1797.

Miss Berry sums up General Conway's character in the following words:—

'It is only those who have had the opportunity of penetrating into the most secret motives of his public career, and into the inmost recesses of his private life, who can do real justice to the

## ANNE SEYMOUR DAMER

unsullied purity of his character, who saw and knew him in the evening of his days, retired from the honourable activity of a soldier and of a Statesman, to the calm enjoyment of private life ; happy in the resources of his own mind and in the cultivation of useful knowledge, in the bosom of domestic peace, unenriched by pensions or places, undistinguished by titles or ribbons, unsophisticated by public life, and unwearied by retirement.'

Such was the father of Anne Conway.





BUST OF CAROLINE, COUNTESS OF AILESBUY

*By Anne Seymour Damer*



## HER MOTHER

### CHAPTER III

#### HER MOTHER

ANNE CONWAY'S mother, Caroline, daughter of Colonel John Campbell of Mamore, afterwards fourth Duke of Argyll, and of the beautiful Mary Bellenden, born in 1721, was no less remarkable as a woman than her father was as a man. Her godmother was Caroline, Princess of Wales, afterwards Queen of George II. Her mother had been Maid-of-honour to the Princess of Wales.

At the age of eighteen Caroline Campbell married Lord Bruce, who was then fifty-seven, as his third wife. He succeeded his father as fourth Earl of Elgin and third Earl of Ailesbury. Of this marriage Mrs. Delany writes: 'Miss Campbell is to be married to Lord Bruce, her father can give her no fortune, she is very pretty, well behaved, and just eighteen, has £2000 a year jointure and £400 pin money. They say he is cross, covetous, and three score old, this unsuitable marriage is the admiration of the old, and the envy of the young.' She had lost her

## ANNE SEYMOUR DAMER

mother three years before, and her father was very often away from home; hence she seems to have had no one to advise her.

She was considered a great beauty at the time of her wedding. Horace Walpole states that, 'Her face and person were charming, lively she was, almost to *étourderie*, and so agreeable she was that I never heard her mentioned afterwards by one of her contemporaries who did not prefer her as the most perfect creature they ever saw.'

Lady Ailesbury, who was an only daughter, had four brothers: John, who succeeded his father as fifth Duke of Argyll, and married the Duchess of Hamilton, one of the beautiful Gunnings; Henry, who was killed in 1747; William, who married Miss Sarah Izard of South Carolina; and Frederick, who married the widow of the Lord Ferrers who was hanged at Tyburn for the murder of his steward. Her first husband, Lord Ailesbury, died in 1747, leaving her a very handsome jointure, and charge of their only child, Mary, who afterwards married Charles, third Duke of Richmond. Lady Ailesbury did not long remain a widow; towards the end of the same year, she married the Honourable Henry Seymour Conway. To Horace Walpole, this marriage was no surprise; he wrote of it in July 1747: 'Harry Conway, whom nature always

## HER MOTHER

designed for a hero of romance, and who is *déplacé* in ordinary life, did wonders . . . but was afterwards taken prisoner, is since released on parole, and may come home to console his fair widow.'

Lady Ailesbury was very much in love with her second husband, and the marriage proved to be one of unalloyed happiness. Her charming disposition was much appreciated by her friends; Lady Luxborough writes to the poet Shenstone: 'You, sir, have also had an agreeable lady at your house, I mean the Countess of Ailesbury; whose charms and whose conduct have always been equally admired by those I have heard speak of her. I have been told she was a lover of retirement in her old Lord's time; I do not know what she may be in her young Colonel's. She is, you know, daughter to General Campbell and Miss Bellenden, who was so celebrated when she was Maid-of-honour to Queen Caroline. It is no wonder then that she is pleasing.'

Horace Walpole in recommending Conway to Sir Horace Mann, at Florence, writes: 'For the Florentine ladies he is the finest person and the handsomest face I ever saw. No, I cannot say that all this will be quite for them! he will not think any of them quite so handsome as my Lady Ailesbury.' Years afterwards (on September

## ANNE SEYMOUR DAMER

28, 1762), he wrote to Conway: 'Your Countess is handsomer than fame; your daughter improves every day,' and writing from Strawberry Hill: 'Strawberry Hill is grown a perfect Paphos; it is the land of beauties; on Wednesday Lady Ailesbury and the Duchesses of Hamilton and Richmond dined here, the two latter stayed all night. There never was so pretty a sight as to see them all sitting in the shell.<sup>1</sup> A thousand years hence, when I begin to grow old, if that can ever be, I shall talk of that event, and tell the young people how much handsomer the women were of my time than they will be then. I shall say "women alter now." I remember Lady Ailesbury looking handsomer than her daughter, the pretty Duchess of Richmond, as they were sitting in the shell on my terrace with the Duchess of Hamilton, one of the famous Gunnings.'

Lady Ailesbury was a well-read woman, who enjoyed the society of the literary men of her day. She was much interested in Rousseau, who through her and General Conway obtained his pension of £100 a year. Among her intimate friends she numbered David Hume, the historian, Gray, Thomson, and Shenstone, the

<sup>1</sup> This shell was a carved seat designed by Mr. Bentley at Strawberry Hill.



SHELL-SEAT AT STRAWBERRY HILL



## HER MOTHER

poets; the last of whom wrote the following lines to her :—

‘ But what can courts discover more  
Than these rude haunts have seen before,  
Each fount and shady tree ?  
Have not these trees and fountain seen  
The pride of courts, the winning mien  
Of peerless Ailesbury ? ’

Amongst her artistic acquaintances were Sir Joshua Reynolds, Angelica Kauffmann, Mr. and Mrs. Garrick, Miss Farren, and Mrs. Siddons.

No mean artist herself, her wonderful embroidered and worked pictures were much admired. Some of these are still in existence and remain beautiful schemes of colour. She imitated such well-known artists as Cuyp, Rosa de Tivoli, Vandyck, and Gainsborough. A writer of the time describes these worked pictures as being little inferior to the originals: ‘they are worked in worsteds, with so much taste, and so happily managed in the various tints as to deceive at a small distance; one in particular, a portrait from Vandyck, in which the colours are so artfully blended as to appear across the room a sketch of that great artist.’

Lady Ailesbury was very fond of society, and, according to her cousin Lady Mary Coke’s account, gambled a good deal both at her own house and when she was at the houses of her

## ANNE SEYMOUR DAMER

friends, and was extraordinarily lucky, for she generally won at Lou, which seems to have been the game chiefly played at this time. She befriended many of the French *emigrés* who came to England during the Revolution, and whom she had met before on her visits to Paris.

The last entertainments that Lady Ailesbury probably attended were the marriage procession of the Prince of Wales (George IV.) and the Princess Caroline of Brunswick, and the Drawing-room held afterwards at St. James's Palace; after the drawing-room, she and her nieces, the Ladies Maria and Louisa Stuart, had supper with Mrs. Herbert, one of the ladies of the bed-chamber, from which they did not reach home till past one o'clock. She was at this time in her seventy-fifth year, but a wonderful old lady; as Miss Berry writes: 'The picture of what an old woman ought to be and so seldom is.'



## GIRLHOOD

### CHAPTER IV

#### GIRLHOOD

ANNE CONWAY'S parents, when in London, inhabited Conway House, Warwick Street, Soho. This house, afterwards known as 'Warwick House' and 'Jersey House,' was at a later date the residence for a time of the Princess Charlotte. It was probably while they were living there that the following incident relating to David Hume took place. Anne Conway was at the time about seventeen years of age. The historian, who had previously been Secretary to her uncle, Lord Hertford, was then become Secretary to her father. In reference to this appointment he wrote on May 1, 1767, to the Comtesse de Boufflers: 'there has happened, dear Madam, a small change to my situation and fortune since I wrote to you. I was surprised with a letter from Lord Hertford urging me to come to London and accept of the office of Deputy-Secretary of State under his brother. I foresaw that it connected me with General

## ANNE SEYMOUR DAMER

Conway, one of the best men in every respect of this country.’<sup>1</sup> In the same year he wrote to Blake: ‘My way of life here is very uniform and by no means disagreeable. I pass all the forenoon at the Secretary’s house, from ten till three, where there arrive from time to time messengers that bring me all the secrets of the kingdom, and indeed of Europe, Asia, Africa, and America. I am seldom hurried, but have leisure at intervals to take a book, or write a private letter, or converse with any friend who may call for me. From dinner to bed-time is all my own. If you add to this that the person (General Conway) with whom I have the chief, if not only, transaction, is the most reasonable, equal-tempered, and gentlemanlike man imaginable, and Lady Ailesbury the same, you will think I have no reason to complain, and I am far from complaining. I shall only regret when my duty is over, because to me the situation can lead to nothing, and reading and sauntering, and lounging and dozing, which I call thinking, is my supreme happiness, I mean my full contentment.’

It was to Hume that Jean Jacques Rousseau was indebted for his introduction to Lady

<sup>1</sup> From the *Private Correspondence of David Hume*, 1761-1776, published 1820.

## GIRLHOOD

Ailesbury; he had always treated Rousseau with great delicacy and generosity, but was ill-requited by the morbid sensitiveness and suspiciousness of 'the philosopher of Geneva.'

Hume retired from his post as Deputy-Secretary in 1769 and settled in Scotland with an income of £1000 a year; nine years subsequently he published a short autobiography in which he mentions his appointment under General Conway: 'In 1767 I received from Mr. Conway, an invitation to be under-secretary, and this invitation, both the character of the person and my *connexions* with Lord Hertford prevented me from declining. I returned to Edinburgh in 1767 very opulent (for I possessed a revenue of £1000 a year), healthy, though somewhat stricken in years, with the prospect of enjoying long my ease and of seeing the increase of my reputation. . . . My company was not unacceptable to the young and careless, as well as to the studious and literary; as I took particular pleasure in the company of modest women.'

But to return to Hume's intimacy with Anne Conway during his appointment as Secretary under her father. She was still almost a child, and in her playful moods was wont to banter the historian. One day, when they were walking

## ANNE SEYMOUR DAMER

together in the London streets, they met a small Italian boy carrying on his head a large tray which contained several plaster figures. Hume stopped the lad and entered into conversation with him, asking him how he modelled his images, and praising their form. He gave the boy a shilling and dismissed him. Anne Conway seems to have been annoyed with Hume for wasting his time talking to 'this poor ignorant little boy' as she called him. Hume remarked that the boy was far from ignorant, and that she had no right to sneer at him or the images that he had modelled with such science and art, and that she should learn to be less severe in her criticisms. 'With all your attainments now, you cannot produce such works.' This remark of Hume's seems to have fired her with the determination to take up sculpture as the main object of her life, for from that moment she set to work on sculpture, giving up the society into which she was just entering and in which she was already much admired, not so much for her good looks as for her gay and witty conversation.

This charming girl might have been content with the ordinary ambitions of other young women of her world, but with her usual impetuosity she immediately procured wax and modelling tools, and worked hard at her self-imposed



ANNE CONWAY WITH DAVID HUME



## GIRLHOOD

task, until she was able to present Hume with a bust—a portrait of himself. She had quite hoped to astound the historian with her completed work, but instead of astonishment she was met with the remark: ‘It is clever enough for a first attempt.’ Nor does it seem to have deserved higher praise, though Hume was always rather sparing of encomiums. He also told her it was easy enough to work in soft material but quite another matter to handle a chisel.

Although she felt the rebuff, it incited her to further work; having obtained a block of marble she set to work with her tools, and in a short time was able to present Hume with a rough copy of the head in marble. Surprised at her energy and the force of character she had displayed in her self-imposed task and at the talent she had acquired, he was no longer able to withhold his praise and astonishment. He considered her achievement great in a branch of art so rarely taken up by women, and which demands labour as well as skill.

Though this first attempt was nothing very remarkable, Anne Conway, having once started on her career of art, developed a taste for sculpture, in which she determined to excel.

From Horace Walpole she received high praise and great encouragement; he saw nothing

## ANNE SEYMOUR DAMER

degrading in his young cousin handling the hammer and chisel, but it was thought at the time that had he not admired his cousin's work so prodigiously it would never have acquired the success it attained.

In reference to her modelling he wrote to her father: 'Good-night to you, to her Ladyship, and to the Infanta (Miss Conway), whose progress in waxen statuary advances so fast that by next winter she may rival Rackstrow's old man. Do you know that, though apprised of what I was going to see, it deceived me, and made such an impression on my mind that, thinking on it as I came home in my chariot, and seeing a woman steadfastly at work in a window in Pall Mall, it made me start to see her move.' By this it is presumed he mistook the woman for a statue, having been so lately impressed by Anne Conway's models.

Owing to her father's position, she was able to obtain the best instructors. Her earliest lessons in handling the chisel she received from John Bacon, then a young man just coming into fashion as a sculptor; he himself had only begun to work in marble in 1760, having invented a machine for transferring the design in plaster with mechanical accuracy to the marble. Later on, in the year 1769, Bacon first exhibited at the



## GIRLHOOD

Royal Academy. His chief works were monumental; among these were the monuments of Pitt in the Guildhall and in Westminster Abbey, of Dr. Johnson, and of Howard, the philanthropist, at St. Paul's, and of Lord Cornwallis in India. Bacon died in the height of his successful career in 1799.

In anatomy Anne Conway's instructor was William Cruikshank. This artist was an eminent surgeon and anatomist; he was born in 1745 and came to London in 1771, where he studied under the celebrated Dr. Hunter. It is said that he was not without some share of personal as well as intellectual vanity, but he had a generous and sympathetic heart and literally went about doing good. It was he who attended Dr. Johnson in his last illness; he himself died in 1800.

Another well-known sculptor from whom Anne Conway received a few lessons was Giuseppe Ceracchi, who had just settled in England. He was celebrated for his groups of 'Thetis and Jupiter,' also for his 'Castor and Pollux,' and the design for Lord Chatham's monument at St. Paul's. He it was who carved the statue of Anne Conway as Mrs. Damer representing the Muse of Sculpture, which stands in the hall of the British Museum, and in which he has so

## ANNE SEYMOUR DAMER

happily preserved the graceful lightness of her form.

Ceracchi went to America, hoping to erect a statue of Liberty, but returned disappointed; he then went to Rome and afterwards to Paris, where, being a republican fanatic, he was concerned in a plot to murder Napoleon in 1801. He was condemned and guillotined in the same year, being dragged to the scaffold in the habit of a Roman Emperor, on a car which he himself had designed for the purpose.<sup>1</sup>

Although the instruction which she received from these three men took up most of Anne Conway's time, we hear that she was able to make several expeditions to Strawberry Hill. Horace Walpole, writing to George Montagu, mentions some of these visits. She also found time to have her portrait painted by Angelica Kauffmann. Lady Mary Coke writing to her sister, the Countess of Stafford,<sup>2</sup> on August 22, 1766, says: 'I went to Lady Ailesbury's and found her and Mr. Conway were going to a painter who is just arrived from Italy (Angelica Kauffmann who came from Italy in 1765), and was brought over by Lady Wentworth, the same who

<sup>1</sup> Sir Joshua Reynolds sat to Ceracchi.—(This was the only bust in marble ever executed of that illustrious painter.)

<sup>2</sup> Lady Ailesbury's cousins.

## GIRLHOOD

drew a picture of Mr. Garrick, which was shown, I am told, in the Exhibition. I went with them and saw the picture she was painting of Miss Conway, it was like, and appeared to me well done but too large, as you would take it for a very big woman.'<sup>1</sup>

During this year Anne Conway must have been going out in society, for Lady Sarah Lennox, or Lady Sarah Bunbury as she was then, a sister of the Duke of Richmond who had married Miss Conway's half-sister, writes to Lady Susan O'Brien<sup>2</sup> on January 9th: 'Miss Conway is come about, she is grown very pretty and agreeable.'

<sup>1</sup> This picture is the beautiful portrait painted by Angelica Kauffmann, so well known by the numerous coloured prints there are of it. The picture is now (1908) in the possession of Mrs. Frederick Johnston, whose husband, Captain Frederick Johnston, R.N., inherited it from his father, Sir Alexander Johnston, to whom it was bequeathed by Mrs. Damer.

<sup>2</sup> Extract from the *Life and Letters of Lady Sarah Lennox*, edited by the Countess of Ilchester and Lord Stavordale, 1902.

# ANNE SEYMOUR DAMER

## CHAPTER V

### IN SOCIETY

THE Lady Mary Coke<sup>1</sup> who is mentioned in the preceding chapter, and who kept so interesting a diary and wrote such graphic letters to her sister, was the fourth daughter of John, second Duke of Argyll, and therefore a cousin of Miss Conway's mother. She had married, in 1741, Edward, Viscount Coke, heir to the Earl of Leicester; he, however, died in his father's lifetime.

Lady Mary Coke was possessed of great beauty, which she preserved to an advanced age; she died October 30, 1811. Horace Walpole wrote of her to Sir Horace Mann: 'I have regard and esteem for her good qualities, which are many, but I doubt her genius will ever suffer her to be quite happy.' She was at one time on most intimate terms with Horace Walpole, but in 1780

<sup>1</sup> These and other extracts from Lady Mary Coke's letters are taken from the four volumes of her letters edited by J. A. Home, and published privately 1889.





PORTRAIT

*By Sir Joshua Reynolds*

## IN SOCIETY

an evident coolness in their friendship had arisen, as we read in the following letter to her sister, which refers to a visit she had intended paying the Conways at Park Place.

‘*July 24, 1780.*—I mentioned in my journal my intention of going to Park Place this week, but having wrote to Lady Ailesbury on Saturday to know if they would be at home, I this day received her answer to beg me to fix some other time, for this week their house was full, though when she named them there was not so many as there was last year when I was there; but I suppose there is one she did not name, who never chooses to meet me, and that is Mr. Walpole.’

The following lines were written by Lady Temple as a complimentary portrait of Lady Mary:

‘She sometimes laughs, but never loud;  
She’s handsome too, but somewhat proud;  
At Court she bears away the bell,  
She dresses fine and figures well:  
With decency she’s gay and airy;  
Who can this be but Lady Mary?’

Horace Walpole writes on December 2, 1784, to the Hon. Thomas Walpole: ‘But I will consult Lady Mary Coke, who is better acquainted than

## ANNE SEYMOUR DAMER

the Herald's Officer with Europe, *vivante et mourante.*'<sup>1</sup>

It was reported at one time that Lady Mary Coke was privately married to Edward, Duke of York, brother of George III. ; in later years she considered herself to be the widow of the Duke of York, and the story goes that one day her mother found the Duke in her apartment, when, upon being rated for the impropriety of her conduct, she drew herself up with ineffable dignity, and replied, 'Madam, do you know to whom you are speaking? You are talking to the Duchess of York.'<sup>2</sup>

She was a great friend of the Duke and Duchess of Richmond; she writes in her diary: 'I have heard from the Duchess of Richmond, she sent me a very kind message to pass a month with them at Aubigny,<sup>3</sup> but the season is too far advanced.'

In 1761 she went with Lady Ailesbury and Miss Conway to the Hague, where they were there joined by Mr. Conway.

<sup>1</sup> Extract from unpublished letters of Horace Walpole. Edited by Sir Spencer Walpole.

<sup>2</sup> From 'Life and Times of George IV.' Lady Charlotte Campbell's *Journal*.

<sup>3</sup> A property in France, inherited by the Duke of Richmond from his grandmother, Louise Renée de Perrencourt of Querouaille, (created Duchesse d'Aubigny by Louis XIV., and Duchess of Portsmouth by Charles II.).



## IN SOCIETY

Five years later she was present at the marriage of Princess Matilda, sister of George III., with the King of Denmark, which ceremony was performed by proxy at St. James's Palace. Mr. Conway read the marriage contract in Latin, by which the King of Denmark named the Duke of York his Procurator; he then read part of the service which the Duke of York, on behalf of the King of Denmark, repeated after him. When the ring had been given, the Archbishop read the prayer for children; the contract was then signed and the ceremony was concluded.

In 1767 there was a rumour that Miss Conway might marry the Duke of Buccleuch. Lady Mary Coke writes in January 1767: 'I was engaged to call for Miss Conway and Lady Charlotte Ponsonby to go with them to Almacks, the Princess Amelia just went in before us; the ball did not begin till ten o'clock. I was glad the two young ladies got partners, as one danced with the Duke of Buccleuch and the other with Mr. Howard.'

Almacks had been started two years previously. George Selwyn writes to Gilly Williams on February 22, 1765: 'Almacks is now opened, in three very elegant new built rooms, a ten guinea subscription, for which you have a ball and a supper once a week for twelve weeks, you

## ANNE SEYMOUR DAMER

may imagine by the sum, the company is chosen : though, refined as it is, it will scarce put old Soho<sup>1</sup> out of countenance, the men's tickets are not transferable, so if the ladies do not like us, they have no opportunity of changing us, but must see the same persons for ever.'

In the same month Lady Mary writes : ' Lady Ailesbury told me she had come to see me to speak on a subject that gave her much uneasiness and that was her daughter, who (*sic*) the Duke of Buccleuch had been for some time particularly civil to, and that for the last four or five days he had seemed afraid to speak to her, which together with Lady Dalkeith's (his mother) never asking her to her house, or taking the least notice of her, made her conclude that she fancy'd they had some design upon the Duke ; and though she said no doubt they would all be extremely happy if he liked Miss Conway, yet she could assure me neither General Conway or her (*sic*) was in any hurry to marry her, (and though she said it very modestly) she gave me to understand there were many that liked her, and she mentioned that she would have a very considerable fortune : she told me that Lady Berkeley had said she wished very much for Lord Berkeley, and though she owned it, if they liked one another, there could be

<sup>1</sup> Mrs. Corneli's assemblies in Soho Square.

## IN SOCIETY

nothing against it, yet the alliance with Lady Berkeley was not what she wished. My answer was that the Duke of Buccleuch was his own master, and I did not believe that any one of his relations would interfere in his choice of a wife, as I was persuaded he would never do anything to disgrace his family, that I had heard Lady Dalkeith say very often, that provided her son made choice of a lady of good family; and one that had been well educated, she should have no objection, that I was persuaded these were her sentiments. I was sure that if the Duke of Buccleuch fixed upon Miss Conway, she would not be her enemy; that her not having asked her to her house seemed peculiar, but that I fancied proceeded from some mistake, and that I would endeavour to set the matter right, she then left me.'

In the following month she mentions that she took Miss Conway to the opera: she had Lady Harrington's box, as the King being present she had lost her own; she goes on to say 'the Duke of Buccleuch never came near us, I think it was because Miss Conway was with me, for we met him as we came out, and he never offered to call our servants, though his natural civility would, I think, have inclined him to do so, if he had not had some particular reason; how it is I don't know.'

## ANNE SEYMOUR DAMER

At the end of this month Lady Mary Coke stated that the Duke of Buccleuch was determined to marry and had made a choice of Lady Betty Montagu, only daughter of George, Duke of Montagu, and that his mother, Lady Dalkeith, was delighted, as Lady Betty was everything that could be wished for.

On March 5, Lady Mary stayed so late at Lady Dalkeith's house, that she quite forgot she had promised to go to Lady Ailesbury's to see Miss Conway dance; however, the following week she took Miss Conway to the opera again: 'Mr. Damer, Lord Milton's eldest son, came to our box, which made me conclude he was to marry Miss Conway. Before the opera was over I was persuaded my conjectures were well grounded.' The next day she writes, 'The marriage was owned, and everybody wished General Conway joy,' and again on April 6 that Mr. Damer and Miss Conway danced together a good deal at Almacks, and that Lady Ailesbury had a party at which the Princess Amelia was present. As usual they played Lou, and Lady Mary won six and forty guineas. On one occasion she states that Lady Ailesbury could not have won less than four or five hundred guineas, but she never owned to her winnings. She also describes a party at Lady Milton's where the Duchess of

## IN SOCIETY

Richmond was conspicuous for her beauty, and a dinner at Holland House, where she met Lady Sarah Bunbury, and where 'You may be certain Lord Carlisle came soon after.' She averred that she was not censorious, yet she could not help saying that she thought Lady Sarah's conduct highly imprudent to say nothing worse, and that her Grace of Richmond was almost as particular with Mr. Sackville (afterwards Duke of Dorset); she did not believe the Duchess capable of infidelity to the Duke, though she observed that the Duchess was flattered with a lover in attendance.

The only other reference that Lady Mary Coke makes to Mr. Damer before their marriage is respecting a breakfast with Adam Smith. The author of *Wealth of Nations* appears to have been a very absent-minded person, for on this occasion he took a piece of bread and butter, which he rolled round and round and put in the tea-pot; he then poured water on it, and after waiting a little while poured out the tea as he thought, remarking that it was the very worst tea he had ever tasted. Mr. Damer told him he did not in the least doubt it, for he had made it of bread and butter, which he had been rolling round his fingers.

Before the wedding Lady Ailesbury gave

## ANNE SEYMOUR DAMER

another party, at which a natural daughter of Lord Pigott's, nine or ten years of age, sang songs from comic operas, and imitated well-known actors, an accomplishment which Lady Mary thought more extraordinary than desirable; she says that there were between forty and fifty persons present; the music was followed by cards and supper. Lady Mary took Miss Conway to the opera on one other occasion before her marriage on May 22nd. She says that when she arrived at her box with Lady Jane Scott, she found not only Miss Conway, whom she had invited, but also her sister, the Duchess of Richmond, was with her, though Lady Mary remarks, she was not sorry, as the box held four ladies.





THE ABBEY HOUSE OF MILTON, DORSETSHIRE

*From an old print*



# HER MARRIAGE

## CHAPTER VI

### HER MARRIAGE

ON Sunday, June 14, 1767, at Park Place,<sup>1</sup> Anne Seymour Conway was married to the Honourable John Damer, the eldest son of Lord Milton, who as Joseph Damer had been member of Parliament for Weymouth, was created a peer in 1762, and later became Earl of Dorchester. John Damer's mother was the Lady Caroline Sackville, daughter of the first Duke of Dorset. The bride was in her eighteenth year and the bridegroom but five years her senior; the marriage at the time gave great pleasure to both families.

The following is the announcement of the wedding from the *London Evening Post*, Saturday, June 13 to Tuesday, June 16, 1767 :

'Sunday, was married at Park Place, the Hon. Mr. Damer, eldest son of Lord Milton, to Miss Conway, daughter of the Right Hon. Henry Seymour Conway, Esq.; who, together with his Lady, the

The marriage took place in the house by special licence, probably owing to the fact that the Parish Church of Remenham is situated some distance from the house.

## ANNE SEYMOUR DAMER

Countess of Ailesbury, and several persons of distinction, set out that morning to be present at the marriage ceremony.'

There were also notices of the marriage in Lloyd's *Evening Post* and the *London Chronicle*. The following is an exact copy of the marriage register, in the Parish Church of Remenham, at which church the Conways attended service, as Park Place is situated in the Parish of Remenham :—

'The Honble. John Damer, Bachelor, eldest son of the Right Honourable Joseph, Lord Milton, and the Honourable Anne Seymour Conway, Spinster, Daughter of the Right Honble. Henry Seymour Conway, one of His Majesty's Principal Secretarys of State, and with his consent, were Married in this Parish by Special Licence at his Seat at Park Place, this Fourteenth day of June, in the Year One thousand seven hundred and sixty-seven, by me, William Stockwood, Rector of Henley on Thames.

This Marriage was }  
solemnised between Us, }

JOHN DAMER,  
A. S. CONWAY.

In the presence of

MILTON.

H. S. CONWAY.'

Lady Mary Coke once attended service at Remenham, when staying with the Conways at Park Place, and her account of it is best told in her own words. Sunday, July 17th : 'You know that Mr. Hume is as good as an infidel. This is

## HER MARRIAGE

the only thing I do not like about him. I have had some conversation with him, but I have no hope of converting him from his erroneous way of thinking, and, thank God, his infidelity does not invalidate my belief. I was the only one of the company that went to church; it rained terribly, and I repented having dressed myself in a new hat, new gloves, etc., for the chaise could not go into the churchyard, which almost lay under water, and I was obliged to walk through the rain and water; judge my condition when I came into the church, quite wet, I do assure you.<sup>1</sup> The sermon was not worth it, and the prayers I might have read at home. Upon the whole I think the others were wiser that did not go. The rain begins to be a more serious condition than confining one to the house and being disagreeable. Notwithstanding all the rain that fell this morning, we walked two hours this evening. Pope Joan was not so favourable to-night (Sunday) as last night, I lost 30s. I drank no ale at supper; I thought it was the occasion of dismal dreams the night before. We retired to our rooms at 12 o'clock.'

Of the marriage, which began under such happy auspices, Horace Walpole wrote to Sir Horace

<sup>1</sup> There is no doubt this was Remenham Church, it lies close to the river, and the gate is some distance from the church-door.

## ANNE SEYMOUR DAMER

Mann, in March 1767, just before the wedding: 'Mr. Conway is in great felicity going to marry his only daughter to Lord Milton's eldest son. The estate in Lord Milton's possession is already £23,000 a year, seven more just coming from the author of their wealth, an old uncle in Ireland. Lord Milton gives £5000 a year and settles the rest. Miss Conway is to have a jointure of £2500 a year and £500 pin-money.' Lady Mary Coke writes, 'Miss Conway's fortune is £10,000, which goes in jewels, equipages, and furniture.'

At first this newly-married couple were much in love with each other, and, being so richly dowered, were quite free from any financial cares, so that, from every point of view, the marriage appeared likely to prove a happy one. They soon went a great deal into society, living a most extravagant life, and entertaining at their house in Tilney Street the great world of fashion, literature and art, but ere long Mrs. Damer appeared at entertainments without her husband, sometimes with her mother, but often alone. Her husband's time was otherwise occupied, his favourite pursuits being horse-racing and gambling, which did not in the least appeal to his artistic wife.

Of their extravagance, Lady Mary Coke writes, on June 19, 1767, a few days after their marriage :

## HER MARRIAGE

‘Lady Ailesbury came to town yesterday with Mr. and Mrs. Damer; she told me that Mrs. Damer’s ear-rings had cost £4000; she laments the Court being in mourning, as it prevents her finery being seen, I think it has been the case of most brides this year.’

This year Mr. and Mrs. Damer visited at Park Place, where General Conway and Lady Ailesbury were staying for the summer months; they also paid several visits to Mr. Damer’s parents at the Abbey House of Milton in Dorsetshire. From the first, Lord Milton did not treat his daughter-in-law with much affection, and he evidently saw that the marriage would not lead to much happiness.

Lady Sarah Lennox writes of the marriage to Lady Susan O’Brien: ‘I think one has no right to blame her more than him; he had no business to marry a girl he did not like, than she to accept a man she was totally indifferent to, and he was as much to blame in giving her the example of never living at home, as she was to make all her life opposite to his. In short, I cannot think it fair to blame one more than the other, but as it is evident love was out of the question, I must give her credit for her present conduct.’

Lady Sarah Lennox was born in 1745, and had a charming and romantic disposition; having lost

## ANNE SEYMOUR DAMER

both her parents at an early age, she was brought up by her grandmother, Lady Cadogan, and lived at one time with her sister, Lady Caroline Fox. She was a very beautiful young woman, and when she was about sixteen years of age the Prince of Wales, afterwards George III., conceived a passion for her. As King he still admired her greatly, but, not wishing to make her his wife or his mistress, he subdued his passion by the strength of his reason, his principles and sense of public duty. She acted as bridesmaid at his marriage with Princess Charlotte of Mecklenburg in 1761. Shortly after this she herself married, her husband being Mr. (afterwards Sir) Thomas Charles Bunbury of Barton and Milden in Suffolk. In 1769 she left her husband, living for some months under the protection of her cousin, Lord William Gordon. She however soon tired of him, and went with her child to her brother's place, Goodwood, where she led a perfectly blameless life. Her husband having divorced her in 1776, she married in 1781 the Honble. George Napier, by whom she had a large family; she lived to the age of eighty-one and was greatly respected by all who knew her.

The romantic episode in her own career which happened at about the same time as the disagreement which arose between Mrs. Damer and her

## HER MARRIAGE

husband, made Lady Sarah take a more lenient view of the situation than did other friends and relations.

Mr. Damer's chief grievance against his wife was that she was so constantly away from home, but he seems to have been a difficult person to live with. Heir to a fortune of not less than £30,000 a year, which he seemed bent on squandering before it came to him, he was one of a wild, foolish set about London, whose whole glory in life was centred in the curl of a coat-collar and the brim of a hat. These young fops made up for want of wit by the most extravagant display of ridiculous eccentricity ; their chief delight seems to have been to astonish their friends, and Damer found an added satisfaction in thus annoying his amiable wife. He appeared three times a day in a new suit. The extent of his wardrobe may be imagined from the statement that at his death it was sold for £15,000, which appears a large amount for even one so extravagant, but it must be remembered that these were the days of silk, lace, and embroidery, and that men's clothes then could cost as much as or even more than did those of the ladies.

All this folly and extravagance could only end in ruin, and Damer, like most spendthrifts, borrowed largely from the Jews. His wife bore

## ANNE SEYMOUR DAMER

with his folly as patiently as possible, but at the cost of all affection for him.

The year following her marriage Mrs. Damer was much concerned for her father, whose house was set on fire<sup>1</sup> and robbed by one of his servants. Lady Mary Coke writes of the incident in her *Diary* on March 2, 1768: 'I received a note from Lady Harrington, to desire I would tell her something about Mr. Conway and Lady Ailesbury, for she could not rest a moment easy till she knew they were safe, after the terrible accident that happened last night. You may guess how greatly surprised and alarmed I was with such a note. I dare not send to their house for fear of something bad, but inquired of the servants if they had heard if anything had happened at Mr. Conway's. They told me the house had been on fire, but that it was extinguished with little or no damage. This gave me courage to write to Lady Ailesbury to know how she did, and to tell her I would wait on her, which I did in about an hour, and found it a very bad affair. The inside of the library is quite demolished; all his military books, that he has been collecting all his life, all burned, every picture in the room and most of his papers, and though the drawers of the library were not destroyed, only the middle of the table, yet bills

<sup>1</sup> The portion damaged was rebuilt by General Conway in 1772.





PORTRAIT AT CAME HOUSE (1768)

*Reproduced by permission of the Earl of Portarlington*



## HER MARRIAGE

to the value of £900 are gone, and the drawers they found open. This circumstance, with some others, gives too much suspicion to its being a robbery, and that this room was set on fire on purpose. This makes the event (melancholy enough in itself) still more dreadful, yet I never saw people behave with so much philosophy. His books and his pictures he laments, but bears the loss of the money with patience.'

On March 8th Lady Mary went to the opera with Lady Thanet and Mrs. Damer; the latter, she states, gave her the following account of the robbery: 'The person, as Lady Strafford will have wrote you word, was recommended to Mr. Conway by the Duke of Richmond, and he carried him to Germany to draw plans, and he remained with him till he came home, and by that means became so familiar in his family that there were few days that he was not in his house. He was married to Mrs. Damer's maid, and had been with the servants till ten o'clock, when he pretended to go away, but privately went into the garrets, that he knew were not made use of, where he locked himself in and continued till two o'clock, and thinking that everybody was asleep, came out and went downstairs, and by the ashes that remained in the grate of the hall he lighted a candle he brought in his pocket for the wicked

## ANNE SEYMOUR DAMER

purpose he put it to. He says he did not know there was a large sum of money in the drawers, but was sure that was the place where Mr. Conway always kept what money he had in the house. He accordingly took the bills, and then, putting the candle upon the table, put all the papers upon it, and when he saw it was on fire, he went out, letting himself out of the door of the court, where by the help of the trees, he got over the wall, but stayed, as I understand, till he saw the smoke and was sure the house was on fire. The next day he went very calmly to the house, and finding the drawers were not burned, he thought it would be suspected the bills were stolen, upon which he immediately went to the bank to get them changed, signing his name as Thomas Williams. Mr. Conway sent for the writing and immediately knew it to be his, upon which the Duke of Richmond and him (*sic*) contrived the following plan: they sent for him to the Duke's house to look at some plans about which they pretended to be very busy; the two clerks from the bank who had changed the bills were ordered to come into the room as if on business with the Duke, but with the motive to consider him well, and if they could take their oath that he was the person who had brought the bills to the bank, then it was agreed on that one of them was to give the Duke

## HER MARRIAGE

a paper, which was to be a sign to Mr. Conway to lay hold of him, which he did, saying, "You are the man that robbed me and set my house on fire." At first he denied it, but in a few moments he owned it all, and was immediately committed to prison. He has now acknowledged that he robbed one of the King's messengers at Paris of twenty guineas. This account I had from Mrs. Damer and Lord Frederick Campbell.'

Next month, she goes on to say, that Mr. Conway told her he had received so melancholy a letter from the wife of the man who had robbed and set his house on fire, that he owned it had moved him. Lady Ailesbury wrote to the same effect: 'I don't wonder at them, and yet I fear they are in the wrong, as crimes like his ought to be punished. I was told that when the story was first mentioned to the King, His Majesty said, "Now I am sure that when this man is condemned, Conway will be teasing us to pardon him, but I am determined to hang him." The King, it seems, knew him (Mr. Conway), for I think he will try to have his sentence changed to transportation.'

In spite of Mr. Conway's efforts the man was eventually hanged, and the execution took place on May 12th, when Lady Mary writes: 'General

## ANNE SEYMOUR DAMER

Conway's man was not hanged till this morning. Two of my servants went to see him, a curiosity I much disapproved of, as I think it shows great hardness of heart, but one of them told me he only waited till the rope was put about his neck ; he said he appeared terribly dejected, and seemed half-dead before he got to Tyburn. There were, they told me, very few spectators ; the mob has at present other amusements. The riots, I am told, continue, and several people have been killed. I think the times are growing unquiet.'

There are a few other references to Mrs. Damer in Lady Mary Coke's *Diary* : ' On May 23rd Mrs. Damer and Lady Ailesbury came to me here,' and on March 9th of the following year is the entry : ' As I came out of the opera with Mrs. Damer, Lord Gower was handing Lady Susan Stuart to her chair ; perhaps he will marry her.' On May 9th she states that she met Mr. and Mrs. Damer at dinner at the Spanish Ambassador's ; at this date they were apparently going out together. Lady Ailesbury was not well at this time, and came from Park Place to London to consult Sir William Duncan, but when Lady Mary Coke was staying at Park Place in July, she found ' her disorder better,' and said she must indeed be a good walker to keep company with Mr. Conway and Lady Ailesbury, ' the hills being

## HER MARRIAGE

steep at that delightful place.' On this visit they passed their days in playing bowls and fishing, and their evenings generally in playing a game called Pope Joan.

On February 3, 1769, Lady Mary Coke writes : 'Lady Lyttelton and Mrs. Damer are so great admirers of the French Ambassadors, that they both insisted she was wellbred, though few people are of that opinion.' In the following week, after having dined at the Portuguese Minister's, Lady Mary went to Lady Ailesbury's, where she found Lord Strafford, Mrs. Damer, and the Dowager Lady Waldegrave. She was greatly annoyed with Lady Waldegrave's and Mrs. Damer's behaviour, as they whispered to each other while she was telling Lady Ailesbury and Lord Strafford of a fire she had seen while she was dining at the Portuguese Minister's, but she was still more angry because Lady Waldegrave won five-and-twenty guineas off her at Lou, and said she could not stay longer to give her her revenge. On February 17th she went to play Lou at Lady Milton's house, where she again noticed that the Duke of Dorset (formerly Mr. Sackville) showed an undue admiration for the Duchess of Richmond. As he was staying at Richmond House during the Duke's absence, Lady Mary was anxious lest reports should arise to the disadvantage of the Duchess,

## ANNE SEYMOUR DAMER

whom she considered imprudent rather than guilty.

On June 9th we hear that Mrs. Damer was at Strawberry Hill, and 'though in an English night-gown, had her head dressed like her French friends.'

In September both Mr. and Mrs. Damer were at Park Place, his mother, Lady Milton, having gone to Bath for her health. On July 4, 1769, George Selwyn met Lady Harrington, Lady Barrymore, and Mrs. Damer at Vauxhall, where 'there was fine music; he had to pay thirty-six shillings for these fine doings.' On June 15, 1771, Lady Harrington, Lady Harriet Stanhope and Mrs. Damer came on horse-back to see Lady Mary Coke at Notting Hill, arriving at half-past two o'clock, a most inconvenient hour, as she always dined at three o'clock when she was alone; so as she was only half dressed when they arrived, they were kept waiting. They did not stay very long, but went over the house and garden, gathering some roses before leaving. During this same year Lady Ailesbury and the Damers were in Scotland while General Conway was at Portsmouth, directing a scheme of fortifications. Lady Mary recounts a very unpleasant incident which happened to him in the following year. At a Review held by the King, Conway, who was





STATUE—AS THE MUSE OF SCULPTURE

*By G. Cerrachi*



## HER MARRIAGE

standing by his Majesty and had an order to give, touched his horse with his spur to make it advance. Instead of advancing, his horse kicked the King's horse so severely that the King was obliged to dismount. Every one was sorry for General Conway, who was much distressed, but the King behaved with great good-nature, and did all in his power to relieve the General's uneasiness.

In 1772 Mrs. Damer travelled for some time on the Continent for her health, which was always rather delicate and particularly so now, owing to the anxiety caused by her husband's extravagant life. She returned in October, and was presented at Court on October 8th.

On January 30, 1774, she visited Lady Mary Coke in the company of Lady Harrington and Lady Harriet Stanhope; but this, like the former visit, was an interruption, for Lady Mary was worried with her bills. Subsequently, she went with her mother and Lady Harriet Stanhope to Paris, where they passed the whole winter, and towards the end of the year were present at a ball given by Louis XVI. and Marie Antoinette, at which Norwegian and Lapland peasant dress was *de rigueur*. They were joined in Paris on November 5th by General Conway, on his return from his mission to Frederick the Great, who had

## ANNE SEYMOUR DAMER

received him with much distinction. While in Paris Mrs. Damer became acquainted with the beautiful Princesse de Lamballe, who afterwards visited her in London; she also became intimate with Horace Walpole's old friend, Madame du Deffand, whose salon on a Sunday evening was filled with her faithful admirers and all the most brilliant celebrities of Paris.

This wonderful old lady had been at one time mistress of the famous Regent, Duke d'Orléans, but this did not in any way degrade her in the eyes of her friends. At the time Mrs. Damer was intimate with her, she was totally blind but very far-seeing in the manner in which she directed the conversation of her matchless company.

At the time of their visit to Paris, Lord Hertford (Mrs. Damer's uncle) was Ambassador there. General Conway and his party returned to England early in 1775. The ladies brought back all the latest fashions, including some magnificent plumes as head-dresses. But on their return to London they found that the Duchess of Devonshire had higher feathers than they had, so they tried to get some even higher, but without success, until they applied at an undertaker's, who promised that when his horses returned he hoped to be able to supply the ladies with the feathers they desired.

## HER MARRIAGE

Of this visit to Paris, Lady Ailesbury wrote with much enthusiasm ; she says of Conway, 'Savez-vous combien il connaît déjà de personnes dans Paris ? Quatre-vingt-dix. Il n'est nullement sauvage.'

It was on their return to England that Mrs. Damer found her husband's behaviour so reprehensible that she decided finally to separate from him. To a woman of her refined and delicate temperament, brought up as she had been by such devoted parents, with such a careful moral training from her earliest childhood, this must have been most galling.

# ANNE SEYMOUR DAMER

## CHAPTER VII

### HER HUSBAND'S DEATH

IN July 1776 General Conway had an attack of facial paralysis, which it was supposed had been brought on by worry concerning his daughter's unhappy marriage, but which passed off without leaving any ill effects. It was alleged that he had settled £10,000 upon his daughter as her fortune, and that this provision had gone with the rest towards paying the Damers' debts, which now amounted to over £70,000.

At this period General Conway must have been pressed for money; he was spending large sums in beautifying his estate at Park Place, and with such expensive works in hand he felt unable to assist his daughter further. That Lord Milton did not attempt to help his daughter-in-law in the payment of his son's debts seems strange. He was a very rich man, but a most unpopular landlord, and had spent large sums on his place,<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> His town house was in Park Lane, and stood on the site of the present Dorchester House, built for Mr. Holford in 1852-4 from designs by Mr. Lewis Vulliamy.

## HER HUSBAND'S DEATH

Milton Abbey House in Dorsetshire, where a few years later (in 1786) he pulled down the whole of the ancient town of Milton, which had grown up around the Abbey, because it was too close to his residence and proved an annoyance to him. The present village of Milton was built with the materials which he obtained from the buildings of the old town. He, however, preserved the ancient Abbey Church, and employed James Wyatt to restore it; expending, so it is stated, upon this restoration alone, over £60,000. When he decided to pull down the old town, he converted the graveyard into his lawns, destroying the graves and treating the bones of the parishioners with much irreverence. There is a tradition in the village that he died from a most gruesome disease, contracted owing to the disturbance of these bodies, but, according to the account of an old parishioner, the removal of the town, which was situated in a most unhealthy spot and usually flooded in the winter, was of great advantage to the inhabitants.

To return to John Damer. Having gone from bad to worse, he at last became totally immersed in debt, and again tried to persuade his father to pay his liabilities; this Lord Milton absolutely declined to do, refusing even to see him. His brothers, who were also at this time in the same

## ANNE SEYMOUR DAMER

plight, were unable to help him. Finding that there was no hope of extricating himself, and that matters had reached a climax, Damer formed the unhappy resolve of depriving himself of existence.

On August 15, 1776, at three o'clock in the morning, he shot himself at the Bedford Arms in Covent Garden; 'having had supper with four common women, a blind fiddler, and no other man, he dismissed his seraglio, Orpheus being ordered to come up again in half an hour. When the fiddler returned he found a dead silence and smelt gunpowder. He called, the master of the house came up, and found Mr. Damer sitting in a chair dead, with a pistol by his side and another in his pocket; the ball had not gone through his head or made any report; on the table lay a scrap of paper with these words, "The people of the house are not to blame for what has happened, which was my own act." This was the sole tribute he paid to justice and decency.' Thus wrote Horace Walpole to Sir Horace Mann on August 20th, describing the tragedy that had befallen his beloved cousin, Mrs. Damer, whom, to use his own words, he 'loved as his own child.' 'What a catastrophe,' he writes, 'for a man of thirty-two,<sup>1</sup> heir to two-and-twenty thousand

<sup>1</sup> John Damer was born on June 25, 1742, and was therefore thirty-four at the time of his death.





PORTRAIT

*From an Engraving by R. Cooper, 1810*



## HER HUSBAND'S DEATH

a year. We are persuaded that lunacy, not distress, was the sole cause of his fate. Lord Milton, whom nothing can soften, wreaks his fury on Mrs. Damer, though she deserves only pity and shows no resentment. He insists on selling her jewels, this is all the hurt he can do her.'

Lord Carlisle, writing to George Selwyn on August 17, 1776, says: 'A coroner's inquest sat on Mr. Damer's body and a verdict of lunacy was returned. What were Mr. Damer's motives for so dreadful an action? There was no man more indifferent to me, but the account shocked me extremely. It is a bad example to others in misery. It makes people think of having recourse to that method of finishing their calamities, without which, perhaps, it had never entered their heads. If it was not so selfish an action, it would be difficult to condemn it in some cases. There never appeared anything like madness in him, yet the company he kept seemed indeed but a bad preparation for eternity.'

Mrs. Damer herself was away from London, and Charles James Fox went to meet her to break the news to her.

The Hon. Thomas Townshend, also writing to George Selwyn at the same date, says:—

'Mary was in some measure prepared for the

## ANNE SEYMOUR DAMER

melancholy story of Mr. Damer's death, as we had last night some account (though a less circumstantiated one than you give) of that terrible and shocking event, we all feel extremely for what Lord Milton particularly must suffer for the loss of a son (whom he had upon the whole so much reason to esteem and to love) in so deplorable a way.'

Lady Sarah Lennox, writing to Lady Susan O'Brien on September 19, 1776, gives the following gossip anent Mr. Damer's death and Mrs. Damer's straitened circumstances: 'Was not you surprised at Mr. Damer's death? I had no idea that he was madish even, and in my mind he has proved that he was quite mad, for I cannot account for his death and the manner of it. I am provoked at Lord Milton, for I was throwing away my pity for him, and behold, not even the death of his son has softened him about his family in general, or taught him generosity. He has been very shabby about Lionel Damer, and quite brutal to Mrs. Damer who, by the way, behaves with all propriety in the world; when one commends a widow for behaving well, it is allowing that love was out of the question, which is to be sure in her case. Lord Milton has taken her diamonds, furniture, carriages, and everything away to pay the debts with, and he abused

## HER HUSBAND'S DEATH

her for staying in another man's house (for she stayed a few days there before she went to the country, and the house is another's, being seized). Upon hearing this she left it, and chose to go in a hackney coach, taking only her inkstand, a few books, her dog, and her maid with her, out of that fine house. I think it was spirited and noble in her; she had three guineas in her pocket, which were to last her till Michaelmas, for Lord Milton did not offer her any assistance. Her sister, as you may imagine, attended her and gave her money, and she went to Mr. Conway's house; she is to live with him for a year in order to save one year's income (£2500) which she gives towards the payment of Mr. Damer's debts, which cannot be quite paid by the sale of everything even. The poor servants are owed fourteen months' wages, which I think one of the most melancholy reflections, for you see that they are in absolute want of bread, if they are unlucky in not getting a place immediately. She paid (out of the Duchess' money) those servants who were in immediate want, the rest were too generous to take any, and refused absolutely to take more than would serve them for immediate use; they are all fond of her and cried bitterly at her leaving the house, in such a way too, but the Damers tell me she walked through the house amidst

## ANNE SEYMOUR DAMER

them all, into a hackney coach, with a firmness that is quite heroic, for though she may be accused of not loving her husband, she cannot be accused of not loving her house and all its grandeur.'

To one of so proud a nature this must have been a sad trial, and it is difficult to realise how Mrs. Damer managed to go through it all; she was, however, fortunate in having her beloved sister, the Duchess of Richmond, with her during all this time of stress and anxiety. Her father was at Jersey and her mother must have been with him; otherwise, had she been at Park Place, she would have come immediately to her daughter's assistance.

After all this trouble it is not surprising to hear that she was very unwell. Horace Walpole writes to General Conway on August 31, 1776: 'I am glad I did not know of Mrs. Damer's sore throat till it is almost well. Pray take care of her and do not catch it.' From this letter it may be presumed that she had then joined her parents in Jersey.

Mrs. Damer was left with a jointure of £2500 a year, but she gave up the first year's income towards paying her husband's debts. That her jointure was not very regularly paid is evident from the following autograph letter, written to

## HER HUSBAND'S DEATH

Mr. Sharpe, her man of business, on August 20,  
1780 :—

‘SIR,—I must trouble you to write a very pressing letter to my Lord Milton about my money, as the irregularity of his payments, which was not what I expected from him, and which he promised should be otherwise, puts me under the greatest difficulties. I have not had any money sent for some time, and people are so pressing with me to be paid that I do not know what to do. If I could but get what is due to me, which is a year’s jointure, I should be able to satisfy everybody and have money in my pocket, and as it is I am distressed, and now at any rate I suppose I shall have the Christmas quarter, though the Midsummer one is almost two months passed—one thing I beg you will insist upon from his Lordship, that is, that he will let me know what I am to depend upon, as I must take measures in consequence, for there is no going on, as so in these times, as he must know himself. I am sorry to give you so much trouble, but I fancy Mr. Clementson does not venture to say much to his Lordship on this subject, which indeed I do not at all wonder at.—I am, sir, yours most truly,

ANNE DAMER.

‘PARK PLACE, *August 20, 1780.*’

# ANNE SEYMOUR DAMER

## CHAPTER VIII

### HER WIDOWHOOD

Now that Mrs. Damer was left a childless widow, she was able to turn her attention to the one subject that really gave her more interest than any other—her desire to excel in the art of sculpture. During the nine years of her married life she does not seem to have had much time to pursue this occupation, although she had made several trips to the Continent, where she had learnt much in the famous galleries and studios of France and Italy.

Pressure for money to pay her late husband's debts, as well as her health, led her for a while to spend her time abroad. She was at this date about twenty-eight years of age, and, notwithstanding her many accomplishments, anxious to improve herself in the knowledge of art. During the first winter of her widowhood, accompanied by her aunt, Lady William Campbell, she travelled through Spain, Portugal, and Italy, and spent some time in Paris. On this expedi-





PORTRAIT BY R. COSWAY, R.A.



## HER WIDOWHOOD

tion Mrs. Damer was able to study the best models and to obtain the best instruction in sculpture. Horace Walpole wrote to Sir Horace Mann: 'Mrs. Damer, General Conway's daughter, is going abroad to confirm a very delicate constitution; she has one of the most solid understandings I ever knew; astonishingly improved, but with so much reserve and modesty, that I have often told Mr. Conway he does not know the extent of her capacity and the solidity of her reason. We have by accident discovered that she writes Latin like Pliny, and is learning Greek. In Italy she will be a prodigy; she models like Bernini; has excelled the moderns in the similitudes of her busts, and has lately begun on marble.'

In the following year Mrs. Damer returned to England. On September 7, 1778, Horace Walpole wrote to her father, who was then at Jersey: 'The only thing you will care for knowing is, that I never saw Mrs. Damer better in her life, nor look so well, you may trust me, who am so apt to be frightened about her.' In another letter, written about the same time from Paris, he says: 'Tell Mrs. Damer that the fashion now is to erect the toupée into a high detached tuft of hair, like a cockatoo's crest; and this toupée they call *la physionomie*. I don't know why.'

## ANNE SEYMOUR DAMER

In 1777 General Conway, Lady Ailesbury and Mrs. Damer paid a visit to Mount Edgecumbe in Devonshire, where they were entertained by Lord Mount Edgecumbe. They admired this beautiful place vastly. Walpole writes to Mr. Conway : ‘To be sure Mount Edgecumbe has put you out of humour with Park Place.’ Madame d’Arblay (Fanny Burney) gives a good description of Mount Edgecumbe, which she visited in 1787 : ‘A very beautiful flower-garden is enclosed in a part of the grounds ; and huts, seats, and ornaments in general were well adapted to the scenery of the place ; a seat is consecrated to Mrs. Damer with an acrostic on her name by Lord Valletort.’

The following is the acrostic, which was carved in gilt letters on this stone bench :—

‘D’avid ne’er played the harp like thee,  
A’nson ne’er found thy like at sea,  
M’ara had not a melody like thine,  
E’dgecumbe, who thinks thee all divine,  
R’ecords thy worth in every line.’

On October 5, 1777, Horace Walpole writes to General Conway : ‘You are exceeding good, and I shall assuredly accept your proposal in the fullest sense, and to ensure Mrs. Damer, I beg I may expect you on Saturday the 11th. If Lord and Lady William Campbell will do me the

## HER WIDOWHOOD

honour of accompanying you, I shall be most happy to see them, and expect Miss Campbell (afterwards Lady Johnston). Let me know about then, that the state bed-room may be aired.' In November of the same year Lady Sarah Lennox writes: 'Mrs. Damer is improved, I think; she is vastly less of a fine lady, and appears to have more sensibility than I ever saw in her manner before. She has behaved very properly in every respect as a widow; she did everything in regard to his servants that showed respect and regard for his memory, for she paid all she could. . . . She now acts sensibly on her own account, for she has taken a small house, and lives with propriety without affecting splendour, and says that, having shown how to live well when she thought she had money, she is resolved to show she knows how to live prudently now she has not; for though her income is good, it will not do for show and the comforts of life too, without out-reasoning it, and she prefers the comforts and not being in debt, to show. She also means to travel, I believe. I have been running on about these people as if you cared about them, which I daresay you do not, for whenever one is put an inch out of the great circle one becomes a looker-on, and in doing so one acquires an excess of indifference about it all, which one

## ANNE SEYMOUR DAMER

easily loses the moment one returns among them again.'

The small house to which Lady Sarah refers was probably the one that Mrs. Damer occupied for some time in Sackville Street, and from which she wrote the following autograph letter to the Earl of Buchan :—

'MY LORD,—Nothing but ill-health to which I am subject, would have prevented me from answering sooner the letter with which I was honoured by your Lordship. I shall think myself fortunate if any assistance in my power can second your Lordship's ideas on the subject you mention, and would willingly make a "*secth*" for your Lordship's approbation, were I not engaged at present in some considerable works that demand my whole attention. Should your Lordship not have in view the immediate execution of your plans, I shall be happy at some future period of time to offer my services.<sup>1</sup>—I have the honour to be, my Lord, your Lordship's most obedient and most humble servant,

'ANNE DAMER.'

In 1779 Mrs. Damer met with an adventure that to any other woman would have proved an

<sup>1</sup> The state of her health at the time prevented her from undertaking his commission.

## HER WIDOWHOOD

experience of great alarm, but with her usual coolness and intrepidity she thought little of it. She was crossing the Channel on a visit to her father, who was then the Governor of Jersey. At this time the War of Independence was at its height, and the Channel being full of American and French men-of-war, it was necessary to run the gauntlet of the enemy's ships. The packet on which Mrs. Damer sailed was challenged by a French vessel. As it was totally unfitted to engage in action, and had little chance of making its escape, a sailing match took place between the two vessels, and several shots were fired. This did not in the least alarm Mrs. Damer, who appears to have thoroughly enjoyed the experience. After a four hours' fight the excitement culminated in the victory of the French ship; the English vessel struck its colours, and the sailors and passengers were taken prisoners. 'La belle Anglaise,' as the French called Mrs. Damer, displayed much bravery, and they so much admired her for it that she was speedily liberated and enabled to proceed on her journey, having gained much renown for her courage.

Mrs. Damer herself was delighted at the opportunity and excitement of witnessing a naval engagement, but Horace Walpole was greatly alarmed at the danger she had been

## ANNE SEYMOUR DAMER

through. He writes to her mother from Strawberry Hill on Friday night, July 1779: 'I am not at all surprised, my dear Madam, at the intrepidity of Mrs. Damer; she always was the heroic daughter of a hero. Her sense and coolness never forsake her. I, who am not firm, shuddered at your Ladyship's account. Now that she has stood fire for four hours, I hope she will give us clear proofs of her understanding, of which I have as high an opinion as her courage, and not return in any danger.'

Lady Ailesbury had written to Walpole in great alarm about General Conway's position in Jersey. She desired Walpole to do all in his power with the authorities, to urge that a larger garrison should be kept there in these troublesome times; but this he told her would not be advisable, as it would tempt the French thither, and might encourage General Conway to make an impracticable defence. If left as it was, the French would not trouble about Jersey, for should they be successful, they fully intended to pour vast thousands of troops into England, and had already threatened to burn the capital itself. He goes on to say: 'You have too much sense, Madam, to be imposed upon by my arguments, if they are insubstantial. You do know that I have my terrors for Mr. Conway; but at present they



## HER WIDOWHOOD

are out of the question, from the insignificance of the island. Do not listen to any rumours, nor believe a single one till it has been canvassed over and over. Fear, folly and fifty motives will coin new reports every hour in such a conjecture. I never, like most superstitious people, believe auguries against my wishes. We have been fortunate in the escape of Mrs. Damer, and in the defeat at Jersey, even before Mr. Conway arrived, and therefore I depend on the same future prosperity.'

On September 13, 1779, he writes to Mr. Conway himself on Mrs. Damer's safe return: 'You may imagine how happy I am at Mrs. Damer's return, and at her not being at Naples, as she was likely to have been, at the dreadful explosion of Vesuvius. Surely it has glutted Sir William's rage for volcanoes. How poor Lady Hamilton's nerves stood it I do not conceive. Oh mankind, mankind, are there not calamities in store for us, but must destruction be our amusement and pursuit?'

Mrs. Damer had probably intended going on to Naples from Jersey to visit the Hamiltons, but the dates of the last two letters show that she would not have had time to have got there and back. She probably postponed her visit<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> She visited the Hamiltons at Naples some years later.

## ANNE SEYMOUR DAMER

owing to the unsettled state of France, and her father did not wish her to run the risk of any further adventures. She was very intimate with both Sir William and Lady Hamilton, who had stayed at Park Place. General Conway had known Sir William for many years, and also his first wife.

A few days after Mrs. Damer's return from Jersey, General Conway wrote to his brother, Lord Hertford, with regard to the Prize Commission at Jersey. He was annoyed that the Government had appointed to act on this Commission as agents for him, certain persons who were not inhabitants of the island. He had not been consulted by Lord Hertford or Lord Amherst; had he been, he would have suggested several people of the island, who should have been nominated to serve on the Commission. He trusted that his brother would see his way to arrange something to get over this difficulty, and said that he hoped to obtain his leave during the following week, if he could get a ship to sail in. He was anxious at this time to be at home at Park Place, where he was then carrying out so many improvements.





STATUE OF GEORGE III.

*By Anne Seymour Damer*

## HER ART

### CHAPTER IX

#### HER ART

WHEN established in London for any length of time, Mrs. Damer gave up everything else to her pursuit of sculpture. Her study of the best models in France, Spain and Italy, now enabled her to produce works of a far better type than hitherto, works which Horace Walpole with pardonable pride in his accomplished cousin, declared to be quite equal to the antique in form.

It was most gratifying to him that a woman of rank and beauty, possessing the usual accomplishments of a woman of quality, should have gained a proficiency in art which would eventually place her name amongst those whom posterity would contemplate with feelings of admiration and esteem. It has been said that Mrs. Damer received great assistance in some of her works from her masters and other artists; but even were this the case, she achieved a great reputation, although it may have been enhanced by the

## ANNE SEYMOUR DAMER

peculiarity of a woman in her position devoting herself to a pursuit so rarely followed by her sex.

Horace Walpole in his *Anecdotes of Painting* describes the art of Mrs. Damer with enthusiasm.

‘A third female genius is Mrs. Damer, daughter of General Conway, in a work more difficult and far more uncommon than painting, the annals of statuary record few artists of the fair sex, and not one that I recollect of any celebrity. Mrs. Damer’s busts of life are not inferior to the antique, and their’s, we are sure, are not more like. Her shock-dog, large as life, and only not alive, has a looseness and softness in the curls that seemed impossible in terra-cotta: it rivals the marble of Bernini in the Royal collection. As the ancients have left us five animals of equal merit with their human figures, namely the Barberini goat, the Tuscan boar, the Mattei eagle, the eagle at Strawberry Hill, and Mr. Jennings’s, now Mr. Duncombe’s dog (Mr. Jennings sold this to Mr. Duncombe for £1000), the talent of Mrs. Damer must appear in the most distinguished light. Aided by some instructions from that masterly statuary Mr. Bacon, she has attempted and executed a bust in marble. Cerrachi, from whom she received four or five lessons, has given a whole figure of her as the Muse of Sculpture,

## HER ART

in which he has happily preserved the graceful lightness of her form.'

Madame d'Arblay (Fanny Burney) on the other hand depreciated the works of Mrs. Damer. 'Her performances in sculpture were of no great merit, but were prodigiously admired by Horace Walpole, who had a notorious weakness for the works of persons of quality.'

This remark of Madame d'Arblay's is illustrated by the following extracts from Horace Walpole's letters:—

'Sept. 7, 1784.—Met Sir William Hamilton at dinner at Mrs. Garrick's, he was returning to the kingdom of cinders (Naples). A Mrs. Walsingham was there with her son and daughter; she, the daughter, is an imitation of Mrs. Damer, and modelled a bust of her brother, who is a good looking young man. The daughter is Miss Boyle, and a real genius, she has carved these tablets in marble, with boys designed by herself; these are for a chimney piece.'

'The moment I enter Strawberry Hill, I hasten into the little parlour, which I have now hung for the reception of "The Death of Wolsey" (painted by Miss Agnes Berry), with Lady Di's (Lady Diana Beauclerk) gipsies, and Mrs. Damer's

## ANNE SEYMOUR DAMER

dogs. I defy your favourite Italy to produce three such monuments of female genius.’<sup>1</sup>

Mrs. Damer’s works consisted chiefly of groups of animals and busts of her friends. In 1778 she carved a bust of herself, which she presented to the Royal Gallery of Florence, where it was placed in the Hall of ancient and modern painters. The poet, Erasmus Darwin, although he cannot be taken as a great judge of art, sings her powers in the following lines :—

‘Long with soft touch shall Damer’s chisel charm ;  
With grace delight us and with beauty warm ;  
Foster’s fine form shall hearts’ unborn engage  
And Melbourne’s smile enchant another age.’

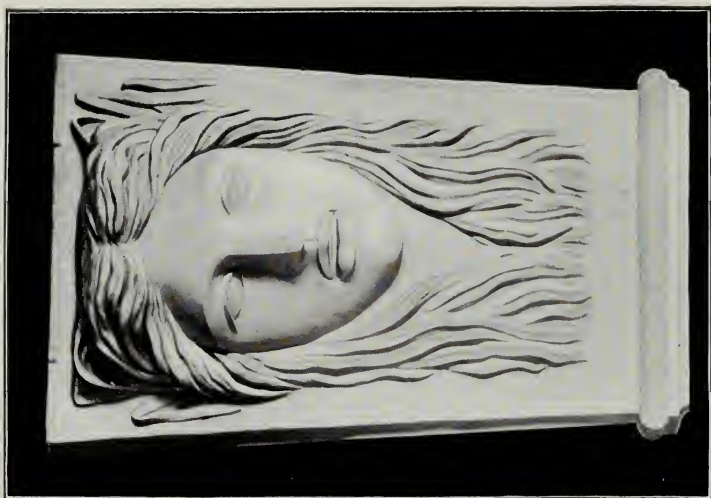
The bust of Lady Elizabeth Foster, afterwards the Duchess of Devonshire, to which Darwin here refers, is now in the possession of the Duke of Devonshire, and that of Viscountess Melbourne is in the collection of the Earl Cowper at Panshanger.

Among other busts that she carved from life and imaginary heads may be mentioned that of Sir Joseph Banks in the British Museum, and that of Thalia, a portrait of her friend, Miss Farren, the well-known actress, who in 1797 married the twelfth Earl of Derby as his second wife. Another important work is the colossal

<sup>1</sup> Extract from a letter, April 18, 1791, to Miss Mary Berry.







MASKS OF THAME AND ISIS ON HENLEY BRIDGE

*By Anne Seymour Damer*

## HER ART

statue of George III., which stands over eight feet high, and is placed in the Register Office of Scotland at Edinburgh. Her uncle, Lord Frederick Campbell, was at the time Lord Clerk Register of Scotland, and to his influence, rather than to its value as a work of art, the statue owes the distinguished place which it occupies. It is roughly carved, but was a gigantic work for a woman to undertake.

A model of an osprey in terra-cotta was highly prized by Horace Walpole, in whose possession it was at Strawberry Hill. Concerning this gift he wrote to Lady Ossory: 'I hope your ladyship will approve of the motto I design for it. Do you remember the statue at Milan with this legend: "Non me Praxiteles, sed Marcus finxit Agrati."'

He therefore had the following pentameter engraved beneath the group:—

'Non me Praxiteles finxit, at Anna Damer.'

'Not me, Praxiteles, but Damer's hand hath formed.'

She also executed a bust of her father, and two busts of her mother; one in Portland stone, which she placed on her monument in Sundridge Church, the other in marble, which she bequeathed with other heirlooms to Lady Johnston.

The most widely known, perhaps, of Mrs. Damer's works, are the two large masks of Thame

## ANNE SEYMOUR DAMER

and Isis, which form the key-stones of the centre arch of the beautiful bridge at Henley-on-Thames. The one to the north represents Thame, with fishes playing in the waves of his beard, and bulrushes inserted in the fillet which binds his temples. The mask to the south represents Isis, and is said to be a portrait of Mrs. Damer's intimate friend and neighbour, Miss Freeman of Fawley Court.

This beautiful bridge was built in 1787, from designs of a Mr. Hayward; it cost £10,000, and consists of five elliptical arches with balustrades of stone. Horace Walpole wrote to the Earl of Strafford, September 7, 1784:—

‘Mrs. Damer herself is modelling two masks for the key-stones of the new bridge at Henley,’ and in another letter about the same date he wrote to the Countess of Ossory, he says that General Conway himself regulated the curve of the arch of this bridge, and he likens its beauty to the Ponte di Trinita at Florence. On another occasion he states ‘the bridge is perfect, as if bridges were natural productions, and the masks, as if the Romans had left them there.’

A statue projected but never carried out was one of her uncle, Lord William Campbell, a man of undaunted courage and great strength. The statue was to represent him in the act of

## HER ART

rescuing a man from drowning at Henley. The design only for this statue was made. As a sculptor she had attained great celebrity, both fashion and royalty being loud in appreciation of her talents, and most anxious to obtain specimens of her work. So many of her tasteful and classical productions were widely scattered, the majority being in the houses of her friends, that there is great difficulty in making a complete list of her works. The following is compiled from Dallaway's *Lives of Painters* and Walpole's *Anecdotes of Painting* :—

Two kittens in white marble, and the osprey eagle, both in the possession of Horace Walpole at Strawberry Hill.

A dog in marble, presented to Queen Charlotte, and afterwards the property of Her Royal Highness the Landgravine of Hesse, Homburg.

A group of two sleeping dogs in white marble, given by Mrs. Damer to her brother-in-law, the Duke of Richmond, and now in Gordon Castle.

A marble of her own Italian greyhound (Fidèle).

Models in terra-cotta of several other dogs.

The statue of George III. at Edinburgh.

The bust of Charles James Fox, presented to Napoleon in 1815.

The two masks of Henley Bridge, in Portland stone.

## ANNE SEYMOUR DAMER

The bust in stone of her mother, Lady Ailesbury.

A bust, heroic size, of Lord Nelson, in the Common Council Chamber at the Guildhall.

Model in terra-cotta of the bust of Sir Joseph Banks, President of the Royal Society.

A head of young Bacchus, a portrait of Prince Lubomerski, placed in the Museum of the University of Oxford.

A bust of Mrs. Siddons as the Tragic Muse.

A bust of herself in marble at the Royal Gallery of Florence.

Another bust of herself in marble, presented to R. P. Knight, Esq.,<sup>1</sup> with the following inscription :—

*'Hanc sui ipsius effigiem at vita veteris amici  
Richardi Payne Knight, sua manu fecit Anna  
Seymour Damer.'*

Isis, a bust in Greek marble; the property of T. Hope, Esq.

The bust of Viscountess Melbourne.

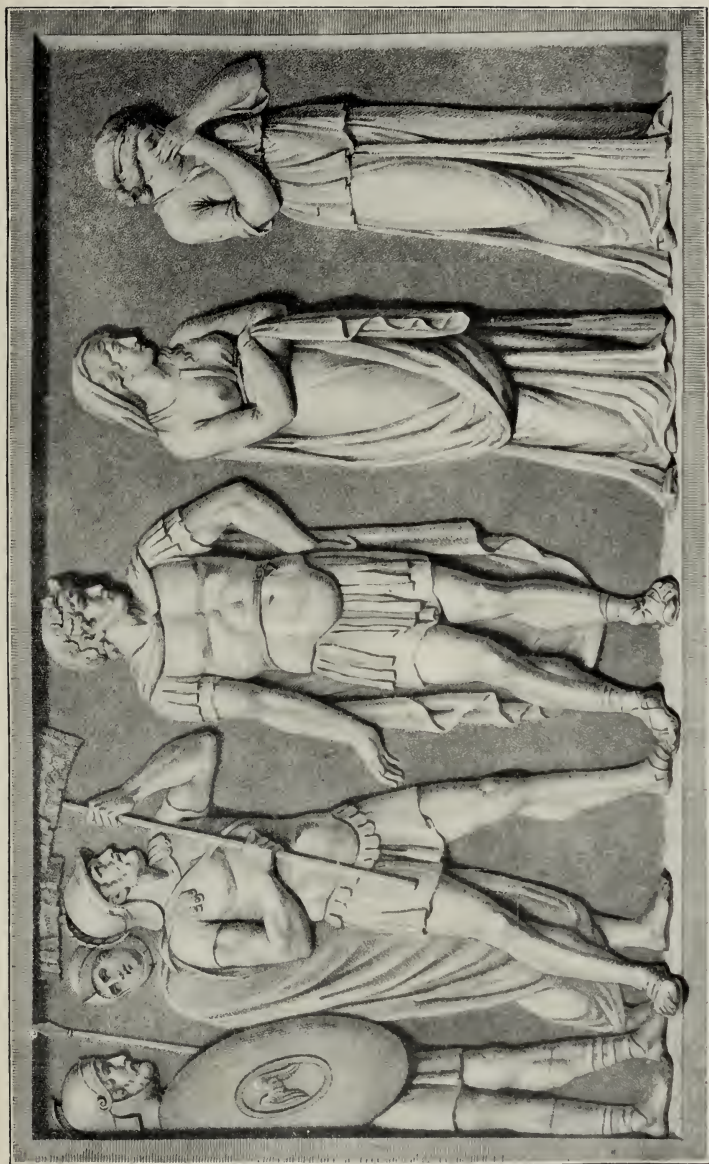
The bust of Lady Elizabeth Foster.

A bust of the Hon. Peniston Lamb, as 'Mercury,' in marble.

A bust in marble of Sir Humphry Davy, late President of the Royal Society.

Two models in terra-cotta, basso-relievo, from

<sup>1</sup> This bust is now placed with Mr. Knight's collection in the British Museum.



BASSO-RELIEVO : CORIOLANUS

*Designed by Anne Seymour Damer*









BASSO-RELIEVO : ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA

*Designed by Anne Seymour Damer*

## HER ART

Coriolanus and Mark Antony, for the Shakespeare Gallery.

A bust in marble of the late Princess Caroline.

A bust of Lady Ailesbury in marble.

A bust of her father, General Conway, in terra-cotta.

A bust of Miss Mary Berry.

A Muse's head in bronze.

A bust of Lord Nelson, model for a cast in bronze.

Another bust of Lord Nelson in bronze, made by desire of the Duke of Clarence, and presented to him at Mrs. Damer's death. It was afterwards placed in Windsor Castle. The Duke of Clarence also desired to have the cast which she had made of Mrs. Jordan's leg.

A small bust of Paris, in marble.

A bust in marble, representing Thalia, a portrait of Miss Farren.

A model of a Greyhound was exhibited in the Royal Academy, 1799, with the following inscription :—

‘ANNA · ΣΕΙΜΟΠΙΕ · ΕΠΟΙΕΙ · ΔΑΜΗΡ  
ΤΟΥΤΙ · ΠΙΣΤΟΝ · ΑΥΤΗΙ · ΚΥΝΑΡΙΟΝ.’

In the description of Mrs. Damer's works, taken from Dallaway's *Anecdotes of Art*, occurs the following passage :—‘A head, in the style of the antique, of a young Bacchanal is singular,

## ANNE SEYMOUR DAMER

not only for its beauty, but as the work of the Hon. Mrs. Damer.

‘Among the ancients no other female sculptor had attained the excellence sufficient to be rewarded; but on the revival of the arts, we have one very extraordinary instance. Mrs. Siddons as the Tragic Muse is a work upon the merit of which a professional artist might securely rest his fame. This singular proof of genius will command the admiration of posterity, as well for its grandeur as eloquence; nor will the observations of Quintilian upon Polycletus be applicable, even to a female sculptor, “aetatem graviorem dicitur resurgisse, nihil ausus praeter leves genas.” As a statuary Mrs. Damer is unrivalled, but in modelling also, not an inferior branch of art as it respects design,<sup>1</sup> but only the point of difficulty as to execution, she has several competitors of her own sex.

‘Concerning the works of Mrs. Damer, Allan Cunningham, in his *Lives of Painters*, remarks that little is to be said. He speaks of her as a vain, enterprising woman, who was constantly failing in all attempts and was constantly imagining she had succeeded. A quotation from some one called Smith, is also brought forward to assist his supposition that some of the finest touches

<sup>1</sup> Andrea Verocchio, who died in 1488, was the first who invented the method of taking off the features of the face in plaster.

## HER ART

of her works were not made by her own hands. But sneers and conjectures do not afford sufficient ground for coming to such a conclusion. That her performances were not of the highest order has never been insisted upon, but a woman of fortune and fashion who could devote herself voluntarily and enthusiastically to so laborious and difficult an art, and achieve so much success in it, as Mrs. Damer had done, must surely be no common genius among her own sex, she at least was almost a prodigy.<sup>1</sup>

It must be remembered that in Mrs. Damer's time, English women were hedged in with almost Eastern prudery as regards any artistic and intellectual efforts which might bring them before the public; but, as amateurs and in the select circle of their own friends, they were at liberty to follow the bent of their individual tastes, and many of them were remarkable for their elegant and artistic work. Lady Dorothea Savile was a good artist who etched with considerable cleverness; so too were Lady Spencer and Lady Diana Beauclerk. The 'Birth of Love,' etched by the last, has been often attributed to Bartolozzi. But the two English ladies who were pre-eminent as first-rate artists in wax and marble, were Mrs. Salmon, who excelled in *medailles* and statuettes

<sup>1</sup> From *The Georgian Era*.

## ANNE SEYMOUR DAMER

of wax, which she manipulated with extraordinary skill, and Mrs. Damer.

Charles James Fox said that he valued her talent more than his own ancient descent. She worked with wonderful rapidity, and was therefore able to execute so many works, notwithstanding the fact that owing to her position in Society she was much occupied with other pursuits. She carried on her work almost to the end of her life; in fact, the bronze replica of her bust of Nelson was finished only a few days before her death. This bust, which was a replica of a bronze cast made two years previously for the King of Tanjore, was presented to the Duke of Clarence, by her executors and Lady Johnston, two days after her death. They themselves took it to Bushy Park, and the Duke, in order to show his respect for the artist, had the bust placed in his dining-room on a pedestal formed from a piece of the mast of the *Victory*, where formerly the plaster cast had stood. When he came to the throne the bust was removed to Windsor Castle. At the same time Lady Johnston presented to the Duke the coat which Nelson had worn at the Battle of the Nile, and which he had given to Mrs. Damer when he sat to her for the bust. This coat was afterwards placed in the Painted Hall at Greenwich Hospital.

## HER ART

Mrs. Damer had made another bronze cast of this bust of Nelson, which she sent as a present to the King of Tanjore: it was on seeing this cast that the Duke of Clarence besought her to make him a copy of it.

It was at the suggestion of her cousin's husband, Sir Alexander Johnston, that she made this presentation to the King of Tanjore. 'As the most appropriate mark she could show him of the admiration which she, as an artist, entertained of his Royal Highness, in consequence of the liberal and enlightened manner in which he had encouraged the introduction and cultivation of European arts and sciences among his subjects; and in consequence of the respect which he had paid to the Naval and Military Heroes of Great Britain, by erecting a splendid monument in his country, to commemorate the great achievements which they performed during the last arduous and protracted contest which prevailed between France and England.'

The following are the circumstances which led to this transaction, and are taken from the *Oriental Herald*:—

The King of Tanjore was a Hindoo Sovereign of rank, influence, and wealth, who had been educated by a European Missionary, and had acquired a knowledge of the arts and sciences

## ANNE SEYMOUR DAMER

of Europe. His country was situated in the southern division of the peninsula of India.

Sir Alexander Johnston, while Chief-Justice and first member of His Majesty's Council of the Island of Ceylon, was anxious that the natives should have a voice in the government; he was assisted in his scheme by the King of Tanjore, whose knowledge of the Hindoo character was of great assistance. Sir Alexander paid him a visit and was received with great attention. He observed what great progress the King, as well as the persons of the highest caste and rank at his court, had made in acquiring a knowledge of European arts and sciences, and was fully convinced that it would be of the greatest advantage to the British interests in India to seize this favourable opportunity to introduce a taste for these arts among the Hindoo inhabitants of India.

On his return to England he mentioned the subject to his cousin, the Hon. Anne Seymour Damer, who with the liberality peculiar to her character, and with the zeal which she displayed on every occasion when she could promote knowledge of art, proposed of her own accord, notwithstanding the expense and labour which she would inevitably incur, to execute, with her own hands, the bust in bronze of Nelson and to send it as a present to the King of Tanjore, who had been so



## HER ART

faithful an ally of the British Government. She felt that no present could be more appropriate than a bust of the hero, who, by the victory of the Nile, had freed the British Dominions in India from the danger of being invaded by the French, and who had thereby finally secured for the King of Tanjore that tranquillity which enabled him to prosecute, without interruption, the plan which he had so wisely adopted of encouraging, amongst the people of his country, the arts and sciences of Europe. While these were the circumstances which led Mrs. Damer to make the presentation, her feelings as an artist, the high rank, the genius, and the celebrity of the artist herself, both on the Continent of Europe and in England, were considerations which rendered the present of more than ordinary interest.

The following is an autograph letter of Mrs. Damer's, written to a Mr. Buckingham at 22 Tavistock Square, the year before her death, from which letter he appears to have written the above account in the *Oriental Herald*.

'9 UPPER BROOK STREET,

'May 19, 1827.

'SIR,—I will no longer delay thanking you for your very obliging present—the engravings must

## ANNE SEYMOUR DAMER

be admired for their excellence, even did they not excite a peculiar interest from the subjects they represent, and I propose to myself much pleasure at a future moment in perusing the work to which they belong. Allow me to take this opportunity of expressing my grateful sense of the flattering manner in which you have distinguished me as an artist in your *Oriental Herald*, and to assure you how sincerely I feel gratified by *your* praises.—I have the honour to be, Sir, your obliged,

‘ANNE SEYMOUR DAMER.’

The drawing by Mrs. Damer of the metope of the Parthenon was copied, she writes, from a drawing in the possession of, and by the favour of, General Miranda, in 1808. Whether she ever carried out this design is not stated. It would have been a heavy undertaking for her, as she was then (1808) about sixty years of age.<sup>1</sup>

Before ending this chapter on the art of Mrs. Damer, another remarkable example of her work, the beautiful decoration of the Library at Fawley Court, near Henley, must be mentioned. The whole of the highly artistic inlaid woodwork of

<sup>1</sup> A metope is the space between the triglyphs of a Doric frieze.

## HER ART

the bookcases and doorways, as well as the frieze and other mural ornaments of this room, were designed and executed by her. Fawley Court belonged at the time to the Freeman family, with whom, particularly Miss Freeman, Mrs. Damer was most intimate.

# ANNE SEYMOUR DAMER

## CHAPTER X

### THE WESTMINSTER ELECTION AND PRIVATE THEATRICALS

IN 1781 Mrs. Damer went abroad, staying for some time in Rome. Horace Walpole writes to the Earl of Strafford from Strawberry Hill on August 31, 1781 :—‘Mrs. Damer certainly goes abroad this winter; I am glad of it for every reason but for her absence. I am certain it will be essential to her health, and she has so eminently a classic genius, and is herself so superior an artist, that I enjoy the pleasure she will have in visiting Italy.’

She returned from the Continent in time to take part in the Westminster Election of 1784. All the most celebrated beauties of England seem to have taken part in this election, which was to send to Parliament Charles James Fox, of whom Mrs. Damer was a most ardent supporter and a connection. Mrs. Damer was one of the three ladies who were celebrated for the famous lady’s canvass, the other two being the beautiful Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire,



WESTMINSTER ELECTION, 1784

*From a print by Rowlandson*



## THE WESTMINSTER ELECTION

and the well-known Mrs. Crewe. The great beauty of the Duchess of Devonshire entirely eclipsed the talent and charm of her associates in their memorable canvass, which was long talked of by the electors, and which attracted so much public attention, no less for its fights, bribery, and drunkenness, than for its political interest.

On the eighth day the poll was considerably against Fox. He therefore rallied his friends around him to make a great effort on his behalf. Accordingly, Mrs. Damer, in the company of the Duchess of Devonshire and Mrs. Crewe, dressed in blue and buff, Mr. Fox's colours, adopted from the American Independents, set out to canvass the electors of Westminster.

The electors were not content with only a handshake with these ladies, but, in their enthusiasm, insisted on receiving kisses. The Duchess of Devonshire submitted even to a kiss from a butcher, and the other ladies offered their fair cheeks to clamouring voters. An old elector is reported to have said: 'Lord, sir, it was a fine sight to see a grand lady come right smack up to us hardworking mortals, with a hand held out and a "Master, how-dye-do," and a laugh so loud, and talk so kind, and shake us by the hand, and say, "Give us your vote, worthy sir, a plumper for the people's friend,

## ANNE SEYMOUR DAMER

our friend, everybody's friend," and then, sir, we hummed and hawed, they would ask us for our wives and families, and if that didn't do, they'd think nothing of a kiss, aye, a dozen of them. Lord, sir, kissing was nothing to them, and it came all natural.'<sup>1</sup>

Owing to this activity and zeal displayed by the fair canvassers, the election, after lasting for forty-seven days, terminated in favour of Mr. Fox.

By character and education Fox was opposed to all despotic institutions; and had now taken up the cry of democracy. George III. had always strongly disapproved of him; on the other hand his son, the Prince of Wales, was a great believer in Fox, and took an active part in the Westminster Election.

To celebrate the victory, a procession was formed, which started from Devonshire House, Fox being carried on a car with a flag waved before him, on which were inscribed the words, 'Sacred to Female Patriotism,' in compliment to the assistance given by the celebrated three ladies who had worked on his behalf.

The carriages of the Duke of Devonshire and of the Duke of Portland attracted even less attention than that of Fox, for Colonel North, brother to Lord North, acted as footman behind

<sup>1</sup> From Allan Cunningham's *Lives of Painters*.



## THE WESTMINSTER ELECTION

the carriage, and Fox's well-known friend, Colonel Hanger, drove the carriage dressed in a coachman's coat, hat and wig. When Queen Charlotte heard of this, she dismissed Colonel North from his office as comptroller of her household, with the remark that she did not covet any one else's servant.

The procession wended its way on to Carlton House, where the Prince of Wales viewed it from a balcony, and received Fox's partisans. Later in the day the Prince dined with Mrs. Crewe in Lower Grosvenor Street, dressed in Mr. Fox's colours, and carrying in his hand a laurel wreath of victory.

From the date of this election Mrs. Damer's admiration of Fox increased, and she induced him to sit to her for the bust in marble which she afterwards presented to Napoleon.

That she should have shown so much interest in the career of a man like Charles James Fox, who was an inveterate gambler and thoroughly dissolute, seems curious. Possibly the reason for it is to be found in her desire for American Independence and her spirit of progress.

When Mrs. Damer had reached the age of thirty-nine, she took part in private theatricals, which at this time had come greatly into fashion, and, owing to the talent which she displayed,

## ANNE SEYMOUR DAMER

she was much in request. The first occasion on which she took a leading part in a dramatic performance was at the house of her brother-in-law, the Duke of Richmond, who, it is said, considered himself most fortunate in obtaining Mrs. Damer's able assistance at his entertainment. The first performance which was given at Richmond House on the evening of Friday, April 20, 1787, was the only dramatic entertainment regulated by the nobility and personages of distinction that had as yet taken place. At the rehearsals, which were superintended by Miss Farren, Mrs. Siddons gave valuable assistance. Mrs. Damer, who played the character of Violante, in a piece called *The Wonder*, in which Lord Henry Fitzgerald took the part of Sir Felix, received unbounded applause; she was also a decided success as Mrs. Lovemore in *The Way to Keep Him*. The *dramatis personæ*<sup>1</sup> in this play were:—

Lovemore, . . . .	Lord DERBY.
Sir Brilliant Fashion, . . . .	Hon. Mr. EDGECUMBE.
Sir Bashful Constant, . . . .	Major ARABIN.
William, . . . . .	Sir HARRY ENGLEFIELD.
Sideboard, . . . . .	Mr. CAMPBELL.
Widow Belmour, . . . .	Hon. Mrs. HOBART.
Mrs. Lovemore, . . . .	Hon. Mrs. DAMER.
Lady Constant, . . . .	Miss CAMPBELL.
Muslin, . . . . .	Mrs. BRUCE.

<sup>1</sup> From the *Annual Register*.

## PRIVATE THEATRICALS

The following description of the dresses they wore is taken from the *Annual Register* :—

Mrs. Damer—morning habit, a plain white robe ; when dressed, an embroidered gauze on a white ground, a diamond necklace of prodigious value, wheat-sheaf of ornaments of diamonds in her hair, a girdle of diamonds and stars of the same festoons as on her dress.

Mrs. Hobart—first dress a white gauze ; when dressed, a plain white muslin, diamond flowers in festoons, a diamond girdle, and ornaments in her hair.

Miss Campbell—an Indian muslin worked in gold upon a red ground.

Lord Derby—first, a chintz morning gown, and a brown morning frock ; third, as Lord Etheridge, a dauphin coloured suit embroidered with red and silver flowers, with a very brilliant star ; fourth, another light brown, with a vest, very rich.

Mr. Edgecumbe—a rich embroidered velvet suit, quantities of rings, seals, and diamond pins.

Major Arabin—a mouse-coloured spring velvet, with silk flowers, a very large muff and plaid, ribbons, and watches.

The band were all dressed in scarlet uniforms, and were sixteen in number.

The following was the manner of the dis-

## ANNE SEYMOUR DAMER

tribution of tickets for this first performance :—

The Duchess of Richmond, . . . 12	The Earl of Derby, . . . 6
Hon. Mrs. Hobart, . . . 12	Major Arabin, . . . 6
Hon. Mrs. Damer, . . . 12	Hon. Mr. Edgecumbe, 6
Miss Campbell, . . . 12	Mr. Campbell, . . . 6
Duke of Richmond, . . . 20	Sir Henry Englefield, 6
Rt. Hon. General Conway, . . 6	The Earl of Abingdon, 2
Rt. Hon. General Burgoyne, 6	Miss Farren, . . . 1

The same numbers were issued for the succeeding nights, with very little variation. After the play was concluded, the company were entertained at supper, which consisted of a variety of covers and a dessert in the first style of elegance ; universal festivity seemed to diffuse itself through the company, and besides several toasts being drunk, some favourite and select songs were contributed ; nor did the company begin to move till after four o'clock in the morning.

This performance proved such a triumphant success that it led to others during April and May, and again in the winter, at all of which Mrs. Damer appeared in the leading part ; her bright and interesting face was well suited to the demands of comedy. Having imbibed this taste for acting, and displayed such animated talent, Mrs. Damer continued to take part in theatrical performances throughout her life, her-



PORTRAIT

*From a miniature by R. Cosway, R.A., engraved 1794*



## PRIVATE THEATRICALS

self arranging some in later years when living at Strawberry Hill.

The following incident is related to have occurred at one of these performances at Richmond House. All the great world of fashion was anxious to be present, and tickets of admission were keenly sought after, no one being admitted without a card, on which to prevent confusion was printed this notice—‘*No one admitted after half-past seven.*’ Pitt had received a ticket from the Duke of Richmond with this notice on it, and, knowing that he should be late, wished to return the ticket; but the Duke on learning this promised Pitt that he should be made the one exception and be admitted at whatever time he pleased. Fox, who had also been invited to the performance, heard of this concession, and postponed his arrival until after the debate. Following Pitt, he arrived at the door of the great Saloon at the same time as his opponent. The doorkeeper in accordance with his instructions admitted Pitt, but tried to exclude Fox, as it was now long after half-past seven, and he had received an order to admit only one after that time. In answer to his explanation Fox said to him, ‘I know that, but to-night I am a “rider” on Mr. Pitt.’ He gained admission, and appears to have been greatly impressed by the brilliant

## ANNE SEYMOUR DAMER

talent displayed by his friend, Mrs. Damer. Horace Walpole says he caught a violent cold at this performance, and the next was postponed as Mrs. Damer was ill, but this performance took place at Richmond House on June 17, 1788. And Walpole was particularly interested in it, as a comedy written by General Conway was given.

‘Mr. Conway’s play, of which your Lordship has seen some accounts in the papers, has succeeded delightfully, both in representation and applause. The language is most genteel, though translated from verse: and both Prologue and Epilogue are charming, the former was delivered most justly and admirably by Lord Derby, and the latter with inimitable spirit and grace by Mrs. Damer. Mr. Merry and Mrs. Bruce played excellently too. But General Conway, Mrs. Damer, and everybody else are drowned by Mr. Sheridan, whose renown has engrossed all fame’s tongues and trumpets.’

Another account of the Richmond House Theatricals is given in the *Diary* of Mrs. Philip Lybbe Powys, who states that she attended the first night of General Conway’s play, *False Appearances*, at the Duke of Richmond’s on May 23, 1788, in company with her husband. The Lybbe-Powys were neighbours of the Conways at



## PRIVATE THEATRICALS

Henley, Mr. Lybbe-Powys being Rector of Fawley, which is about two miles from Park Place; they were therefore much interested in their friend's play. Mrs. Lybbe-Powys gives the caste as follows :—

The Baron, . . .	. . .	Earl of DERBY.
Monsieur de Forlis, .	. . .	Captain MERRY.
Champagne, . . .	. . .	Captain HOWARTH.
The Marquis, . . .	. . .	Lord HENRY FITZGERALD.
The Countess, . . .	. . .	Hon. Mrs. DAMER.
Celia, . . . . .	. . .	Miss HAMILTON.
Lisette, . . . . .	. . .	Mrs. BRUCE.
Locayle, . . . . .	. . .	Miss CAMPBELL.

‘The Prologue and Epilogue were both clever; wrote by General Conway, and spoken with great spirit by Lord Derby and Mrs. Damer; the whole was amazingly well acted, and the house filled with all the fine people in town.’<sup>1</sup>

The following criticism of the Richmond House Theatricals appeared in *The Whitehall Evening Post* :—

‘From Saturday, April 21, to Tuesday,  
April 24, 1787.

‘Last Friday night gave us, in its full and complete state, Mr. Murphy’s play, called *The Way to Keep Him*. The following were the *dramatis personæ* :—

(Here follows cast.)

<sup>1</sup> From the *Diary of Mrs. Philip Lybbe-Powys*, edited by Mrs. Climensson.

## ANNE SEYMOUR DAMER

‘It would not be very easy to find the vivacity and nonchalance of the Widow Belmour better pourtrayed than by Mrs. Hobart. . . . In the Prologue she was not equally fortunate; a manner too hurried, and without waiting for effect, was visible.

‘Mrs. Damer boasts strong sensibility, but her tones are too frequently depressed, and sometimes not audible at the conclusion. This was more peculiarly felt in the delivery of the Epilogue, which alluded to her own talents for statuary, and was written expressly for her.

‘Miss Campbell, in *Lady Constant*, had not much room for effect, the best was her little air on the harp.

‘The Muslin of Mrs. Bruce was excellent.

‘Lord Derby’s *Lovemore* had much good in it, and the concluding rhymes of the *Way to Keep Him* were never better spoken.

‘Mr. Edgecumbe’s *Sir Brilliant* was not so fortunate.

‘The *Sir Bashful* of Major Arabin was *every thing by turns, but nothing long*. His powers of mimicry are so strong, that in the course of a part he gives you a little of everything. . . . The management of his person, however, was well.

## PRIVATE THEATRICALS

‘Sir Harry Englefield did better than the part did for him.

‘Perhaps, upon the whole, no private play was ever better acted, certainly none better managed in point of scene and stage management.

‘Lord Abingdon’s charming little air, given to Mrs. Hobart, and which she executed well, should not pass without notice; there was a turn of much beauty in it.

‘The dresses of this evening were increased in magnificence, that of Mrs. Hobart in particular. Among the audience present were His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales, Lord and Lady Stormont, Mrs. Fitzherbert, the Duchess of Devonshire, Mr. Dundas Sheridan, and what was most wonderful, Mr. Fox and Mr. Pitt came in together!’

(Here follows description of Dresses.)

‘Some additional lines were added to the Prologue, in compliment to the Prince, who very condescendingly noticed this attention in His Grace.

‘Friday, after the Play at the Duke of Richmond’s, in Privy Gardens, His Grace gave a grand supper, which was served up about twelve o’clock, and consisted of two courses with a dessert. An universal festivity seemed to diffuse itself through the company; and besides some

## ANNE SEYMOUR DAMER

toasts drunk, some favourite and select songs were sung; nor did the company begin to move till four o'clock in the morning. The Duke was sole attendant and Master of the Ceremonies on this occasion. As the company are to be different on each night of entertainment all the first characters in the kingdom are expected to partake of this *fête théâtrique* at Richmond House.'

John Kemble, the actor, was present at the performance, and was so delighted with it, that he requested permission to transplant it to Drury Lane, where it met with indifferent success.

*False Appearances* was an adaptation from the French Play *Les Dehors Trompeurs*, by Boissy, and has been attributed by some writers to Walpole; this, however, can hardly be the case, for he himself mentions General Conway as the author.

Horace Walpole again mentions the play when writing to Hannah More on July 4, 1788: 'I do lament your not going to Mr. Conway's play: both the author and the actors deserved such an auditor as you, and you deserved to hear them. However I do not pity *good* people, who out of virtue lose and miss our pleasures. Their pastimes fleet as fast as those of the wicked, but when gone, you saints can sit down and feast on

## PRIVATE THEATRICALS

your self-denial, drink bumpers of satisfaction to the health of your merit, so truly I don't pity you.' And again to Lord Strafford on August 2, 1788: 'I shall go to Park Place, where I expect to find the Druids' Temple from Jersey erected. How dull will the world be, if constant pilgrimages are not made thither! where besides the delight of the scenes, that temple, the rude great arch, Lady Ailesbury's needleworks, Mrs. Damer's "Thame and Isis" on Henley Bridge, with others of her sculptures, make it one of the most curious spots in the island, and unique. I want to have Mr. Conway's comedy acted there; and then the Father, Mother, and Daughter would exhibit a theatre of arts as uncommon. How I regret that your Lordship did not hear Mrs. Damer speak the Epilogue.'

In another letter he says that he met Mrs. Garrick in her box at Drury Lane Theatre when Mr. Conway's play was produced there. He writes to Hannah More on April 22, 1789: 'I am sure, my good friend, you partake of my joy at the great success of the comedy. The additional character of the Abbé pleased much, it was added by the advice of the players to enliven it, that is to stretch the jaws of the pit and gallery, I sighed silently; for it was originally so genteel a piece, that I was sorry to have it

## ANNE SEYMOUR DAMER

tumbled by coarse applauses. But this is a secret.'

The following is the caste of *False Appearances* when produced at Drury Lane, April 20, 1789 :—

Baron, . . . . .	WROUGHTON.
Marquis, . . . . .	KEMBLE.
Governour de Forlis, . . . . .	PARSONS.
Abbé, . . . . .	BANNISTER, Junior.
Robert, . . . . .	R. PALMER.
Countess, . . . . .	Miss FARREN.
Lisette, . . . . .	Miss POPE.
Lucile, . . . . .	Mrs. CROUCH.
Celia, . . . . .	Mrs. KEMBLE.

'Taken from the French, said to have been adapted to the English stage by General Conway. It is on the whole a pretty good play, but the underplot which concerns the Abbé is bad. The Countess is a pleasant character.

'Acted six times.' (Genest.)





MISS MARY BERRY

*From a bust by Anne Seymour Damer*



# FRIENDSHIP WITH THE MISSES BERRY

## CHAPTER XI

### FRIENDSHIP WITH THE MISSES BERRY

IT was in the year 1789 that Mrs. Damer first made the acquaintance of the Misses Berry and their father. This acquaintance soon ripened into a strong friendship, which lasted till Mrs. Damer's death.

Mary Berry, the elder of the two sisters, kept the very interesting diary, in which she mentions amongst the events of the year 1789 the introduction of herself and her sister to Lady Ailesbury and Mrs. Damer, and their visit to Park Place. For this introduction of his friends to his relations, Horace Walpole made an appointment; he had become so intimate with the Misses Berry, that he wished, as he said, his friends to be their friends. He writes to Miss Mary Berry on March 20, 1789: 'I hope you are not engaged this day se'night, but will allow me to wait upon you and Lady Ailesbury, which I will settle with her when I have your answer. I did mention it to her in general, but have no free day before

## ANNE SEYMOUR DAMER

Friday next, except Thursday, when if there is no other illumination (for the recovery of George III.), as it is threatened, we should neither get thither or (*sic*) thence, especially not the latter if the former is impracticable, "Quidquid delirant Reges, plectuntur Achivi."'

The meeting took place; both Lady Ailesbury and Mrs. Damer were charmed with the Misses Berry and invited them to Park Place.

The Misses Berry had come from Yorkshire, and, their mother having died soon after their birth, they had been brought up by their grandmother. Mr. Berry had been educated as a barrister, but does not appear to have practised. On leaving Yorkshire he and his daughters and their grandmother removed to Chiswick, where they lived at College House. Shortly afterwards Mr. Berry married again, but there is no further mention of his second wife, and his daughters remained with their grandmother. A brother of his died, leaving three hundred thousand pounds and an estate worth between four and five thousand a year, and bequeathing to another brother, William, the whole of his property, with the exception of ten thousand pounds which he left to the Misses Berry's father.

Both Mary and Agnes Berry received a good education, and were taken by their father on

## FRIENDSHIP WITH THE MISSES BERRY

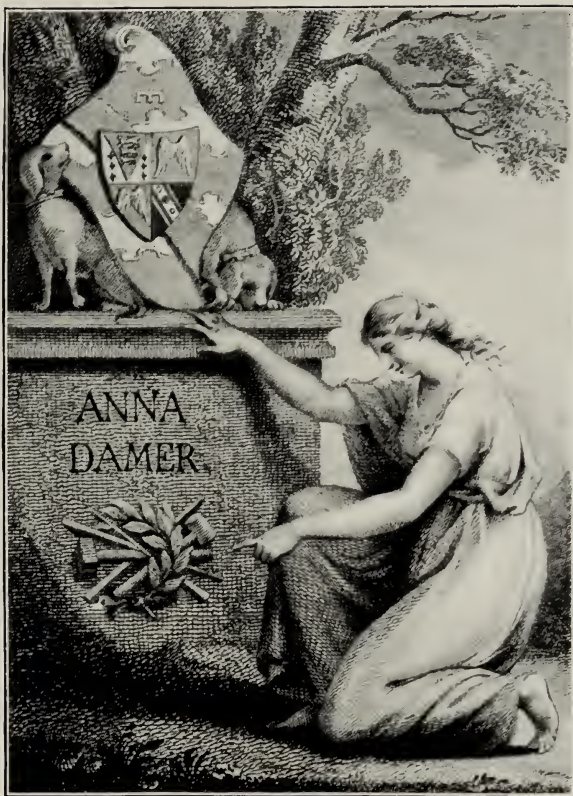
several occasions to travel on the Continent. Neither of them was remarkably clever, nor had they much talent in conversation, but their art lay in promoting the conversation of others and in shedding a home-like air on the society which met under their roof.

In 1788 they made the acquaintance of Horace Walpole at the house of Lady Herries, but it was not till they were settled at Twickenham that the acquaintanceship ripened into an intimate friendship. Writing from Strawberry Hill to Lady Ossory on October 11, 1788, Horace Walpole mentions the beginning of this friendship: 'I have made a most precious acquisition; it is the acquaintance of two young ladies of the name of Berry, whom I first saw last winter, and who accidentally took a house here last season with their father.' He goes on to tell their history, and then describes them: 'Their father, Mr. Berry, is a merry little man with a round face, and you would not suspect him of so much feeling and attachment. The daughters are of pleasing figures, Mary, the eldest, sweet, with fine dark eyes, that are very lively when she speaks, with a symmetry of face that is more interesting from being pale; Agnes, the younger, has an agreeable, sensible countenance, hardly to be called handsome, but almost; she is less ani-

## ANNE SEYMOUR DAMER

mated than Mary, but seems out of deference to her sister to speak seldomer, for they dote on each other, and Mary is always praising her sister's talents. I must tell you they always dress within the bounds of fashion, though fashionably, but without the excrescences and balconies with which modern hoydens overwhelm and barricade their persons, in short, good sense, information, simplicity, and ease is characteristic to the Berrys.' Walpole apologises to his correspondent for sending her this lengthy description 'of two pearls found in his path,' and three years later he tells her that they are extraordinary beings, and he is proud of his partiality for them.

It was reported at the time that Horace Walpole was in love with Mary Berry and had proposed marriage to her, but from the manner in which he writes of the sisters this seems improbable. He was in his seventy-first year when he first made the acquaintance of these charming girls, and, although he certainly had a greater partiality for Mary, who was his favourite, if not the object of his passion, he generally spoke of them both as his 'Two Wives.' He was always anxious when the sisters were abroad or on visits, particularly if their letters were delayed. He told Lady Ossory that he cared not a straw for its being said that he was in love with one of



BOOK PLATE

*Designed by Agnes Berry, 1793*



## FRIENDSHIP WITH THE MISSES BERRY

them ; the ridicule could only fall on him not on them ; ‘ people shall choose which : it is as much with both as either, and I am infinitely too old to regard the *qu'en dit-on.*’

Two years after making their acquaintance he writes to Mary Berry : ‘ I am certainly not in love with you, yet fully in love enough not to bear any damage done to that perfect nose (Miss Berry having had a carriage accident at Pisa), or any of your beautiful features’ ; and again he says : ‘ A lover, especially one of seventy-three, would not give you these details’ ; also : ‘ I have seen O’Hara with his face as ruddy, and black, and his teeth as white as ever, and as fond of you too, and as grieved for your fall as anybody, but I.’

On July 29, 1789, he wrote to Mary that he expected Mr. Conway, Lady Ailesbury, and Mrs. Damer to stay with him ; and on August 6th, that they had all spent Saturday to Monday at Strawberry Hill, and Mrs. Damer had arranged with him that Mr. Berry and his two daughters should meet him at Park Place in the beginning of September. ‘ Now this will make me hate that month more than ever, long evenings without a fire are tiresome.’

In the following year, when the Misses Berry were staying at Park Place, Mrs. Damer writes to

## ANNE SEYMOUR DAMER

Walpole that Lady Ailesbury is charmed with both the sisters; 'this does not surprise me,' he replied. Mrs. Damer goes on to say that she never saw two people have so much taste for the country, who had no place of their own. To which Horace Walpole replies to Miss Berry: 'It may be so, but begging her ladyship's pardon, and yours, I think that people who have a place of their own are mighty apt not to like any other.' Mrs. Damer had been at Strawberry Hill this year with her dog 'Fidèle'; Mr. Walpole says that he must celebrate the sense of Fidèle, Mrs. Damer's terrier. Without making the slightest gesture, her mistress only said to her: 'Now, Fidèle, you may jump on any chair you please,' she instantly jumped on the settee: and so she did in every room in the house for the whole ten days she stayed. This is another demonstration that dogs understand our language, so far as it relates to their own affairs.

On August 8, 1790, Miss Mary Berry writes: 'Do tell me where Mrs. Damer lives: though we are not to have the pleasure of being admitted till next week, we wish no longer to delay leaving our name at her door.' Two days later the Misses Berry left North Audley Street, their home in London, for a tour abroad. Shortly afterwards Horace Walpole, being anxious to



## FRIENDSHIP WITH THE MISSES BERRY

have his friends near him, purchased for them Mrs. Clive's cottage, then called Cliveden, which he renamed Little Strawberry Hill. At his death he bequeathed this cottage to the sisters.

Throughout their absence abroad he constantly refers to his alarm for their safety: 'Oh, when shall I hear you are safe and my fears groundless? the storm on Tuesday terrified me beyond measure, and so I have remained until this minute, that Mrs. Damer has most humanely sent me an express to tell me you are landed—Heaven preserve you all.' Again: 'My letter yesterday will have told you of my terror I have been in from the storm on Tuesday and ever since, and the transport of a line from Mrs. Damer, to tell me you are landed.' He was also greatly alarmed at the idea of their passing through Paris, at this time, although this had been advised by Mrs. Damer.

He passed the evening of October 21, 1790, with Mrs. Damer, and met 'Mrs. B. and the Charming Man.' He was to go and see her again the following Saturday, as she was setting out for Lisbon on the Saturday week. 'She writes to you (Mary Berry) to-night, for which reason I agreed I would not until Tuesday, and indeed I have already said all I have to say, or

## ANNE SEYMOUR DAMER

at least I will say. The Johnstons have been at Newnham and are actually at Park Place.'

Mrs. Damer, who was now busy with her preparations for her visit to Lisbon, writes on Thursday, October 30, 1790, to the Berrys (they had by this time reached Florence): 'Mr. Walpole comes to-day, I know how melancholy he will be, for we have no letters from you yet, and I fear I shall leave London without hearing again. . . . Jerningham told me that the night Mr. Walpole was here (he set Mrs. B. and him down) when he got into the coach he could not contain himself, there was nothing melancholy he did not say, he was quite in an agony. I have not written to him for fear that, seeing a letter from me, he should be disappointed in finding I had no news from France.' In another letter she writes: 'I left Mr. Walpole, I really think in health, and well; but he receives no degree of comfort as to his fears, nor will he until he hears and receives a letter from another country; the interest and tenderness he shows makes me feel infinitely more sensibly giving him any additional pain, and deprives him of the satisfaction he may, heaven knows, indulge with me of saying all he thinks.'

On October 31st Walpole writes to Miss Berry: 'We had a hurricane on Wednesday last, I said

## FRIENDSHIP WITH THE MISSES BERRY

to it, "Blow, blow thou winter wind, I don't mind you now." But I had not forgotten Tuesday, the 12th, and now I hope it will be as calm as it is to-day on Wednesday next, when Mrs. Damer is to sail. I was in town on Thursday and Friday, and so were her parents, to take our leaves, as we did on Friday night; stopping at Richmond House, she set out yesterday morning and I returned hither (Strawberry Hill).'

After the departure of Mrs. Damer, Walpole went to stay with her parents at Park Place, but would only remain a very few days, as he said: 'I do not love letters taking so many days before they get in the high post road.' Of the fuss which he made about his letters Mrs. Damer remarks: 'He has always a horror of his letters being seen except by those they are intended for, and though I daresay he took care to put no politics in them, I should not wonder if his imagination presented them to him read aloud in the *Assemblée Nationale*. It's an age since I have heard from him.'

It appears that Mrs. Damer did not start as soon as she intended, the wind being contrary. Walpole complains of the dulness of London with no South Audley Street to receive him, no Mrs. Damer, and the Conways at Park Place till after Christmas. On November 28th, before he

## ANNE SEYMOUR DAMER

had heard of Mrs. Damer's safe arrival, he sent the Misses Berry her address, which was 'Aux soins de Messieurs Mellish et de Visne à Lisbon'; he subsequently heard of her arrival after a passage of seven days.

In the following year (1791) Walpole was annoyed to hear from Mrs. Damer that the Berrys had decided to remain abroad till the spring of 1792. He writes: 'I was extremely weak and low when Mrs. Damer's letter arrived, and mentioned her supposing I should not see you till spring twelve months.'

Through the intimacy that had grown up between the Conway family and the Misses Berry originated the engagement between Mary Berry and General O'Hara, who was on terms of almost brotherly affection with Mrs. Damer, and most highly esteemed by General Conway. Miss Berry states in her journal that she met General O'Hara at Park Place after having previously become acquainted with him at Cheltenham, and that he proposed to her under the mulberry tree on the lawn. He was thought highly of by all Miss Berry's most intimate friends, and was often mentioned by Walpole with much praise. Mary loved him with that warm and generous enthusiasm which invests its object with every generous quality.

## FRIENDSHIP WITH THE MISSES BERRY

No mention is made in any of Walpole's letters of the manner in which he bore the intelligence of this projected change in the life of one of his 'beloved wives,' but how he would be affected by it was a matter of considerable anxiety to both Mary Berry and General O'Hara. Through some misunderstanding, however, the engagement was broken off, and the couple never met again. Whether Horace Walpole had anything to do with this is not known.

Forty-eight years after the engagement had been broken off, Miss Berry opened the packet of letters that had passed between her and the General; she says: 'These letters relate to the six happiest months of my existence: a concatenation of unfortunate circumstances, letters lost and delayed, doubts unsatisfied, questions unanswered, all these crushed the fair fabric of my happiness by loss of confidence and misunderstanding, while my bosom could not for long banish a hope that all might be set right, and so it would, had we ever met for four-and-twenty hours, but he remained at Gibraltar till his death in 1820.'

# ANNE SEYMOUR DAMER

## CHAPTER XII

### LISBON

As we have seen in the last chapter, Mrs. Damer left England in November 1790 on a visit to Lisbon. She arrived there after a passage of seven days. She was a good sailor, and found the sea-voyage, although a long one, far less fatiguing than the long land journey over the Alps to Naples. The Hamiltons had invited her to spend another winter with them at Naples. To this proposed visit and her reason for going to Lisbon, her father refers in the following autograph letter :—

‘PARK PLACE, 28th Nov. 1790.

‘DEAR SIR WILLIAM,—I feel full of shame and contrition having so long neglected to acknowledge and thank you for your letter of June last, the more as you asked me in it some questions which I should have answered. In respect to the latter, however, my conscience acquits me, as I mentioned them immediately to Mrs. Damer, which indeed was the main of my

## LISBON

commission, and she treated my questions as insignificant, having informed you herself of all that I could have learned.

‘Being upon her subject, I’ll now tell you, knowing the kind interest you take about her, that she has gone to pass some of the cold months at Lisbon. She was not ill, but only not quite well, the harsh winters here generally affect her, and in point of climate I believe that is among the first. It may seem odd to you, and to all who know her and you, that going so far, she should prefer Lisbon to Naples. To this her inclination would have led her, but she took her resolution late, too late for a journey across the Alps, which would now have been too cold, and too fatiguing for her. I think, besides, that however excellent and pleasing to her in most respects, your air was not quite adapted to her constitution. The voyage to Lisbon is long, but she bears the sea tolerably well; the Paquet boats on that station are excellent; and she has met with the civilest captain and the best accommodations imaginable, this we heard from her at Falmouth; from Lisbon we have not yet heard, tho’ we imagine she sailed on the 7th or 8th, and, as appeared to us, had fair winds for ten days or a fortnight afterwards.

‘The account you give of your intended pub-

## ANNE SEYMOUR DAMER

lication is very interesting, and will I daresay clear up much that was doubtful of that elegant and beautiful fabrique. Of the Greek inhabitaney there can be no doubt, and the Greek letters or inscriptions you mention with the further details you will furnish, throw a new light upon the subject, and make it altogether a most acceptable work to all of that mass, the Publick, who have any taste.<sup>1</sup>

‘Our Parliament has opened with uncommon *éclat* by the manifest advantage and honour we have acquired in the convention. It will cost us some money, but I think well bestowed. But I have like mind to trouble you upon political matters for which I am at this moment very ill qualified, buried in the country, with other thoughts and occupations, and hearing only the tattle of the day. What is happy and comfortable in our situation I dwell upon with pleasure, which is the singular tranquillity we enjoy, and have a prospect of; while our nearest neighbours seem preparing for themselves scenes of disquiet and calamity. I have no conception that it can end otherwise in France: and in the Netherlands, if the reports of this day are true; which

<sup>1</sup> This probably refers to one of Sir William Hamilton’s contributions to the *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society*, 1767-1795.





PORTRAIT

*From an Engraving by Hopwood*



## LISBON

are the first we could have since the Definitive day. The Brabantois are going to throw themselves, most rashly as appears, into immediate civil war with sixty thousand fine Austrian troops in their country and four Great Powers declared against them. If the Wilkinsons are still with you, pray give my compliments to both. I hope she continues the improvement begun since she was with you. I wrote to him some time ago. I doubt our friend the Duchess does not gain ground, and could heartily wish her with you for the winter. She has had lately a little fever which has thrown her back.

‘I hope now that all is so amicable between our sovereigns nothing will prevent your visit to us next spring. Accept Lady Ailesbury’s best compliments, and believe me, Dear Sir, your most faithful and affectionate servant,

‘H. S. CONWAY.’

On her arrival at Lisbon, Mrs. Damer wrote : ‘Nothing can be more civil and attentive than the people in general are to me here—Mr. Walpole, our Minister, and his wife, in particular.’<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The Honourable Robert Walpole, Minister Plenipotentiary to Portugal, and his second wife Sophia, daughter of Richard Street of Lisbon. Mr. Walpole was a younger son of Lord Horatio Walpole the Diplomatist, a nephew of the Prime Minister, and therefore a cousin of Horace Walpole.

## ANNE SEYMOUR DAMER

In her letters to Miss Berry she describes her impressions:—

‘LISBON, *November 21, 1790.*

‘You cannot form to yourself an idea of the Portuguese, their indolence or indifference, neither money nor entreaty will bring them: till it may suit their particular convenience there is no getting even the commonest workmen near you. When I came I found two panes of glass broken, and for five days, though the master of the house and my own servants went twenty times a day after the people, I could not have them put in. I can divert myself with all distresses of this sort except cold ones. . . . I dined at our Minister’s last Thursday, with I know not how many English of the sort no foreign tour is free from—fat, vulgar women, and scowling, unknown men, Consuls, and some of the “Factory.” In the evening we had the French Ambassadors (Madame de Chalons) and all the *corps diplomatique*, but I should like to see something of the Portuguese, which is not very easy for foreigners. Mr. Walpole is to carry me to a grand *fête* at a Portuguese house, given on the marriage of a great heiress, who has married her uncle, as she could find no one great enough to marry out of her own family.’

## LISBON

‘LISBON, *December 2, 1790.*

‘Going out in Lisbon is really an operation. There are several only two-wheeled chaises, open before, with leathern curtains that draw; you set out as if on a journey, and go nodding along over the worst pavement possible and up and down very steep hills, on which this town stands, yet these chaises are actually the vehicles best calculated for this tour, and far from unpleasant when one is not obliged to be much dressed: but you may guess how it is when you have to scramble up into such a carriage in rainy weather, with a gauzed petticoat and a dressed head. A four-wheeled carriage is uneasy: it is, I think, scarcely bearable. These are used (but not without four mules) by Ministers and great persons, and here and there a foreigner, but there is no such thing to be hired unless by chance. My own coach, were it here, might be drawn up the hills by six mules: but would never be kept back by two, such as they have for the tour. You will imagine all this diverts more than disturbs me. I make, however, my necessary visits. The hours are early; sometimes they begin to make visits at five o’clock, and everything ends at latest, unless it be some *fêtes*, by eleven. The weather was soft this morning, and I went in my chaise to see an

## ANNE SEYMOUR DAMER

aqueduct some way off, yet close to this straggling town on one side; but here you have a cornfield, an orange garden, a church, and then a house, just as it happens, all jumbled in the same queerest manner that I ever saw. The aqueduct may be called magnificent, but the arches are, I think, too close: the height in one part is immense; it looks rather thin and poor than light. The place is wild and rocky, with some gardens of orange-trees, now ripening, and some olive trees. I do not love comparisons, but there is no seeing this place without thinking of the Pont du Gard, and sadly indeed it loses by such comparison, though the one is all in its glory and the other but a ruin.'

During this visit, Mrs. Damer went out so much in society that she was glad of a quiet evening at home. She thus describes her room: 'It is small, white-washed, and a sort of farmhouse chimney occupies one-half of it; it is high, and built with large, rough stones; there are some shelves, two tables, and many chairs; here I have my books and my writing, and my ideas are not at least outwardly frozen; their substitutes for fires are large cloaks, of the form you see in Florence, which they wear very gracefully, both men and women; they are eternally

## LISBON

wrapped up in them, riding, walking, hanging over a balcony when the sun shines, or sitting at home in a state of idleness—a state to which they seem to have a great propensity, by what I hear and by the little I have seen.'

She proceeds to relate how only of recent years the nobility had given up some of their old customs, one of which was to sit on the floor with their legs crossed. She even saw one lady of the highest rank, who was in deep mourning, so seated at one of the assemblies. Mrs. Damer regrets that the Portuguese had begun to improve, and thought they would have been far more entertaining if they had continued to practise their good old customs.

The Portuguese families kept very much to themselves, the women living separately from the men. In fact men and women of the family seldom addressed each other, and Mrs. Damer mentions a case of a match being broken off between a young man and his cousin, because she asked him 'how he did!' It was not etiquette even for a married woman to go to the house of an unmarried man, and on this account many married women did not attend a concert given by the Duke de Cadaval, a prince of the blood, notwithstanding the fact that his two aunts assisted him in doing the honours. The opening

## ANNE SEYMOUR DAMER

of the year 1791 found Mrs. Damer still at Lisbon. She writes on January 20th :—

‘Though there are so many things to see at Lisbon, there are some—some respectable Gothic churches—which will bear seeing more than once. One of the most ancient is horrid to look at, almost totally destroyed by the earthquake, little else but the outside walls standing. The Castle, formerly a Moorish Palace, was nearly made a ruin. You see here and there a bit of a column, etc., stuck in little better than a mud wall, but this her Majesty does not think of rebuilding; she has at immense expense built a church called the Convento Nuovo, or the Coracão de Jesu (the heart of Jesus), in the worst taste, adorned by many colossal statues in the style of Bernini exaggerated. The works of a Portuguese artist in this church, the great altar-piece, and several others, are painted by Pompeo, and one by the Princesses.

‘In this convent is the Queen’s favourite nun, recommended to her by the late confessor as a Santa; they say she is really a shrewd, sensible woman, and spoken well of. There were, they say, many fine pictures in the church by the best masters; most of them were swallowed up or destroyed, some stolen and sold. At the Marquis Pamela’s there is one called a Raphael,



## LISBON

which it may be; it is very fine, but has been miserably painted over, which I gained much credit by finding out, though it is as plain as the nose on one's face.'

She goes on to mention her statue of Joseph I., the late King of Portugal, in bronze; this statue was modelled and cast at Lisbon, 'tho' heavy, really is not without some merit.'

In February Mrs. Damer decided to leave Lisbon, and was making her arrangements to travel back through Spain, where she hoped to find a better climate; she wished particularly to visit Seville, Granada, Cordova, Toledo, the Escorial, and Il-de-Fons; in fact to see these towns was the chief object of her journey. Meanwhile she was concerned to hear of the illness of Horace Walpole, who had a bad attack of gout—he wrote to Miss Berry: 'Mrs. Damer seems perfectly well, and to have settled her return, which is to be through Spain; our letters are to be directed to Madrid. She is in great distress, and I heartily pity her, about "Fidèle," who seems dying.' Her little dog did die at Lisbon a few days after this.

On February 17th she writes:—'My mules are on the road, and will be ready on Monday next, and that evening or Sunday I shall probably cross the water and begin my journey. From the time

## ANNE SEYMOUR DAMER

I leave Lisbon to the time I reach Madrid, I shall not have a single letter.'

She started on February 20th, travelling with mules all the way, and her first stopping-place was Aldega Galega, where she stayed at a private house; from there she went to Badajoz, the first Spanish town she reached on her journey. She arrived at Seville on March 6th, and was greatly fatigued by her journey, which was very unpleasant owing to the rough state of the roads. 'Men, mules, and everything were ready to die, and the expectation of seeing the carriage broken to pieces, in an actual desert as to assistance, was really unpleasant.' At Seville she stayed till March 10th, when she went on to Granada, where she was much pleased with the Alcayas or Palace. 'The Moorish part is admirable, the Alhambra is not now all it has been, but it is well worth the sacrifice of a week to see.'

On leaving Granada she stayed at Herrera and Aranjuez, travelling over dreadful roads, and sleeping at strange inns, and eventually reaching Madrid on March 30th, where she was received by the British Minister, Lord St. Helens, and by the Consul. Horace Walpole wrote at the time to the Berrys that she had been 'received at Elvas with all military honours and a banquet, by order of Mello, formerly Ambassador here

## LISBON

(London). It was handsome of him, but must have distressed her, who is void of all ostentation and love of show.'

After seeing all the sights of Madrid, Mrs. Damer went on to Valladolid on the 16th, where she made her way into the Cloisters of a Monastery of Dominican Friars, and where she saw some fine Gothic architecture; at Il-de-Fons she also saw some first-rate statues.

On April 20th she journeyed to Vittoria, on the Bay of Biscay, and found the roads still very bad and the travelling rough. Of the Cathedral at Burgos she writes:—'Wishing to see it thoroughly, and particularly the Cloister, and not being sure of the same indulgence I met with from my Dominican Friars at Valladolid, I went dressed in Lady Spencer's fashion; this dress, with the large cloak and boots, is what, in point of dressing, the bench of Bishops could not object to.' By this means she passed almost unnoticed. On another occasion, at Seville, she went out dressed like a Portuguese, when the people called her 'Francese,' and ran after her. Not liking this publicity, she dressed herself as a 'vile Mantillo'; that is, with a piece of silk or linen thrown over the head, then crossed and twisted round the waist, without which no woman in Spain can go into a church; but Mrs.

## ANNE SEYMOUR DAMER

Damer found it most uncomfortable for sight-seeing, as she was unable to raise or turn her head.

On the 24th she was at Bayonne, where she met a very eccentric 'Maire de la Ville,' who was a great admirer of Fox, and presented her with some verses he had composed in his honour. Here the weather was dreadful, intense cold and incessant rain.

*Bordeaux, April 28th.*—'Everything seems perfectly quiet, some bustle there has been at Paris, but nothing to affect an insignificant traveller.'

She arrived at Paris on May 3rd, where she found her friend, Madame Balbi, at home, who offered to take her to the Assemblée Nationale. Paris at the time, she says, was fairly quiet, Monsieur de la Fayette being again in power, but she did not escape a visit from the 'Poissardes,'<sup>1</sup> who even insisted on entering her bedroom, despite her maid's efforts to prevent them. By presenting them with twelve francs, however, she got rid of them, and they in their turn gave her a bouquet, one of them, much to her consternation, embracing her. 'They go every-

<sup>1</sup> The 'Poissardes' were the Dames de la Halle, who had forced the King and Queen to quit Versailles for Paris on October 6, 1789. These women, who had arrived the previous day, were said to be the vilest refuse of their sex, and were drunk with wine and fury.

## LISBON

where and will not be refused admission; they go to all travellers to obtain money.'

Mrs. Damer visited the Champs de Mars, then called the Champ de la Fédération; she found all much destroyed. She attended the 'Théâtre de Monsieur' the following day, went to the Assemblée Nationale, and she afterwards drove to see the ruins of the Bastille.

After a stay of a week in Paris, Mrs. Damer left on the 10th for Calais, where she was detained a day, owing to a disturbance between the Captains of the English and French packets. She left on the 12th, and, after a rough passage, reached London between ten and eleven o'clock at night. She drove to her father's house, thinking to find her parents at home, or else expected soon to appear for supper, 'or perhaps my dear Mr. Walpole alone, sitting by the fire, as I have often seen him, waiting their arrival.'

Her mother's maid told her that nobody was at home, 'they were at her Uncle Frederick's, and the carriage was not ordered till twelve o'clock.' Mrs. Damer declared she could not go on to her own home without having seen them, so she drove on to Arlington Street (Lord Frederick Campbell's) where she found many carriages waiting. She was rather vexed at finding a party, but Lady Frederick on hearing

## ANNE SEYMOUR DAMER

that she was downstairs, came to receive her, and was followed by General Conway and Lady Ailesbury, also 'dear Mr. Walpole,' who she thought was looking remarkably well. He had written of Mrs. Damer's return to Miss Berry, that he had heard from her, that they might expect her on May 10th and said he would allow two or three days for disappointments: he wrote again after her arrival, on May 12th, saying she came to Lord Frederick Campbell's house where he and her parents were spending the evening.

So ends this tour, Mrs. Damer having been abroad from November 1790 to May 1791.

## AT HOME

### CHAPTER XIII

#### AT HOME

DURING the next few years Mrs. Damer remained in England, where she continued to shine in society, and completed some of her most important works in sculpture. She was in far better health since her visit to Lisbon and Spain, but shortly after her return, in June 1791, Horace Walpole wrote that, despite her having returned in Spanish health, she had soon caught an English north-eastern cold, with pains in her back and all her limbs, accompanied with a little fever : and she was obliged to keep her bed. He says her father came to him from her, having left her better, and that he should himself go and see how she was. He sat with her for an hour and found her much mended. The next day the answer to his inquiry was 'Much better.'

When staying with Horace Walpole at Strawberry Hill in July 1791, she repaired most skilfully with wax the beak of the famous eagle. During

## ANNE SEYMOUR DAMER

this visit Madame d'Albany,<sup>1</sup> 'la plus grande reine du monde,' as Walpole called her, breakfasted at Strawberry Hill. Writing of her to Miss Berry he says: 'I really found she has more sense than I had thought the first time I saw her, but she had like to have undone all, for when I showed her the "Death of Wolsey,"<sup>2</sup> with which Mrs. Damer is anew enchanted, I told her it was painted by her acquaintance, she recollected neither of you, but at last it came out that she had called you the Misses Barry.'

On July 7th Mrs. Damer went to Park Place for three weeks, with Madame d'Albany, the Duke and Duchess of Richmond, the Messrs. Mount-Edgewcombe, Mrs. Buller, and the 'Charming Man,' and in August she went to Goodwood, and thence to the sea.

All this time she was keeping up her correspondence with the Berrys, who were still abroad.

On September 25th she returned to Strawberry Hill, where she stayed all Thursday and Friday. On the following Friday she again stayed at Strawberry Hill for a night, leaving the following

<sup>1</sup> The Countess of Albany, whom Horace Walpole called the 'Pinchbeck Queen of England,' was a great-niece of Lady Ailesbury's and a cousin of the Duchess of Richmond and of Mrs. Damer.

<sup>2</sup> Painted by Miss Agnes Berry.







BUST OF MISS FARREN AS THALIA

*By Anne Seymour Damer*

## AT HOME

day with Madame de Cambis<sup>1</sup> for Park Place, whither Horace Walpole followed them later.

On arriving at Park Place, Walpole wrote to Miss Berry, 'Here is nobody but Mrs. Damer and Madame de Cambis, and I am glad there is not. I shall return on Wednesday, and at the end of the week, shall hope to receive a direction further, but scarce, I doubt, shall know so soon, that your final determination or your route is fixed.'

He passed the evening of October 19, 1791, at Mrs. Damer's, with Lord and Lady Frederick Campbell, Mrs. and Miss Farren, Lord Derby and Miss Jennings, who stayed till past twelve o'clock. He also supped with her after a play on the 26th, and met her parents, who were in town for a few days.

Great was Horace Walpole's delight to be able at last to welcome back, after an absence of over a year, the Misses Berry and their father, who arrived at their house in North Audley Street on November 11th. The month after their arrival Walpole became fourth Earl of Orford through the death of his nephew.

The Berrys stayed at Strawberry Hill for

<sup>1</sup> George Selwyn says that Madame de Cambis was one of the Nuns at Madame de Maintenon's famous and splendid establishment at St. Cyr; she was then about forty, and as beautiful as a Madonna.

## ANNE SEYMOUR DAMER

three weeks, while they were getting settled in their new country abode, where they lived during the summer months with their father for many years after the death of Lord Orford.

On October 18, 1793, Lord Orford writes to Miss Berry: 'The coach has just brought me from Park Place a grove of Lavender Plants<sup>1</sup> for you, of which Mrs. Damer had given me notice. My gardener has gone to distribute them about Cliveden, which I hope next summer will be as odoriferous as Mount Carmel.'

On October 19th, Mrs. Damer wrote to Miss Berry, that Lord Orford was very unwell; it appeared afterwards that he was not really ill, but did not want to go to Park Place, which he described as one of the coldest houses in the world.

He again had supper with her on November 30th, and met the Duchess of Richmond, Lord Derby, the Farrens, and Edward Jerningham. The next mention Lord Orford makes of being at Mrs. Damer's house was on April 27, 1794, when he met her parents, the 'House of Argyle,' the Greatheads, Mrs. Hervey, and the 'Charming Man'; he stayed till they went to supper and was not at all fatigued.

<sup>1</sup> Park Place was at that time much celebrated for its lavender and distillery.





9 UPPER BROOK STREET, LONDON (1906)

## AT HOME

Mr. and Miss Mary Berry were at Park Place July 31, 1794. Lord Orford did not expect them to return so soon, concluding they would be pressed to stay longer and would be frail; they had found the alterations to the house had advanced rapidly.

In September 1794 Mrs. Damer removed from her house in Sackville Street, where she had lived for some years, to 9 Upper Brook Street. Lord Orford writes: 'I went yesterday evening to Mrs. Damer's and had a glimpse of her new house, literally a glimpse, for I saw but one room on the first floor, where she had lighted a fire, that I might not mount two flights, and as it was eight o'clock and quite dark, she only opened a door or two, and gave me a cat's-eye view into them. One blemish I had descried at first, the house had a corner arrival like her father's.<sup>1</sup> Ah me! who do not love to be led through the public! I did see the new bust of Mrs. Siddons, and a very mistressly performance it is indeed.'

Of this glimpse Miss Berry writes to Lord Orford, 'I am sorry that you would, and did, see Mrs. Damer's house before it was ready to be seen, for fear that from seeing nothing well but its only defect (the corner entry), you should take one of your sudden prepossessions, which

<sup>1</sup> This entrance has since been altered.

## ANNE SEYMOUR DAMER

you say yourself, (though in all cases I do not allow it), totally deprives you of future judgment.'

In October 1794, Mrs. Damer's sister, the Duchess of Richmond, was taken ill, and Mrs. Damer, who was sent for to nurse her at Goodwood, found her exceedingly ill. Lord Orford, writing to Miss Berry on October 6th, says: 'I have not heard from Mrs. Damer since she got to Goodwood; therefore your letter was the first that informed me of the continued illness of the Duchess, for which I am really sorry on every account.' The Duchess getting better for a time, Mrs. Damer was able to return to London.

In July 1795 Lord Orford was called upon to entertain the Royal Family at Strawberry Hill and Mrs. Damer was begged by her cousin to assist him. Although he was at this time suffering from a bad attack of gout, he was delighted at the honour paid to him. In a letter to General Conway he writes: 'Your daughter will have told you what a bustle I am in, preparing, not to resist, but to receive an invasion of Royalties to-morrow. I am to wear a sword, and I have appointed my two nephews, George and Horace, as aides-de-camp. If I fall, as ten to one I do, to be sure it will be a superb tumble, at the feet of a Queen and eight daughters of a



## AT HOME

King, for besides the six Princesses, I am to have the Duchess of York and the Princess of Orange! Woe is me at seventy-eight and with scarce a hand or foot to my back.'

In his next letter, written on July 7th, he describes the visit of the Queen and the Princesses.

'I am not dead of fatigue with my royal visitors, as I expected to be, though I was on my poor lame feet for three whole hours. Your daughter, who kindly assisted me in doing the honours, will tell you the particulars and how prosperously I succeeded. The Queen was uncommonly condescending and gracious, and deigned to drink my health, when I presented her with the last glass, and to thank me for all my attentions. Indeed, my memory *de vieille cour* was but once in fault, as I had been assured that her Majesty would be attended by a Chamberlain, yet was not, I had no glove ready when I received her at the step of the coach: yet she honoured me with her hand to lead her upstairs: nor did I recollect my omission when I led her down again.'

How little did Lord Orford think, when despatching this letter to his beloved friend, General Conway, that he would so soon be called upon to hear the sad news of the death of this

## ANNE SEYMOUR DAMER

old friend, which occurred unexpectedly at Park Place on the morning of Thursday, July 9th? General Conway, or as he was then, Field-Marshal Conway, had only returned from his house in London on the previous evening, and the fatal attack came on quite suddenly at five o'clock in the morning. According to Mrs. Damer's account, in a letter written to Miss Berry on the day after her father's death, he had been remarkably well and cheerful at supper on the evening of July 8th. She attributed his demise to his imprudence in exposing himself to damp and cold, and expressed her solicitude for Lord Orford, begging Miss Berry to give her some account of him 'as he never seemed to apprehend this.'

Field-Marshal Conway died at the age of seventy-five.<sup>1</sup> By his will, dated March 3rd, 1771, he devised all his estate of Park Place to his wife, Caroline, Countess of Ailesbury; but Lady Ailesbury only remained at Park Place till the end of that year, having disposed of the property to the first Lord Malmesbury.

<sup>1</sup> A long obituary notice was published in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, July 1795.





THE HONOURABLE HORACE WALPOLE, AFTERWARDS EARL OF ORFORD

*From a picture by Eckardt, engraved 1807*

# DEATH OF LORD ORFORD

## CHAPTER XIV

### DEATH OF LORD ORFORD

LADY AILESBURY was now in her seventy-fourth year, and at this age her husband's death must have been a severe blow to her. She had the companionship of her daughter, Mrs. Damer, who, with the exception of occasional visits to Strawberry Hill, remained with her mother as long as she was at Park Place. On September 15, 1795, Lord Orford says that Mrs. Damer came to him on the Saturday and spent Sunday with him. He then, at her mother's request, settled with her that the Misses Berry should meet him at Park Place, the date of which visit was to be arranged by them.<sup>1</sup> In October he states that Lord Malmesbury had proposed to buy Park Place, but Lady Ailesbury and Mrs. Damer did not leave it till the end of the year. Mrs. Philip Lybbe-Powys, in her interesting diary,<sup>2</sup> writes on December 14th: 'Mr.

<sup>1</sup> Of this visit there is no record.

<sup>2</sup> *Diary of Mrs. Philip Lybbe-Powys*, edited by Mrs. Clinenson, 1903.

## ANNE SEYMOUR DAMER

Powys and myself dined at Park Place; Lady Ailesbury insisted on our going. It was a visit we much wished to avoid, as her ladyship was going to quit that sweet place for ever the next day but one, and, of course, everything bore so melancholy an appearance that it was hardly possible to keep up one's spirits at the thoughts of losing so kind a neighbour. Mrs. S. Hervey, Mrs. Jennings, etc., were there.'

On quitting Park Place they made their home at Mrs. Damer's house, 9 Upper Brook Street, where they had for neighbours in later times Mrs. Damer's cousins, Colonel and Lady Charlotte Campbell, who lived at No. 13, and George, sixth Duke of Argyll, at No. 29 (now called Brook House).

In July and August 1796, Mrs. Damer went to Bognor with Mary Berry, and from thence to Goodwood, where they found the Duchess of Richmond very unwell again. Lord Orford, writing to Miss Berry on July 25th, says, 'I wish you could give me a better account of my dearest Duchess; tell me when you see her again exactly how you find her'; and again, on August 2nd: 'I hoped to hear of all at Goodwood, and flattered myself I should have better accounts of both, of you and my dear Duchess, now I am in perfect ignorance of everything.' And on the following

## DEATH OF LORD ORFORD

day: 'I am grieved you can give no better account of my dearest Duchess; still, though slow (and slow indeed it is to me who have so much at heart), I am confident she will recover, though I may not be so happy as to see it.' On August 9th he writes: 'I am grieved that my dear Duchess has had additional pains.' She died in November 1796. Lord Orford had loved her most affectionately from the moment he first saw her, when she was but a child of five years old. Her sweet temper and unalterable good nature had made her retain a friendship for and confidence in him, that was more steady than he ever found in any other person to whom he had been attached. 'It is a heavy blow; I had flattered myself the last time when I saw her so extremely ill last winter that she would soon recover. She has languished ever since, suffered terribly, as much as could be discovered under her invincible patience and silence; but she is gone, and I am still here, though above twenty years older! The Duke, who is exceedingly afflicted, retains all her servants and has pensioned them for their lives, has sent me, as the dear soul had desired him, one of her own rings. I can never put it on my swelled fingers, but I will for ever carry it about me while there is any for ever for me.' He also said he came to town to greet Lady

## ANNE SEYMOUR DAMER

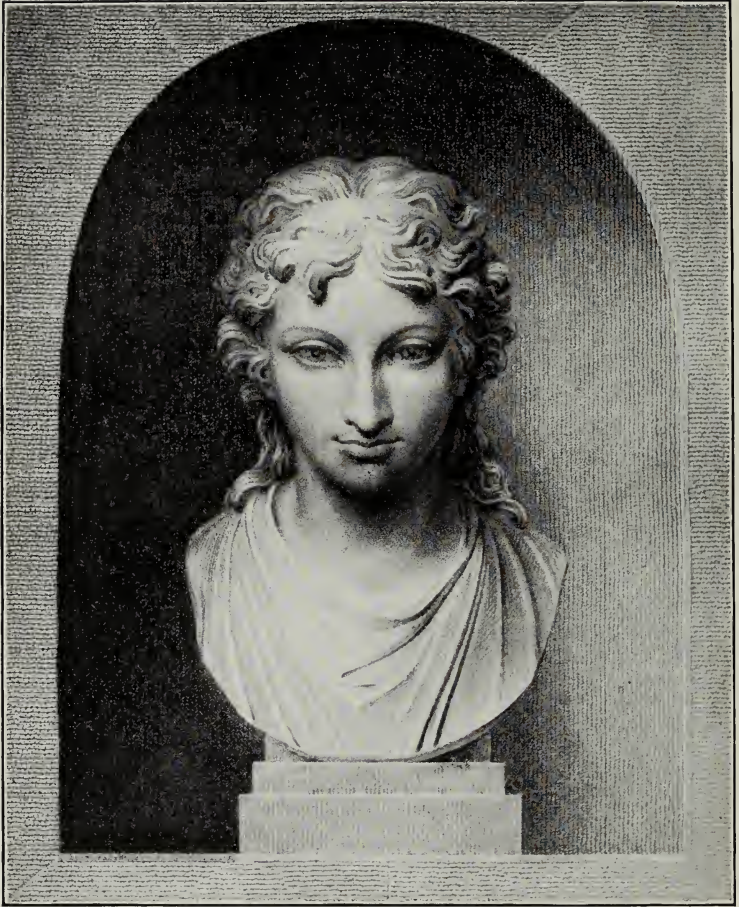
Ailesbury and Mrs. Damer after their sad loss, and that at the last Mrs. Damer was the only person the Duchess recognised.

The death of the Duchess of Richmond was another great sorrow to Mrs. Damer, who was devoted to her half-sister, and the blow, which fell so soon after her father's death, affected her sorely. During that winter she remained quietly in London; one night in December she dined with her old friend Lord Orford, at whose house she met Cosway, 'whose glibity she found very entertaining.'

Lord Orford at the time was far from well, and Mrs. Damer was very anxious about him. The account of his declining health is best told by Miss Berry: 'These attacks of gout are becoming more frequent and longer, and make those with whom he is living at Strawberry Hill very anxious that he should return to Berkeley Square, to be near assistance in case of any sudden seizure. When not immediately suffering from pain, his mind was tranquil and cheerful. He was still capable of being amused, and of taking some part in conversation: but during these last weeks of his life, when fever was superadded to his ills, his mind became subject to the cruel hallucination of suffering himself to be neglected and abandoned by the only persons to whom his







BUST OF ANNE SEYMOUR DAMER

*Carved by herself*

## DEATH OF LORD ORFORD

memory clung, and whom he always desired to see. In vain they recalled to his recollection how recently they had left him, and how short had been their absence : it satisfied him for the moment, but the same idea recurred again, as soon as he had lost sight of them. At last nature, sinking under the exhaustion of weakness, obliterated all ideas but those of mere existence, which ended, without a struggle, on the 2nd of March 1797.'

It was touching to Mrs. Damer and other devoted friends to recall how much he missed them in his last moments, and how eagerly he looked for them to be constantly at hand. That the invalid should have enjoyed the society of three such intellectual women as Mrs. Damer and the Misses Berry is not surprising. Lord Orford was a man of great refinement, and it was women such as Mrs. Damer, with her knowledge of sculpture and art and brilliant conversational powers, who appealed to a man with such an artistic temperament as he had.

The last letter this prince of letter-writers wrote to his old correspondent, the Countess of Ossory, was dated January 15, 1797 ; in this he told her that hitherto old age had laid its hand lightly on him, but if she found in this letter evidence of irritability, she must ascribe it

## ANNE SEYMOUR DAMER

to the attacks of gout, which had become more frequent and severe. Though his house at Strawberry Hill still afforded him pleasure, and his library gave him as much gratification as ever, his friends had persuaded him to move to London, and he felt convinced he never would return.

Lord Orford's death, which made another blank in Mrs. Damer's life, took place at his house, 11 Berkeley Square, in his eightieth year. He was buried at Houghton, in Norfolk, near the remains of his renowned father—the celebrated Prime Minister.

Lord Orford died without ever having taken his seat in the House of Lords. He had succeeded to the title on the death of his eccentric nephew, and having reached the advanced age of seventy-five, was, he said, too old to make any change in his habits of life.

He bequeathed Strawberry Hill,<sup>1</sup> with £2000 a

<sup>1</sup> The late Earl of Orford died worth £95,000 3 per cents., and has given away £50,000 sterling in legacies, which, in the present state of the funds, will leave nothing to the residuary legatee. His Lordship has bequeathed £10,000 to the Duchess of Gloucester; £5000 to Lady Waldegrave; £4000 to each of the Miss Berrys; £500 to each of his nephews and nieces, and a variety of other legacies. Mrs. Damer has Strawberry Hill, and £2000 a year; and Mr. Berry all the manuscripts, and the press, from whence will now come, most probably, his Lordship's posthumous works; amongst which will be his letters during forty years to Sir Horace Mann, and great additions to the noble authors.—*Morning Chronicle*, March 9, 1797. See also *Gentleman's Magazine*, March 1797.

## DEATH OF LORD ORFORD

year for its upkeep to Mrs. Damer for her life, with remainder to Elizabeth Laura, Dowager Countess Waldegrave. He had made Mrs. Damer his executrix and residuary legatee, on account of her taste in art and her respect for antiquities, to which she had added a certain archæological knowledge acquired during her travels. That Lord Orford should select her as a fitting guardian of the house he loved so well, and of the treasures he had collected, was only natural. Many of these cherished objects were of little value to the outside world, but for him each had a meaning and history. In every room he had arranged these relics, which he had gathered together from every country in Europe during his long and interesting life.

Strawberry Hill, which had been considerably enlarged by Lord Orford, and in which he had lived for fifty years, was at first rented by him in 1747 from a Mrs. Chenevix who had a lease of it, but the following year he was able to purchase the property, having found it necessary to obtain an Act of Parliament for this purpose, as the estate was in the possession of three minors of the name of Mortimer. He described the house to Mr. Conway at the time as 'a little play-house that I have got out of Mrs. Chenevix's shop, it is the prettiest bauble you ever saw, it

## ANNE SEYMOUR DAMER

is set in enamelled meadows, with filigree hedges.' Mrs. Chenevix was proprietress of a fashionable toy-shop in London; during her occupancy Strawberry Hill was called Chopped Straw Hall, but this name did not suit Lord Orford, who was delighted to find in an old deed, that the place had originally been called Strawberry Hill. He added considerably to the property, and when Mrs. Damer came into possession of it, the house was a veritable Gothic Castle, not only its exterior but as regards its furniture and fittings also.

By a codicil to his will Lord Orford bequeathed 'A box marked O, containing MSS.,' to Mr. Berry and his daughters, with directions that Mr. Berry should bring out a new edition of his works, with the addition of the papers contained in this box. This task was actually undertaken by Mary Berry, who worked hard at it for over twelve months; but when the new edition was issued to the public it came out under Mr. Berry's name. Mary Berry said that by making her father editor and Mrs. Damer executrix, 'Lord Orford caused his papers being secured to her eye and mine alone.'

The Dowager Countess Waldegrave, already referred to, was Lord Orford's great-niece, being the widow of her cousin George, fourth Earl

## DEATH OF LORD ORFORD

Waldegrave, who died in 1789; she was a daughter of Maria Walpole, one of the three illegitimate daughters of Lord Orford's brother, Sir Edward Walpole. This lady married firstly, James, second Earl Waldegrave, and secondly, William Henry, Duke of Gloucester, and was the mother of William Frederick, Duke of Gloucester and of the Princess Sophia Matilda.

In the summer of 1798 Lady Ailesbury and Mrs. Damer settled at Strawberry Hill, spending the winter months at Mrs. Damer's house in Upper Brook Street.

# ANNE SEYMOUR DAMER

## CHAPTER XV

### FRIENDSHIP WITH NELSON

AT some period during the year 1798, Mrs. Damer was at Naples on a visit, not her first, to Sir William and Lady Hamilton. Sir William began life with an ancient name and £1000, but improved his fortunes by marrying an heiress in 1755, a daughter of Hugh Barlow who owned property in Wales. This marriage was one of convenience rather than of choice, the inducement being the lady's estate of £5000 a year. On her death in 1782, the following autograph letter of condolence was written to Sir William Hamilton by General Conway:—

‘It is impossible to be more sincerely affected than I was by the melancholy news which makes the subject of your last letter, but which I had indeed heard with too much certainty before. Condolences as well as exhortations are always the vainest and generally the most troublesome or impertinent things imaginable. I shall therefore restrain myself in much I could say on the subject. Life affords no room for repairing the





BUST OF LORD NELSON

*By Anne Seymour Damer*



## FRIENDSHIP WITH NELSON

loss of such friends, especially after the earliest stages, therefore to feel, but yet bear like men is the only part to take, and I believe just that which your good heart and good sense will dictate.

‘What say you to this curious event of Gibraltar? I am not a prophet nor a conjuror, God knows, but I have constantly expected what has happened, having no notion how ships or floating batteries can stand against shot and shell from land from heights, especially against which their fire is perfectly vain. Their loss I find is very great, and their expense has undoubtedly been immense. We are told the combined fleet came into the Bay the day before this extraordinary action, in which I confess I had no faith for a long time; and we have now the strongest assurance from many quarters that those fleets have the most positive orders to engage. I want faith for that too. However with such appearance and such reports it’s impossible not to have some anxiety where the consequence is so very important.

‘I doubt our Jamaica Fleet and the convoy have suffered much. One fine ship is certainly lost, but fortunately all the crew saved. In the East it is good that our prospect clears a little, I should hope too, possibly, on the West, at least I have always had and retain sanguine hopes from that

## ANNE SEYMOUR DAMER

quarter, but I don't speak as ministers do from knowledge, but conjecture ; and perhaps these ups and downs and variations of fortune will finally bring us peace, all the powers having, one would think, had war enough, and that may I hope bring you amongst us again—not to stay I fear, tho' I should very earnestly wish it, and I could furnish many good arguments from the life I flatter myself with my farm, my garden, my little projects, of which amidst all my present grand occupations my head is still full, and there indeed my heart leans above all the attracts of ambition. When one is embarked, one must do the duty of one's station, at the bar or helm ; and there are times of life and moments in all times when Kingdoms and gardens seem of the same size and importance, and one can't at such times forget that there's no envy, no squabbles, no toils, no *debates* in the latter.

'Mrs. Damer has, I think, been much the better for her visit to you, and its effects continue. Accept Lady Ailesbury's kindest compliments, and believe me, Dear Sir, with the greatest truth, Yr. affect. and faithful servant, H. S. C.'

This letter shows that Mrs. Damer had been on a visit to Naples prior to 1798, and had benefited by her stay there.

## FRIENDSHIP WITH NELSON

Sir William Hamilton had only been nine years a widower when he married the celebrated Emma Harte or Lyon, who had previously been living under the protection of Charles Francis Greville, Sir William's nephew, to whom he owed the introduction. This does not seem to have been any bar to Lady Ailesbury or Mrs. Damer in making her acquaintance. General Conway congratulated Sir William on this marriage.

‘PARK PLACE, *September 9, 1791.*

‘DEAR SIR WILLIAM,—I have this morning seen in the newspaper what I did not think possible could have been there so soon, and have hardly faith enough to believe on their credit,—that an account was actually come of your arrival at Naples. I thought you must have flown; but the time flies so much faster that I should rather have suspected my computations. After your leaving us here, your departure was so sudden, that I lost, not only the pleasure I had promis'd myself of getting another short sight of you, or even sending you a line with my most cordial wishes for all the happiness that could or would attend the event which had immediately preceded it. I did not mean to make an epithalium, nor scatter flowers upon your couch as complimenters do, but to assure you of the warmest and

## ANNE SEYMOUR DAMER

sincerest felicitations of a friend. You have had already a honeymoon of five good years ;<sup>1</sup> in other words, five years' experience of good humour and attachment. I take your own word for this, not only because it is the best authority with me, but because it has the strongest proof in your actions ; mine, (to a friend I dare call it so) has been of many more lustres from the same experience, and I should be ungrateful to the happiness it has procured me, and to its author, if I did not declare those to be the true and efficient ingredients which make in the married state that composition which is call'd happiness ; however, other circumstances of fortune, name, dignity and a thousand *et ceteras* may vary.

‘ You are now returned to what I am afraid I must, but am grieved to call your home—at least to apprehend it ; as you gave us but very slender hopes of seeing you again soon. I most heartily hope you'll find there everything and in every way exactly to your wish and Lady Hamilton's, as well as your own satisfaction. I only regret all that cou'd not happen here, where I might have my little share.

‘ You had heard, I believe, before your departure, your friend Lady Craven's marriage to the

<sup>1</sup> The allusion is to the time when Emma Harte was under Sir William's protection prior to their marriage.

## FRIENDSHIP WITH NELSON

Margrave; announced to Lord Berkeley by the Margrave in form. A left-hand marriage, *à leur mode*, with a promise to take her with his right hand, when Lord Craven died. That event has already happen'd, poor Lord C. is dead, very opportunely, as I suppose she thinks, and I conclude she is by this time Margravine *dans les formes*.

‘Accept Lady Ailesbury’s best compliments; make mine accepted by Lady Hamilton; and believe me, Dear Sir, sincerely, Your most Faithful Servant,

H. S. CONWAY.

‘Mrs. Damer desires me to tell you she has receiv’d your letter from Dover, and will answer it soon.’

About the time of Mrs. Damer’s visit to Naples Lady Malmesbury, writing of Lady Hamilton, from Caserta, to her sister, Lady Minto, says:— ‘She behaves as well as possible and quite wonderfully, considering her origin and education. You never saw anything so charming as her attitudes. The most graceful statues and pictures do not give you an idea of them.<sup>1</sup> Her dancing of the Tarantella is beautiful to a degree. The Queen (of Naples) has received her as Lady

<sup>1</sup> Lady Ailesbury said that, when she first met her, Lady Hamilton dressed atrociously.

## ANNE SEYMOUR DAMER

Hamilton, though not as the English Minister's wife, and I believe all the English were to be civil to her, which is quite right.'

At the date of Mrs. Damer's arrival at Naples, news had just come of Lord Nelson's landing in Egypt, and of his destruction of the French fleet in Aboukir Bay, after a terrible fight lasting twelve hours in which he captured nine vessels, and burnt two. By this great victory in August 1798, in which over five thousand French sailors were killed or taken prisoner, Nelson destroyed Buonaparte's communications, and prevented his making Egypt a starting point for the conquest of India.

Naples was thoroughly excited at the prospect of the arrival of the victor of the Nile. In her preparations for the reception, Lady Hamilton was assisted by Mrs. Damer, who was more than interested at the prospect of making the acquaintance of the hero. On the approach of the 'Vanguard,' with Nelson on board, a procession of boats started from Naples, headed by the Royal barge, with flags and music. Lady Hamilton was one of the first to accord her welcome, and probably Mrs. Damer was with her.

Nelson, who was far from well, was nursed with much solicitude by Lady Hamilton at her



## FRIENDSHIP WITH NELSON

house, where Mrs. Damer soon became intimate with him.

Of this victory Miss Berry wrote to Mrs. Damer in October :<sup>1</sup>—

‘I have not said a word to you of our glorious victory, but you do not suspect me of not feeling it. Do you participate in some other less agreeable feelings which to me accompany this and every other success in that quarter? When I think that under the circumstances, we might have been so much nearer the scene of action, and among the first to receive and congratulate the gallant conquerors! How much more appropriate to our minds, interesting to our feelings, and gratifying to our vanity, in spite of all the privations with which such a situation might seem to have been accompanied, than anything we are or have been doing.’ From this it would appear that the Misses Berry as well as Mrs. Damer had been invited to Naples.

With her usual enthusiasm, Mrs. Damer asked and obtained Nelson’s consent to carve a bust of him, persuading him to sit to her in the coat which he had worn at the Battle of the Nile, and which, when subsequently given to her, became a cherished possession to such a hero-worshipper.

<sup>1</sup> The news of the Battle of the Nile, which took place August 1, did not reach London until October 2.

## ANNE SEYMOUR DAMER

She did not have much time for the completion of the bust, as Nelson was only on shore for twenty-one days.

Some years after this visit, Mrs. Damer wrote to Lady Hamilton, begging the latter to exert her influence in having an engraving of the bust which she had executed at Naples included in a *Life of Nelson*. 'You know I owe this favour to you and Sir William (of the immortal hero having sat to me), and you will not wonder at my ambition and anxiety that such a circumstance, which I know so well how to value, should be recorded, and that my name should thus be, (if I may term it so), joined to the most brilliant name England ever gave birth to.'

Very few incidents are recorded of Mrs. Damer's visit to Naples. The Princess Dashkoff wrote of her studio as a fashionable morning resort, where she was found generally employed with her chisel: 'that was a sanctum in which she received only her particular friends; for her character was as devoid as possible of ostentation, and she made so little parade of her talents and learning, that I remember one morning, she was extremely disconcerted at my having observed a Greek work lying in her room, full of marginal annotations in her own handwriting.'

The Princess Dashkoff, with whom Mrs. Damer

## FRIENDSHIP WITH NELSON

was acquainted, was a lady-of-honour to Catherine II. of Russia, and took a leading part in the Revolution of 1762 which deposed Peter III. She had travelled much in Europe, and numbered among her friends all the most distinguished men of her day. She assisted Catherine II. in her literary pursuits, compiled a Russian Dictionary, and became President of the Academy of Arts and Sciences at Petersburg in 1782. Mrs. M. Hartley, writing to Sir William Pepys, Bart., says: 'I see that the Princess Dashkoff has been banished to Moscow twice, and when we saw her in England, I apprehended she had a hint given her, that it would be proper for her to make an excursion on her travels. . . . I shall never forget the entertaining conversation at which I was present, between you and her and Mrs. Montagu in the year 1780.'<sup>1</sup>

We hear that Lady Hamilton desired to have a carriage and liveries like those Mrs. Damer used when staying at Naples.

The following is a reprint by the Strawberry Hill private press of a notice which appeared in the *Morning Post*, May 5, 1804, describing the bust of Nelson as exhibited at the Royal Academy:—

<sup>1</sup> From the *Correspondence of Sir William Pepys, Bart.*, edited by Miss Alice Gaussen, 1904.

## ANNE SEYMOUR DAMER

‘MODEL ACADEMY.<sup>1</sup>—Among the number of busts that people this year’s Exhibition, stands pre-eminent in merit as it does in situation, that of LORD NELSON. It was entirely finished, as well as conceived, by the HONOURABLE MRS. DAMER; for while most of the modern Statuaries, Modellers strictly speaking rather than Sculptors, confine their own labours to shaping the ductile clay, and suffer what little fire they may have instilled in this pliant material, again to evaporate under the mechanical process of the journeyman, who thence copies the fragile form in the more stubborn marble, simply by rule and compass, the fair hand of a female artist remains as yet almost unrivalled in the arduous task of singly defying every difficulty opposed by the hardest produce of the Parian quarry.

‘Notwithstanding its modern costume, this portrait of LORD NELSON displays more of the true spirit of the antique, than most of the sculpture worthies that grace the circle formed round its base; spite of all the advantage they enjoy of Roman togas, or bared bosoms. It possesses that breadth of style which, carefully discarding every incidental minutiae of the feature, unworthy of record, as unconnected with the

<sup>1</sup> Gallery of Models.

## FRIENDSHIP WITH NELSON

effect of the countenance or expression of the mind, prevents the truth of the resemblance from being diminished, instead of increased by a confusion of unmeaning details, cavities, and protuberances, dimples and pimples, not mellowed by any assistance of colours, not smoothed down by any touch of the pencil. It exhibits, moreover, a simplicity of attitude inseparable from real dignity. Looking straight forward to the object of all his thoughts and wishes, the Hero of Aboukir here appears, not studying his *air de tête* by some affected twist of the neck, as ungraceful as it is ridiculous, where no action of an entire body accounts for this constrained motion of the head, but attentively surveying the scene of his future triumph and glory.'

When Mrs. Damer left Naples is not recorded, but, as she generally did not return from abroad till the spring, she probably remained there throughout the winter.

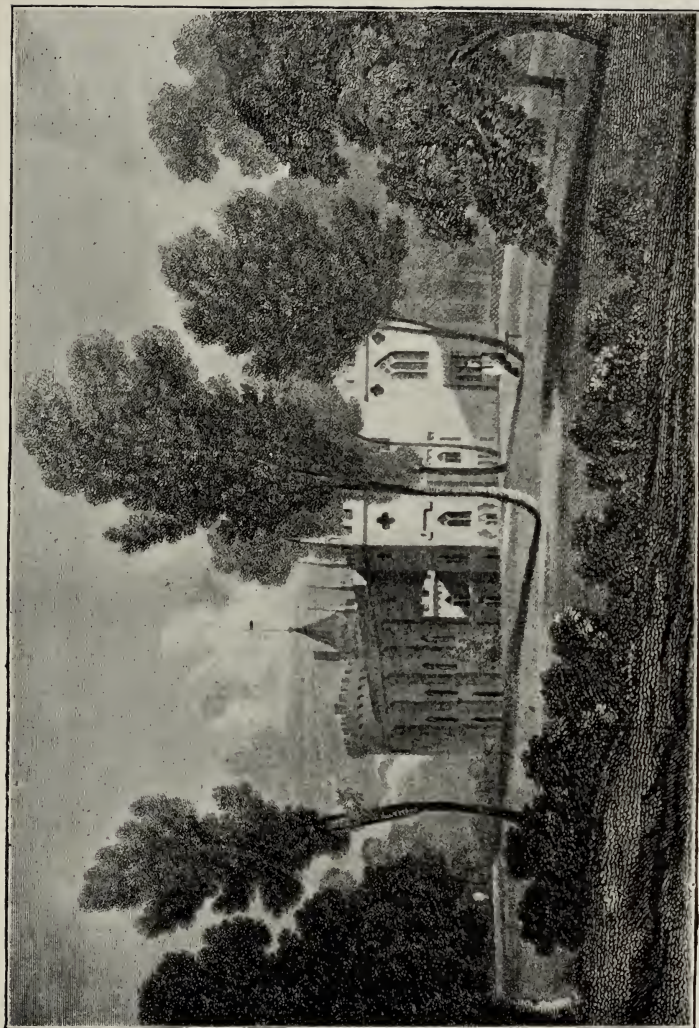
# ANNE SEYMOUR DAMER

## CHAPTER XVI

### STRAWBERRY HILL

IN Miss Berry's diary it is recorded that, soon after settling at Strawberry Hill, Mrs. Damer and Lady Ailesbury became acquainted with Mrs. Howe, who possessed an extraordinary force of mind, clearness of understanding, and remarkable power of thought and combination. She retained these faculties unimpaired to the great age of eighty-five, by exercising them daily, both in practice of mathematics and in reading the two dead languages, of which late in life she had made herself the mistress. To these acquirements must be added warm and lively feelings joined to a perfect knowledge of the world, and of the society of which she had always been a distinguished member.

Writing in August 1798 to Mrs. Damer from Cheltenham, Mary Berry refers to her engagement, which had been broken off for some time. At Cheltenham her first meeting with Colonel O'Hara had taken place. 'This place and every-



STRAWBERRY HILL

*From an old print*





## STRAWBERRY HILL

thing about it recalls in the most lively manner scenes and recollections to my mind, which, though melancholy, I cannot call unpleasing. They are, thank Heaven! unembittered by reproach, and undisgraced by folly. My imagination seems to pass everything that has happened since, and to bring me back to the calm but lively enjoyment of a society in which I am delighted.'

Early in 1799 Mrs Damer was at Malvern with Miss Berry and Lady Spencer.

On 5th March Miss Berry, writing to Mrs. Cholmeley, says: 'On Saturday Mrs. Damer and ourselves dined with your mother and brother, and yesterday we went with him, at his own request, to the Great Orleans pictures which are exhibited at the Lyceum, in the Strand. It was my second visit. Among them is the Sebastian del Piombo (a "Resurrection of Lazarus"), of whose excellence, if you remember,

"He talked so much and long about it  
That e'en believers 'gan to doubt it."

But he would not say too much. I gave him credit for all his admiration: it is one of the finest pictures in the world—excelling in grouping, composition, drawing, intellect, clearness, expression, and all that constituted the perfection

## ANNE SEYMOUR DAMER

of the higher order of painting. Mrs. Damer, he, and I stood before it above half an hour yesterday, thoroughly enjoying it.'

Under Mrs. Damer's ownership, Strawberry Hill did not relinquish its traditions for hospitality. As hostess, she endeavoured to keep alive the glories of Walpole's Gothic Castle; in the summer she gave wonderful garden-parties, which were attended by all the great world of fashion from London, and where she was surrounded by that intellectual coterie of which she was the centre. Though she led a quiet life with her mother she was constantly visited by her intimate friends. In addition to the Berrys, her neighbours included Mrs. Garrick, the widow of the great actor and an interesting woman, who at one time had been an opera-dancer in Vienna. She had come to London at an early age, and was assisted to the position she held in society by the patronage of the Countess of Burlington as well as by her own charms.

Another theatrical friend of Mrs. Damer's was Mrs. Siddons, who was often a guest at Strawberry Hill, spending many hours in the studio, where, under the tuition of Mrs. Damer, she practised modelling. She is said to have first learnt the art at Birmingham, where, so the story runs: 'Going one day into a shop and

## STRAWBERRY HILL

seeing a bust of herself which the shopman, not knowing whom he was addressing, told her was a likeness of the greatest actress in the world, Mrs. Siddons bought the bust, thinking she could make a better replica of her own features. She set to work, and from that time made modelling one of her favourite pursuits.' She, anyhow, owed much to Mrs. Damer, in whose studio she, with other fair dames arrayed in mob-caps and aprons, wielded the malet and chisel, kneading wax and clay with their white hands. Mrs. Siddons mentions that whenever she was with Mrs. Damer they indulged in their passion for sculpture, and adds that on one occasion, when she was on a visit to Mrs. Damer at Strawberry Hill, she had the honour of meeting Louis Philippe, afterwards King of France, and the Prince Regent.

Another constant visitor at Strawberry Hill at this period was Miss Joanna Baillie, who assisted so greatly with the renowned theatrical performances that took place there. She was a daughter of the Reverend James Baillie, and a niece of William and John Hunter, the great anatomists; she published several volumes of plays, and some poetry which was considered very graceful; and lived to the age of eighty-nine.

## ANNE SEYMOUR DAMER

Caroline, Princess of Wales, also paid several visits to Mrs. Damer, whose cousin, Lady Caroline Campbell, was in waiting upon her for some time. Lady Caroline was a daughter of Lady Ailesbury's brother, the Duke of Argyll, and had married a distant cousin, Colonel John Campbell of Shawfield.

On November 12, 1799, Mary Berry writes: 'Lady Ailesbury is, I think, particularly well and in good spirits, and is, indeed, the picture of what an old woman between seventy and eighty ought to be, and so seldom is. Mrs. Damer chips away at her marble one half of the morning and trots about the grounds the other half in all weathers, and is much better for this variety of exercise.'

Towards the close of the year 1800 Mrs. Damer again indulged in her taste for private theatricals. The first performance took place in November, and the Misses Berry and their father, who were staying at Strawberry Hill, greatly assisted in the preparation and performances which proved so brilliant a success.

The programme ran :—

# STRAWBERRY HILL

THEATRE, STRAWBERRY HILL

November 1800

Will be presented a Comedy, in two Acts, called

## THE OLD MAID

Mr. Harlowe, . . . .	Mr. BURN.
Clerimont, . . . .	The EARL OF MOUNT-EDGE- CUMBE.
Captain Cape, . . . .	Mr. BERRY.
Mrs. Harlowe, . . . .	Miss BERRY.
Miss Harlowe, . . . .	Mrs. BURN.
Trifle, . . . .	Miss AGNES BERRY.

To which will be added

## THE INTRIGUING CHAMBERMAID

Goodall, . . . .	Mr. BURN.
Valentine, . . . .	The EARL OF MOUNT-EDGE- CUMBE.
Oldcastle, . . . .	Mr. BERRY.
Trusty and Colonel Bluff,	Mr. HERVEY.
Slap and Security, . . . .	Mr. CAMPBELL.
Mrs. Highman, . . . .	Mrs. BURN.
Charlotte, . . . .	Miss AGNES BERRY.
Lettice, . . . .	The Hon. Mrs. DAMER.

The Prologue to the performance to be spoken by the  
Earl of Mount-Edgecumbe.

The Epilogue by the Hon. Mrs. Damer.

The following is the Prologue, written by the  
Earl of Mount-Edgecumbe and spoken by him at

ANNE SEYMOUR DAMER

the opening of the Theatre, Strawberry Hill,  
November 1800 :—

*‘Noise and disputing behind the scenes.—The Curtain begins  
to rise.*

*(Speaks within.)*

Hold, hold! What’s this? No Prologue to our  
play?

Down with the curtain—let it down I say;  
Let me go forth—I must, I will have way!

*(Enters.)*

So, I’ve escaped at length; with much ado,  
With threats, entreaties, aye, and wrangling too,  
I’ve forced my passage, ere the curtain rise,  
To mark your looks, your thoughts to scrutinize,  
And read our doom beforehand in your eyes.

Long in the green-room was the point contested;  
Scarce to my pray’r a half-assent I’d wrested;  
When, loudly summoned by the prompter’s bell,  
(To young adventurers tremendous knell!)

Restraint disdaining, hastily I flew

To state the case, and plead my cause to you.

What! an unpractis’d novice band engage,  
With vent’rous step, to tread the awful stage;

Before this dread tribunal dare t’ appear:

Face such an audience as I now see here;

Nor send a humble messenger before,

To court your favour and your smile implore;

Thus did I vainly urge: they all reply,

‘But who so bold will venture?’ Who will?—I.

Give me your Prologue; let this task be mine,

Or I’ll no longer be your Valentine.

Thus then—but soft! methinks I here descry

Smiles of humour beam from ev’ry eye;

The gen’rous sentiment each bosom move,

That prompts to pardon, if it can’t approve:

## STRAWBERRY HILL

Yes, in these partial looks with pride I view  
Our fondest wishes realiz'd by you.  
No, no more ; I'll hasten to my friends ;  
Bid them with confidence dispel their fear,  
Certain to meet a kind reception here.'

There is no description of the performance given in any of the newspapers of the date, yet the success with which it evidently met encouraged Mrs. Damer to arrange another and more ambitious performance in the following year. This next play selected, which highly taxed the histrionic talents of this distinguished company of amateurs, was a comedy in five acts, entitled *Fashionable Friends*, adapted from the French play *L'homme du Jour*, by Boissy. This comedy was found among the papers of Lord Orford, and was produced under the personal superintendence of Miss Berry. The plot, characters, and dialogue turn upon the love intrigues of married couples in society, and there was a want of morality and an easy licence about the play which make improbable the allegation that it was written by Miss Berry, even though she was instrumental in having it produced.

The following is a reprint of the original programme :—

# ANNE SEYMOUR DAMER

THEATRE, STRAWBERRY HILL

November 1801

Will be presented an entirely new Comedy, in five Acts,  
called

## THE FASHIONABLE FRIENDS

Sir Dudley Dorimant,	. . .	EARL OF MT.-EDGECUMBE.
Sir Valentine Vapour,	. . .	Mr. BERRY.
Mr. Lovell,	. . .	Mr. BROWNLOW NORTH.
John,	. . .	Mr. CAMPBELL.
Lapierre,	. . .	Mr. BURN.
Music Master,	. . .	Mr. MERCER.
Lady Selina Vapour,	. . .	Hon. Mrs. DAMER.
Mrs. Lovell,	. . .	Miss BERRY.
Mrs. Racket,	. . .	Mrs. BURN.
Miss Racket,	. . .	Miss A. BERRY.
Trimming,	. . .	Lady ELIZ. COLE.
Lappett,	. . .	

The Prologue to be spoken by the Earl of Mount-  
Edgecumbe.

To which will be added

## LOVERS' QUARRELS

Don Carlos,	. . .	Mr. MERCER.
Sancho,	. . .	EARL OF MT.-EDGECUMBE.
Lopez,	. . .	Mr. CAMPBELL.
Leonora,	. . .	Miss A. BERRY.
Jacintha,	. . .	Hon. Mrs. DAMER.

The Prologue and Epilogue to the *Fashionable Friends* were written by Miss Joanna Baillie.

The following criticism of the play occurs in



## STRAWBERRY HILL

the *Journal and Correspondence of Miss Berry*,  
edited by Lady Teresa Lewis :—

‘The great strength of the play is witty, sprightly dialogue, kept up uniformly throughout without ever flagging in any part; and in the great skill with which one of the chief characters, Lady Selina, is drawn: the weakness, if it has any, seems to be in this, that the plan and conduct of the plot resemble those of many plays that we have already, and the first part of the play has, perhaps, less action carried on in it than the present taste in plays may require. I think, however, that its strength will do more than get the better of its weakness, and that, represented in a theatre where the dialogue may be distinctly heard, it will meet with the warmest applause.’

After the first representation of *Fashionable Friends* at Strawberry Hill in November 1801, a friend wrote to Mrs. Damer :—

‘ Sweet be the rest and undisturbed  
That crowns the pleasant toil to-night,  
And long may its remembrance live,  
Long, long be cherish’d with delight.

Or if the spirits, highly wrought,  
Court not so soon the oblivious hour;  
If e’en in slumbers unsubdued,  
Genius and Fancy yet have power.

## ANNE SEYMOUR DAMER

(Since all the beauties choose to say  
With faith implicit is received,  
Since ladies never yet could lie  
And tales so grave are sure believ'd.)

Oh! may the parent of your child,  
For your fond cares his thanks bestow,  
Farquhar support the trembling sprite,  
While Damer wreathes his modest brow.

Mark how he bends to sprightly Burn,  
See how he kneels at Berry's feet,  
And owns that, but for Edgumbe's wrath,  
He could have punished foul deceit.

That youth—O'Brien in his name?  
His hand the grateful bard shall seize,  
Glad on some stage to find again,  
One gentleman who moves with ease.

The vision flies—but not in dreams  
Alone shall live this pleasant night,  
For long shall its remembrance live,  
Long, long be cherished with delight.'

No further amateur performances are mentioned as having taken place at Strawberry Hill, although Mrs. Damer had fitted up a most complete little theatre.

In the following year the *Fashionable Friends* was produced at Drury Lane, but without success, running only for two nights, although the cast contained some of the best-known actors and actresses of the day, such as Mr. Kemble, Miss

## STRAWBERRY HILL

Du Camp, who was afterwards Mrs. Kemble, Mrs. Jordan, etc.

The following is the cast of the public performance :—

### FASHIONABLE FRIENDS

Produced at Drury Lane, April 22, 1802

Sir Dudley Dorimant,	. . .	C. KEMBLE.
Lovell,	. . . . .	BARRYMORE.
Sir Valentine Vapour,	. . .	KING.
Dr. Syrop,	. . . . .	SUETT.
Lady Selina Vapour,	. . .	Miss DU CAMP.
Mrs. Lovell,	. . . . .	Mrs. YOUNG.
Mrs. Racket,	. . . . .	Miss POPE.
Miss Racket,	. . . . .	Mrs. JORDAN.

When the comedy was published the following appeared in the advertisement: ‘This comedy, found among the papers of the late Earl of Orford, and remaining unclaimed in the hands of his Executors for five years, was brought forward at Mr. Kemble’s request. After the extraordinary abuse that has been lavished upon it, the Executors considered it a duty to the unknown author to publish it.

‘Acted but twice.

‘The dialogue of the play is pretty good, the characters are well drawn, but there is a sad want of plot and incident.’ (Genest.)

# ANNE SEYMOUR DAMER

## CHAPTER XVII

### PARIS

ON Monday, March 8, 1802, Mrs. Damer left London with Miss Berry, for Paris; on the following day the Chevalier Jerningham wrote to Lady Bedingfield:—‘En attendant, Mrs. Damer et Miss Berry sont parties pour Paris, Mars 9, 1802.’<sup>1</sup>

They started at eleven o'clock and only reached Sittingbourne at seven, the roads being in such a bad state that in several places the four horses could hardly drag the coach out of the mud; they were therefore compelled to remain the night at Sittingbourne. Starting early on the following morning, they reached Dover at noon—too late to get their carriage on board the packet, and to save the tide that day. Not wishing to sail at night, they decided to wait till the morning of the following day, when they arrived at Calais at four o'clock, and where, although they found the pier and quay very crowded with people, they

<sup>1</sup> From the *Jerningham Letters*: Edited by Egerton Castle, 1896.

## PARIS

met with no incivility or delay. The custom-house officers treated them with every consideration, and after having passed through several ceremonies in regard to their passports, and meeting with no rudeness from the officials, or impertinent questions or delays, they were permitted to go to their hotel, where they stayed the night.

Early on the 11th they left Calais, and found the French roads well kept, but Miss Berry says that the tolls were very high. On the road between Calais and Paris they had to pay as much as £2, 7s. 6d. for their carriage. Everything and everybody seemed to have improved since their previous visits to France, but they noticed how the churches had suffered at the hands of the revolutionists. At Montreuil, where they stopped a night, they found the principal church an entire ruin; the people who had come to regard the destruction as a disgrace, on being questioned about this act of vandalism, declared that the church had not been demolished, but had fallen down! Only two churches out of seven in this town were then open for public worship. All the châteaux which they passed on the road were shut up and deserted, but none of them pulled down or otherwise injured.

Leaving Montreuil on the 12th, they passed

## ANNE SEYMOUR DAMER

through Abbeville, which, with its dismantled fortifications, looked very neglected; several small villages through which they drove bore a deserted air, though a great part of the road for some miles outside Abbeville had been planted with apple-trees, which were well tended and looked in good order.

Their next halting-place was Amiens; here they found Lord Cornwallis, who was in charge of the mission sent by the British Government to France, in order to carry out the negotiations in regard to signing the Treaty of Peace between the two countries. Besides Lord Cornwallis, they met Mrs. Damer's friend Mr. Merry, Mr. Moore, Colonel Littlehales, and Colonel Nightingale, who were attached to Lord Cornwallis's staff. It was during this halt at Amiens, that Mrs. Damer first met Joseph Buonaparte, who was in charge of the treaty<sup>1</sup> on behalf of the French Government.

The great struggle between England and France had been in progress for so long that both sides were anxious to bring the war to a close, and this treaty was the result of the *pourparlers* which had been entered upon with this object. Buonaparte, who was at this time First Consul,

<sup>1</sup> The treaty was definitely signed on March 25, just a week after Mrs. Damer and Miss Berry had left Amiens.



PORTRAIT

*From Engraving by Walker*





## PARIS

had at the close of the previous year opened the negotiations for the peace with England; his offer was at once met by the English Government, who agreed to give up the French Colonies that had been captured; France in return promised to retire from Southern Italy, and to leave Holland and Switzerland to themselves.

On peace being declared, there were great rejoicings in London, and a feeling of relief that the war had at last been brought to a conclusion.

During this brilliant but short period of peace which ensued between England and France, the name of Napoleon Buonaparte was enthroned in dazzling glory; English people of fashion all flocked to Paris, to enjoy the pleasure so abundantly offered to them, and among those who hurried thither was Charles James Fox, who arrived some time after his friend Mrs. Damer had left, remaining there throughout August and September 1802. He was present at the audience given to the Diplomatic Body, September 2nd or 3rd, as reported in the *Morning Post* of September 8th, and dined with the First Consul on September 10th. Fox may at this time have mentioned to the First Consul the object of Mrs. Damer's visit to Paris—her desire to present him with the bust of Fox.

## ANNE SEYMOUR DAMER

On leaving Amiens, on March 13th, Mrs. Damer and her friend passed the house of the Duke de St. James, which was entirely dismantled and the park wall of which was broken down in several places, and the beautiful Château de Chantilly, which, with the exception of le petit château and the stables, then being used as barracks, was completely ruined.

When at length they reached Paris, they found great difficulty in obtaining accommodation, all the hotels being crowded with English visitors; they managed, however, to get an apartment at the Hôtel d'Orléans. On the next day they visited the Gallery of the Louvre, where Mrs. Damer was delighted to renew her acquaintance with the beautiful statues and pictures which she knew so well how to appreciate. While wandering through these galleries they met Mrs. Cosway,<sup>1</sup> whom they had known for some time. She presented Monsieur de la Vallée, the Secretary of the Louvre, to them, who proved most useful in showing them the treasures of the galleries.

Mrs. Cosway, who was the daughter of an inn-keeper at Leghorn, was a clever woman. She was a good musician, and gave very interesting musical parties, which were attended by the

<sup>1</sup> Wife of the celebrated miniature painter.

## PARIS

Prince of Wales and other leaders of society, by which means she obtained a position in the social world of London. After her husband's death in 1821 she lived almost entirely in Paris. Growing tired of the pleasures of the world, she entered a convent at Lyons, of which she became the Superior.

That Mrs. Damer expected to meet Mrs. Cosway in Paris is shown by the following autograph letter written from London :—

‘FRIDAY, *March* 8, 1802.

‘DEAR MR. COSWAY,—I thank you for the letter and should have thanked Mrs. Cosway, but I hope to do so soon in person that I have not written to her. I have at last obtained my passport, and mean to set out next Monday. You will perhaps like to send a letter, or some little parcel to Mrs. Cosway, which I will take care of, and if you could contrive to call upon me on Sunday morning, if I do not call on you before, I should be very glad. I do not rejoice at the immense work Mrs. Cosway has undertaken, but of that when we meet.—Farewell, and believe me,  
Yours very sincerely, ANNE S. DAMER.

‘To Richard Cosway, Esq., Stratford Place.’<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This autograph letter is reproduced by kind permission of Mr. F. Sabin.

## ANNE SEYMOUR DAMER

The 'immense work Mrs. Cosway has undertaken' was the drawing of every picture in the Gallery of the Louvre, accompanied in each case by a history of the picture and painter, an undertaking which, however, seems never to have been accomplished.

During her stay in Paris, Mrs. Damer found the manners of the people much altered for the worse; the appearance of the men was dirty, and the women were not nearly so well dressed as they were before the Revolution.

After delivering letters of introduction on March 16th to Madame de Castellane, Madame de Beaveau, Madame de Mortemart, Madame Louise de Tallyrand Périgord and Madame d'Audernarde, she proceeded with Miss Berry to interview the fashionable dressmaker, Mlle. Bertin, in the Rue de Richelieu. They were not shown anything pretty or which tempted them to buy, but Mrs. Damer ordered a bonnet for two louis, to be made from a model which was composed entirely of lace and which cost seventy louis. This Mlle. Bertin had been celebrated as dressmaker to Marie Antoinette; during the Reign of Terror she heard that she was to receive a domiciliary visit from the agents of the revolutionary government who were desirous of ascertaining the amount of the Queen's debts; she

## PARIS

accordingly destroyed all her accounts, declaring that the Queen owed her nothing.

On March 27th, Mrs. Damer heard the roar of the cannons at the Invalides, announcing the long-expected Peace; the Treaty of Amiens having been signed on March 25th.

During their visit to Paris the two friends went a great deal into society, where they frequently met Neckar, Madame Récamier, General de la Fayette, the Duc de Rohan Chabot, and Madame de la Rochefoucauld, to whom Mrs. Damer had letters of introduction, and Madame de Staël whom she had met before. Another acquaintance with whom they were brought in contact was Madame Chabot de Castellane, to whom they had been introduced by Madame de Staël; we also hear that they made visits to two of the Ministers' wives, Madame Luçay, wife of the Préfet du Palais, and to Madame Fouché, wife of the Minister of Justice; while Monsieur Bertier, the Minister of War, received them with great civility, though he had no wife to assist him in doing the honours of his house. It was here that Mrs. Damer first met Cambacérès, the Second Consul, and on a later occasion, Le Brun, the Third Consul, who was the son of a farmer in Normandy, and who remembered having seen Mrs. Damer in 1775.

## ANNE SEYMOUR DAMER

What Mrs. Damer enjoyed more than anything was the statue gallery at the Louvre, where she spent much time, and although she was now over fifty years of age, she was still anxious to improve herself in the art of sculpture; she declared she learnt many things from the beautiful objects she saw in this collection.

At a ball at the Circle des Étrangers they met many of the *nouveaux riches*, whose women-kind were so much over-dressed and loaded with jewels and rich laces, that Miss Berry said it was impossible to believe they were at a ball in Paris.

On March 30th they were taken to the Tuileries by a Swiss tailor who waited on Madame Buonaparte. He showed them over Buonaparte's suite of rooms. Miss Berry said that none of the many palaces which she had seen in France and other countries approached in magnificence these apartments. Two days afterwards, Mrs. Cosway took Mrs. Damer and Miss Berry to the house of Madame Buonaparte, the First Consul's mother, to whom they were presented, and who showed them over the whole *appartement* which had formerly belonged to Miss Berry's friends, the Montfermeil family. Madame Buonaparte was quiet and civil, but showed no brilliance in conversation.

## PARIS

After this Mrs. Damer was more than ever anxious to be presented to the First Consul. Madame d'Arblay, writing under date of this month, mentions that she had heard much of the visit of Mrs. Damer and Miss Berry to Paris, and of the difficulty which they experienced in getting the coveted introduction. 'A lady here (Paris) told us she had been called on by Miss Berry, who had complained with much energy upon the subject; saying, "We have been everywhere, seen everything, heard everybody, beheld such sights! listened to such discourse, joined much society! and all to obtain his notice. Don't you think it is very extraordinary that he should not himself desire to see Mrs. Damer?" "Madame," replied the lady, "perhaps if you had done half this, the First Consul might have desired to see you both." "But you don't imagine," answered Miss Berry, laughing, "we came over from England to see you *ci-devants*! we can see such as you at home.'" Madame d'Arblay also states that Mrs. Damer and Miss Berry had left Paris before her arrival, but that she heard that they had succeeded in obtaining the much-desired introduction, and it was reported they were both very gay and agreeable women, as well as very enterprising and extremely *répandus*.

On April 2nd Mrs. Damer and her friend were

## ANNE SEYMOUR DAMER

again taken by the little Swiss tailor to Madame Buonaparte's *appartement* in the Tuileries. It had been arranged that Josephine should receive them as two distinguished ladies from England who were anxious to see the First Consul and to make the acquaintance of Madame Buonaparte. During a previous visit to France Mrs. Damer had met and been on friendly terms with Josephine de Beauharnais, but on her return to England the acquaintance had dropped, and Miss Berry does not mention that Josephine even referred to it on this occasion. She received them with marked civility, talking of her garden at Malmaison, and of the plants which she was getting from Lee & Kennedy in England. Miss Berry managed to turn the conversation on to the subject of statuary, thinking this would recall Mrs. Damer to Josephine's remembrance, but without success. Their disappointment at not seeing the First Consul during this reception was subsequently only slightly mitigated by catching a glimpse of Napoleon from a window of the *entresol* of the Tuileries on the occasion of a great parade of troops. The Swiss tailor had obtained places for them to view the spectacle. They saw the First Consul mount his horse, and he then passed their window twice.

A few days after this they were again received



## PARIS

by Madame Buonaparte, at a reception for Foreign Ministers and their wives, or any strangers of mark staying in Paris. Thus at last Mrs. Damer obtained her long-cherished desire of being presented to Buonaparte. When going round the circle, he made a few remarks to her and Miss Berry, but appeared never to have heard of Mrs. Damer's fame as a sculptress, nor of the principal object of her visit to Paris—her wish to offer to him her bust of Charles James Fox.

We do not hear that during the few remaining days that Mrs. Damer and Miss Berry were in Paris, they were again summoned to the Tuileries. The rest of their time seems to have been taken up in making farewell visits to their friends, especially to Madame Récamier, whose house Miss Berry describes as the most elegant she had ever seen, all the furniture being most handsome, and richly ornamented in the very best taste.

On April 11th they left, and travelled by easy stages to London, which they reached on the 18th.

# ANNE SEYMOUR DAMER

## CHAPTER XVIII

### HER MOTHER'S DEATH

SHORTLY after Mrs. Damer's return from France in 1802, the comedy of *Fashionable Friends* which she had produced at Strawberry Hill the previous year, with so much success, was given at Drury Lane Theatre. This play unfortunately met with the same fate as that of her father's which had been produced at the same theatre in 1788. *Fashionable Friends* was only acted at Drury Lane for two nights, and then was withdrawn, owing to the unfavourable reception given to it by the public.

The following advertisement appeared in connection with this play:—

'The *Morning Post* may now display unfurl'd  
Four columns of the Fashionable world,  
And not confin'd to tell of war's renown,  
Spread all the news around of all the town:  
While gay Gazettes the polish'd Treasury writes,  
Of Splendid fashions, not of vulgar frights,  
Proud to record the tailor's deeds and name,  
And give the milliner to deathless fame,  
Who first shall force proud Gallia to confess  
Herself inferior in the arts of dress.

## HER MOTHER'S DEATH

Oh! join to pray my hopes may not be vain,  
Commence, gay Peace, a long and joyous reign,  
May Europe's nations, by my counsels wise,  
Learn e'en their faults to cherish and to prize,  
And sheening glory's bright, but fatal star,  
Prefer thy follies to the woes of war!

The failure of this play was a great disappointment to Mrs. Damer and to Miss Berry, who had been encouraged by the hearty applause with which it had been received at a private performance, to give it a wider publicity.

In the autumn of 1802 Mrs. Damer was very anxious about the health of her friend Mary Berry, who was so far from well that the Berry family decided to winter abroad. They left in October, hoping to let Little Strawberry Hill during their absence, and rented a house at Nice, belonging to General Morgan, for which they paid £90 from November to May.

Miss Mary Berry writes to Mrs. Damer from Nice: 'I remember your telling me that you thought you should feel comfortable and pleased at Strawberry Hill, if you could fancy me quietly settled, or taking a walk at Nice. Be comfortable and be pleased then, dear soul! *car enfin m'y voici*. After all our scruples and regrets about £90, and mine I assure you were many, we have been obliged to give it.'

Since her return from Paris, Mrs. Damer had

## ANNE SEYMOUR DAMER

found a new and most absorbing interest in purchasing plants for Josephine Buonaparte. On this topic she writes to her friend Sir Joseph Banks :

‘STRAWBERRY HILL, Decr. 9, 1802.

‘DEAR SIR,—As I long to repair our misfortune, and send our *great* friend something from this country which she cannot get elsewhere, pray tell me if you have any hopes of a *Strelitzia Albiflos* or any other rare plant, as I feel anxious on all occasions not to do less than may be expected of me, and I certainly, with such an *adjunct* as yourself, think myself now in little danger—if you will have the goodness to deposit or have deposited the plant in Upper Brook Street, giving me notice, I will take care that it shall be transplanted in the manner Madame Buonaparte herself directed. Give me, I beg, some account of your health, and present my best compliments to Lady Banks and your sister. If the weather continues as mild as it has hitherto done we shall not, I believe, be in Town much before Xmas, but I shall not fail, whenever we do come, to acquaint you with our arrival, and hope that though not what is called London neighbours, we shall remember that we are neighbours in the country.—Believe me, dear sir, Your very sincere and much obliged,

ANNE S. DAMER.’



BUST OF SIR JOSEPH BANKS

*By Anne Seymour Damer*



## HER MOTHER'S DEATH

And again :—

‘STRAWBERRY HILL, Decr. 20, 1802.

‘DEAR SIR,—I have dispatched a letter to Madame Buonaparte, announcing the future hopes of the long-wished-for Strelitzia to her, and her more present hopes of the S. Wales seeds you mention, and as I daily expect to hear from my Captain, whom I offered to meet in town any day he would name, and whom I can trust with anything to Calais, if you have no objection, I should think the packet of seeds, sealed up by you, might be now sent to my house in Upper Brook Street, where at all events I mean to be for a few hours on Tuesday next, and very soon after Xmas-day to stay for the winter—a day or two excepted for which I may probably return hither. I cannot say how much I am pleased with the thoughts of repairing our misfortunes, and I do promise you that, like the *burnt child*, whenever you think proper to trust the Strelitzia to change of position, it shall not be my fault if every possible care for her safe conveyance and quick arrival be not adopted.—Believe me, dear sir, Your most sincere and much obliged,

‘ANNE S. DAMER.’

Sir Joseph Banks was a well-known traveller,

## ANNE SEYMOUR DAMER

naturalist and botanist, whose extensive knowledge had been of great assistance to Mrs. Damer in obtaining the plants that she showed such a keen anxiety to send to her illustrious friend in France. He was President of the Royal Society, a Trustee of the British Museum, and a member of the French Institute.<sup>1</sup> His acquaintance with her, which had developed into so pleasant a friendship, had sprung from his intimacy with Sir William Hamilton, with whom he had been at Eton, and to whom he was one of the first to offer congratulations on his marriage with Emma Harte.

Sir William Hamilton was delighted when he could write and tell his old friend that his wife had, a short time after their marriage, begun to take an interest in his archæological pursuits; and later, when she showed a pleasure in botany, Sir Joseph Banks became more charmed with Lady Hamilton than ever.

In January 1803 Mrs. Damer suffered a further great loss in the death of her beloved mother, who had for the last seven years lived entirely with her daughter, either at her house in Upper Brook Street, or at Strawberry Hill. During these years Mrs. Damer had cared for and nursed her with the greatest devotion and affection. The blow was the more severe as she

<sup>1</sup> There is a bust of him by Mrs. Damer in the British Museum.



## HER MOTHER'S DEATH

was without the presence of her beloved friend Mary Berry to support and comfort her. The sense of her loss is expressed in the following letter, written to her friend on the day after her mother's death :—

‘TUESDAY MORNING, *Jan.* 18<sup>th</sup>.

‘My dearest, kindest of mothers expired yesterday morning without a groan, even without a sigh; her countenance instantly became placid, and her fine features made her beautiful in death. Such, I am convinced, can be the end only of one possessing a virtuous mind and a conscience without reproach; and such a one, I am proud to think, was my mother. A scene more affecting, more impressive, than her end, it was not possible to see. My grief is extreme; as much as ever I thought I should regret this dear mother, I find that regret deeper and more painful than I expected. All the arrangements, every little improvement at Strawberry Hill,—his house, all (sometimes imperceptibly at the moment to myself), tended wholly to procure her amusement and comforts; and all these have lost their value to me. But never more to behold that benign countenance brightening up at the sight of me! this does give me the feeling of an almost broken heart.’

## ANNE SEYMOUR DAMER

Lady Ailesbury had attained the age of eighty-two, much beloved by the numerous friends to whom she had endeared herself. She was interred at Sundridge Church, in Kent, near Coomb Bank, the home of her childhood and early married life. Mrs. Damer erected to her mother's memory a handsome tomb, and herself carved the bust that is placed over it.

# LEAVES STRAWBERRY HILL

## CHAPTER XIX

### LEAVES STRAWBERRY HILL

OWING to the absence abroad of her friends and neighbours, the Berrys, Mrs. Damer appears to have found life at Strawberry Hill very lonely after her mother's death. Although she kept up a correspondence she greatly missed their society, and in one letter she proposed joining them. The news of their old friend Lady Ailesbury's death was a great shock to them, and in their sincere affection for Mrs. Damer they sympathised deeply with her in her loss.

On May 14, 1803, Mrs. Damer writes to Miss Berry that war was inevitable and that the French Ambassador had been recalled from London, and was leaving the following day. A week later she remarks that letters no longer came by Calais, although they were still sent that way, and goes on to say that Pitt, Fox, and Buonaparte himself were all in favour of peace. In spite of all these rumours of war, Mrs. Damer was still very anxious to join her friends; 'As

## ANNE SEYMOUR DAMER

for myself, you may depend upon it, that if I can come to you I will; I shall learn by your letters where you are to be, when you have settled your plans.'

There is no reference in Mary Berry's letters to show whether Mrs. Damer accomplished her wish to join her and her sister abroad this year; it is hardly likely she did, as they returned early in September, crossing from Germany to Southwold to avoid passing through France, and Mrs. Damer probably thought it wiser to remain at home; the war with France had now broken out, and the closing of the French ports made it a matter of considerable difficulty for any English to leave that country, many of them even being detained as prisoners of war.

She accordingly spent most of her time at Strawberry Hill, where, still active and energetic, she found much with which to occupy herself, in spite of the loneliness of her position. The absence of domestic ties, for she had no child and was now without parents, enabled her during the next few years to give up the whole of her time and energies to the completion of some of her best-known works in sculpture, and so fulfil her ambition to excel in the art which was bringing her much renown.

At times she still enjoyed the society of her

## LEAVES STRAWBERRY HILL

circle of cultivated acquaintance, her company being sought and her conversation prized by many of the great men of her day.

In August 1807 she accompanied the Berrys on a visit of three weeks' duration to their friends, Mr. and Mrs. Greathead, who were then living at Guy's Cliff, in Warwickshire. She was much fascinated by the beautiful situation of Guy's Cliff and by the grounds, particularly the walk by the hill-side, where she found 'quiet calmness and repose.' A few weeks later she and Miss Berry visited Josiah Wedgwood, experiencing great delight in his blue and white ware, made in imitation of china.

On October 22, 1807, at the house of the Berrys, whom she now saw frequently, Mrs. Damer met Prince Staremberg, who had come to England on the behalf of Austria to make offers of mediation between England and France.

The friends spent much time in reading and discussing books: in a letter from Miss Berry written from Tunbridge to Mrs. Damer, she describes a book she had been reading:—

'I read a great deal every morning, and indeed often of an evening; I don't know if any good will come of it, it does not yet seem to have cleared my head as to any use I can make of it. But in the meantime I am more delighted with

## ANNE SEYMOUR DAMER

Mrs. Hutchinson (*Memoirs of Colonel Hutchinson*, by his wife; published 1806) than any book I have read for an age. She was a really superior woman both as to head and heart. Her description and account of her husband's attachment to her, is the truest, the most elevated and admirable picture of love and true affection from and to a superior mind that can be imagined. It fills up every line of that ideal picture long ago traced by the imagination, and now engraved by reason on my heart. And in the sad certainty of never meeting it, I feel better pleased with myself to suffer from its absence, than to be able to comprehend or to deny its existence—Farewell—or I shall grow romantic.'

In another letter written some years later: 'I read Alfieri in Italian—but what Italian—so stuffed with Tuscanisms, so fraught with words immediately derived from the Latin, that it is hardly to be recognised as the language of Boccaccio, Machiavelli, and other Italian classics!'

On August 7, 1809, Mrs. Damer received a visit at Strawberry Hill from the Princess of Wales (Queen Caroline), who was attended by Lady Charlotte Lindsay and brought with her the little boy whom she was educating.<sup>1</sup> Notice had been given to Mrs. Damer two or three

<sup>1</sup> William Austin 'Willikins,' son of a labourer at Deptford.

## LEAVES STRAWBERRY HILL

days previously that she might expect this visit, which was intended to be a 'surprise' one, the Princess not wishing to give any trouble.

Miss Berry writes: 'The Princess talked a great deal more than she looked at anything, and seemed pleased to have more people to talk to; the pictures, etc., of the house, and observations on them, came merely to fill up gaps and new matter for discourse.' The Princess made herself very pleasant, and her conversation was lively, odd and clever. Miss Berry says, 'What a pity she has not a grain of common sense.' She was taken all over the house, and refreshments were offered her in the library; these she refused. The Princess seems to have conducted herself in a pleasant, easy, and gracious manner, and begged the ladies to be seated. She remained for half an hour, and when taking her departure thanked Mrs. Damer, and shook hands with all the company.

On the following day the Princess sent Lady Glenbervie to suggest that Mrs. Damer should share a box at Covent Garden Theatre with her on opera nights. It appears that no one would make this arrangement with her, and it certainly seems hard that the Princess of Wales had not a box allotted to her own use.

In the ensuing year Mrs. Damer stood god-

## ANNE SEYMOUR DAMER

mother to Mr. Hoper's little girl; Mr. Hoper was the Berrys' man of business. The christening took place at St. James's Church, Piccadilly.

In the same year, the Princess of Wales paid Mrs. Damer another visit at Strawberry Hill. She arrived late, bringing with her only Lady Charlotte Campbell, Mrs. Damer's cousin. After a cold dinner, at which the Princess was very lively and remained long at table, they walked and sat about the garden; she did not leave till twelve o'clock, although she had ordered her carriage at 9.30.

On September 7, 1809, Mrs. Damer was at Ham House, when she was of great assistance to her relative Lady Caroline Congleton (daughter of the first Earl of Portarlington) in entertaining Queen Charlotte, who describes her visit in a letter<sup>1</sup> to a member of her family:—

'I am to thank my dearest . . . for a very kind letter I received yesterday, and wished to have answered it immediately, but was prevented doing it by a visit to Lady Caroline and Mrs. Damer at Ham, where we were received most kindly in every sense. This little retreat is quite a little earthly Paradise, the house stands in a Green Field incircled by most magnificent trees,

<sup>1</sup> From Miss Berry's *Correspondence*, edited by Lady Theresa Lewis.



## LEAVES STRAWBERRY HILL

all planted by the late General Carpenter, a gravel walk goes all round the shrubbery, and also round another field which goes to the end of Ham Walks; there they keep three cows, the produce of their *Milck* is sufficient for this establishment. The house consists below stairs of a Hall, Drawing-room and Dining-room, and a small Parlour which is Lady Portarlington's Painting Room when she inhabits the house. The Drawing- and Dining-rooms are entirely furnished with Lady Portarlington's Paintings, consisting chiefly of copies after the old and most famous Masters. A Picture of her mother in a Turkish dress, one of the present Lord Bute, and one of Sir Charles Stewart, are not done by her. From the Salle de Compagnie you go into the Gardens, where under the shade of the finest trees possible you may save yourself from the violence of the sun. Above stairs there are upon the Best Floor four excellent bed-Chambers, and Mrs. Damer assures me the attics are good, and the offices also. We dined at three, and had, to the honour of Mrs. Damer's house-keeper and cook, as elegant and good a dinner as if a Cordon Bleu had directed it, we were very *chearfull*, and a little after Four we drank Coffé; the Rain having ceased Lady Caroline wished to show me from Ham Walks the view of the River, and like-

## ANNE SEYMOUR DAMER

wise that of Lord Dysart's place, and as she had been favoured with a key she offered to carry us there. We walked, and most delightful it was there, and saw not only the house but all the *Beautiful* china which a civil House-keeper offered to show us. It is so fine a collection that to know and admire it as one ought to do, it would require many hours, but when all the fine paintings, Cabinets of excellent workmanship both in ivory and amber also attract your notice, days are required to see it with advantage to yourself. The house is much altered since I saw it by repairing, and tho' the old furniture still remains, it is now kept so clean, that even under the Tattered state of Hangings and Chairs, one must admire the good taste of old Forefathers and their magnificence. The Parqueté floors have been taken up with great care, cleaned and relaid, and in order to preserve them, the Present Lord has put carpets over them, but of course not nailed down. I saw also this time the chapel, which is so dark and dismal that I could not go into it. Upon the whole, the Place remaining in this old style is *Beautiful* and magnificent both within and without but truly melancholy.

'My Lord is little there since the death of my Lady, for whom he had the greatest regard and

## LEAVES STRAWBERRY HILL

attention. We returned by six to Ham, and left our Hostess and Lady Cardigan immediately, we were back time enough to dress before the King returned from London, and I had before that a visit from Augustus, who sets out to-day to join the Prince, but means to see Oxford and Blenheim on his way. And now my dearest . . . I know of no more to entertain you for to-Day, and if I have succeeded in giving you but a quarter of an hours Amusement, I shall be amply rewarded, but the greatest reward you could give me, and the best news from your part of the World would be that of yr. being better, which I hope will soon be attained by Fresh Air and inhaling the soft sea breeze.

‘This is the Constant Prayer and wish of yr. Affectionate . . . and Friend

‘CHARLOTTE.’<sup>1</sup>

In 1811 Mrs. Damer received a present of French Porcelain from the Empress Josephine, which was sent through a gentleman of the French Court, accompanied by an invitation from the Empress to visit her in Paris. This invitation she did not accept, thinking it advisable not to leave England while the war was still in progress.

<sup>1</sup> The capital letters and spelling are the Queen's.

## ANNE SEYMOUR DAMER

‘Dined at Mrs. Damer’s with Monsieur de Bréhan,<sup>1</sup> the Frenchman who has brought her the present of a fine cup and saucer from the Empress Josephine. He appears by his conversation and manners, which are unaffected, to be something above the rank of an upper servant, a decent person employed in commissions, etc. He comes here with a great order to Lee & Kennedy, for plants for the said Empress; whether he brings a liquidation of her long account with them, I know not. He has a mother and an uncle settled here, who live together at Hampstead. The uncle is no other than M. de Montier, or Monstier, who was the first French agent to motive the peace of 1783, before Reyneval was sent here. He crossed from Dieppe to Gravesend as was intended, but by stress of weather was allowed to land at Margate. He, or any one else, leaving France for this country, must have a particular passport, signed twice by the Emperor’s own hand.’

It was in this year, 1811, that Mrs. Damer finally decided to give up Strawberry Hill, resigning the house and grounds together with the £2000 a year which had been left to her by Lord Orford to keep up the place, to the next heir, the Dowager Countess Waldegrave; with

<sup>1</sup> Miss Berry’s *Diary*, January 12.

## LEAVES STRAWBERRY HILL

the property Mrs. Damer gave up all Lord Orford's prints, books and furniture which were included as heirlooms.

She felt the wrench of leaving this home where she had passed so many happy and peaceful days of her life, both while it was in her own possession and in that of her dear friend, Lord Orford. The Hon. R. K. Craven, writing to Miss Berry on March 7, 1811, says: 'Pray have the kindness to remember me most particularly to Mrs. Damer. You cannot conceive how much I regret her giving up Strawberry Hill, for I must ever remember with pleasure the happy rainy days I occasionally pass there; our embarkations, disembarkations, eating strawberries, the wet grass that adorns the Bay of Biscay, and the terrific adventure of my boat, driven by a gale of wind into Mr. Somebody's garden. Let me live in hopes that the younger Strawberry will give me an opportunity of repeating those scenes of rural felicity.'

Lady Waldegrave resided at Strawberry Hill till her death in 1816, when the estate passed to her son, the fifth Earl Waldegrave. The property remained in the Waldegrave family for some time, but was eventually sold. At the auction the contents of the mansion realised the sum of £29,000. This wonderful sale lasted

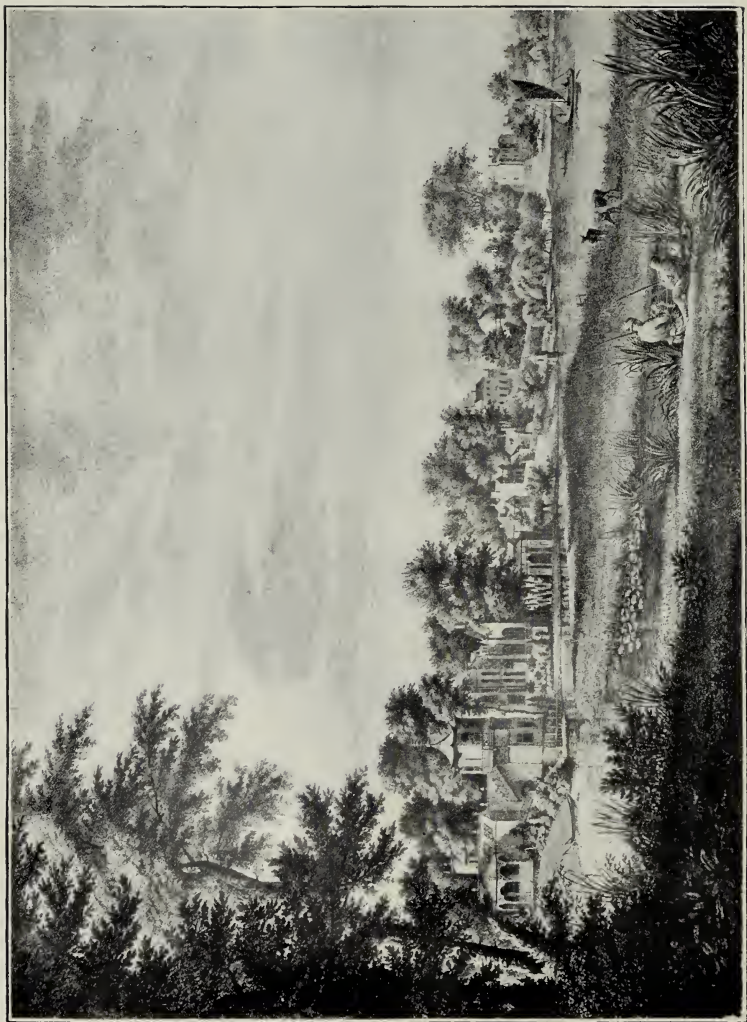
## ANNE SEYMOUR DAMER

several days, and attracted all the collectors and dealers in the country, but the sums realised for many of the objects so highly prized by Lord Orford, when offered for sale, would raise a smile to the lips of the modern purchaser.

How little did Horace Walpole think that the collection, which he had cherished and arranged with so much taste, would have been thus scattered! In 1761, many years before his death, he wrote to his friend George Montagu, from Houghton, his father's place, from whence the magnificent collection of portraits had just been sold to the Empress Catherine of Russia: 'Poor little Strawberry: at least it will not be stripped to pieces by a descendant.'

The Strawberry Hill collection included many rare specimens of portrait figures in Chelsea porcelain, which were made about 1750, some of which were portraits of Lord Orford's friends, such as George II., Kitty Clive the actress, and Field-Marshal Conway, his cousin (this last specimen is in the South Kensington Museum).





VIEW OF TWICKENHAM, INCLUDING YORK HOUSE.

*From an old print*



# YORK HOUSE

## CHAPTER XX

### YORK HOUSE

AFTER giving up Strawberry Hill, Mrs. Damer, who must have missed her garden and her country pursuits, lived almost entirely at her house in Upper Brook Street, where she followed her occupation of sculpture.

She never seems to have visited her old home at Park Place after her father's death in 1795, but her friend Miss Berry went there in June 1811, and wrote to Mrs. Damer an account of the visit, when staying with Mrs. Scott at Danesfield, near Marlow.

*Danesfield, June 30, 1811.*—‘I was at Park Place<sup>1</sup> yesterday. It had rained much in the night, and was a grey, damp, melancholy day, suiting well with the feelings I carried to it. Never did I see a place which, without being much altered, is so perfectly changed, so triste, so comfortless! Everything is neglected: the

<sup>1</sup> Park Place was at this time the property of Lord Malmesbury.

## ANNE SEYMOUR DAMER

seats all falling to pieces, the trees overgrown in some places, and in others dead and left standing, the poor little flower-garden with its fountain dry and its borders flowerless, its little arcades over-grown and broke, and the thorn-tree in the middle left to spread over the whole space. Oh, how every slip of it affected me! I saw you and O'H.,<sup>1</sup> sitting under the thorn-tree in its trim days, and myself having left you merely to enjoy the delicious sensation of knowing you were expressing for me every sentiment I could wish to inspire. I saw him following me into the laurel walk, and in giving me a letter (which I had accidentally dropped), in a joking manner, first convincing me of the seriousness of the sentiment I had inspired. I sat down at the end of the library and saw your form at the bottom, on a ladder, arranging new placed books, and the look you gave and recalled, when you found us sitting at the other end of the room, just where you had left us when you returned again to your work. . . . I am so glad I have seen Park Place once, in spite of all the melancholy it inspired, but I should be sorry to see more of it.'

The visit is also mentioned in her diary—June 29—'Went in Mrs. Scott's barouche to

<sup>1</sup> General O'Hara, to whom she had been engaged.

## YORK HOUSE

Park Place. Instead of driving up, as formerly, to the house to see Park Place, carriages turn up by the Horse Shoes, Lord Malmesbury having bought all the intervening land. It is impossible to describe the melancholy I felt at again finding myself at Park Place. We entered it by the kitchen garden, and from thence into the little flower garden, where several recollections totally overcame me. They needed not the additional melancholy which the forlorn, the neglected, the ruined look of everything gave me. Had I known nothing of the inhabitants, I could have sworn, only from seeing the place, that they cared little for the country. Poor Park Place! how changed in every particular! the alterations made in the inside of the house are not good, I think. The furniture of the library is certainly improved, for there is a fine collection of books in it; a folio edition of all the Greek and Latin classics probably having belonged to "Hermes,"<sup>1</sup> besides very fine copies of all the different books, dictionaries, foreign topography, etc. I shall probably never see it again, nor do I wish to, lest the image of it in its present state should derange and confuse my former recollections of its beauties, its comforts, its inhabitants, and my

<sup>1</sup> Lord Malmesbury was the son of James Harris, author of *Hermes*.

## ANNE SEYMOUR DAMER

last winter there, when I vainly hoped for and looked forward to happiness within my grasp! We returned by Medmenham Ferry. . . . In the evening I read out to them, but my spirits had not at all recovered Park Place.'

Two years after this, the Misses Berry decided to sell their country house, Little Strawberry Hill, which they had occupied for twenty-two years. They felt deeply parting from a place which had been associated with so many happy memories, but they had found their expenditure so greatly increased that they were glad to be saved the expense of keeping up two houses. They now settled in their house in North Audley Street, where they lived for the remainder of their lives.

On January 15, 1814, the Princess of Wales (afterwards Queen Caroline) spent the day with Mrs. Damer in her studio, sitting for her bust for the last time.

In May of this year Miss Berry mentions in a letter to Mrs. Damer that Madame de Staël, with whom Mrs. Damer was very intimate, and who had been in London for some time, had left for Paris. 'I parted with Madame de Staël, *non sans attendrissement de ma part*, late on Saturday evening; she set off for Paris early on Sunday morning. I own I much regret her absence.

## YORK HOUSE

She had a frankness with me, and a power of exciting my mind; now she is gone, while I am regretting her, she will never think more of me till we meet again. I know her well, with all her faults, ridicules, and littlenesses, and yet she is a very superior creature.'

Madame de Staël, on the other hand, is reported to have said, that she loved Miss Berry the best and thought her the cleverest of all the women in England.

In February 1815 Mrs. Damer was present at a party at the Misses Berry's house, where she met Lady Stuart and her niece, Augusta Foster, and Sir Henry Englefield.

In spite of the war which was still in progress, Mrs. Damer decided, with her usual pluck and determination, that Napoleon's escape from Elba was a fitting opportunity to make the presentation to him of the bust of Charles James Fox, which she had so long designed for his acceptance. Having gained his permission to present it, she set out towards the end of April for Paris, where she was most graciously received by the Emperor, who granted her an audience at the Palais Elysée, accepted the bust, and in return gave Mrs. Damer a valuable enamelled snuff-box with his portrait on the lid, set in a circle of twenty-seven diamonds. The following inscription is

## ANNE SEYMOUR DAMER

engraved on a loose gold plate which fits inside the box :—

‘THIS BOX WAS GIVEN BY THE EMPEROR NAPOLEON OF FRANCE  
TO THE  
HON<sup>BLE.</sup> ANNE SEYMOUR DAMER  
AS A SOUVENIR

In consequence of her having presented him with a bust of Mr. Fox executed by herself. The bust had been promised at the Peace of Amiens, was finished in 1812, and sent to France where it remained, but was not presented till May 1, 1815, when, by command of His Majesty, Anne Damer had an audience for that purpose at the Palais Elysée, where the Emperor then resided.’

There is a slight inaccuracy in this inscription, for, as we have seen in a foregoing chapter, Napoleon did not speak to Mrs. Damer on the subject of Sculpture when she was presented to him at the Tuileries, on her visit to Paris after the Peace of Amiens.

Mrs. Damer bequeathed this snuff-box to the nation at her death in 1828, and it is now at the British Museum.

‘At a Committee Meeting, November 8, 1828, the principal Librarian of the British Museum announced that he had received a gold snuff-box, set in diamonds, and ornamented with a finely executed portrait of the Emperor Napoleon, bequeathed to the Trustees by the late Hon. Mrs. Damer, under the injunction of never allowing



SNUFF-BOX PRESENTED TO MRS. DAMER  
BY NAPOLEON BUONAPARTE, 1815





## YORK HOUSE

the portrait to be copied, or the box, under any pretence, to be taken out of the collection.' The following notice appeared in the *Times* in reference to the presentation of the bust :—

'*Paris, May 4, 1815.*—On Monday Mrs. Seymour Damer had the honour of presenting to the Emperor the bust of Charles Fox in marble, sculptured by this lady, who had already presented to him the bust in plaster, after the Peace of Amiens. She had the honour of an interview with the Emperor, who on this occasion told her that if this distinguished man had lived, there would have been peace; that the debt of England would have been less than a million, and many thousands of men would still be alive.'<sup>1</sup>

At such a time, as will be seen in another short notice in the *Times* of the same date, under the head of Paris, we find the *Moniteur* recording the fact 'that some idiotical English woman presented to the Corsican the Bust of Charles James Fox.'

The following inscription was written for the bust by the Hon. William Lamb :—

'Live, Marble, live! for thine's a sacred trust—  
The patriot's face that speaks his noble mind;  
Live that our sons may kneel before his bust,  
And hail the benefactor of Mankind.

---

<sup>1</sup> This action of Mrs. Damer's was not regarded with much popularity.

## ANNE SEYMOUR DAMER

This was the man, who, midst the tempest's rage,  
A mark of safety, to the nation stood,  
Warn'd with the prophet's voice a servile age,  
And strove to quench the ruthless thirst for blood.

This was the man whose ever-deathless fame  
Recalls his generous life's illustrious scenes.  
To bless his fellow-creatures was his aim,  
And universal liberty his means.'

Napoleon's arrival in Torbay, before Mrs. Damer's return, is referred to by Miss Berry in a letter to Mrs. Damer written on July 23, 1815: 'The rapid course of public events, all more wonderful than the other, which have taken place within this last month, leave all comment, as well as calculation at a distance. You little thought that your friend at Paris would be in England before yourself, and that your bust may return to that country it never ought to have left, without going out of the possession of the person to whom you gave it. Before I close this letter I shall probably have heard of his arrival at an English port. The last triumph of the English character for good faith and truth is indeed flattering. We shall not sully it by our conduct even to him; strict confinement and security for his person seems all that is thought of for him.'

In another letter Miss Berry writes to Mrs. Damer: 'If you have felt the Battle of Waterloo

## YORK HOUSE

as a "soldier's daughter," as it was universally felt here (England), and above all, as it was felt by all those engaged in it, its glory and its results have absorbed every other feeling.'

A few days after this letter was written, news arrived that Paris had capitulated to the allied armies, and that the war which had dragged on so many years, was at last brought to a termination by the exile of Napoleon to St. Helena.

On her return to England Mrs. Damer decided to buy another country place. Temporarily she rented Lady Buckinghamshire's house at East Sheen, being anxious again to own a place in or near Twickenham, to which locality she was very partial. After some delay she was fortunate enough to secure York House, which she purchased from her friend Prince Staremburg, the late Austrian Ambassador.

York House, or as it was originally called York Place, was situated near the river at Twickenham, and had formerly been given to Chancellor Clarendon, on the occasion of the public announcement of his daughter's marriage with James, Duke of York; the Chancellor made it his summer residence when in attendance on the King at Hampton Court. Queen Anne was born here in 1664, and afterwards it became the residence of the Duke of York.

## ANNE SEYMOUR DAMER

Mrs. Damer lost no time in adding a studio, to which she removed all her sculptures, tools, marbles and models; it was situated to the east of the house and is now used as a conservatory. Here she worked away with her usual energy throughout the summer months, but she still spent the winters in Upper Brook Street.

When at York House she was constantly visited by the Misses Berry, who lost their father in the year 1817. He died at a great age, after a few days' illness without any suffering. Mrs. Damer wrote of him: 'He had a kind, cheerful, and guileless heart, and I shall always remember him with gratitude.'

Another constant visitor to Mrs. Damer at York House was the unfortunate Queen Caroline, who was in the habit of coming to watch Mrs. Damer at her work. Mrs. Damer truly sympathised with her, and on every occasion treated her with the respect due to her position. Lady Charlotte Lindsay, who had been in waiting on the Queen, but who had retired from her service some time before her trial, wrote to Miss Berry on June 18, 1820, that she had not heard of 'any woman of fashion that had called upon the Queen, except Mrs. Damer, who she imagined thought this visit a respect due to the station of the Queen, against whom nothing had as yet

## YORK HOUSE

been proved. The only inconvenience that may result to Mrs. Damer is, that no other woman of character having made this visit, it acquires greater consequence than should naturally belong to so simple an action, as she would be reckoned a decided partisan of the Queen's, when she probably only disapproves of the proceedings against her.'

Creevey states that he met Mrs. Damer in the following year at dinner at Queen Caroline's on February 11th, whither he went in company with Lord Brougham and the Hon. R. H. Craven.

# ANNE SEYMOUR DAMER

## CHAPTER XXI

### THE LAST YEARS OF HER LIFE

IN August 1820 a lawsuit was instituted by the Marquis of Cholmondeley and the Hon. Mrs. Damer, to obtain the Rolle estates, which had been in the possession of the late Lord Clinton for twenty years, and now belonged to his son. These large estates were situated in Devonshire and Cornwall, and had come into the possession of the Walpole family, from whom they had descended to Lord Clinton, through the marriage of Robert, second Earl of Orford, with Margaret, only daughter and sole heiress of Samuel Rolle. This Lady Orford also succeeded to the Barony of Clinton.

From the evidence it appears that Robert, Earl of Orford, left these estates back to the Rolle family, and that they had eventually passed into the possession of Lord Clinton, who was descended from Bridget, sister of Samuel Rolle and aunt of Margaret, Lady Orford and Baroness Clinton.



PORTRAIT TAKEN IN OLD AGE

*Reproduced by permission of Mrs. F. Erskine Johnston*





## THE LAST YEARS OF HER LIFE

The suit was instituted by the Marquis of Cholmondeley, as heir-at-law of his uncle, Horace, fourth Earl of Orford, and by Mrs. Damer as residuary devisee of the fourth Lord Orford's will. Lord Cholmondeley was a son of Mary, Sir Robert Walpole's<sup>1</sup> only daughter and therefore sister to Horace Walpole. By a codicil added to his will, Lord Orford gave to Mrs. Damer, instead of to her father, and to her heirs, executors, and administrators for ever, all the rest and residue of his real and personal estates, which he then was or should be at his death seized or possessed of, interested in, or entitled to, not by him otherwise disposed of. This codicil was made in 1796, and shortly before Lord Orford's death. This case lasted a long time, and was eventually decided by the Master of the Rolls in favour of the Defendant.

It is a curious fact that Creevey, when writing to Miss Ord on February 11th of the following year, states that Mrs. Damer 'renounced all claim to half Lord Clinton's Estate, when she was informed by law she was entitled to it.' According to the decision of the Master of the Rolls she had no title to the estates, or even if she ever had any title, it was barred by the Statute of Limitations.

<sup>1</sup> First Earl of Orford.

## ANNE SEYMOUR DAMER

‘I was at Brougham’s by half past two, and found Craven waiting. As soon as Brougham was ready, we set off to pick up Mrs. Damer, who was to dine also with the Queen. . . . And here let me stop and express my admiration for this extraordinary person. You know she is Field-Marshal Conway’s daughter, cousin of Lord Hertford, etc. etc. She is the person who paid all her husband’s debts, without the least obligation on her so to do, and she is the person who renounced all claim to half Lord Clinton’s estate, when she was informed by law she was entitled to it. She is seventy years of age, and as fresh as she was at fifty. . . . Well, when we reached Brandenburg House, we were ushered up a very indifferent staircase, and through an ante-room into a very handsome well-proportioned room, from forty to fifty feet long and very lofty, with a fine coved ceiling, painted with gods and goddesses in their very best clothes; the room looks over the Thames, and is not a hundred yards from it.

‘Upon our entrance, the Queen came directly to Mrs. Damer, then to Lord Brougham and then to me. I am not sure whether I did not commit the outrage of putting out my hand without her doing the same first; be it as it may, however, we did shake hands. She then asked me if I had not

## THE LAST YEARS OF HER LIFE

forgotten her, and I can't help thinking she considered my visit as somewhat late, or otherwise she would have said something civil about my uniform support. She is not much altered in face or figure, but very much in manner. She is much more stately and much more agreeable.

'She is occasionally very grave. . . . As we went down to dinner, Craven handed the Queen, Brougham, Mrs. Damer, Madame Felice, who was leaning on the arm of a foreigner, seeing me unprovided for, came in the most natural, laughing manner, and put her arm through mine.'<sup>1</sup>

During these two years, the Misses Berry were again travelling in Italy, and many letters passed between them and Mrs. Damer. On April 3, 1821, Mary Berry wrote that she was so glad to hear that Mrs. Damer was perfectly well, and to be able to tell her that she had been fortunate in procuring, through Canova, the piece of marble that Mrs. Damer had asked her to get; it was to be sent by sea, 'with other trifles of her own.'

It was wonderful that Mrs. Damer, who was now aged seventy-three, should want marble for her sculpture, but she had still several important subjects on hand. She was distressed to hear

<sup>1</sup> From the *Creevey Papers*, edited by the Right Hon. Sir Herbert Maxwell, Bart.

## ANNE SEYMOUR DAMER

from Miss Berry, in October of the following year, of the death at Venice of Canova, who had often assisted her in her work with his valuable advice.

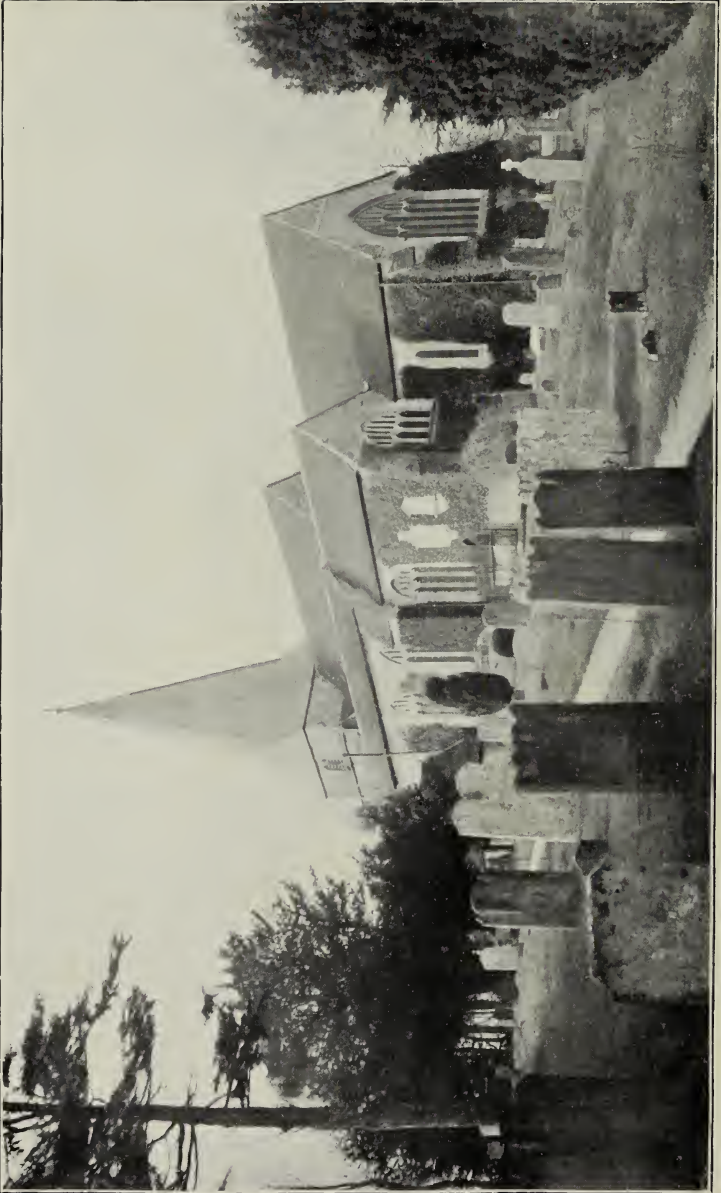
The Berrys were back in England in 1824, and we are told that Mrs. Damer walked with Mary Berry from York House to Sir Waltham Waller's house at Twickenham, to see his wonderful collection of old French furniture, which they considered finer than anything they had ever seen in France.

During the summer of 1825 Mary Berry was staying with Mrs. Damer at York House, where she had now gathered together a large collection of her own busts and models in terra-cotta, and a great deal of her mother's beautiful embroidery.

Early in the year 1828 Mrs. Damer's beloved friends, the Misses Berry, left England for another trip on the Continent, accompanied by Lady Charlotte Lindsay; they never saw their old friend again. Ill-health, together with the infirmities and weakness of old age, had now set in, with an almost imperceptible decay, but even in this weakened state her patience and perseverance enabled her to finish the bust of Nelson for the Duke of Clarence, a few days before her death.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A day or two after her death this bust was presented to the Duke at Bushey by Sir Alexander and Lady Johnston, in the presence of





SUNDRIDGE CHURCH, KENT

## THE LAST YEARS OF HER LIFE

She passed away in enviable tranquillity at her house in Upper Brook Street on May 28, 1828, in her eightieth year, her near relations, George, fifth Duke of Argyll, and Sir Alexander Johnston, being with her to the last.

It was not till June that the Berrys received the affecting news of the loss they had sustained, a loss which they felt most bitterly, their grief being intensified by the thought that they had not been with her at the last. Mrs. Damer was many years senior to her friends, who lived on to the advanced ages, respectively, of eighty-nine and ninety.

Mrs. Damer was buried at Sundridge Church, near the grave of her mother. In her will she desired that her working apron, with all her tools and the ashes of her favourite dog 'Fidèle,' which had died many years before, should be placed in her coffin. She bequeathed York House to her cousin Lady Johnston,<sup>1</sup> for the purpose of keeping under one roof the whole of her collection of the bronze and marble busts of her friends and the celebrated men and women of

the Duchess of Cumberland and the Duchess of Meiningen. Mrs. Damer had also made a cast of Mrs. Jordan's leg, for which the Duke sent a note with his own and Mrs. Jordan's thanks; at the death of Sir Joshua Reynolds, who had the cast in his possession, the Duke of Clarence formally applied for it to Burke, as one of the executors, who sent it to him.

<sup>1</sup> Daughter of Lord William Campbell.

## ANNE SEYMOUR DAMER

her day. She further bequeathed to her, and afterwards to Sir Alexander and his daughters, all her terra-cotta models and her mother's embroideries in worsted work ; the majority of these treasures are still in the possession of the Johnston family.

York House was let for some time and eventually sold by the Misses Johnston, in 1864, to the Duc d'Aumale, who bought it for his nephew, the Comte de Paris, who lived there for many years.

Mrs. Damer herself had designed the tomb for her mother at Sundridge Church, and the following is the inscription on her own memorial tablet which is placed in the Chancel of the Church :—

' HIC PROPE JACET  
UNO CLARA CUM MATRE LOCO  
ANNE SEYMOUR DAMER  
SCULPTRIX ET STATUARIA ILLUSTRIS FEMINA  
HENRICI SEYMOUR CONWAY ET CAROLINE CAMPBELL FILIA.'

The following notices of Mrs. Damer's death appeared respectively in the *Morning Post* and *Times* of May 29, 1828, and in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, May-July 1828 :—



## THE LAST YEARS OF HER LIFE

‘MORNING POST’ AND ‘TIMES’

‘Early on Wednesday, the 28th May, died, at her house in Upper Brook Street, Grosvenor Square, the Hon. Anne Seymour Damer, the only child of the late Right Hon. Field-Marshal Conway (brother to Francis, Earl of Hertford), and the Lady Caroline Campbell, daughter of John, fourth Duke of Argyll, and widow of Charles, Earl of Ailesbury.’

‘GENTLEMAN’S MAGAZINE,’ May–July 1828

### OBITUARY

Hon. Mrs. DAMER, May 28th.

‘In Upper Brook Street in her 80th year, the Hon. Anne Seymour Damer, celebrated as an amateur sculptor, and as legatee of Horace Walpole, Earl of Orford, of Strawberry Hill. She was the only child of the Right Hon. Henry Seymour Conway, brother of Francis, first Marquis of Hertford, by Lady Caroline Campbell, daughter of John, fourth Duke of Argyll and widow of Charles, Earl of Ailesbury and Elgin. She was married, June 14th, 1767, to the Hon. John Damer, eldest son of Joseph, first Lord Milton, and brother of George, Earl of Dorchester. Her marriage was an unhappy one, Mr. Damer was heir to an expectancy of £30,000 a year, but was a turn too eccentric to be confined within limits of fortune. He shot himself at the Bedford Arms, Covent Garden, August 15th, 1776, leaving Mrs. Damer a widow without issue. From this period Mrs. Damer appears to have devoted herself to the cultivation of her talents, particularly to her chisel, and became afterwards as eminent in Sculpture as her contemporaries Marian Cosway and Angelica Kaufmann were in Painting. In 1797, on the death of her father’s intimate friend Horace Walpole (for by that name he is better known than by the Earldom which he possessed the last six years of his life); Mrs. Damer found herself the owner of the pretty Ivy-house, called Strawberry Hill, with a legacy of £2000 to keep it in repair,

## ANNE SEYMOUR DAMER

on condition she resided there and did not dispose of it to any person, unless it were to his great niece the Countess Dowager Waldegrave, on whom and her heirs it was entailed. All his prints, books, and furniture were made heirlooms. His niece, the Duchess of Gloucester, preferred £10,000 to this Villa. Mrs. Damer's portrait by Hamilton is at Strawberry Hill. Mrs. Damer resided at this celebrated house from Lord Orford's death till about the year 1810, when she gave it up to the late Countess Waldegrave, who died there in January 1816. When the Duke of Richmond patronised private theatricals, he was glad to avail himself of Mrs. Damer's assistance. She was the *Thalia* of the scene. She appeared in the character of "Wonder," when Lord Henry Fitzgerald supported the part of "Don Felix." She also was eminent as Mrs. Lovemore, in *The Way to Keep Him*, and Lady Freelove in *The Jealous Wife*.

' At a later period, during her residence at Strawberry Hill, she herself fitted up an elegant theatre. Here the comedy called *Fashionable Lovers* (which has been attributed to the part of Lord Orford), was presented. Mr. Kemble obtained permission to transplant this comedy to Drury Lane, but it was not successful.

' In the art of Sculpture, Mrs. Damer undoubtedly took the lead of all amateurs. In early life she received lessons from Ceracchi and the elder Bacon, and she even followed the example of professional artists in taking a voyage to Italy to improve herself. Her elegant, tasteful and classical productions are widely scattered as presents.

' At the suggestion of Sir Alexander Johnston, her relative, with a view to aid the advancement of European Arts in India, she sent a bust of Lord Nelson to the King of Tanjore, and she presented another bust of Nelson to the Corporation of London, which is placed in the Common Council Room at the Guildhall. A statue of George III. by Mrs. Damer adorns the Register Office at Edinburgh, and her beautiful bust of Sir Joseph Banks at the British Museum is well known. But perhaps the most public of her works are the

## THE LAST YEARS OF HER LIFE

colossal heads of "Thames" and "Isis" on Henley Bridge. Several of her busts are in the hands of private individuals. Mrs. Damer possessed one of the best selected and most valuable libraries ever formed by a female collector. She had, we hear, directed that her apron and tools should be buried with her : as also the bones of her favourite dog that died before her.'



## INDEX OF NAMES

- ABINGDON, EARL OF, 98, 103.  
 Ailesbury, Caroline, Countess of,  
   1, 5, 7, 8, 9, 11, 13, 17, *et passim*.  
 — Charles, third Earl of, 3, 11.  
 Amelia, Princess, 38.  
 Amherst, Lord, 74.  
 Antoinette, Marie, 55, 180.  
 Arabin, Major, 96, 97, 98, 102.  
 Argyll, fourth Duke of, 1, 17.  
 — fifth Duke of, 18.  
 — sixth Duke of, 142.
- BACON, JOHN, 28.  
 Baillie, Rev. James, 165.  
 — Joanna, 165, 170.  
 Balbi, Madame, 130.  
 Banks, Sir Joseph, 78, 82, 188,  
   189, 190.  
 Bannister, Junior, 106.  
 Barrymore, 173.  
 — Lady, 54.  
 Beauclerk, Lady Diana, 77, 85.  
 Bedford, Duke of, 2.  
 Bedingfield, Lady, 174.  
 Bellenden, Mary, 17.  
 Bentley, Richard, 2.  
 Berry, Agnes, 77, 107, *et passim*.  
 — Mary, 1, 15, 22, 78, 83, 107,  
   *et passim*.  
 — Mr., 108, 109, 110, 137, 146,  
   148, 166, 167, 170.  
 — William, 108.  
 Bertier, Monsieur, 181.  
 Bertin, Mlle., 180.  
 Blake, 24.
- Brougham, Lord, 215.  
 Bruce, Lord, 17.  
 — Lady Mary, 3, 7, 8.  
 — Mrs., 96, 101, 102.  
 Brunswick, Princess Caroline of,  
   22.  
 — Prince Frederick of, 8.  
 Buccleuch, Duke of, 35.  
 Buchan, Earl of, 70.  
 Buckingham, Mr., 89.  
 Buller, Mrs. 134.  
 Bunbury, Lady Sarah; 31, 39,  
   45, 62, 69, 70.  
 — Sir Thomas Charles, 46.  
 Buonaparte, Joseph, 176.  
 — Madame, 182, 184, 185.  
 — Napoleon, 30, 81, 95, 156,  
   177, 185, 209, 210, 212, 213.  
 Burgoyne, Rt. Hon. General, 98.  
 Burlington, Countess of, 164.  
 Burn, Mr., 167, 170.  
 — Mrs., 167, 170.
- CADOGAN, LADY, 46.  
 Campbell, Lady Caroline, 11, 166.  
 — Colonel, and Lady Charlotte,  
   142, 198.  
 — Lady Frederick, 131, 135.  
 — Lord Frederick, 1, 79, 131,  
   132, 135.  
 — Henry, 18.  
 — Miss, 69, 96, 97, 98, 101, 102.  
 — Mr., 96, 98, 167, 170.  
 — William, 18.  
 — Lady William, 66, 68.

## ANNE SEYMOUR DAMER

- Campbell, Lord William, 68, 80.  
 — of Mamore, Hon. John, 1, 17.  
 — of Shawfield, Colonel John, 166.  
 Carlisle, Lord, 39, 61.  
 Caroline, Princess, 83.  
 Catherine II. of Russia, Queen, 159, 204.  
 Cavendish, Mrs., 2.  
 Ceracchi, Giuseppe, 29, 30.  
 Charlotte, Princess, 23, 81, 198.  
 — Queen, 23, 81, 198.  
 Chenevix, Mrs., 147, 148.  
 Cholmeley, Mrs., 163.  
 Cholmondeley, Marquis of, 216, 217.  
 Clarence, Duke of, 83, 86, 87, 220.  
 Coke, Viscount Edward, 32.  
 — Lady Mary, 21, 30, 32-36, 38-40, 42, 44, 48, 51-55.  
 Cole, Lady Elizabeth, 170.  
 Congleton, Lady Caroline, 198.  
 Conway, Baron, 10.  
 — Hon. Henry Seymour, 1, 3-10, *et passim*.  
 Cornwallis, Lord, 176.  
 Cosway, Mrs., 178, 179, 180.  
 — R., 144, 179.  
 Craven, Hon. R. K., 203, 215.  
 Crewe, Mrs., 93, 95.  
 Crouch, Mrs., 106.  
 Cruikshank, William, 29.  
 Cunningham, Allan, 84, 94.  
 Cuyp, 21.
- D'AUDENARDE, MADAME, 180.  
 d'Aumale, Duc, 222.  
 de Bréham, Monsieur, 202.  
 de la Fayette, General, 181.  
 de la Rochefoucauld, Madame, 181.  
 de Paris, Comte, 222.  
 de Rohan Chabot, Duc, 181.  
 de Staël, Madame, 181, 208, 209.  
 Devonshire, Duke of, 13.  
 Du Defand, Madame, 9.
- EDGECUMBE, HON. MR., 96-98, 102.  
 Englefield, Sir Harry, 96, 98, 103, 209.  
 FARREN, MISS, 21, 78, 83, 96, 98, 106, 135, 136.  
 — Mrs., 135, 136.  
 Ferrers, Lord, 1, 18.  
 Fitzgerald, Lord Henry, 96, 101.  
 Foster, Agnes, 209.  
 — Lady Elizabeth, 78, 82.  
 Fouché, Madame, 181.  
 Fox, Lady Caroline, 46.  
 — Charles James, 14, 61, 81, 86, 92-95, 99, 103, 130, 177, 185, 209-211.  
 Frederick the Great, King, 55.  
 Freeman, Miss, 80, 91.
- GAINSBOROUGH, 21.  
 Garrick, Mr. and Mrs., 21, 105, 164.  
 George III., King, 46, 79, 81, 94.  
 George IV., King, 22, 94, 95, 103, 179.  
 Glenbervie, Lady, 197.  
 Gloucester, Duchess of, 146.  
 — William Frederick, Duke of 149.  
 — William Henry, Duke of, 149  
 Gordon, Lord William, 46.  
 Gray, 11, 20.  
 Greathead, Mr. and Mrs., 195.
- HAMILTON, LORD ARCHIBALD, 5.  
 — Duchess of, 18, 20.  
 — Lady, 74, 118, 150, 153, 155, 157, 190.  
 — Miss, 101.  
 — Sir William, 74, 118, 150, 153, 190.  
 Hanger, Colonel, 95.  
 Harrington, Lady, 37, 54, 55.  
 Harte, Emma, 190.  
 Hartley, Mrs. M., 159.  
 Hayward, Mr., 80.

## INDEX OF NAMES

- Herbert, Mrs., 22.  
 Herries, Lady, 109.  
 Hertford, first Marquis of, 10, 13,  
 14, 23, 25, 56, 74.  
 Hervey, Mr., 167.  
 — Mrs., 136.  
 Hobart, Hon. Mrs., 96-98, 102,  
 103.  
 Howarth, Capt., 101.  
 Howe, Mrs., 162.  
 Hume, David, 20, 23-27.  
 Hunter, Dr., 29.
- IZARD, SARAH, 18.
- JENNINGS, MISS, 135.  
 Jerningham, Edward, 136.  
 Johnston, Sir Alexander, 88, 221,  
 222.  
 — Lady, 69, 79, 86.  
 — The Misses, 222.  
 Jones, Elizabeth, 7.  
 Jordan, Mrs., 83, 173.  
 Joseph I., King of Portugal, 127.  
 Josephine, Empress, 201, 202.
- KAUFFMANN, ANGELICA, 21, 30, 31.  
 Kemble, C., 173.  
 — John, 104, 106, 172.  
 — Mrs., 106, 173.  
 King, 173.  
 Knight, R. P., 82.
- LAMB, HON. PENISTON, 82.  
 — Hon. William, 211.  
 Lennox, Lady Sarah, 31, 39, 45,  
 62, 69, 70.  
 Lewis, Lady Teresa, 171.  
 Lindsay, Lady Charlotte, 196,  
 214, 220.  
 Littlehales, Colonel, 176.  
 Louis XVI., King, 55.  
 Lubomerski, Prince, 82.  
 Luçay, Madame, 181.  
 Luxborough, Lady, 19.
- Lybbe-Powys, Mr., 101.  
 — Mrs. Philip, 100, 141.
- 'MAIRE DE LA VILLE,' 130.  
 Malmesbury, Lord, 140, 144, 155,  
 205, 207.  
 Mann, Sir Horace, 5, 19, 32, 44,  
 60, 67, 146.  
 Marlborough, Duke of, 8.  
 Matilda, Princess, 35, 149.  
 Mecklenburg, Princess Charlotte  
 of, 46.  
 Melbourne, Viscountess, 78, 82.  
 Mello, 128.  
 Mercer, Mr., 170.  
 Merry, Capt., 101, 176.  
 Milton, Lady, 38, 53, 54, 61.  
 — Lord, 41, 45, 58, 59, 62.  
 Minto, Lady, 155.  
 Miranda, General, 90.  
 'Missy,' 7.  
 Montagu, George, 2-4, 11, 30, 204.  
 Moore, Mr., 176.  
 More, Hannah, 104, 105.  
 Mount-Edgcombe, Lord, 68, 167,  
 170.  
 — Messrs., 134.
- NAPIER, HON. GEORGE, 46.  
 Napoleon Buonaparte, 30, 81, 95,  
 156, 177, 185, 209, 210, 212, 213.  
 Nelson, Lord, 82, 83, 86-88, 150-  
 161, 220.  
 Nightingale, Colonel, 176.  
 North, Mr. Brownlow, 170.  
 — Colonel, 94.  
 — Lord, 14, 94.
- O'BRIEN, LADY SUSAN, 31, 45, 62.  
 O'Hara, General, 116, 117, 162.  
 Orange, Prince of, 139.  
 Ord, Miss, 217.  
 Orford, Lord, see Walpole,  
 Horace.  
 Ossory, Lady, 79, 109, 110, 145.

## ANNE SEYMOUR DAMER

- PALMER, R., 106.  
 Parsons, 106.  
 Pepys, Sir William, 159.  
 Philippe, Louis, 165.  
 Pigott, Lord, 40.  
 Pitt, William, 99, 103.  
 Ponsonby, Lady Charlotte, 35.  
 Pope, Miss, 106, 173.  
 Portland, Duke of, 94.  
  
 RÉCAMIER, MADAME, 181, 185.  
 Reynolds, Sir Joshua, 21, 30.  
 Richmond, Charles, third Duke  
   of, 7, 15, 18, 31, 34, 81, 96, 98,  
   99, 103, 104, 134, 143.  
 Richmond, Duchess of, 8, 34, 39,  
   40, 53, 64, 98, 134, 136, 138,  
   142-144.  
 Rousseau, Jean Jacques, 20, 24, 25.  
  
 SACKVILLE, LADY CAROLINE, 41.  
 St. Helens, Lord, 128.  
 Salmon, Mrs., 85.  
 Savile, Lady Dorothea, 85.  
 Scott, Lady Jane, 40.  
   — Mrs., 205.  
 Seymour, Francis, 10.  
 Selwyn, George, 35, 54, 61, 135.  
 Sharpe, Mrs., 65.  
 Shenstone, 19, 20.  
 Sheridan, Mr. Dundas, 103.  
 Shorter, Charlotte, 10.  
   — Alderman Sir John, 10.  
 Siddons, Mrs., 21, 82, 96, 164, 165.  
 Smith, Adam, 39.  
 Spencer, Lady, 85, 163.  
 Stafford, Countess of, 30.  
 Stanhope, Lady Harriet, 54, 55.  
 Staremburg, Prince, 195, 213.  
 Stormont, Lord and Lady, 103.  
 Stratford, Lord, 53, 80, 92, 105.  
 Stuart, Ladies Maria and Louisa,  
   22.  
  
 Stuart, Lady, 209.  
 Suett, 173.  
  
 TANJORE, KING OF, 86, 87, 88, 89.  
 Temple, Lady, 33.  
 Thanet, Lady, 49.  
 Thomson, 20.  
 Townshend, Hon. Thomas, 61.  
  
 VALLETORT, LORD, 68.  
 Vandyck, 21.  
  
 WALDEGRAVE, SECOND EARL OF,  
   140, 202.  
   — George, fourth Earl of, 149.  
   — Dowager Lady, 53, 147, 148,  
   202, 203.  
   — Lord, 146.  
 Wales, Prince of (George III.), 46,  
   79, 81, 94.  
   — (George IV.), 22, 94, 95,  
   103, 179.  
   — Caroline, Princess of, 17,  
   166, 196-198, 208.  
   — Princess Dowager of, 5.  
 Waller, Sir Walter, 220.  
 Walpole, Sir Edward, 149.  
   — Horace, 2-20, 27, 30, 32, 33,  
   43, 60, 64, 67, 68, 71-81, 92,  
   100, 104-117, 127-148, 169, 203,  
   204.  
   — Maria, 149.  
   — Hon. Robert, 121.  
   — Hon. Thomas, 33.  
 Wedgwood, Josiah, 195.  
 Wentworth, Lady, 30.  
 Williams, Gilly, 35.  
 Wroughton, 106.  
 Wyatt, James, 59.  
  
 YORK, DUCHESS OF, 139.  
   — Edward, Duke of, 34.  
 Young, Mrs., 173.









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