

*The marriage of GEORGIANA, DUCHESS OF DEVONSHIRE, to one of England's wealthiest and most influential aristocrats, enabled her to become one of the leaders of fashionable society in ENGLAND in the last quarter of the 18th century. Her exploits featured continually in the newspapers and prints of the period. These recorded her addiction to FASHION and GAMBLING, and the central role of Devonshire House in the Whig politics of the day. In 1784 the Duchess gained further renown as the first woman to campaign for a political candidate, the Whig politician CHARLES JAMES FOX.*

*Morning Post*

WEDNESDAY 24 MAY 1775

The Duchess of D—e has a fashionable coat of mail; impregnable to the arrows of wit or ridicule; many other females of distinction have been made to moult, and rather than be laughed at any longer, left themselves featherless; while her Grace, with all the dignity of a young Duchess is determined to keep the field, for her feathers increase in enormity in proportion to the public intimation she receives of the absurdity. Her head was a wonderful exhibition on Saturday night at the opera. The Duke is quoted as saying she is welcome to do as sahe likes as long as she doesn't think it 'necessary that I should wear any ornaments on my head in compliment to her notions of taste and dress.'

Excerpt from  
*'A Rational Day in the Country'*  
by James Hare

The Ladies rise from one o'clock to two-breakfast in their own rooms for the convenience of having their hair combed while they drink their tea. Cold meat is brought for the Dogs at the same time. Send messages, or (if Time permits) write notes to each other, just to say, 'Dearest one, how do oo do?' The usual answer is 'As oo do, so does poor little I, by itself ... I.' This delicate complaint of solitude sets the whole house in motion. All the Ladies run from one room to another till they have mustered a sufficient force to venture among the men...they write with the greatest ease and tolerable accuracy long letters on all subjects and to every sort of correspondent, standing, walking and even running, and without the least interruption of conversation, which at Chatsworth never goes beyond a whisper...they take the precaution of beginning them all alike with the general terms of general civility that may apply to anybody, such as 'My Dearest most dear ever adored Lord without whom I cannot live-Bess oo.'... If by this time it is grown nearly dark and snows and freezes pretty hard, walking is usually proposed. I forgot to observe that when the Ladies first come down to a small Room with a large fire they are wrapped up with furs and waddings of various sorts, but as this heavy 'furniture' might impede their agility in walking,

they throw it off and chuse lighter drapery before they venture out-such as gauze or muslin shawls, thin silk sandals, which with the help of a long Pole with a spike in the end of it (to throw over their shoulders or stick into any gentleman's foot who has the honour of accompanying them) form the walking apparatus. The reflection of the snow in the glimmering of the Moon through the trees, if it is a clear night enables them to find their way round the pleasure ground very tolerably.

*A Poem by* GEORGIANA DUCHESS of  
DEVONSHIRE *to her illegitimate child,*  
*Eliza Courtenay*

*Unhappy child of indiscretion  
poor slumberer on a breast forlorn  
pledge of reproof of past transgression  
Dear tho' unfortunate to be born*

*For thee a suppliant wish addressing  
To Heaven thy mother fain would dare  
But conscious blushes stain the blessing  
And sighs suppress my broken prayer*

*But spite of these my mind unshaken  
In present duty turns to thee  
Tho' long repented ne'er forgotten  
Thy days shall lov'd and guarded be*

*And should th' ungenerous world upbraid thee  
for mine and for thy father's ill  
A nameless mother oft shall assist thee  
A hand unseen protect thee still*

*And tho' to rank and wealth a stranger  
Thy life a humble course must run  
Soon shalt thou learn to fly the danger  
Which I too late have learnt to shun*

*Meanwhile in these sequestered vallies  
Here may'st thou live in safe content  
For innocence may smile at malice  
And thou - Oh! Thou art innocent*

*A Poem by* MARY ROBINSON (1758-1800)  
*To The Duchess of Devonshire*

*The Nightingale with mourning lay,  
Amid the twilight's purpling glow,  
May sweetly hymn the loss of day,  
While echo chants her melting woe;  
But what can soothe the wounded breast,  
And ev'ry aching sense beguile—  
Ah! What can charm the soul to rest,  
Like Devon's voice or Devon's smile?*

*The modest orb, with trembling light,  
Beams thro' the soft and fresh'ning show'r,  
And, stealing o'er the realm of night,  
Gives luster to the silent hour;  
But what can cheer the fainting heart,  
When gloomy horror frowns severe—  
Ah! What can sympathy impart,  
Like Devon's sigh or Devon's tear?*

*Tho' nature's proudest will combin'd  
To give her form unequal'd grace;  
And though the feelings of her mind  
With fine expression mark her face;  
Yet as the Casket charms the view  
But till the treasur'd gem is seen,  
Her mind demand the tribute due,  
Which else her beauty's claim had been.*

