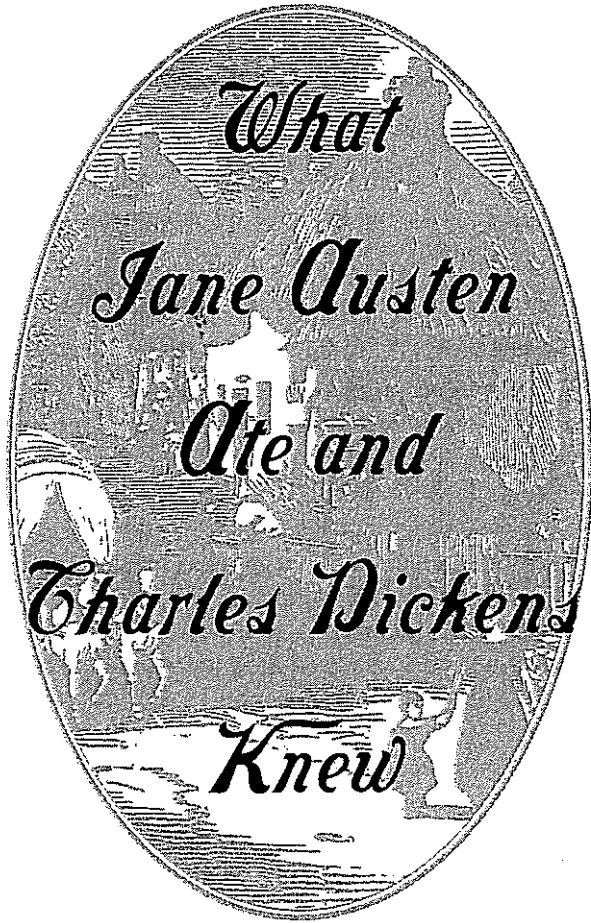


DANIEL POOL



FROM FOX HUNTING TO WHIST—
THE FACTS OF DAILY LIFE
IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY ENGLAND

P R E C E D E N C E :
O F B I S H O P S ,
B A R R I S T E R S , A N D
B A R O N E T S

a good deal of the social hierarchy in England was made explicit in the order of precedence, a more or less official ranking of honors, ranks, lineage, and occupational statuses in the kingdom. It was certainly a ranking of which no nineteenth-century hostess would have dreamed of being ignorant, for by mid-century it had become the custom in almost every household of any pretension for the guests at a dinner party to gather in the drawing room before the meal, the ladies then being escorted in to the dining room by the gentlemen one at a time in strict order of both their ranks, the personages of greatest rank or distinction going first. The good hostess at any dinner party ascertained everyone's rank in advance and then quietly arranged the guests in order of precedence while the party mingled informally in the drawing room before the meal: "If the society is of a distinguished kind," observed an etiquette book soberly, "she [the hostess] will do well to consult Debrett or Burke, before arranging her visitors."

Trollope, the infallible guide to social distinction and nuance, tells us both what a headache this could be and the social weapon it could become in the hands of the skillful. In *The Last Chronicle*

ORDER OF PRECEDENCE AMONG MEN.

All of Peers rank among themselves by date of creation, in the following order—English, Scotch, of Great Britain, Irish, of the United Kingdom.

THE SOVEREIGN.

Prince of Wales, Sons of the Sovereign, in order of birth, Grandsons, Brothers, Nephews, and Uncles of the Sovereign, Younger Princes of Blood Royal.

- Archbp. of Canterbury.
- Lord Chancellor.
- Archbys. of York, Armagh, Dublin.
- President of Council.
- Lord Privy Seal.
- Lord Great Chamberlain.
- The Earl Marshal.
- Lord Steward of Household.
- Lord Chamberlain of Household.
- Dukes†
- Lord Great Chamberlain.
- Lord High Constable.
- Earl Marshal.
- Lord Steward of Household.
- Lord Chamberlain of Household.
- Marquises.†
- Dukes' eldest sons.
- Lord Great Chamberlain.
- Lord High Constable.
- Earl Marshal.
- Lord Steward.
- Lord Chamberlain.
- Earls.†
- Eldest sons of Marquises.
- Younger sons of Dukes.
- Lord Great Chamberlain.
- Lord High Constable.
- Lord Steward.
- Lord Chamberlain.
- Viscounts.†

- Eldest sons of Earls.
- Younger sons of Marquises.
- The Bishops of London, Durham, and Winchester.
- English Bishops according to date of consecration.
- The Bishop of Meath.
- Other Irish Bishops, in order of consecration.
- Lord Great Chamberlain.
- Lord High Constable.
- Lord Steward.
- Lord Chamberlain of the Household.
- Secretary of State.
- Barons.†
- Speaker of House of Commons.
- Commissioners of the Great Seal (when they have no claim to higher rank).
- Treasurer of the Household.
- Comptroller of the Household.
- Master of the Horse.
- Vice-Chamberlain of Household.
- Secretary of State, if below the rank of Baron.
- Eldest sons of Viscounts.
- Younger sons of Earls.
- Eldest sons of Barons.
- Knights of the Garter, if of no higher rank.

if a Marquis.

if an Earl.

if a Viscount.

if a Baron.

if of no higher rank.

- Privy Councillors, in order of appointment, when with no higher precedence.
- Chancellor of the Garter.
- Cancellor of Exchequer.
- Chancellor of Duchy of Lancaster.
- Chief Justice of Queen's Bench.
- Master of the Rolls.
- Chief Justice of Common Pleas.
- Chief Baron of Exchequer.
- Vice-Chancellors, according to seniority.
- Palace Judges of Queen's Bench.
- Palace Justices of Common Pleas.
- Palace Barons of Exchequer.
- Commissioners of Bankruptcy.
- Younger sons of Viscounts.
- Younger sons of Barons.
- Barons of England, Scotland, Great Britain, Ireland, & United Kingdom, in order of their respective patents.
- Knights of the Thistle, if of no higher rank.
- Knights of St. Patrick, if of no higher rank.
- Knights Grand Cross of the Bath; and of St. Michael and St. George.
- Knights Commanders of the Bath; and of St. Michael and St. George.
- Knights Commanders of the Bath; and of St. Michael and St. George.
- Knights Bachelors.
- Companions of the Bath; and of St. Michael and St. George.

- Eldest sons of younger sons of Peers.
- Eldest sons of Barons.
- Eldest sons of Knights Grand Cross of the Bath.
- Eldest sons of Knights Grand Cross of St. Michael and St. George.
- Eldest sons of Knights Commander of the Bath.
- Eldest sons of Knights Commander of St. Michael and St. George.
- Eldest sons of Knights Bachelors.
- Younger sons of the younger sons of Peers.
- Younger sons of Barons.
- Esquires of the Sovereign's body.
- Gentlemen of Privy-chamber.
- Esquires of Knights of the Bath.
- Esquires by creation, and by office.
- Younger sons of Knights Grand Cross of the Bath; of Knights Grand Cross of St. Michael and St. George; of Knights Commanders of the Bath; of Knights Commanders of St. Michael and St. George; and of Knights Bachelors.
- General and Flag Officers.
- Colonels in the Army, Captains in the Navy.
- Gentlemen entitled to bear arms.

Order of precedence among men.

of *Barset* he asks, "Amidst the intricacies of rank how is it possible for a woman to learn and remember everything? If Providence would only send Mrs. Dobbs Broughton a Peer for every dinner-party, the thing would go more easily; but what woman will tell me, off-hand, which should go out of the room first; a C.B., an Admiral of the Blue, the Dean of Barchester, or the Dean of Arches?" In *Can You Forgive Her?*† one of the suitors for Mrs. Greenow's hand is allowed to take her in to dinner, while the other, grinding his teeth, must follow with another lady. "There was no doubt as to Mrs. Greenow's correctness," says Trollope. "As Captain Bellfield held, or had held, her Majesty's commission, he was clearly entitled to take the mistress of the festival down to dinner." And the loser's companion points out to him briskly, "If you were a magistrate, Mr. Cheesacre, you would have rank; but I believe you are not."

In the order of precedence the peerage (dukes, marquesses, earls, viscounts, and barons) soared above virtually everyone else, including baronets and knights, who were creatures of relatively low distinction. A bishop, too, ranked very high, which is why the battles over the post (see *Barchester Towers*) could be so ferocious, while

the high position accorded the lord chancellor and the archbishop of Canterbury suggests why those personages are alluded to in novels as beings of such consequence. As we shall see, official rank and actual social clout in the case of any particular individual might be two different things, but any effort to come to grips with the world embodied in the nineteenth-century novel must begin with precedence.

THE TITLED

There were two orders of titled folk in England. Dukes, marquesses, earls, viscounts, and barons (who ranked in that order) were known as the peerage. Considerably below them on the social scale and *not* peers came the baronets and knights, easily recognizable because they were always addressed as "Sir."

Together with the bishops and the archbishops of the Church of England, the peers composed the House of Lords, and, indeed, a reference to a "lord" almost always meant a peer or one of his children. They were invariably hugely wealthy and possessed of gigantic landed estates, but their only privilege of any significance was the right to be tried for a felony by the House of Lords rather than by a court. In addition, on extremely formal ceremonial occasions peers got to wear coronets. Search the Palliser novels and you will probably find a reference somewhere to "strawberry leaves." These were the flora (in the form of precious stones, of course) that ornamented the ducal coronet; lower ranks in the peerage had their distinctive coronets as well.

The title was always hereditary, with the exception of a very few "life peerages" created late in the 1800s, whose honors died with them. The title generally passed to the eldest son; in some families, if there were no male heir, the peerage ended. However, children stepped into their father's shoes for purposes of inheritance, so that if the heir left a male child, the child would inherit the title. If the child died or there were no child, the title would pass to a brother of the title's holder. Failing that, it would pass to another male still in the line of direct descent from the first holder of the title. In *Can You Forgive Her?*, this means that Jeffrey Palliser has a chance at

the title once his cousin Plantagenet dies, as Plantagenet's wife, Lady Glencora, calmly explains to a friend: "If I have no child, and Mr. Palliser were not to marry again, Jeffrey would be the heir." This also accounts for the classic denouement of Victorian melodrama in which the impoverished American street urchin is discovered to be the new earl of Foxglove. Branches of the family might have ramified endlessly since the title was first bestowed, but if the urchin were the closest living male heir—even if he were from a very junior or "cadet" branch of the original family—he would inherit the title and usually the manor.

A lady marrying a peer took his noble status, which is why the socially ambitious Lizzie Eustace pursues Lord Fawn in *The Eustace Diamonds*, even though she has already acquired a bundle of money with her first marriage and Lord Fawn is both dreary and penniless. "How could she have done better?" cries Mme. Goesler. "He is a peer and her son would be a peer." That is, a man who married a widowed viscountess could only send out cards inviting you to dinner in the name of Mr. Smith and Viscountess Warwick. If Miss Smith married Viscount Warwick, however, she became Viscountess Warwick.

But why would a peer marry beneath him? Partly, no doubt, because the landed estate that went with his title was often tied up in an entail that prevented him from selling any of it to raise money and was, in addition, often burdened with legal requirements to pay jointure and portions to various members of the family, so that a peer might be as interested in trying to land a rich heiress as she was in trying to land him. This was especially true because it was firmly believed that to be a peer required a fairly expensive keeping up of appearances, so much so, indeed, that at one time military heroes awarded a peerage were often granted great landed estates simultaneously to allow them to maintain the title in proper style. Lord Fawn, as Trollope points out, had estates that brought him very little, and, indeed, he "was always thinking, not exactly how he might make both ends meet, but how to reconcile the strictest personal economy with the proper bearing of an English nobleman. Such a man almost naturally looks to marriage as an assistance in the dreary fight. It soon becomes clear to him that he cannot marry without money, and he learns to think that heiresses have been invented exactly to suit his case. . . . He has got himself, his position, and, perhaps, his title to dispose of, and they are surely worth so much per annum." "A rich heiress can buy a coronet any day,"

wrote a shrewd American observer in the 1880s. "There are marchionesses now living whose fortunes fresh from trade saved the ancient estates of the aristocracy from the hammer."

Although titles like duke, earl, and viscount conjure up images of armored figures with maces and swords clashing on horseback, a great many peerages were not of very long standing. A peerage—which was always granted by the monarch—was given perhaps most often for service to the political party then in power at the behest of the prime minister. (Disraeli's becoming earl of Beaconsfield comes to mind in this connection.) In addition, very wealthy lawyers, brewers (perhaps surprisingly), and lord chancellors (almost invariably) became peers, as did military heroes, like the duke of Wellington. To keep the peerage small and sought after, commoners were seldom made peers unless they were old and lacking in male children so that the title would die with them and keep the aristocracy unsoiled from contact with the plebs. (This exclusivity and the consequent desirability of the honor were strengthened by the fact that in each generation only one child, the heir, was ennobled, and the others all became commoners.) Titles were sometimes called patents of nobility because they were originally granted by "letters of patent," that is, letters that were open to the whole world to see. In the case of two peers of the same rank, the one with the oldest patent took precedence. "His rank in the peerage was not high," Trollope remarks of Lord Poppelcourt in *The Duke's Children*, "but his barony was of an old date." Brand-new peerages were considered tacky. When a new lord chancellor was proposed for the peerage in the 1880s, he requested that the title be granted to his *father* so that the chancellor himself would be the *second* Lord———. Promotions could be made from within the peerage, with the titles previously attained trailing along after the new one. Accordingly, one might be Baron Little one year; Viscount More, Baron Little the next; Earl Stillmore, Viscount More, Baron Little the year after; and so forth.

Below the peerage came the baronets and knights, who were much more numerous in nineteenth-century English fiction and were much less influential, at least at a national level, in English society. These ranks, if the word doesn't have too disrespectful a sound, were the middle-class English titles, though, in the case of baronets, it is admittedly a very upper middle class that is at issue. A baronetage was hereditary like a peerage, but baronets were not peers and they did not sit in the House of Lords. Sir James Dedlock

in *Bleak House*, Sir James Chettam in *Middlemarch*, Sir Walter Elliot in *Persuasion*, and Sir Pitt Crawley in *Vanity Fair*—all are baronets. They constituted the upper reaches of that somewhat amorphous group called the gentry, and while they might sit in the House of Commons, they were more often preoccupied with local, “county” affairs.

At the bottom of the titled ranks was knighthood. Knighthood was not hereditary, perhaps one reason it lacked some of the grandeur of a baronetcy. In addition, distinguished doctors or lawyers tended to become baronets, while knighthoods, the novelists tell us, were bestowed for reasons bordering on the comical on persons who were often—heaven forbid—“in trade.” Trollope speaks in *The Warden* of the pleasure of “a city tallow-chandler in becoming Sir John on the occasion of a Queen’s visit to a new bridge,” while in *Great Expectations* Dickens tells us how Mrs. Pocket’s father “had been knighted himself for storming the English grammar at the point of a pen, in a desperate address engrossed on vellum, on the occasion of the laying of the first stone of some building or other, and for handing some Royal Personage either the trowel or the mortar.”

H O W T O A D D R E S S Y O U R B E T T E R S

*L*ife was full of perplexities for the nineteenth-century English gentleman, perhaps never more so than when dealing with the aristocracy and other worthies. First there was the problem of addressing them in conversation; second, that of writing them a friendly note or sending them a properly addressed invitation to one’s ball. Both situations were complicated by the “faux-noble” nomenclature problem, that is, the use of such titles as lord and lady for members of the upper crust who *did* have status but were not *real* lords and ladies and were given these titles only as “courtesy titles.” How did one keep all this straight?

By using these forms of address:

I. In Direct Conversation:

Your Majesty—to the king or queen.

Your Royal Highness—to the monarch's spouse, children, and siblings.

Your Highness—to the nephews, nieces, and cousins of the sovereign.

Duke or Duchess—to a duke or duchess if one were a member of the nobility or gentry.

Your Grace—to a duke or duchess if one were below the gentry, and to an archbishop of the Church of England.

My Lord—to a peer below the rank of duke and to a bishop of the Church of England.

Lord—to address an earl, marquis, or viscount. The first two were often marquis or earl *of* someplace; e.g., "the earl of Derby." They were not addressed this way in conversation but, rather, one dropped the "of" and put "lord" in front of the geographical locale designated in the title; e.g., "the earl of Derby" became "Lord Derby." A viscount had no "of" in his title but was simply "Viscount Palmerston"; however, he was likewise addressed as "Lord Palmerston." A baron was virtually *never* spoken of or addressed as "Baron"; "Lord Tennyson" (as in the case of the poet who was created a baron) was the invariable way of addressing a peer of the lowest rank.

Lady—to a marchioness, countess, viscountess, or baroness. It worked as it did for the males; e.g., the "marchioness of Derby" became "Lady Derby."

Sir—to a baronet or knight with his first name; e.g., "Sir Thomas Bertram."

Baron—to a judge of the Exchequer Court or, on extremely formal occasions, a baron in the peerage.

Lady—to the wife of a baronet or knight. Here, in contrast to the way "Lady" was used for a peeress in the manner described above, Jane Fairfax, the wife of Sir John Fairfax, was addressed as "Lady Fairfax." That is, Sir Thomas Bertram's wife in *Mansfield Park* is referred to as "Lady Bertram," and Sir Leicester Dedlock's wife in *Bleak House* is "Lady Dedlock." It is not merely contemporary readers who may find it difficult to distinguish between peeresses on the one hand and the wives of knights and baronets on the other when both groups use the title Lady. The female peerage were said to find the usurpation of the title by the lower ranks quite annoying; some apparently wished the wives of knights would resume their old title of Dame.

My Lord—to a lord mayor, and to judges of the King's Bench and Common Pleas courts.

Your Worship—to a justice of the peace but probably only by his inferiors.

Doctor—in the early part of the century, i.e., in Jane Austen's era, the term would probably have been used for a doctor of divinity; it was still so used in *Tess* in 1891. Otherwise, it would probably have been applied to a physician but not to a surgeon, who would have been styled "Mr." At the beginning of *Dombey and Son*, Paul's birth is attended by "Doctor Parker Peps, one of the Court Physicians" and by "the family Surgeon," who is addressed as "Mr. Pilkins." In addressing a medical doctor, it was mandatory to use the surname after the title; it was thus considered rude to say simply, "Yes, doctor."

Squire—a term with no legal significance at all. Though they were often justices of the peace, squires per se were merely substantial landowners with a long residence in a particular country area, no more.

II. In Direct Written Communication:

the **Most Reverend**—to an archbishop.

His Grace—to a duke or an archbishop.

the **Most Noble**—to a marquis.

the **Right Honourable**—to an earl, viscount, or baron.

the **Right Reverend**—to a bishop.

the **Right Honourable**—to a member of the Privy Council and, hence, to all cabinet members since they were privy councillors ex officio. Also, to a peer's eldest son bearing an inferior, courtesy title of his father's.

the **Venerable**—to an archdeacon.

the **Very Reverend**—to a dean.

the **Reverend**—to a rector, a vicar, a canon, and all other clergy of the Church of England not covered under the above titles.

the **Honourable**—to a member of Parliament.

III. Courtesy Titles

As noted above, these were titles given to the children of peers and some of their spouses as a matter of politeness, not because they conveyed any legal rights with them the way a genuine peerage did. That is, all the children of peers were commoners, including the eldest son, until he—or one of the others—inher-

ited the title from his father or was otherwise granted a title when he became a peer himself. However, to distinguish socially the children and—in the case of male children—their wives, they were all granted courtesy titles, as follows:

Lord—to the eldest son of a duke, marquis, or earl, who was also entitled to use the inferior title of his father, that is to say, a peer customarily bore several titles (duke of X, marquis of Y, earl of Z, etc.), using only the highest, and his eldest son took the next title down as a courtesy title until he inherited the highest title from his father. In *Middlemarch*, Celia Brooke, after marrying the baronet Sir James Chettam, reflects that it is nice her son is who he is, but “it would be nice, though, if he were a Viscount. . . . He might have been, if James had been an Earl.” And the oldest son of Plantagenet Palliser, the duke of Omnium, is called the earl of Silverbridge in *The Duke’s Children*, even though he does not sit in Parliament and is not really an earl. He is addressed as “Lord Silverbridge,” after the name of a borough associated with the family.

Lord—to a younger son of a duke or marquis. Presumably because the younger son was not an heir, the “Lord” was simply tacked on to his Christian name and surname; e.g., Lord Silverbridge’s younger brother in *The Duke’s Children* is called “Lord Gerald Palliser.” There was no borrowing of one of father’s titles.

Lady—to the daughter of a duke, marquis, or earl, with her Christian name and surname; that is, for naming purposes she was treated like a peer’s younger son. Thus, in *Vanity Fair*, we first encounter young Pitt Crawley as he is “said to be paying his addresses to Lady Jane Sheepshanks, Lord Southdown’s third daughter.” Just to confuse things a little more, “Lady” would also be the courtesy title of the spouse of a peer’s son bearing the courtesy title “Lord.” She would have been known as Lady John Fairfax, in contrast to the two no-courtesy style usages of “Lady” listed above.

the Honourable—to all children, male and female, of the lower peers, that is, viscounts and barons, and to the younger sons of earls. In *Persuasion*, Sir Walter Elliot madly pursues an acquaintance with his cousins, “the Dowager Viscountess Dalrymple, and her daughter, the Honourable Miss Carteret.” The housekeeper, Mrs. Fairfax, in describing Mr. Rochester’s current womanfriend in *Jane Eyre*, alludes to the woman we come

to know as Miss Ingram as the "Hon. Blanche." Her father, deceased, was Baron Ingram.

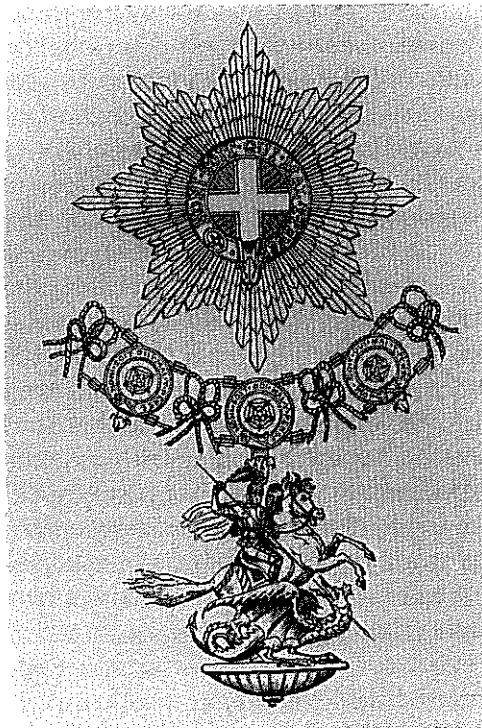
One occasionally sees the word "dowager" introduced into a title; e.g., the "Dowager Lady Ingram," as Charlotte Brontë calls Blanche's mother. This was neither a courtesy nor legal title but simply designated the widow of the titled male implied by the title, e.g., Lord Ingram, or, in the case of Viscountess Dalrymple, Viscount Dalrymple. After a certain point, the custom also developed of referring to a dowager simply as "Joan, countess of Warwick," the first name being used to differentiate her from the current earl's wife.

In a not dissimilar fashion, you called yourself "Alfred, Lord Tennyson" to distinguish yourself from other Lord Tennysons in the lineage. Tennyson's title also illustrates the tendency in the lower reaches of the peerage for names in titles to be drawn from surnames as well as from places. That is, dukes were *always* dukes of some *geographical area*—e.g., Omnium, Windsor, Rutland, Edinburgh—as were, generally speaking, marquesses. Earls, however, might be either geographical (Disraeli was earl of Beaconsfield) or use their family name (like Prime Minister John Russell, who became Earl Russell). The same was true of viscounts and barons.

The contemporary reader may be confused by the different uses of the title of Lady. To summarize what has been said above, there were four distinct usages. If you married the baronet or knight Sir John Drudge, you became Lady Drudge (husband's last name). If Sir John, who is, we shall say, a resident of Chiswick near the noble river Avon, then became an earl and subsequently a marquis, he would probably be known, assuming he chose a territorial designation, as the marquis of Chiswick and earl of Avon, and he would then be addressed as Lord Chiswick and his wife would become Lady Chiswick (husband's territorial designation). Their eldest son, Horace Drudge, would now have the courtesy title Lord Avon, and *his* wife, by analogy to a real peerage, would be Lady Avon (husband's territorial designation). Horace's younger brother would be known as Lord Albert Drudge, and *his* wife, the former Gwendolyn Sprockett, would be known as Lady Albert Drudge (husband's Christian name and surname). Finally, Hypatia—Horace and Albert's sister—would be known as Lady Hypatia Drudge (own Christian name and family surname).

If all this was simply too confusing, it was always comforting to

remember that an overly ostentatious use of formalities and titles was frowned on anyway. After all, the queen sometimes made do with Ma'am as a formal title of address and the Prince of Wales with Sir. Only servants, suggested a contemporary book touching on usage, said "My Lord" and "My Lady" in every other sentence. It added: "It is, however, well to show that you remember the station of your interlocutor, by now and then introducing some such phrases as, 'I think your Grace was observing,' or, 'I believe, madam, I was pointing out to you—'" Among themselves, and with friends and relatives, except perhaps on a first introduction, the nobility even dropped the "Lord" in front of their names in conversation, so that, for example, to his friends "Lord Derby" was simply "Derby." (He would have remained "Lord Derby," however, to servants, business and tradespeople.)



Star, collar, and badge of the Order of the Garter.

E S Q . , G E N T . , K . C . B . ,
E T C .

What did it mean to put "Bart." or "Esq." after one's name, to style oneself "K.C." or "Q.C.," or, like Lady Macleod in *Can You Forgive Her?*, be "the widow of a Sir Archibald Macleod, K.C.B.?" What did the mysterious letters signify?

Here is a guide to the meaning and significance of those that were among the more common:

Bart., Bt.—Abbreviations for baronet.

Esq. (Esquire)—Originally, an esquire was the young man who attended on a knight and was in training to be a knight himself. The name, then, was a job description rather than, as knight, a title of honor. By the nineteenth century, the term had become somewhat casual in application, although denoting in theory that one was a member of the gentry, ranking below a knight and above a mere "gentleman." There were subsequent, doomed attempts to maintain that it should be used only by justices of the peace, military men, barristers and physicians, and certain sons of knights and peers, but eventually it became merely a title of indeterminate respectability. Thus, after the farmer's wife has mingled with the quality at Squire Thorne's "fete champetre" in *Barchester Towers*, "it might fairly be expected that from this time forward the tradesmen of Barchester would, with undoubting pens, address her husband as T. Lookaloft, Esquire."

Gent.—Short for gentleman, in social terms an increasingly imprecise status, though it carried an unmistakable air of gentility. A gentleman was defined by the law as someone with no regular trade or occupation.

B.A.—Abbreviation for bachelor of arts, a degree apparently often associated with clergymen who had gone straight from Oxford or Cambridge to an incumbency.

D.D.—Abbreviation for doctor of divinity.

K.C.—King's Counsel, an honor given to a senior, distinguished barrister in recognition of an outstanding career. Toward the middle of the nineteenth century, K.C. replaced serjeant as the highest honor within the bar to which a barrister could aspire.

Q.C.—Queen's Counsel, the equivalent during Victoria's reign of the K.C.

C.B.—Companion of the Bath. Lowest of the three honors within the Order of the Bath. In *Vanity Fair*, the renewed campaign against Napoleon means that before the fighting ended, Thackeray says, "Mrs. Major O'Dowd hoped to write herself Mrs. Colonel O'Dowd, C.B."

G.C.B.—Grand Commander of the Order of the Bath. A high distinction of knighthood often conferred for distinguished military service. One of Jane Austen's brothers was a G.C.B. Originally, part of the ceremony of becoming a knight involved bathing in order to purify oneself.

K.C.B.—Knight Commander of the Bath (less status than a G.C.B.). The honor held by Sir Archibald Macleod, "who had been a soldier."

Kt.—A knight.

K.B.—A knight bachelor, same status as the plain knight with no trimmings. (In another context, K.B. was an abbreviation for the Court of King's Bench.)

K.G.—Knight of the Garter. The highest order of knighthood, given, as a rule, only to peers.

M.P.—Member of Parliament.

R.A.—Member of the Royal Academy, the officially sanctioned institute of painting founded by George III as an art school and a forum for annual exhibits of work by contemporary artists.

V.C.—The Victoria Cross. A very high military award and not an honor of knighthood like the Bath. It was first given in 1857 to Crimean War heroes and was traditionally manufactured by a London jewelers' firm out of metal from captured Russian guns. Not to be confused with the D.S.O., the Distinguished Service Order, an award for officers only that came into being in 1886.

S T A T U S :
G E N T L E M E N A N D
L E S S E R F O L K

The order of precedence explained whether a bishop's wife had precedence over the daughter of a peer and whether a duke outranked the archbishop of Canterbury and other easy-to-grasp distinctions. On a daily basis, however, the average Englishman would also have had to deal with more subtle distinctions of class and status for which there was no readily available guide.

At the beginning of the century everyone knew where he or she stood. Dukes, marquises, and earls were on top, except that possession of a distinguished family name and great landholdings for generations would outrank a paltry title of lesser age, as witness the immense deference accorded by everyone to the titleless Mr. Darcy in *Pride and Prejudice*. Below the great nobles and landowners were the gentry, the locally based "county families" of squires, clergy, baronets, and knights with properties not as great as those of the dukes but large enough to have tenants. Bishops and physicians and barristers would rank somewhere in here, and then came the yeoman farmers, the independent landowners with their large or small holdings, and the bankers, and then the lesser tradesfolk, artisans, and at the very bottom the working poor and farm laborers.

The changes in English society in the 1800s altered this somewhat static hierarchy. To begin with, industry and manufacturing created new sources of wealth that could compete with land, even though its holders frequently had to put some of their wealth into landownership of a country estate to be really "accepted." Second, the professions became both more influential and more respected: doctors acquired real scientific training for a change; the clergy became more conscientious about its duties and education; and suddenly there was a new class of people, like Lydgate in *Middlemarch*, demanding to be taken seriously—socially and professionally. Meanwhile, a lower middle class made up of Bob Cratchits

and Sue Brideheads and Eugene Hexams popped up to serve in the counting houses and the great bureaucracies of government, such as the educational system. At the same time, the enclosure acts and the mechanization of agriculture dramatized so vividly in novels like *Tess* drove many off the land and destroyed the traditional village life that had sustained the cottager and the rural laborer.

In effect, these vast and rapid changes meant that status was more and more what you yourself could make it. If you were Eugene Hexam, you tried to have people treat you as a solid member of the middle class. If you were Ferdinand Lopez or Pip, you asked to be taken seriously as a gentleman. Progress into a higher class necessitated mastery of various social rituals, speech patterns, and even habits of spending. Estella makes fun of Pip in *Great Expectations* for his "coarse hands," and we are told of Lizzie Eustace in *The Eustace Diamonds* that to be "lady-like" she insists on never combing her own hair or doing even the most trivial of tasks associated with putting on or maintaining her wardrobe. These were part of the prejudice against manual labor that marked someone as having aspirations to gentility. In fact, the resolute display of a hopeless inability to do anything oneself became increasingly the distinguishing mark of a lady or gentleman as the century wore on, and along with it, of course, went a growing reliance on servants.

Indeed, the first thing any household with pretensions to middle-class status did was to hire a housemaid or even a maid-of-all-work. When you really arrived, you hired a manservant, an index of social propriety that reassures the timid maidens of the ladies' boarding school into whose midst Mr. Pickwick makes his erring way: "He must be respectable—he keeps a man-servant," said Miss Tomkins to the writing and ciphering governess." This was something of a change, as Jane Austen's nephew pointed out in a memoir of his aunt written in 1870. "Less was left to the charge and discretion of servants, and more was done, or superintended, by the masters and mistresses," he writes of her era. "Ladies did not disdain to spin the thread of which the household linen was woven. . . . A young man who expected to have his things packed or unpacked for him by a servant, when he travelled, would have been thought exceptionally fine, or exceptionally lazy. When my uncle undertook to teach me to shoot, his first lesson was how to clean my own gun."

But as the century wore on, more and more of the attributes of status fell into the category of behavior to be avoided—and things that could be "acquired." One had at all costs to avoid doing manual

labor, and also one could not be "in trade." And what things should one try to acquire? Stated baldly, if you were well-off, you had to have a carriage and servants, and, if you had real pretensions, you had to have land, an ancient family, and a title—probably in that order.

If you already *had* a carriage and servants and were socially ambitious, then you wanted land and—hopefully—a distinguished and ancient pedigree. "She has no fair pretence of family or blood," observes Mr. Weston crushingly of Mrs. Churchill in *Emma*. An ancient pretension to family grandeur in and of itself, of course, was ridiculous if there were nothing to back it up; this is the moral of the absurd pretensions of Tess Durbeyfield's father, but they are echoed in the aspirations of Alec's father, Mr. Simon Stoke, the imitation d'Urberville in *Tess* who digs the name d'Urberville out of a book in the British Museum while looking for "a name that would not readily identify him with the smart tradesman of the past." Minimally, it would seem, descent from a Norman family was imperative. The parson tells Durbeyfield "that you are the lineal representative of the ancient and knightly family of the d'Urbervilles, who derive their descent from Sir Pagan d'Urberville, that renowned knight who came from Normandy with William the Conqueror." The Normans, after all, had created the whole system of lords of the manor whose descendants continued down through the nineteenth century to exact fealty from their social inferiors. Is it an accident that Mr. Darcy—was it not probably d'Arcy at one point?—and his relative, Lady Catherine de Bourgh, have a suggestion of something French about their names?

Land was perhaps more the key than anything else to real social distinction. You certainly needed land to support a peerage with the appropriate style, and at one time it was fashionable to reward poor but impoverished military heroes with great chunks of land along with their titles so they wouldn't disgrace the peerage. "A Countess living at an inn is a ruined woman," as Sir Pitt Crawley sneers of his mother-in-law in *Vanity Fair*. Not that you would expect to get a peerage right away if you bought land, but if you were middle class it was vital to the attainment of any genuine social status. "Mr. Bingley," we are informed in *Pride and Prejudice*, "inherited property to the amount of nearly a hundred thousand pounds from his father, who had intended to purchase an estate, but did not live to do it. Mr. Bingley intended likewise, and sometimes made choice of his county," but then changed his mind—which drove his social-

climbing siblings crazy: "his sisters were very anxious for his having an estate of his own." Once settled, it was recommended by a contemporary that one try to marry a daughter to one of the county gentry and at the same time try to become a justice of the peace.

Above all, people craved a title, the problem being that as you got down among the lower reaches of the gentry there was a danger that *anybody* could become a baronet or knight—as Jane Austen is quick to point out. That friend of the Bennets', for example, "Sir William Lucas had been formerly in trade in Meryton, where he had made a tolerable fortune and risen to the honour of knighthood by an address to the King, during his mayoralty. The distinction," Austen adds loftily, "had perhaps been felt too strongly."

But no one ever said it would all be easy. The easiest way to be in this enviable position was to have a huge estate, the sort of property that went with all old feudal families and obviated the necessity for working because you simply collected the rents from your tenant farmers. "You misled me by the term *gentleman*," observes a character in *Persuasion*. "I thought you were speaking of some man of property."

Nor did the socially hopeful wish to be in trade. Why? Because being a gentleman or lady denoted freedom, in true aristocratic fashion, from the need to earn a living. As George Eliot observes of Dorothea Brooke's forbears in *Middlemarch*, "the Brooke connections, though not exactly aristocratic, were unquestionably 'good': if you inquired backward for a generation or two, you would not find any yard-measuring or parcel-tying forefathers."

A barrister's wife could be presented at court while a solicitor's could not. Surely, this was in some measure because the solicitor took fees directly, i. e., was in trade, while the barrister only received an honorarium. Doctors, it was said, could rarely rise to the peerage, and at least one contemporary observer noted approvingly that this made sense in view of the fact that they actually accepted money from people, i. e., seemed to be in trade.

One should not be in trade, and one should avoid manual labor. Hence, for status one needed servants. There was one other minimal prerequisite to respectable middle-class status besides servants. "Lady Fawn and her daughters," says Trollope in *The Eustace Diamonds*, "were poor rich people. . . . The old family carriage and the two lady's maids were there—as necessaries of life." "Your father's only a merchant, Osborne," says the long-suffering Dobbin to the unbearable George Osborne one day at school in *Vanity Fair*.

"My father's a gentleman, and keeps his carriage," retorts the obnoxious boy. Carriages were an enormous status symbol; it is a measure of the devotion felt by some Victorian heroines for their husbands that they submit when all looks black to the prospect of being able to live with only one carriage.

Education and upbringing were important to gentlemanly status, too. "A clergyman is a gentleman by profession and education," observes Mr. Riley in *The Mill on the Floss*. The story of the nineteenth century is, in fact, that of the efforts of many to obliterate their humble origins in an ascent to gentlemanly status *without* a great landed estate. This upward mobility through education is, in some measure, the story of *Great Expectations*, where Magwitch determines to make a "gentleman" of Pip.

SOCIETY

Society and "The Season"

The chief target of the socially ambitious—and the main arena of those who had already arrived—was London. The fancy London



In the season.

society that swirls on the outskirts of Trollope's Palliser novels and glitters just beyond the reach of the social-climbing Veneerings in *Our Mutual Friend* was composed of perhaps some 1,500 families in all, totaling among them some 10,000 people.

In London, "Society" dwelt within a relatively small area of the West End. The most desirable residences were right next to Hyde Park on Park Lane, the western border of Mayfair and the residence in *Vanity Fair* of the selfish old Miss Crawley whose £70,000 Becky Sharp schemes to obtain. Then, just east of the park, came Grosvenor Square and Berkeley Square in Mayfair itself. Farther south and west was the still respectable area of St. James, where Pall Mall and its clubs were, and Buckingham Palace, and even farther south was the slightly less desirable but still fashionable area of Belgrave Square. Society shopped on Bond Street and Regent Street, and the latter—for men, after the theater and dinner—was the place to meet unmarried ladies of a more forthcoming sexuality than those whose prospects and futures were so carefully chaperoned by the anxious mammas and papas of the regions farther north. This was "the Belgrave-cum-Pimlico life, the scene of which might extend itself to South Kensington, enveloping the parks and coming round over Park Lane, and through Grosvenor Square and Berkeley Square back to Piccadilly. Within this," thinks the young Frank Greystock, trying to decide on a course of life in *The Eustace Diamonds*, "he might live with lords and countesses and rich folk generally, going out to the very best dinner-parties, having everything the world could give."

As a rule, the nobility and gentry began coming to town to the West End from their country estates sometime around Christmas to prepare for the opening of Parliament. "The season depends on Parliament," wrote a contemporary, "and Parliament depends upon sport." Until then shooting and fox hunting made leaving the countryside more or less unthinkable, or, as an observer put it, "the sessions of Parliament cannot be held til the frost is out of the ground and the foxes begin to breed."

In London, it was up early to go riding in Hyde Park, preferably on the sandy track known as Rotten Row (there was also the Ladies' Mile for the women), then home for breakfast. Shopping and paying bills for the ladies and making calls on those one knew extremely well came next. Then lunch, followed for men by the club—if they were not in Parliament or it was not in session just then—while the ladies took to their carriages to leave cards and to pay still more calls.

Dinner followed at around six or seven and in the evening there were soirees or the opera (dinner parties, too, especially on the Wednesdays and Saturdays when there were no evening parliamentary sessions) and then balls or dances starting at ten or later that could go until three o'clock in the morning.

The height of the season, however, did not come until sometime after the opening of Parliament, and through midwinter, indeed, up through March, many families still remained in the country. Drawing rooms and levees at St. James's Palace were rarely crowded as yet, people actually *went* to the opera or the theater, and you could still afford the luxury of stopping to chat if you encountered a friend on your way up Piccadilly. It was not until after a short Easter holiday—during which Parliament adjourned and families returned briefly to the country—that the real season began, a dizzying three-month whirlwind of parties, balls, and sporting events. In May came the annual exhibition at the Royal Academy of Art, the first of the gala court balls and concerts, and the beginning of the round of debutante-delighting private balls and dances. Despite all the surface gaiety, these latter gatherings revolved around the deadly serious business of marrying off the young girls of the family to eligible and wealthy young men in what Trollope and others referred to as the "marriage market." This could be done only with difficulty in the country, given the relative paucity of prospects, but at the round of balls, concerts, and gay parties which the London season offered, there were such great numbers of wealthy and titled young men and women brought together from all over England that it was inconceivable that demure young Lady Elizabeth wouldn't catch *somebody's* eye once she was "out." In fact, her first season marked a dramatic turning point in the life of a well-bred young girl. Until she was seventeen or eighteen, she was not considered socially alive and, in a telling phrase of the era, was deemed to be "in the school-room"; at dinners when guests were present she did not speak unless spoken to and then it was only to answer questions yes or no. "A girl not out, has always the same sort of dress," observes Miss Crawford in *Mansfield Park*, "a close bonnet for instance, looks demure, and never says a word." She was not to encourage or entertain romantic attentions from the opposite sex. Then, overnight, everything changed: she was suddenly expected to dress and wear her hair in an adult fashion, and she "came out," which meant that she was formally presented along with a host of other young debutantes to the sovereign in a formal drawing room at St. James.

It was, naturally, a momentous and eagerly anticipated event in a girl's life. "Before the carriage arrived in Russell Square," Thackeray tells us as Amelia Sedley and Becky Sharp leave Miss Pinkerton's Academy for the great world at the start of *Vanity Fair*, "a great deal of conversation had taken place about the Drawing-room, and whether or not young ladies wore powder as well as hoops when presented."

Having once been presented, the young girl embarked on an extraordinary round of balls and dances and similarly festive affairs—when she came out in 1849 Lady Dorothy Neville attended "50 balls, 60 parties, 30 dinners and 25 breakfasts." All this was with a serious goal in mind. If the girl did not get herself married within two to three seasons she was considered a failure; at thirty a hopeless, permanent spinster. Men, even a man like the crass Thomas Bertram in *Mansfield Park*, were apparently aware that they were supposed to focus only on the "eligible" girls. Recounting a stroll with two sisters, he says, "I afterwards found out that I had been giving all my attention to the youngest, who was not *out*, and had most excessively offended the eldest. Miss Augusta ought not to have been noticed for the next six months, and Miss Sneyd, I believe, has never forgiven me." Someone else commiserates with the absent Miss Sneyd: "To be neglected before one's time must be very vexatious," adding, "But it was entirely the mother's fault. Miss Augusta should have been with her governess."

In May or June came the two great annual sporting events of the season—the Derby, which had to be shared with the masses because of its overwhelming popularity and for which Parliament always adjourned, and then Ascot, some thirty miles from London, a much more exclusive horse race altogether. July witnessed the Henley Regatta along with various climactic cricket contests—notably between Oxford and Cambridge, and between Eton and Harrow—at "Lord's" on the outskirts of London. And now, suddenly, as the eponymous young M.P. and hero of *Phineas Finn* notices, a new air of expectancy would begin to manifest itself in society, for "everyone around him seemed to be looking forward to pleasant leisure days in the country. Men talked about grouse, and of the ladies at the houses to which they were going and of the people whom they were to meet." Naturally, for it was only a short time until August 12, which, when it came, signaled alike the end of the season, the adjournment of Parliament, and the retreat of everyone who was anyone to the north—August 12 marked the opening of the grouse

season. The fashionable deserted London altogether at this point. If you were lucky, you went north to your "grouse moor" in Scotland or else wangled an invitation from someone who *had* one, thereby inaugurating a period of some months devoted to the persecution of small animals that would last until people went "up" to "town" again the next winter. Partridge shooting began on September 1, and the pheasant season opened October 1, while "cub hunting," the pre-season practice hunting of immature foxes with inexperienced riders, got under way at approximately the same time. On the first Monday of November there came the traditional opening of the fox-hunting season.

And then it was back to town to start the whole thing all over again.

Basic Etiquette

The Gentleman

1. In riding horseback or walking along the street, the lady always has the wall.
2. Meeting a lady in the street or in the park whom you know only slightly, you wait for her acknowledging bow—then and only then may you tip your hat to her, which is done using the hand farthest away from her to raise the hat. You do not speak to her—or to any other lady—unless she speaks to you first.
3. If you meet a lady who is a good friend and who signifies that she wishes to talk to you, you turn and walk with her if you wish to converse. It is not "done" to make a lady stand talking in a street.
4. In going up a flight of stairs, you precede the lady (running, according to one authority); in going down, you follow.
5. In a carriage, a gentlemen takes the seat facing backward. If he is alone in a carriage with a lady, he does not sit next to her unless he is her husband, brother, father, or son. He alights from the carriage first so he may hand her down. He takes care not to step on her dress.
6. At a public exhibition or concert, if accompanied by a lady, he

goes in first in order to find her a seat. If he enters such an exhibition alone and there are ladies or older gentlemen present he removes his hat.

7. A gentleman is always introduced to a lady—never the other way around. It is presumed to be an honor for the gentleman to meet her. Likewise (and it is the more general rule of which this is only a specific example), a social inferior is always introduced to a superior—and only with the latter's acquiescence. Elizabeth Bennet is horrified when the obtuse Mr. Collins insists on *introducing himself* to Mr. Darcy in *Pride and Prejudice*. She tries to persuade "him that Mr. Darcy would consider his addressing him without introduction as an impertinent freedom, rather than a compliment to his aunt; that it was not in the least necessary there should be any notice on either side, and that if it were, it must belong to Mr. Darcy, the superior in consequence, to begin the acquaintance."

8. A gentleman never smokes in the presence of ladies.

The Lady

Her rules of conduct are perhaps simpler.

1. If unmarried and under thirty, she is never to be in the company of a man without a chaperone. Except for a walk to church or a park in the early morning, she may not walk alone but should always be accompanied by another lady, a man, or a servant. An even more restrictive view is that "if she cannot walk with her younger sisters and their governess, or the maid cannot be spared to walk with her, she had better stay at home or confine herself to the square garden."

2. Under no circumstances may a lady call on a gentleman alone unless she is consulting that gentleman on a professional or business matter.

3. A lady does not wear pearls or diamonds in the morning.

4. A lady never dances more than three dances with the same partner.

5. A lady should never "cut" someone, that is to say, fail to acknowledge their presence after encountering them socially, unless it is absolutely necessary. By the same token, only a lady is ever truly justified in cutting someone: "a cut is only excusable when men persist in bowing whose acquaintance a lady does not wish to keep up." Upon the approach of the offender, a simple stare of silent iciness should suffice; followed, if necessary, by a

“cold bow, which discourages familiarity without offering insult,” and departure forthwith. To remark, “Sir, I have not the honour of your acquaintance” is a very extreme measure and is a weapon that should be deployed only as a last resort.

How to Address the Nontitled

It must not be Lucy any longer, Lord Lufton; I was madly foolish when I first allowed it.” This quote from Trollope’s *Framley Parsonage* shows that it was just as problematic to converse with people informally as it was to get their titles straight. That is, there were rules even within the family and among friends as to how you addressed people, titled or not, and a breach of these rules could be a blunder in etiquette as severe as sending the wrong lady down to dinner first at a dinner party.

To his wife, the man of the house was quite often “Mr. ——,” just as he called her “Mrs.——.” (To call one’s husband “Thompson” was not a sign of good breeding, however; to call him “T.” was hopelessly vulgar.) Daughters customarily addressed their parents as “mama” and “papa” (the accent in well-bred circles being always on the second syllable); as the unspeakable Mrs. General instructs the heroine in *Little Dorrit*, “Papa is a preferable form of address. . . . Father is rather vulgar, my dear.” However, this was not true for males. The boys would call their parents “father” and “mother.” When outsiders spoke of the family, the eldest daughter was differentiated from the other daughters by being called “Miss” followed only by her surname, while the other daughters were spoken of by “Miss” and the Christian name, if not by both Christian name and surname. Thus, the traveling Dorrits are entered on a hotel register as William Dorrit, Esquire; Frederick Dorrit, Esquire; Edward Dorrit, Esquire; Miss Dorrit; Miss Amy Dorrit.

Outsiders, even women friends, at least in Jane Austen’s time, generally addressed the women of the family as “Mrs.” or “Miss,” as the case might be, followed by the surname, until a great deal of intimacy had been achieved. It was sufficiently rare for these formalities to be dropped that in *Vanity Fair* Thackeray mentions as a sign of remarkable sudden sympathy that “the girls Christian-

sometimes even that dignity was denied them. In some families, a string of underservants in succession in the same position all might be called by the same first name because the family did not want to be bothered learning a new one each time a replacement was hired. (Footmen were invariably John, Charles, or James.) Or a serving woman named Mary might become Alice if a wife or daughter in the employer's household were named Mary, and sometimes the reason for a name change seems to have been pure whim. When Mr. Dombey hires Mrs. Toodle as a wetnurse, he instructs her, "While you are here, I must stipulate that you are always known as—say as Richards—an ordinary name, and convenient. Have you any objection to be known as Richards?"



The first quadrille.

“May I Have This Dance?”

I consider a country-dance as an emblem of marriage,” says John Thorpe to Catherine Morland in *Northanger Abbey*.

“But they are such very different things!” she says.

“—That you think they cannot be compared together.”

“To be sure not. People that marry can never part, but must go and keep house together. People that dance only stand opposite each other in a long room for half an hour.”

This peculiar business of standing around during a country-dance—likewise, in *Pride and Prejudice*, during the Netherfield ball Elizabeth Bennet and Mr. Darcy get up to dance and then “they stood for some time without speaking a word; and she began to imagine that their silence was to last through the two dances.” is a good deal less puzzling if we realize these were glorified square dances. Although the country-dance dated back to the 1600s in one form or another, by Jane Austen’s time the dance had assumed its quintessential nineteenth-century form, in which three or more couples, the men and women in separate lines some four feet apart, facing one another, danced their way through a series of figures.

A figure was merely a sequence of movements, like those in square dances in which men and ladies opposite one another advanced and then retreated, or locked arms and swung around, or do-si-doed (from the French *dos-à-dos*), or wove their way through the other dancers. Depending on the nature of the figures, all the couples might be in motion at once, or only one or two, with the rest following the leading or “top couple” in sequence—each dance could vary considerably in form at the pleasure of the dancers. Those danced by the partners in *Northanger Abbey* at the Bath Assembly rooms and by Elizabeth Bennet and Mr. Darcy at Meryton evidently involved the other couples standing idly by while the top couple or their successors were in motion. This period of inactivity is what allowed time for the long, bantering Austenian conversations. In the case of *Emma*, it enabled the heroine to eavesdrop on Mr. Elton: “she was not yet dancing; she was working her way up from the bottom, and had therefore leisure to look around, and by only turning her head a little, she saw it all. When she was half-way up the set, the whole group were exactly behind her, and she would no longer allow her eyes to watch; but Mr. Elton was so near that

she heard every syllable of a dialogue which just then took place between him and Mrs. Weston." The number of couples also affected the length of a dance (and, thereby, conversations while dancing). If there were only three couples—the minimum—you might be able to whiz through a dance in five minutes. If there were twenty or more in the "set" of dancers, however, it might take an hour.

At the other extreme is the country dancing at Mr. Fezziwig's party for his family and apprentices which the Ghost of Christmas Past conjures up from Scrooge's part (in which constant movement rather than standing around predominated): "Away they all went, twenty couple at once, hands half round and back again the other way; down the middle and up again; round and round in various stages of affectionate grouping; old top couple always turning up in the wrong place; new top couple starting off again, as soon as they got there; all top couples at last, and not a bottom one to help them."

A sure-fire crowd-pleaser that was almost invariably the last dance on a formal program was the "Sir Roger de Coverley." It also seems to have become associated with Christmas. In *Silas Marner*, it is the signal to begin the dance at Squire Cass's annual Christmas party; in *A Christmas Carol*, as was probably more common, it closes out the evening's festivities, with the Fezziwigs once again top couple, going through all the figures: "advance and retire, hold hands with your partner; bow and curtsy; corkscrew; thread-the-needle, and back to your place."

Dickens could describe the "Roger de Coverley" in such detail because it was the one country-dance whose figures never changed. It was, in fact, the dance American square dancers know as the Virginia reel. Bottom man and top lady retire and advance, bottom lady and top man do the same, the couples then repeat the steps, linking arms, and then the top man and top lady weave their way in and out down their sex's line, join hands at the bottom and promenade on up—with the next couple repeating the figures until all the couples have gone through the same sequence. It was a natural for sending everyone off into the night in a convivial and neighborly frame of mind.

As the new century wore on, however, the country dancing of couples dancing in a group gave way to the more intimate—and socially isolating—waltz.

The waltz was no doubt more suited to the anonymous, citified society that England was increasingly becoming, a society where

even the partners—let alone the other couples—were often unknown to each other. The social logic of the waltz, indeed, lay in a direction other than that of the country-dance—attention was focussed exclusively on the couple rather than on the group—and conversation became secondary to the intoxication of the now constant, swirling movement (so unlike that of the country-dance), as we see in *Can You Forgive Her?* when Lady Glencora Palliser's old flame, Burgo Fitzgerald, shows up at Lady Monk's ball to try quite literally to sweep Lady Glencora off her feet and out of her marriage—"I will go up to her at once, and ask her to waltz," Burgo said to himself." So he does. "And then they were actually dancing, whirling around the room together. . . . Burgo waltzed excellently, and in old days, before her marriage, Lady Glencora had been passionately fond of dancing. She seemed to give herself up to it now as though the old days had come back to her. Lady Monk, creeping to the intermediate door between her den and the dancing room, looked in on them and then crept back again. Mrs. Marsham and Mr. Bott standing together just inside the other door, near to the staircase, looked on also—in horror." By the 1850s the country-dance and the minuet had been replaced by the waltz and the only real survivor of the collective dancing of the old days was a descendant of the country-dance named the quadrille. This was a dance performed by four couples, each of which occupied one point of a diamond. The quadrille was used to open virtually every fashionable ball until almost the end of the century—it could be varied in theory, like the country-dance, but in practice it usually consisted of five figures, which collectively incorporated such square-dance figures as the do-si-do. (There was also a complicated variant known as the lancers, after the cavalry units of the same name, which never rivaled the original quadrille in popularity.)

It would seem, however, that the quadrille rapidly became a chore to be got through while you waited for the waltz to begin. A mid-century etiquette book advised that a young lady need know only the figures—not the steps—as she prepared to "walk" through it. It took so long, moreover, that a gentleman was advised to lay in a half hour's store of conversation while the tedious figures were gone through. *Punch* noted in a satirical piece on the coquette that "she will walk a quadrille with a county member, but will not, if possible, waltz with any thing under a peer."

The Rules of Whist and Other Card Games

One cannot seem to make it through any Jane Austen book without a brush with whist, speculation, quadrille, or casino. And not only Jane Austen. Dickens's people play all-fours and Pope Joan, Trollope's characters play whist, and in *Vanity Fair* Rawdon Crawley turns out to be an ecarte man. And what would the drawing rooms and card parties of nineteenth-century England have been without loo?

What were these games like?

Many games, such as whist, were to be played with a specific number of players. Others, however, like loo, commerce, and speculation, were "round games"; that is, theoretically, any number could play. The player on the dealer's right was sometimes called the "pony," the person on his left the "elder hand." When the dealer dealt, say, five cards to every player, that was the player's "hand." (The dealer's leftover cards were sometimes called the "stock.") When each of the players played one of his or her cards in sequence in a round of play with everyone else, it was often called a "trick." A "rubber" usually consisted of three or more games. As for the cards themselves, the highest suit in a game—sometimes determined at the game's outset by simply turning over a card—was the "trump" suit. The little clubs or hearts or other emblems that marked the particular suit of a card were called the "pips"; in whist the jack, king, queen, or ace of the trump suit were sometimes called "honors."

All-Fours—Known as high-low-jack in America, in Dickens it seems to turn up as a game for somewhat raffish characters, like the doctor and his scruffy friend who play it in the Marshalsea Prison in *Little Dorrit*. There are two, sometimes four, players. The idea is to get the highest score with your six cards, the game being to ten or eleven points. The high trump, the low trump, the jack of trumps, and the highest number of pips each counts as one.

Beggar My Neighbor—The game played by Pip, appropriately, the first time he encounters Estella at Miss Havisham's. The two

players divide the cards between them and then turn over their top cards in sequence. When one of them turns up an ace, king, queen, or jack, the other must give up, respectively, four, three, two, or one of his own cards, except that if in doing so *he* turns up an ace, king, queen, or jack, the other must play to him. The winner is the person who ends up with all the cards. The players begin to play in *Great Expectations*, and Miss Havisham's vengeful delight can scarcely be contained—"Beggar him," she cries, and at the end, says Pip, Estella "threw the cards down on the table when she had won them all, as if she despised them for having been won of me."

Casino—(also spelled *cassino*)—In *Sense and Sensibility*, a game played by Lady Middleton, who is somewhat lacking in inner resources. David Copperfield "used to go back to the prison, and walk up and down the parade with Mr. Micawber; or play casino with Mrs. Micawber" when her husband was thrown in the King's Bench Prison. Each of the two players (each may have one partner) is dealt four cards down. Beginning with the eldest hand, each player must match—and take—the card face up; or else build on it, e.g., play a 4 to a 3, so on the next round—if no one else can—he matches and takes them with a 7, or just puts down a card and takes nothing. You play until all the cards are used up or one player gets 21.

Commerce—Basically, an old form of poker. Three cards are dealt down, which you can discard if you wish, and then you try to get three of a kind, a three-card straight flush, a flush of three, a pair and "point," the latter being the biggest number of pips in one hand.

Cribbage—A game that seems to have been associated with lengthy, subdued evenings of recreation among the elderly. Two players (generally) are each dealt six cards and then discard or "lay out" two of them into a "crib." Cards are turned over, with each player in putting down his card trying to get a 15, a pair, a "sequence" (a straight), or 31. Points are recorded by moving pegs around a board with tiny little holes in it.

Ecarte—A popular gambling game, played, not surprisingly, by Rawdon Crawley in *Vanity Fair*. Generally, a two-person game, though at one time played with spectators betting on the game. You deal five cards to each player after removing the 2s through 6s from the deck. Players may try to discard if they wish.

Euchre—For two to four players. The 2s through 6s are removed

from the deck and then five cards are dealt to each player. To be "euchred" is to get fewer than three tricks.

Faro—A gambling game in which players bet on the order in which cards will turn up when dealt off the bottom of a deck. Except that they are not exactly "dealt." The dealer uses a faro box—a machine with a spring in it that pops up the cards.

Loo—A round game in which, apparently, play is best restricted to five to seven participants. Everyone gets three cards down, and an extra hand is dealt down for the benefit of all called a "miss." The players make their bets before dealing is completed and then may put down their hand and take up the miss, pass, or play from their hand, the high card of the suit led or highest trump winning the trick.

Ombre—An old-fashioned card game, probably already out of fashion in Jane Austen's time, that took its name from the Spanish word for "man." The ombre plays against the other two, each being dealt nine cards from a forty-card deck which has had the 8s, 9s, and 10s removed. The ombre gets to discard and also to designate the trump suit. The play is like whist.

Patience—The game of solitaire.

Piquet (also spelled picquet)—Two players are each dealt twelve cards from a pack with no 2s, 3s, 4s, 5s, or 6s, the remaining eight cards being available for exchange. The elder hand then enumerates the cards in his hands, first by "point" (being the highest number of cards of one suit he holds and, if the other player has an equal number, "point" going to the player with the highest value in pips in those cards), then by a flush of three or more (e.g., "tierce," "quart," "quint"), then how many 4s or 3s of a kind he has, his opponent each time responding "not good," "good," or "equal," corresponding to whether he can do better, worse, or the same. A number of tricks are played thus.

Pope Joan—Apparently a convivial, cheerful game to be played on festive occasions—Christmas in *The Last Chronicle of Barset*—or within the family circle, as with the merry-makers at Dingley Dell in *Pickwick*. A round game, it drew its name from a supposed ninth-century female pope and was played with a deck that had no 8 of diamonds and with a board with divisions marked "Pope Joan," "Intrigue," "Matrimony," "Ace," "King," "Queen," "Knave," and "Game." The idea was to play the card next highest to the one that had just been placed on the table, those with various winning combinations getting stakes that had

been placed in the different divisions of the board. At Dingley Dell, "when the spinster aunt got 'matrimony,' the young ladies laughed afresh, and the spinster aunt seemed disposed to be pettish; till, feeling Mr. Tupman squeezing her hand under the table, she brightened up."

Quadrille—"Mrs. Bates," we are told in *Emma*, "was a very old lady, almost past everything but tea and quadrille." It was a variation of ombre, which it replaced in popularity in the early 1700s. It was played by four people with a deck from which the 8s, 9s, and 10s had been removed.

Speculation—A round game in which you ante up a set amount, the dealer anteing up double. Each player gets three cards, and another is turned face up to determine the trump. The players take turns turning up cards until someone has a higher card than the trump. He may then sell it, if he wishes. The holder of the highest trump takes the pot. In *Mansfield Park* Mary Crawford characteristically, while playing, "made a hasty finish of her dealings with William Price, and securing his knave at an exorbitant rate, exclaimed, 'There, I will stake my last like a woman of spirit. No cold prudence for me. I am not born to sit still and do nothing. If I lose the game, it shall not be from not striving for it.'"

Vingt-et-un—Basically, the American game of 21, in which players try to get cards whose face value is 21 or as close to that number as possible without going over it.

Whist—A game for two couples, the partners sitting opposite one another and each player being dealt thirteen cards. The first person puts down a card which the next person must match in suit if he can. Otherwise, he must play the trump suit or discard. The person who plays the highest trump or the highest card of the suit led wins the trick and leads for the next trick. Points are won according to the number of tricks played and, sometimes, the number of honors held, and a game is won by getting 5 or 10 points, depending on whether "short" or "long" whist is played. A "rubber" usually consists of the best two out of three games. Whist is the ancestor of bridge.

Whist and round games seem to have been viewed, respectively, as instances of rather stodgy, reflective card playing on the one hand and a more lighthearted, boisterous sort of play on the other, as in the speculation game in *Mansfield Park* when "the round table was

altogether a very comfortable contrast to the steady sobriety and orderly silence of the [whist players]." In *Pickwick*, similarly, "the rubber was conducted with all that gravity of deportment and sedateness of demeanour which befit the pursuit entitled 'whist'—a solemn observance, to which, it appears to us, the title of 'game' has been very irreverently and ignominiously applied. The round-game table, on the other hand, was so boisterously merry as materially to interrupt the contemplations of [one of the whist players]."

Calling Cards and Calls

In the 1800s suddenly more people were trying to get into "society," people who wanted to claim members of the elite as their friends or at least be acknowledged by them; people, in short, who wanted to be part of the social world of those who *were* the social world. What could the upper crust do with these pretenders?

The calling card and the "morning calls" served as nice ways, if not to keep these social aspirants forever at a distance, at least to hold them off for a while and perhaps to screen those who would be allowed some entree from those who would not. Accordingly, the calling card and the morning call, or visit, flourished during most of the nineteenth century.

The protocol for leaving cards was as follows: when you came to town, you drove around with your footman to the houses of those you wished to notify of your presence. ("The morning was chiefly spent," we are told in *Sense and Sensibility* of Mrs. Jennings's first day back in London, "in leaving cards at the houses of Mrs. Jennings's acquaintance to inform them of her being in town.") This was principally an activity of ladies. At each house, the footman took a small card bearing your name and two cards of your husband's (yours for the mistress of the house and one of his for both the master and the mistress) and gave them to the butler, who would put them on a salver inside the front hall or, in less fancy establishments, perhaps on the mantelpiece. Visitors then had a chance to see whom the family numbered among its social circle and be suitably impressed. In *Persuasion*, for example, the anxious social climbers took care for "the cards of Dowager Viscountess Dalrymple, and the

Hon. Miss Carteret, to be arranged where they might be most visible," and when Becky Sharp receives cards from the marchioness of Steyne and the countess of Gaunt, "you may be sure they occupied a conspicuous place in the china bowl on the drawing-room table, where Becky kept the cards of her visitors." (Mr. Gunter insults Mr. Noddy in *The Pickwick Papers* by refusing him his card "because you'll stick it up over your chimney-piece, and delude your visitors into the false belief that a gentleman has been to see you, sir.") If there were daughters living at the home you were calling on, you might leave separate cards for them and for any guests of the household, too. If you were calling with an unmarried daughter or daughters in tow, they did not generally leave cards of their own but you wrote their name or names under your own name on your card before handing it to the footman to be delivered. The object of all this, of course, was to renew—or solicit—acquaintance, and, of course, those who were suddenly wealthy or famous could expect to receive a deluge of cards, like Mr. Dorrit, who becomes suddenly allied with the fraudulent but immensely sought-after Mr. Merdle. "Cards," says Dickens, "descended on Mr. Dorrit like theatrical snow. As the friend and relative by marriage of the illustrious Merdle, Bar, Bishop, Treasury, Chorus, Everybody wanted to make or improve Mr. Dorrit's acquaintance." In *Our Mutual Friend* the humble dustman Mr. Boffin is suddenly bequeathed an immense fortune: "Foremost among those leaving cards at the eminently aristocratic door before it is quite painted are the Venerings—out of breath, one might imagine, from the impetuosity of their rush to the eminently aristocratic steps." In addition, "the enchanting Lady Tippins leaves a card. Twemlow leaves cards. A tall custard-coloured phaeton tooling up in a solemn manner leaves four cards, to wit, a couple of Mr. Podsnaps, a Mrs. Podsnap, and a Miss Podsnap. All the world and his wife and daughter leave cards."

It was understood that the lady of the house was then socially obliged to return a card to you, or, if she wished, she could make a call and actually visit you. A call, of course, counted for more than the mere leaving of a card. Indeed, you might try to "call" in the first instance rather than merely leave a card, although in doing so, naturally, you took a risk of rejection that you didn't when you merely left a card. Suppose you are bold, however; with a call, instead of merely leaving your card, you inquired if the lady were "at home." She was free to peer out of her drawing-room window on the second floor, see you and then whisper an emphatic "no" to

her servant. This was perfectly acceptable, and it was understood that many people were *physically* at home when they were not *socially* "at home," although it was crass if they got caught. "She reached the house without any impediment, looked at the number, and inquired for Miss Tilney," we are told in *Northanger Abbey*. "The man believed Miss Tilney to be at home, but was not quite certain. Would she be pleased to send up her name? She gave her card. In a few minutes the servant returned, and with a look which did not quite confirm his words, said he had been mistaken, for that she was walked out." Catherine Morland leaves, we are told, "with a blush of mortification," but "at the bottom of the street, however, she looked back again, and then, not at the window, but issuing from the door, she saw Miss Tilney herself."

If the lady of the house wished to see you, however, you were invited to come inside and enter the drawing room (on the first floor in town houses, the ground floor in country mansions), the room in which a lady always received her visitors. If you were a gentleman, you took your hat and riding whip with you (umbrellas could be left downstairs), presumably to show you did not intend to stay long.

And nobody did, as a rule. If you were calling purely for the sake of formality (weddings, for example, demanded calls; "not to wait upon a bride," says Mr. Woodhouse in *Emma*, "is very remiss") you were expected to stay no more than fifteen minutes, and your call could be returned merely with a card. If another visitor appeared while you were making the polite chit-chat calls required, you eased your way slowly out, after an introduction—presuming it was to a socially inferior person, a social equal agreeable to being introduced, or a social superior who didn't mind—had been effected. No refreshments were offered, at least until the advent of afternoon tea in the latter part of the century. Conversation was supposed to be light and touch on safe, general topics like the weather and certainly not on friends whom another, strange caller might not be presumed to know. If you were not well acquainted with the callee, you made your call between three and four o'clock. If you were somewhat better acquainted, between four and five, and a good friend received you between five and six. These were all referred to as morning calls, notwithstanding the fact that they occurred in the afternoon or early evening, a carryover from the eighteenth century when "morning" often denoted the time before dinner, and dinner was often not until three or four in the afternoon. Certainly, no one

but a great intimate would presume to actually call in the *real* morning, i.e., before one o'clock.

When you left town, you submitted a card with PPC written on it, short for *pour prendre congé*, French for "I'm leaving," and, if you were really new in town, you might sidestep this whole process by getting a letter of introduction from a friend to someone of prominence in the community. These were sometimes referred to as "tickets for soup" since they required as a minimum, generally, that the person receiving the letter invite the bearer to dinner.

It will have been apparent that paying and receiving calls was largely a female enterprise, in large part because many men were at work, hunting or shooting (in the country), or at their clubs during the day. Men could pay calls as well; however, they did not receive them from ladies, unless those ladies were of dubious reputation. It was a very strict rule that no lady ever called on a gentleman except upon a business or professional matter. To do otherwise, as a mid-century etiquette book stiffly put it, "would be, not only a breach of good manners, but of strict propriety." Thus, well as she knows Gabriel Oak, Bathsheba Everdene is in some doubt of the propriety of going to talk to him at the end of *Far from the Madding Crowd* after he announces he won't work for her anymore. At his door, "she tapped nervously, and then thought it doubtful if it were right for a single woman to call upon a bachelor who lived alone, although he was her manager, and she might be supposed to call on business without any real impropriety." The one obligatory time for a man to send out his own cards was upon his marriage, the receipt of the card signaling that you were respectable enough to be retained as a friend even though the new groom's bachelor days were now over. "When a man marries, it is understood that all former acquaintance *ends*, unless he intimates a desire to renew it, by sending you his own and his wife's card."