
Daniel Starer

Research for Writers

59 West 85th Street

New York, N. Y. 10024

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June 19, 1980

Ken Follett
Chemin des Basses Moulieres
06130 Grasse France

Dear Mr. Follett:

Tomorrow I am sending you two packages by air mail. The first, a large tube, contains full-page reproductions from The Times and the Pall Mall Gazette. The second package, a large manila envelope, contains the most important information.

Please read first the chapter "The Last Season" Xeroxed from Before the Lamps Went Out. It will tell you the Court of June 4th, 1914, was the height of The Season, and perhaps the social event of the decade. Everything I've read leads me to believe that an Earl's daughter coming out in 1914 would have been presented at that Court, or one very much like it. The subsequent coming-out ball, given by her family in honor of the presentation, would have been a less momentous event for all concerned.

During my research I became so convinced that this June 4th fete would be useful to you, I took the liberty of providing much information on it. The letter from the American Ambassador to President Wilson describes the color and action. The Times of June 5th describes the suffragette incident, lists presentations and clothes worn. The etiquette manuals discuss protocol, food, entertainment, etc. (I've been assured that English society was frozen enough that these manuals, dated 1907 and 1910. would be applicable to 1914 on most points).

I've Xeroxed substantially from The Queen, The Lady's Newspaper. The June 13, 1914 issue has pictures and more descriptions of clothing, and the current society gossip. I've included the sports, music, theater, art and automobile pages from this issue. (Please note I've shown some restraint by not including the dog page). If you set a scene at this Court, authentic material for conversation is here. For the men I've included pages from the June 4th and 5th newspapers which will allow them to be fluent in the international, domestic, sports and stock market news of the day. (Note that I've favored the Pall Mall Gazette over the Times only because it reproduces more legibly.

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I've Xeroxed a second batch from The Queen, which contains the "Social Notes" and "The London Season, 1914" pages from several dates during the height of The Season. Here are superficial descriptions of balls, debutante and other, given at hotels and private homes. From all the above information you should be able to construct a realistic debutante ball. Note that in scanning The Queen from 1911 to 1914 I found no mention of a debutante ball given at the Savoy. But many other hotels were used (some will be found in the "Social Notes"). I also found no mention of a debutante's proper age.

An English librarian, who helped me often, thought that 18 was correct, though was not the only age at which girls came out. She said that I found no good descriptions of post-Court, debutante balls because they were so common at the time and not really newsworthy. She has suggested further sources. The best is to scan The Queen for names of the more prominent hostesses, society women and chaperones. Surely many wrote memoirs which this library is likely to have. But such a process might be time-consuming.

If you need more information on food, clothes or any other period detail, good results should be found by checking such headings as "Clothing-London-20th Century" and "Food-London-20th Century." Further period jokes will show up in memoirs and Punch. (What kind of jokes do you like?).

Please understand I have by no means run out of steam on this subject. But I would like your go-ahead before proceeding further. I now have a good grasp of the sources from this period. The English librarian is quite keen on helping with a subject so close to her heart.

I hope all this is useful to you. I have enjoyed the project and hope we can work together in the future.

Sincerely yours,

Daniel Starer

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