

JOHN ASHTON

FLORIZEL'S
FOLLY

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CHAPTER I

Early history of Brighthelmstone – Domesday Book – The Flemings – The French harry the South Coast – At Brighthelmstone – Defences of the town – Rumours of the Spanish Armada – Armament of the town

WE who live in these latter days, when Brighton, the 'London-on-the-Sea,' has a standing population of 115,873,¹ and contains 19,543 houses, can hardly realize its small beginnings. That it was known to the Romans there can be no doubt, for, about 1750, an urn was dug up near the town, which contained a thousand *denarii*, ranging from Antoninus Pius to Philip; and others have since been found. In the Anglo-Saxon time Brighthelmstone was a manor, and the great Earl Godwin succeeded in the lordship of it to his father, Ulnoth. On his banishment from the kingdom, this manor, with his other possessions, was seized by King Edward,

¹ Census, 1891.

but, afterwards, he recovered it, and held it until his death, on April 14, 1053, when it lapsed into the hands of his son Harold, who held it until his death at the Battle of Senlac, on October 14, 1066.

I should rather say that Harold held two of the three manors of Brighthelmstone, for his father, Godwin, had given the other to a man named Brictric, for his life only. This was the manor called 'Brighthelmstone-Lewes;' the other two were 'Michel-ham' and 'Atlyngworth.' It is thus described in Domesday Book, A.D. 1086:

'Radulfus ten. de Will'o, Bristelmestane. Brictric tenuit de dono Godwini. T. R. E. et mo, se def'd p. 5 hid' et dimid'. Tra' e' 3 car. In d'nio e' dimid' car. et 18 vill'i et 9 bord' cu' 3 car. et uno servo. De Gablo 4 mill' aletium. T. R. E. val't 8 lib. et 12 sol. et post c. sol., modo 12 lib.

'In ead' villa, tent Widardus de Will'o 6 hid' et una va et p'tanto se defd'.

'Tres aloarii tener' de Rege E., et potuer' ire quolibet. Uno ex eis habuit aula': et vill'i tener' partes alior' duor. T'ra e' 5 car. et est in uno M. In d'nio un' car. et dim', et 13 vill'i, et 21 bord', cu' 3 car. et dimid': ibi 7 ac' p'ti et silva porc. In Lewes 4 hagæ. T. R. E. val't 10 lib., et post 8 lib., modo 12 lib.

'Ibide' ten' Wills. de Watevile Bristelmestune de Willo. Ulovard tenuit de Rege E. T'c et modo se defd' p. 5 hid' et dim'. T'ra e' 4 car. In d'nio e' 1 car. et 13 vill'i, et 2 bord' cu' una car'. Ibi Æccl'a.

'T. R. E. val't 10 lib'. et post 8 lib', modo 12 lib'.'

Translation

'Ralph holds of William (de Warren²) Bristelmestune. Brictric held it from the gift of Earl Godwin. In the time of King Edward, and now, it defends itself for 5 hides³ and a half. The (arable) land is 3 carucates.⁴ In demesne is half a carucate, and 18 villeins⁵ and 9 bordars.⁶ Of the Gabel (customary payment) 4 thousands of herrings. In the time of King Edward it was worth 8 pounds and 12 shillings, and, afterwards, 100 shillings. Now, 12 pounds.

'In the same vill,⁷ Widard holds of William 6 hides and 1 virgate;⁸ and, for so much, it defends itself.

'Three aloarii (customary tenants) held it of King Edward, and could go where they pleased. One of them had a hall, and the villeins held the portions of the other two. The land is 5 carucates, and is in one manor. In demesne one carucate and a half, and 14 villeins and 21 bordars, with 3 carucates and a half; there are 8

² Earl of Surrey, son-in-law of William the Conqueror.

³ A hide is an indeterminate quantity of land, varying from 20 to 4,000 acres. Eyton says it was a fiscal value, and not a superficial quantity.

⁴ As much land as eight oxen could plough in a season – 80 to 144 acres.

⁵ Peasants, not serfs.

⁶ Lord Coke says they were 'Boors holding a little house, with some land of husbandry, bigger than a cottage.'

⁷ Manor.

⁸ A perch of 16½ feet, or 5½ square yards.

acres of meadow, and a wood for hogs. In Lewes 4 haggæ.⁹ In the time of King Edward it was worth 10 pounds, and, afterwards, 8 pounds; now 12 pounds.

'In the same place William de Wateville holds Bristelmestone of William. Ulward held it of King Edward. Then, and now, it defends itself for 5 hides and a half. The land is 4 carucates. In demesne is 1 carucate, and 13 villeins, and 2 bordars with one plough.¹⁰ There is a church.

'In the time of King Edward it was worth 10 pounds, and, afterwards, 8 pounds; now, 12 pounds.'

We thus see how small was the population of the three manors in the time of William the Conqueror, and it is useful to note that there is no mention whatever of fisheries or fishermen except the Gabel of herrings. Concerning this matter Lee¹¹ propounds a very interesting theory. He says:

'From the surnames of some of the most ancient families in the town of *Brighthelmston*, the phrase and pronunciation of the old natives, and some peculiar customs there, it has, with great probability, been conjectured, that the town had, at some distant period, received a colony of *Flemings*. This might have happened soon after the Conquest, for we read of a great inundation of the sea, about that time, in *Flanders*; and such of the inhabitants of

⁹ Haga was a house in a city or borough – some think a shop.

¹⁰ Eight oxen.

¹¹ 'Ancient and Modern History of Lewes and Brighthelmstone,' etc., printed for W. Lee, the editor and proprietor, Lewes, 1795, p. 458.

the deluged country as wanted new habitations could not have anywhere applied with a greater likelihood of success than in *England*. *Matilda*, Queen of *William the Conqueror*, was their countrywoman, being daughter to *Baldwin*, Earl of *Flanders*. At her request, *William de Warren*, her son-in-law, would have readily given a band of those distress emigrants a settlement on one of his numerous manors; and, as they had been inhabitants of the maritime part of *Flanders*, and lived chiefly by fishing, *Brighthelmston* was the most desirable situation for them within the territory of that nobleman.

"The *Flemings*, thus settled at *Brighthelmston*, were led, by habit and situation, to direct their chief attention to the fishery of the Channel. Besides obtaining a plentiful supply of fresh fish of the best kind and quality for themselves and their inland neighbours, they, every season, cured a great number of herrings, and exported them to several parts of the Continent, where the abstinence of Lent, vigils, and other meagre days, insured them a constant market. The inhabitants of the town, now classed into *landsmen* and *seamen*, or *mariners*, profited respectively by the advantages of their situation. The former, whose dwellings covered the *Cliff*, and part of the gentle acclivity behind it, drew health and competence from a fertile soil. The latter, residing in two streets under the *Cliff*, found as bountiful a source of subsistence and profit in the bosom of the sea. In process of time the *mariners* and their families had increased so far as to compose more than two-thirds of the population of the town, and had a

proportionate share of the offices and internal regulation of the parish.'

The people of Brighthelmstone were subject, in common with all the coast, to invasion and reprisals to the English raids on France, and their ships and boats were occasionally taken, and their fishery interrupted. In 1377 the French harried the South Coast, spoiled the Isle of Wight, and burnt Rye, Portsmouth, Dartmouth, Plymouth, and Hastings. There is no record of Brighthelmstone being attacked, but the French came parlously near, as Holinshed tells us: 'Winchelsie they could not win, being valiantlie defended by the abbat of Battell and others. After this, they landed, one day, not far from the abbeie of Lewes, at a place called Rottington (Rottingdean), where the prior of Lewes and two knights, the one named sir Thomas Cheinie, and the other, sir John Falleslie, having assembled a number of the countrie people, incountred the Frenchmen, but were overthrowen; so that there were slaine about an hundred Englishmen; and the prior, with the two knights, and an esquier called John Brokas, were taken prisoners, but yet the Frenchmen lost a great number of their owne men at this conflict, and so, with their prisoners, retired to their ships and gallies, and, after, returned into France.'

As far as I have read, Brighthelmstone had peace until 1514, when Holinshed tells us: 'About the same time, the warres yet continuing betweene England and France, Prior Jehan (of whom ye have heard before in the fourth yeere of this King's reigne),

a great capteine of the French navie, with his gallies and foists¹² charged with great basilisks¹³ and other artillerie, came on the borders of Sussex, in the night season, at a poore village there, called Brighthelmston, and burnt it, taking such goods as he found. But, when the people began to gather, by firing the becons, Prior Jehan sounded his trumpet, to call his men aboard, and by that time it was daie. Then certeine archers that kept the watch, folowed Prior Jehan to the sea, and shot so fast, that they beat the gallie men from the shore; and wounded manie in the foist; to the which Prior Jehan was constreined to wade, and was shot in the face with an arrow, so that he lost one of his eies, and was like to have died of the hurt; and, therefore, he offered his image of wax before our ladie at Bullongne, with the English arrow in the face for a miracle.'

These archers, who so stoutly resisted the French, were, according to Lee, the land-owners and others of the adjacent country, as well as the inhabitants of the sea-coast, who were obliged to keep *watch* and *ward* whenever there was the least appearance of danger. The *Watch*, called *Vigiliæ minutæ*, in the King's mandate to the Sheriff, was nocturnal, and seldom exacted, unless an immediate descent was apprehended. The *Ward* consisted of men-at-arms, and *hobilers*, or *hoblers*. The latter were persons who seem to have been bound to perform that

¹² A foist was a light galley, a vessel propelled both by oars and sails.

¹³ Heavy ordnance, which, in the fifteenth century, could carry stone balls of 200 lb. weight.

service by the nature of their tenure. They were a sort of light cavalry, dressed in jackets called *hobils*, and mounted on fleet horses. The bold stand made against the French who landed at Rottingdean in 1377 was principally by the *Watch* and *Ward* of this coast, which had been divided into districts, entrusted to the care of some baron or religious house by certain Commissioners called *Rectores Comitatus*. Thus it was that the Prior of Lewes and the Abbot of Battle were placed at several times at the head of an armed power, to oppose actual or threatened invasion. Certain hundreds and boroughs were also obliged, under pain of forfeiture, or other penalty, to keep the beacons in proper condition, and to fire them at the approach of an enemy, in order to alarm and assemble the inhabitants of the Weald.

Brighthelmstone had yet another hostile visit from the French, and to this we are indebted for the earliest recorded view of the town. It occurred in 1545, and Holinshed gives us the following short and pithy account of the affair.

'After this, the eighteenth of Julie, the admerall of France, monsieur Danebalte, hoised up sailes, and with his whole navie came forth into the seas, and turned on the coast of Sussex before Bright Hampsteed; and set certein of his soldiers on land, to burne and spoile the countrie: but the beacons were fired, and the inhabitants thereabouts came downe so thicke, that the Frenchmen were driven to flie with losse of diverse of their numbers; so that they did little hurt there.'

The French then tried the Isle of Wight, and got the worst

of it, so returned to Sussex. 'The French Capteins having knowledge by certeine fishermen, whom they tooke, that the King was present, and so huge a power readie to resist them, they disanchored, and drew along the coast of Sussex; and a small number of them landed againe in Sussex, of whome, few returned to their ships: for diverse gentlemen of the countrie, as sir Nicholas Pelham and others, with such power as was raised upon the sudden, tooke them up by the waie, and quickelie distressed them. When they had searched everie where by the coast, and saw men still readie to receive them with battell, they turned sterne, and so got them home againe without anie act acheived worthie to be mentioned. The number of the Frenchmen was great, so that diverse of them that were taken prisoners in the Ile of Wight, and in Sussex, did report that they were three score thousand.'

This descent on Brighthelmstone is admirably shown in a water-colour drawing on parchment in the MS. Department of the British Museum (Cotton MSS., Aug. 1, vol. i. 18), which measures 3 feet by 2 feet; it is here reproduced. A tracing of it was engraved in 'Archæologia,' vol. xxiv., p. 298, as an illustration of a paper read by Sir Henry Ellis before the Society of Antiquaries, April 14, 1831.

Here we find the town, *apparently*, just where it is now, with a 'felde in the midle of the towne,' but with some houses on the beach opposite what is now Pool Valley, on the east side of which houses the French are landing. The following are the explanations

inserted in the drawing:

'The Bekon of the Town.'

'The Wynde Mylles.'

'The towne of Brithampton.'

'Hoove Church.'

'Hove Village.'

'A felde in the midle of the Town.'

'The town Fyre Cage.'

'The Valley coming from Ponyng betwixt Brithampton and the village Hove.'

'Upon this west parte may lond persons unletted by any provisions there.'

'The east parte of Brithampston rising only on Cleves (cliffs) high.'

'Here landed the Galeys.'

'Shippes may ride all somer within di. a myle the towne in V fathome water.'

'These grete Shippes ryding hard aboard shore by shoting into the hille and valies over the towne, so sore oppresse the towne that the Countrey dare not adventure to reskue it.'

In consequence of this attack, Lee says that 'The town of *Brighthelmston*, thus harassed by frequent alarm, and the desultory attacks of an active enemy, resolved to erect fortifications, which might afford them some protection in future. Accordingly, at a Court Baron held for the manor of Brighthelmstone-Lewes, on the 27th of September, 1558, the

Lords of the manor granted to the inhabitants of the town, a parcel of land on the cliff between Blacklyon street and Ship street, and about two hundred and sixteen yards westward from the lower end of East street, thirteen feet in length and sixteen feet in breadth, to build thereon a storehouse for armour and ammunition, afterwards called the *Blockhouse*. This parcel, however, was only part of the site of that building; for, at a Court Baron held for the Manor of *Atlyngworth*, on the 3rd day of January 1613, the homage presented that the north side of the said building stood on the demesne lands of that manor. The *Blockhouse*, the walls of which were about eight feet in thickness, and eighteen feet in height, was circular, and measured 50 feet in diameter. Several arched apartments in its thick walls were repositories for the powder and other ammunition for the defence of the town. In front of it, towards the sea, was a little battery called the *Gun Garden*, on which were mounted four pieces of large iron ordnance. Adjoining the *Blockhouse*, on the east, stood the *Townhouse*, with a dungeon under it for the confinement of malefactors. From the summit of this building rose a turret, on which the town clock was fixed.

'At the same time, with the *Blockhouse*, were erected four Gates of freestone (three of which were arched) leading from the Cliff to that part of the town which lay under it; viz. the *East-gate* at the lower end of *East-street*; the *Portal*, vulgarly miscalled the *Porter's-gate*, which was less than any of the others, and stood next the *East-gate*; the *Middle-gate*, opposite the end of *Middle-*

street, commonly called the *Gate of all nations*; and the *West-gate*, which stood at the end of *West-street*. From the *East-gate*, westward, there was, at the same time, a wall built about fifteen feet high, and four hundred feet long, where the *Cliff* was most easy of ascent: and, from the termination of that wall, a parapet, three feet high, was continued on the verge of the *Cliff* to the *West-gate*, with embrasures for cannon. The *Blockhouse* was built at the expense of the mariners of the town; but the gates and walls seem to have been erected partly, if not wholly, at the expense of Government.

'The upland part of the town, thus effectually secured on the south, might also, in case of any emergency, be rendered pretty secure on its three other sides, by cutting trenches at the ends of the streets which led into the town; or barring the enemy's entrance with lumber carriages and household furniture, while the inhabitants annoyed them from every quarter.'

From 1545 to 1586 Brighthelmstone lived in peace; but when rumours of the Spanish Armada, which was in preparation, began to be bruited about, the town's folk had a scare, for a fleet of fifty vessels were descried off the town, apparently waiting for a favourable opportunity of landing. The terrified inhabitants lit the beacons, and sent off, post haste, to Lord Buckhurst, the Lord Lieutenant of the county, for assistance and protection. His lordship immediately attended with as many armed men as he could hurriedly muster, and posted them on the brow of the cliff between Brighthelmstone and Rottingdean, so that he

might oppose the enemy should they try to land at either place. During the ensuing night, his force increased to the number of 1,600 men, and a considerable number of Kentish men were on their march to join him. However, when morning dawned, the ships were still there, but no one on board seemed to show any disposition to land; so a few boats belonging to the town plucked up heart of grace, and ventured out a little way to reconnoitre this fleet, when they discovered, to their very great joy, that it only consisted of Dutch merchantmen, laden with Spanish wines, detained in the Channel by contrary winds!

But at the end of July, 1558, when the Armada was an accomplished fact, Brighthelmstone went to work in earnest to defend itself; and they then had in the town belonging to the Government, six pieces of great iron ordnance and ten 'qualivers.'¹⁴ Luckily, they were not needed, and after the memorable storms of 1703 and 1705 the sea so encroached, that the *Blockhouse* and Gun Garden, together with the walls and gates, were sapped, and finally disappeared through stress of weather.

¹⁴ Or caliver, a kind of harquebuse or musket – the lightest firearm, except the pistol, and it was used without a rest.

CHAPTER II

Escape of Charles II. to France – The story of it – The 'Royal Escape' – Brighton in 1730 – In 1736 – In 1761 – Forty-five different ways of spelling the name of the town

THERE is nothing particularly noteworthy with regard to Brighthelmstone until we come to the embarkation of Charles II. in July, 1651, from that place for France, the culmination of his wanderings after the disastrous Battle of Worcester. There are several accounts of this event, including one dictated by the King himself to Samuel Pepys; but the one that is considered most reliable is Colonel Gounter's narrative, a manuscript which was found in a secret drawer of an old bureau, formerly in possession of the Gounter family, and purchased by a Mr. Bartlett of Havant, when their old seat at Racton was dismantled about the year 1830. It is now in the British Museum (Add. MSS., 9,008), and is entitled, 'The last Act in the Miraculous Storie of His Mties Escape, being a true and perfect relation of his Conveyance, through many obstacles and after many dangers, to a safe harbour out of the reach of his tyrannical enemies. By Colonell Gounter, of Rackton, in Sussex, who had the happines to be instrumentall

in the busines (as it was taken from his mouth by a person of worth, a little before his death).'

The following is the portion relating to Brighthelmstone:

'When we were come to Beeding, a little village where I had provided a treatment for the King (one Mr. Bagshall's house), I was earnest that his majesty should stay there a while till I had viewed the coast; but my Lord Wilmot would by no means, for fear of those soldiers, but carried the King out of the road, I knew not whither; so we parted. They where they thought safest, I to Brightemston, being agreed they should send to me when fixed anywhere and ready.

'Being come to the said Brightemston, I found all clear there, and the inn (the George) free from all strangers at that time. Having taken the best room in the house, and bespoke my supper, as I was entertaining myself with a glass of wine, the King, not finding accommodation to his mind,¹⁵ was come to the inn: and up comes mine host (one Smith by name). "More guests," saith he to me. He brought them up into another room, I taking no notice. It was not long, but, drawing towards the King's room, I heard the King's voice, saying aloud to my lord Wilmot, "Here, Mr. Barlow, I drink to you." "I know that name," said I to mine host, now by me. "I pray inquire whether he was not a major in

¹⁵ This hardly agrees with Lee's account (p. 475), who says he 'was conducted at last to the house of a Mrs. Maunsell of Ovingdean, by Lord Wilmot and Colonel Gunter... At Ovingdean the King lay concealed for a few days, as local tradition still relates, within a false wall or partition, while his friends were contriving the best means for his escape to France.'

the King's army." Which done, he was found to be the man whom I expected, and presently invited (as was likely) to the fellowship of a glass of wine.

'From that I proceeded, and made a motion to join company; and, because my chamber was largest, that they would make use of it, which was accepted, and, so, we became one company again.

'At supper, the King was cheerful, not shewing the least sign of fear or apprehension of any danger, neither then, nor at any time during the whole course of this business, which is no small wonder, considering that the very thought of his enemies, so great and so many, so diligent and so much interested in his ruin, was enough, as long as he was within their reach; and, as it were, in the very midst of them, to have daunted the stoutest courage in the world, as if God had opened his eyes, as he did Elisha's servant at his master's request, and he had seen an heavenly host round about him to guard him, which, to us, was invisible; who, therefore, though much encouraged by his undauntedness and the assurance of so good and glorious a cause, yet were not without secret terrors within ourselves, and thought every minute, a day, a month, till we should see his sacred person out of their reach.

'Supper ended, the King stood with his back against the fire, leaning over a chair. Up came mine host (upon some jealousy, I guess, not my certain knowledge); but up comes he, who called himself Gaius, runs to the King, catcheth his hand, and kissing it, said, "It shall not be said but I have kissed the best man's hand

in England."

'He had waited at table at supper time, where the boatman also sat with us, and were there present. Whether he had seen, or heard anything that could give him any occasion of suspicion, I know not; in very deed, the King had a hard task so to carry himself in all things, that he might be in nothing like himself, majesty being so natural unto him, that, even when he said nothing, did nothing, his very looks (if a man observed) were enough to betray him.

'It was admirable to see how the King (as though he had not been concerned in these words, which might have sounded in the ears of another man as the sentence of death) turned about in silence, without any alteration of countenance, or taking notice of what had been said.

'About a quarter of an hour after, the King went to his chamber, where I followed him, craved his pardon with earnest protestation, that I was as innocent, so altogether ignorant of the cause how this had happened. "Peace, peace, colonel," said the King, "the fellow knows me, and I him; he was one (whether so, or not, I know not, but so the King thought at the time) that belonged to the back stairs to my father. I hope he is an honest fellow."

'After this, I began to treat with the boatman (Tettersfield,¹⁶ by name), asking him in what readiness he was. He answered he could not be off that night, because, for more security, he had

¹⁶ Tattersal.

brought his vessel into creek, and the tide had forsaken it, so that it was on ground.

'It is observable, that all the while the business had been in agitation to this very time, the wind had been contrary. The King, then opening the window, took notice that the wind had turned, and told the master of the ship; whereupon, because of the wind and a clear night, I offered £10 more to the man to get off that night; but that could not be: however, we agreed he should take in his company that night.

'But it was a great business that we had in hand, and God would have us to know so, both by the difficulties that offered themselves, and, by his help, he afforded to remove them.

'When we thought we had agreed, the boatman starts back, and saith, no, except I would insure the bark. Argue it we did with him, how unreasonable it was, being so well paid, etc., but to no purpose, so that I yielded at last, and £200 was his valuation, which was agreed upon.

'But then, as though he had been resolved to frustrate all by unreasonable demands, he required my bond; at which, moved with much indignation, I began to be as resolute as he; saying, among other things, there were more boats to be had besides his; and, if he would not act, another should, and made as though I would go to another.

'In this contest, the King happily interposed, "He saith right," (saith his majesty), "A gentleman's word, especially before witnesses, is as good as his bond." At last, the man's

stomach came down, and carry them he would, whatsoever came of it: and, before he would be taken, he would run his boat under the water: so it was agreed that about two in the night they should be aboard. The boatman, in the meantime, went to provide necessaries, and I persuaded the King to take some rest, he did, in his clothes, and my Lord Wilmot with him, till towards two of the night. Then I called them up, shewing them how the time went by my watch.

'Horses being led by the back way towards the beach, we came to the boat and found all ready, so I took my leave, craving his majesty's pardon if anything had happened through error, not want of will or loyalty; how willingly I would have waited further, but for my family (being many) which would want me, and I hoped his majesty would not, not doubting but in a very little time he should be where he would.

'My only request to his majesty was, that he would conceal his instruments; wherein their preservation was much concerned.

'His majesty promised nobody should know. I abided there, keeping the horses in readiness in case anything unexpected had happened.

'At eight of the clock, I saw them on sail, and it was the afternoon before they went out of sight.

'The wind (oh Providence) held very good till next morning, to ten of the clock brought them to a place in Normandy, called Fackham,¹⁷ some three miles off Havre de Grace, Wednesday,

¹⁷ Fécamp.

Oct. 15.

'They were no sooner landed, but the wind turned, and a violent storm did arise, insomuch that the boatman was forced to cut his cable, and lost his anchor to save his boat, for which he required of me £8, and had it.'¹⁸

On the King's restoration, Tattersal shared the fate of most of those who had helped the King in his need; but he must have either had good interest or was very pertinacious in his claim, for his coal-brig, ornamented and enlarged, was taken into the Royal Navy as a fifth-rate, under the name of the *Royal Escape*, and on September 4, 1671, the Duke of York, as Lord High Admiral, appointed Tattersal to be her captain (a sinecure post), with pay as such, and an extra pension of £100 per annum. On August 29, 1672, the King granted the reversion of this appointment to his son Nicholas, to take effect after the death of Tattersal senior, which took place on May 20, 1674. He was buried near the south side of Brighton Church, under a marble slab, commemorative of his virtues. The *Royal Escape* was for some years moored off Whitehall; afterwards she was relegated to Deptford, where she gradually decayed, and was broken up for firewood in 1791.

We get an account of Brighton in 1730 in 'Magna Britannia' (pp. 510 and 511), which states that it is 'an indifferent large and populous town, chiefly inhabited by fishermen, and having a good Market weekly on Thursday, and a Fair yearly. The Situation is very pleasant, and generally accounted healthful;

¹⁸ The spelling of the MS. has been modernized.

for, tho' it is bounded on the North side by the *British Channel*, yet it is encompassed on the other Parts with large Cornfields and fruitful Hills, which feed great Flocks of Sheep, bearing Plenty of Wooll, which is thought by some concern'd in the Woollen Manufacture, to be of the finest Sort in *England*... About 90 Years ago, this Town was a very considerable Place for Fishing, and in a flourishing Condition, being, then, one of the principal Towns of the County, containing nearly six hundred Families; but since the Beginning of the Civil Wars, it hath decay'd much for want of a Free Fishery, and by very great Losses by Sea, their Shipping being very often taken from them by the Enemy: Nay, it is the Opinion of the most judicious Inhabitants that, had not Divine Providence in a great Measure protected them by their Town being built low, and standing on a flat Ground, the *French* would several Times have quite demolish'd it, as they had attempted to do; but the low Situation of it prevented their doing it any considerable Damage, the Cannon Balls usually flying over the Town; But the greatest Damage to the Buildings has been done by the breaking in of the Sea, which, within these 40 Years, hath laid Waste above 130 Tenements; which Loss, by a modest Computation, amounts to near £40,000; and, if some speedy Care be not taken to stop the Encroachments of the Ocean, it is probable that the Town will, in a few Years, be utterly depopulated; the Inhabitants being already diminished one third less than they were, and those that remain are many of them Widows, Orphans, decrepid Persons, and all very poor; insomuch

that the Rates for their Relief are at the Rack Rent of 8d in the Pound, for there are but few Charities given for their Support.'

Groynes, however, were introduced early in the eighteenth century, with such good effect as to do away with the above dismal apprehensions. Indeed, it was beginning to be a place for visitors to come to for the benefit of the bathing and sea-air, as we may see by the following letter from the Rev. William Clarke (grandfather of the celebrated traveller, Edward Daniel Clarke (1769-1822)), to his friend Mr. Bowyer.¹⁹

'Brighthelmstone,

'July 22, 1736 .

'We are now sunning ourselves upon the beach at Brighthelmstone, and observing what a tempting figure this Island made formerly in the eyes of those gentlemen who were pleased to civilize and subdue us. The place is really pleasant; I have seen nothing in its way that outdoes it. Such a tract of sea; such regions of corn; and such an extent of fine carpet, that gives your eye the command of it all. But then, the mischief is that we have little conversation besides the *clamor nauticus*, which is, here, a sort of treble to the plashing of the waves against the cliffs. My morning business is bathing in the sea, and then buying fish; the evening is riding out for air, viewing the remains of old Saxon camps, and counting the ships in the road, and the boats that are trawling.

'Sometimes we give the imagination leave to expatiate a

¹⁹ 'The Brighton Ambulator,' by C. Wright, London, 1818, p. 25.

little; fancy that you are coming down, and that we intend to dine one day next week at Dieppe in Normandy; the price is already fixed, and the wine and lodging there tolerably good. But, though we build these castles in the air, I assure you we live here *almost under ground*. I fancy the architects here usually take the altitude of the inhabitants, and lose not an inch between the head and the ceiling, and then dropping a step or two below the surface: the second story is finished something under 12 feet. I suppose this was a necessary precaution against storms, that a man should not be blown out of his bed into New England, Barbary, or God knows where.

'But, as the lodgings are *low*, they are cheap; we have *two parlours, two bed chambers, pantry, etc.*, for 5s. per week; and if you will really come down you need not fear a bed of proper dimensions.

'And, then, the coast is safe; the cannons all covered with rust and grass; the ships moored, and no enemy apprehended. Come and see.'

Lee tells us that about 1736 the delightful situation of Brighthelmstone began to attract some visitors of distinction as early in the summer as the deep miry Sussex roads were in some way passable. Hunting, horse-racing, and water-parties were then the chief, or sole, attractions; and a few indifferent inns their only places of accommodation.

But Dr. Richard Russell, having removed from Mailing, near Lewes, to this town about the year 1750, called attention to the benefit of sea-bathing, having written a treatise, which

was translated into English, and went through several editions – 'De Tabæ Glandulari, sive de usu aquæ marinæ in morbis glandularum dissertatio,' Oxford, 1750, 8vo. This brought visitors to Brighthelmstone; the erection of lodging-houses became a profitable speculation, and the town began to increase in population and celebrity.

Dr. Russell's successor, Dr. A. Relhan, wrote, in 1761, 'A Short History of Brighthelmston, with Remarks on its Air, and an Analysis of its Waters, particularly of an uncommon Mineral one, long discovered, though but lately used.' In this tract he thus describes the Brighthelmstone of his time:

'The town, at present, consists of six principal streets, many lanes, and some spaces surrounded with houses, called by the inhabitants Squares. The great plenty of flint stones on the shore, and in the cornfields near the town, enabled them to build the walls of their houses with that material when in their most impoverished state; and their present method of ornamenting the windows and doors with the admirable brick which they burn for their own use, has a very pleasing effect. The town improves daily, as the inhabitants, encouraged by the late great resort of Company, seem disposed to expend the whole of what they acquire in the erection of new buildings, or making the old ones convenient. And, should the increase of these, in the next seven years, be equal to what it has been in the last, it is probable there will be but few towns in England that will exceed this in commodious buildings.

'Here are two public rooms, the one convenient, the other not only so, but elegant; not excelled, perhaps, by any public room in England, that of York excepted: and the attention of the proprietor in preparing everything that may answer for the conveniency and amusement of the company is extremely meritorious.

'The men of this town are busied almost the whole year in a succeeding variety of fishing; and the women industriously dedicate part of their time, disengaged from domestic cares, to the providing of nets adapted to the various employments of their husbands.

'The spring season is spent in dredging for Oysters, which are mostly bedded in the Thames and Medway, and, afterwards, carried to the London market: the Mackerel fishery employs them during the months of May, June, and July; and the fruits of their labour are always sent to London; as Brighthelmston has the advantage of being its nearest fishing sea coast, and the consumption of the place, and its environs, is very inconsiderable. In the early part of this fishery, they frequently take the red Mullet; and, near the close of it, abundance of Lobsters and Prawns. August is engaged in the Trawl fishery, when all sorts of flat fish are taken in a net called by that name. In September they fish for Whiting with lines: and in November the Herring fishery takes place, which is the most considerable and growing fishery of the whole. Those employed in this pursuit show an activity and boldness almost incredible, often venturing

out to Sea in their little boats in such weather as the largest ships can scarce live in. Part of their acquisition in this way is sent to London, but the greatest share of it is either pickled, or dried and made red. These are mostly sent to foreign markets, making this fishery a national concern...

'From this account of the fishery of this town, the reader will be satisfied that it must supply a constant and good article in provision to the inhabitants. And although there are complaints made of the inconveniences experienced in the want of a regular and daily market; yet, as few who come here to take the waters can long want an appetite, and as fish of different sorts, excellent mutton, beef, and veal tolerably good, with all kinds of fowl, may be had in plenty twice or thrice a week, the rarities of a London market may be resigned unregretted for a few months.'

It is probable that very few towns have so many variations on their names as Brighton, which modernized form began somewhere about 1775; at least, that is the earliest date I have met with. F. E. Sawyer, Esq., F.M.S., in an article on the 'Ecclesiastical History of Brighton' in the 'Sussex Archæological Collections,' vol. xxix., pp. 182, 183, gives forty-five different readings of the name, together with the authorities whence they are derived, and he repeated them in *Notes and Queries*, vi. S. ii. 376, with the dates of the authorities. They are as follow:

SPELLINGS OF BRIGHTEHELMSTONE

Brighthelm	{ston stone eston {estone iston yston sted		1252 and 18th cent. 1340. 1415. 1460. 1616. 1535 and 1411. Camden.
Brighthehisted			1616.
Brightehelmston			1621.
Brighte	{lmeston lmiston {lnyston elneston elniston		1440. 1616. <i>ib.</i> ? 1616.
Brythalmston			1340.
Britelmston			?
Brist	{ elm {almerston halmestone helstone	{etune estune {eston estona	1086. <i>ib.</i> ? Dugdale. 1292. ? ?
Bright	{ hem {henstone Hampstead healmertun on	{pston son sted stone	1509-14. 1628. 1629. 1609. 1509-14. Stow. Saxon. Modern.
Brighelm	{ston eston		1292. 1397.
Brithelmston			1438.
Brithelm	{ston eston		? 1404.
Brythelmston			1397.
	{elmstone		1438.

CHAPTER III

Brighton becomes fashionable – Duke of Cumberland there – His character – The Royal Marriage Act – His influence over the Prince of Wales – The Duke and the King – Bad conduct of the Prince of Wales

BRIGHTON rapidly became fashionable, and we find the announcement on June 1, 1761, of Lord Abergavenny, Lord Bruce, Mr. and Lady Jane Evelyn, Lady Sophia Egerton, etc.; and on June 25, 1775, arrived here the Duke and Duchess of Richmond, Duke and Duchess of Marlborough, Ladies Caroline and Eliza Spencer, etc. In 1782 it was patronized by Royalty, for the somewhat eccentric Princess Amelia Sophia Eleonora, the second daughter of George II., paid the town a visit, and Henry Frederick, brother to George III. and Duke of Cumberland, took up his residence there at Grove House. An extract from a letter from Brighthelmstone published in the *Morning Herald*, September 28, 1782, describes the state of society there at that time:

'Sep. 26. – This place is, at last, as full as an egg, but the company is a motley groupe, I assure you. The Duke of C – is

at the head of the whole, and condescendingly associates with all, from the *Baron* down to the *Blackleg*! – *Play* runs high, particularly at Whist; his Royal Highness has touched a few hundreds by betting adverse to Major B – gs, who, apparently, is not like to make a very profitable campaign of it. We have every kind of amusement that fancy can desire for the train of folly and dissipation; and all are crowded beyond measure! *Barthelemon* has had two or three *boreish concerts* entirely of *his own* music, by which he has made much more than he merited. Lady *Worsley*, who is among us, is the life and soul of *equestrian parties*, riding *sixteen miles within the hour* every morning with all imaginable ease! Her Ladyship made a match the other day to ride over our revived course for fifty guineas, p. or p. against her aide du camp, Miss V – rs, and mounted her buckskins and half boots accordingly; but, to the mortification of a great number of spectators, who assembled to see this exhibition of *female jockeyship*, she declared off at the moment they were expected to start! Few people think of stirring from hence at present, so that it is probable we shall have a jolly season till the staghounds come down, about the middle of next month.'

This Duke of Cumberland (born 1744, died 1790) was the reverse of estimable in character. He was a confirmed gambler, and never missed a great horse-race when he was in England. In 1770 Lord Grosvenor brought an action against him, and obtained £10,000 damages from him on account of Lady G.; and in 1771 he married Lady Anne Luttrell, the widow of

Mr. Christopher Horton, of Derbyshire, a lady much older than himself. This so enraged George III. that he forbade them the Court, and he sent a message to Parliament, recommending a legislative provision for preventing any of the Royal Family marrying without the consent of the King. Hence arose The Royal Marriage Act (12 George III., c. xi.), which was passed in 1772. By this Act none of the descendants of George II., unless of foreign birth, can marry under the age of twenty-five without the consent of the King. At and after that age, after twelve months' notice given to the Privy Council, they may contract such marriage, which shall be good unless both Houses of Parliament disapprove. Walpole gives us a ballad on the Marriage Act, a few verses of which I reproduce:

'The Marriage Act not made by the Late King

'a new ballad

'The Duke was restored to his brother's high favour,
And continued, as usual, his wanton behaviour;
For adultery at Court was not thought an unfitness,

As a twice married maiden of honour can witness.

'But Hymen, indignant to see his laws broke,
Determined to bend the loose youth to his yoke;
So a votary true, a bright widow, he chose,
And the pert little Prince was soon caught in the noose.

'But, oh! all ye Gods, who inspire ballad-singers,
Ye Muses, with nine-times-ten ivory fingers,
I invoke ye to guide both my voice and my pen,
While I sing of the fury that seized King and Queen.

'King and Queen, when they heard how th'undutiful whelp
Had disgraced the great houses of Mecky and Guelp,
Swore and cried, curs'd and fainted, and calling for Bute,
Of your Luttrell connexion, cried George, see the fruit.

'This Irish alliance my projects all bilks,
I'd as lief he had married the daughter of Wilkes;
While to humour my mother and you I conspire,
I am out of the frying-pan into the fire.

'From the Duke's breach of duty, my act shall receive
The highest-flown doctrines of prerogative;

Plantagenets, Tudors, nay, Stuarts I'll quote,
And what law cannot prove, shall be proved by a vote.

'To marry, unmarry, son, brother, or heir,
Has been always his right, our good King shall declare;
Though as far from the truth as the north from the south,
It is not the first lie we have put in his mouth.

'They may burn and be damn'd, but they never shall marry:
George the Third as despotic, shall be, as Eighth Harry:
He shall cut off the heads of his sons and his spouses,
For we'll have no more war between red and white roses.'

The Duke was ultimately reconciled to the King, but, during the time of his displeasure, the former was a very bad Mentor to the young Prince of Wales, with whom he was most intimate to the day of his death. We learn a great deal about them from Walpole. The following occurred in 1780, when the Prince was eighteen years old:²⁰ 'Two days afterwards the Duke told me the Prince of Wales had said to him: "I cannot come to see you now without the King's leave, but in three years I shall be of age, and then I may act for myself. I will declare I will visit you."'

²⁰ 'Journal of the Reign of King George the Third, from the Year 1771 to 1783,' by Horace Walpole, London, 1859, vol. ii., p. 416.

Again²¹ (1781): 'But an event soon happened that changed that aspect, and made Cumberland House naturally the headquarters of at least part of the Opposition. The Duchess of Cumberland and the Luttrells openly countenanced the amour of the Prince of Wales, and Mrs. Armstead ... joined that faction, and set themselves in open defiance of the King.

'The first project was to make a ball for the Prince at Cumberland House; but the King forbad his servants going thither. The Duke then made a great dinner for the Prince's servants, to which, as I have said, the King would not permit them to go. The Duke was so enraged, that he wrote a most insolent letter to the King, in which he told him he would go abroad, for this country was not fit for a gentleman to live in. The Duke, however, went to the Drawing-room again, and continued to go, the Duchess having certainly told him that if he absented himself he would lose his influence over the Prince of Wales.

'To the Queen's ball, as I have said, the Duke was not invited, yet went to Court the next day. At that ball the Prince got drunk, which threw him into a dangerous fever, but such a general irruption over his whole face and body of the humours in his blood came out, that it probably saved his life.

'At this moment the Duke and Duchess of Gloucester came to town from Weymouth. The King, as usual, vented his complaints to the Duke of Gloucester. The King told the Duke that though, on the reconciliation, he had told the Duke of Cumberland that

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 449.

all his doors would be opened to him, "yet," said the King, "he comes to the Queen's house fourteen times a week to my son, the Prince, and passes by my door, but never comes in to me; and, if he meets me there, or when we are hunting, he only pulls off his hat, and walks, or rides away. I am ashamed," continued he, "to see my brother paying court to my son." The King resented it, and, though he invited the principal persons who hunted, to dinner, he never invited the Duke of Cumberland. The Prince of Wales seemed to be very weak and feeble. He drank hard, swore, and passed every night in – : such were the fruits of his being locked up in the palace of piety!

The King further informed the Duke of Gloucester of his brother Cumberland's outrageous letter, and said, "He has forced himself every day into my son's company, even when he was at the worst." The Duke said he wondered his Majesty had suffered it. "I don't know," replied the King, "*I do not care to part relations.*"

'May 4, 1781.²²— The conduct of the Prince of Wales began already to make the greatest noise, and proved how very bad his education had been, or, rather, that he had had little or none; but had only been locked up, and suffered to keep company with the lowest domestics; while the Duke of Montague, and Hurd, Bishop of Lichfield, had thought of nothing but paying court to the King and Queen, and her German women. The Prince drank more publicly in the Drawing room, and talked there irreligiously

²² Walpole, vol. ii., p. 457.

and indecently, in the openest manner (both which were the style of the Duchess of Cumberland). He passed the nights in the lowest debaucheries, at the same time bragging of intrigues with women of quality, whom he named publicly. Both the Prince and the Duke talked of the King in the grossest terms, even in his hearing, as he told the Duke of Gloucester, who asked him why he did not forbid his son seeing his brother. The King replied that he feared the Prince would not obey him.

'The Duke of Cumberland dropped that he meant by this outrageous behaviour to force the King to yield to terms in favour of his Duchess, having gotten entire command over the Prince. The latter, however, had something of the duplicity of his grandfather, Prince Frederick, and, after drawing in persons to abuse the King, would betray them to the King. Nor in other respects did his heart turn to good. In his letters to Mrs. Robinson, his mistress, he called his sister, the Princess Royal, a poor child, "*that bandy-legged b – h, my sister*;" and, while he was talking of Lord Chesterfield in the most opprobrious terms, he was sending courier after courier to fetch him to town. That Lord's return produced a scene that divulged all that till now had been only whispered.

'One night, as soon as the King was gone to bed, the Prince, with St. Leger and Charles Windham, his chief favourites, and some of his younger servants, the Duke of Cumberland, and George Pitt, son of Lord Rivers, went to Blackheath to sup with Lord Chesterfield, who, being married, would not consent

to send for the company the Prince required. They all got immediately drunk, and the Prince was forced to lie down on a bed for some time. On his return, one of the company proposed as a toast, "*A short reign to the King.*" The Prince, probably a little come to himself, was offended, rose and drank a bumper to "*Long live the King.*" The next exploit was to let loose a large fierce house-dog, and George Pitt, of remarkable strength, attempted to tear out its tongue. The dog broke from him, wounded Windham's arm, and tore a servant's leg. At six in the morning, when the Prince was to return, Lord Chesterfield took up a candle to light him, but was so drunk that he fell down the steps into the area, and, it was thought, had fractured his skull. That accident spread the whole history of the debauch, and the King was so shocked that he fell ill on it, and told the Duke of Gloucester that he had not slept for ten nights, and that whenever he fretted, the bile fell on his breast. As he was not ill on any of the disgraces of the war, he showed how little he had taken them to heart. Soon after this adventure, the King being to review a regiment on Blackheath, Lord Chesterfield offered him a breakfast, but the late affair had made such a noise that he did not think it decent to accept it.

'For the "Public Advertiser," 1782

MODERN WIT – (BLACKHEATH)

'Drink *like* a Lord, and *with* him, if you will.
Deep be the bumper: let no liquor spill;
No *daylight* in the glass, though through the night
You soak your senses till the morning light;
Then stupid rise, and with the rising sun
Drive the high car, a second *Phaeton*.
Let these exploits your fertile wit evince:
Drunk as a Lord, and happy as a Prince!

'Nov. 28, 1781.²³— The Duke of Gloucester had come to town, as usual, on the opening of Parliament, and stayed five days, in which he was three times with the King, who, as if he had not used the Duke ill, opened his mind to him on his son, the Prince of Wales, and his own brother, the Duke of Cumberland, the latter of whom, he said, was governed by Charles Fox and Fitzpatrick, and governed the Prince of Wales, whom they wanted to drive into opposition. "When we hunt together," said the King, "neither my son nor my brother speak to me; and,

²³ Walpole, vol. ii., p. 480.

lately, when the chace ended at a little village where there was but a single post chaise to be hired, my son and brother got into it, and drove to London, leaving me to go home in a cart, if I could find one." He added, that when at Windsor, where he always dined at three, and in town at four, if he asked the Prince to dine with him, he always came at four at Windsor, and in town at five, and all the servants saw the father waiting an hour for the son. That since the Court was come to town, the Duke of Cumberland carried the Prince to the lowest places of debauchery, where they got dead drunk, and were often carried home in that condition.'

*'Feb. 20, 1782.*²⁴— The hostilities of the Prince of Wales were supposed to be suggested by his uncle, the Duke of Cumberland, who had now got entire influence over him. The Prince, though, at first, he did not go openly to her, frequently supped with the Duchess of Cumberland; and, in a little time, they openly kept a faro bank for him – not to their credit; and the Duke of Cumberland even carried bankers and very bad company to the Prince's apartments in the Queen's house. This behaviour was very grating to the King, and the offences increased. The Duke of Cumberland twice a day passed by the King's apartment to his nephew's, without making his bow to his Majesty; and the brothers, at last, ceased to speak. On hunting-days the Duke was not asked to dine with the King. He returned this by instilling neglect into his nephew. The King complained of this treatment to the Duke of Gloucester, who asked why he bore it. "What can

²⁴ Walpole, vol. ii., p. 502.

I do?" said the King; "if I resent it, they will make my son leave me, and break out, which is what they wish."

'But it was not long before the folly and vulgarity of the Duke of Cumberland disgusted the Prince. His style was so low that, alluding to the Principality of Wales, the Duke called his nephew *Taffy*. The Prince was offended at such indecent familiarity, and begged it might not be repeated – but in vain. Soon after, Mr. Legge, one of the Prince's gentlemen, and second son of the Earl of Dartmouth, growing a favourite, inflamed the Prince's disgusts; and the coolness increasing, the Duke of Cumberland endeavoured to counteract the prejudice by calling Legge to the Prince "*Your Governor*" – but as the Governor had sense, and the uncle none, Legge's arrows took place, the others did not. Yet, though the Prince had too much pride to be treated vulgarly, he had not enough to disuse the same style. Nothing was coarser than his conversation and phrases; and it made men smile to find that in the palace of piety and pride his Royal Highness had learned nothing but the dialect of footmen and grooms. Still, if he tormented his father, the latter had the comfort of finding that, with so depraved and licentious a life, his son was not likely to acquire popularity. Nor did he give symptoms of parts, or spirit, or steadiness. A tender parent would have been afflicted – a jealous and hypocritic father might be vexed, but was consoled too.'

One more quotation from Walpole,²⁵ which shows us the

²⁵ Vol. ii., p. 446.

Prince of Wales after he had attained his eighteenth year, when he had his own suite of apartments in the Queen's House (now Buckingham Palace):

'Feb., 1781. – A new scene now began to open, which drew most of the attention of the public, at least of the town. Since the family of the Prince of Wales had been established, and that he was now past eighteen, it was impossible to confine him entirely. As soon as the King went to bed, the Prince and his brother Prince Frederick went to their mistresses, or to – . Prince Frederick, who promised to have the most parts, and had an ascendant over his brother, was sent abroad on that account, and thereby had an opportunity of seeing the world, which would only make him more fit to govern his brother (contrary to the views of both King and Queen) or the nation, if his brother should fail, and which was not improbable.

'The Prince of Wales was deeply affected with the scrofulous humour which the Princess of Wales had brought into the blood, and which the King kept down in himself by the most rigorous and systematical abstinence. The Prince, on the contrary, locked up in the palace, and restrained from the society of women, had contracted a habit of private drinking, and this winter the humour showed itself in blotches all over his face. His governor, the Duke of Montague, was utterly incapable of giving him any kind of instruction, and his preceptor, Bishop Hurd, was only a servile pedant, ignorant of mankind. The Prince was good-natured, but so uninformed that he often said, "I wish anybody would tell me

what to do; nobody gives me any instructions for my conduct." He was prejudiced against all his new servants, as spies set on him by the King, and showed it by never speaking to them in public. His first favourite had been Lord Malden, son of the Earl of Essex, who had brought about his acquaintance with Mrs. Robinson.'

CHAPTER IV

**Mrs. Robinson – Her story of Florizel and Perdita
– Her after-career – Coming of age of the Prince
of Wales – His new establishment – His first visit
to Brighton – His and Colonel Hanger's adventure**

WHO was this Mrs. Robinson? She was of Irish extraction, and was born in Bristol in 1758. In 1774 she married an attorney's clerk, named Robinson; and, owing to pecuniary difficulties, she went on the stage, appearing at Drury Lane as Juliet on December 10, 1770, a part for which her fascinating beauty well fitted her. On December 3, 1779, Garrick's adaptation of Shakespeare's *Winter's Tale* was produced by royal command, and Mrs. Robinson appeared in the part of Perdita. It was then that she was seen and admired by the Prince of Wales. Let her tell her own story as to that night, and what came of it.

'The play of the *Winter's Tale* was, this season, commanded by their Majesties. I never had performed before the royal family; and the first character in which I was destined to appear was that of Perdita. I had frequently played the part, both with the Hermione of Mrs. Hartley and of Miss Farren: but I felt a strange degree of alarm when I found my name announced to perform

it before the royal family.

'In the green-room I was rallied on the occasion; and Mr. Smith, whose gentlemanly manners and enlightened conversation rendered him an ornament to the profession, who performed the part of Leontes, laughingly exclaimed, "By Jove, Mrs. Robinson, you will make a conquest of the Prince; for to-night you look handsomer than ever." I smiled at the unmerited compliment, and little foresaw the vast variety of events that would arise from that night's exhibition!

'As I stood in the wing opposite the Prince's box, waiting to go on the stage, Mr. Ford, the manager's son, and now a respectable defender of the laws, presented a friend who accompanied him; this friend was Lord Viscount Malden, now Earl of Essex.

'We entered into conversation during a few minutes, the Prince of Wales all the time observing us, and frequently speaking to Colonel (now General) Lake, and to the Honourable Mr. Legge, brother to Lord Lewisham, who was in waiting on his Royal Highness. I hurried through the first scene, not without much embarrassment, owing to the fixed attention with which the Prince of Wales honoured me. Indeed, some flattering remarks which were made by his Royal Highness met my ear as I stood near his box, and I was overwhelmed with confusion.

'The Prince's particular attention was observed by everyone, and I was again rallied at the end of the play. On the last curtsy, the royal family condescendingly returned a bow to the performers; but, just as the curtain was falling, my eyes met those

of the Prince of Wales; and with a look that I *never shall forget*, he gently inclined his head a second time; I felt the compliment, and blushed my gratitude.

'During the entertainment Lord Malden never ceased conversing with me: he was young, pleasing, and perfectly accomplished. He remarked the particular applause which the Prince had bestowed on my performance; said a thousand civil things; and detained me in conversation till the evening's performance was concluded.

'I was now going to my chair, which waited, when I met the royal family crossing the stage. I was again honoured with a very marked and low bow from the Prince of Wales. On my return home, I had a party to supper; and the whole conversation centred in encomiums on the person, graces, and amiable manners of the illustrious Heir apparent.

'Within two or three days of this time, Lord Malden made me a morning visit. Mr. Robinson was not at home, and I received him rather awkwardly. But his Lordship's embarrassment far exceeded mine. He attempted to speak, – paused, hesitated, apologized; I knew not why. He hoped I would pardon him; that I would not mention something he had to communicate; that I would consider the peculiar delicacy of his situation, and then act as I thought proper. I could not comprehend his meaning, and therefore requested he would be explicit.

'After some moments of evident rumination, he tremblingly drew a small letter from his pocket. I took it, and knew not what

to say. It was addressed to Perdita. I smiled, I believe, rather sarcastically, and opened the billet. It contained only a few words, but those expressive of more than common civility: they were signed Florizel.

"Well, my lord, and what does this mean?" said I, half angrily.

"Can you not guess the writer?" said Lord Malden.

"Perhaps yourself, my lord," cried I, gravely.

"Upon my honour, no," said the Viscount. "I should not have dared so to address you on so short an acquaintance."

I pressed him to tell me from whom the letter came. He again hesitated; he seemed confused, and sorry that he had undertaken to deliver it.

"I hope I shall not forfeit your good opinion," said he; "but –"

"But what, my lord?"

"I could not refuse – for the letter is from the Prince of Wales."

'I was astonished; I confess that I was agitated; but I was, also, somewhat sceptical as to the truth of Lord Malden's assertion. I returned a formal and a doubtful answer, and his lordship shortly after took his leave.'

It is not worth while pursuing the details of this woman's fall; she says her husband was neglectful of her, and unfaithful; and, besides, the Prince gave her a bond for £20,000, payable when he came of age. He soon tired of her, and terminated the connection in 1781. The lady seems to have been far from inconsolable, for in 1782 she was under the protection of Colonel Tarleton, and a

caricature, said to be by Gillray, called 'The Thunderer' (August 20, 1782), thus shows the then situation.

The engraving shows a dragoon officer (Colonel Tarleton) standing before the door of the 'Whirligig' Chop-house, with a drawn sword, boasting his wondrous feats of arms. Beside him stands a figure having a plume of three feathers instead of a head (the Prince of Wales). The sign, the 'Whirligig,' is Mrs. Robinson. The *Morning Post*, September 21, 1782, says: 'Yesterday, a messenger arrived in town, with the very interesting and pleasing intelligence of the Tarleton, armed ship, having, after a chace of some months, captured the Perdita frigate, and brought her safe into Egham port. The Perdita is a prodigious fine clean bottomed vessel, and had taken many prizes during her cruize, particularly the Florizel, a most valuable ship belonging to the Crown, but which was immediately released, after taking out the cargo. The Perdita was captured some time ago by the Fox, but was, afterwards, retaken by the Malden, and had a sumptuous suit of new rigging, when she fell in with the Tarleton. Her manœuvring to escape was admirable; but the Tarleton, fully determined to take her, or perish, would not give up the chace; and at length, coming alongside the Perdita, fully determined to board her, sword in hand, she instantly surrendered at discretion.'

The scandal about her being connected with Fox has, I think, no foundation in fact. He was infatuated with Mrs. Armstead, who afterwards became his wife; and the foundation for the rumour was, probably, that Fox was the agent from the Prince

to negotiate the return of the £20,000 bond from Perdita, which he succeeded in effecting, on condition that she was paid an annuity of £500 for life. Still, the caricaturist T. Colley gives us (December 17, 1782), 'Perdito and Perdita, or the Man and Woman of the People,' which shows Mrs. Robinson driving Fox in her chariot. This must have been a very smart affair, if we may trust a newspaper cutting of 1782.

'Dec. 4. – Mrs. Robinson now sports a carriage, which is the admiration of all the *charioteering* circles in the vicinity of St. James's; the body Carmelite and silver, ornamented with a French mantle, and the cypher in a wreath of flowers: the carriage scarlet and silver, the seat-cloth richly ornamented with silver fringe. Mrs. Robinson's livery is green, faced with yellow, and richly trimmed with broad silver lace; the harness ornamented with stars of silver, richly chased and elegantly finished. The inside of the carriage is lined with white silk, embellished with scarlet trimmings.'

The *Morning Herald*, June 16, 1783, says: 'The *Perdita's* new *vis-a-vis* is said to be the aggregate of a few stakes laid at Brooke's, which the competitors were not able to decide. Mr. Fox therefore proposed that as it could not be better applied than to the above purpose, that the *Perdita* should be presented with an elegant carriage. The ill-natured call it *Love's Last Stake*, or The Fools of Fashion.'

It is not worth while following her career until her death on December 26, 1800; and, indeed, unconnected as she was

with the Prince and Brighton, the episode would not have been introduced were it not to tell the story of how the Prince got the name of Florizel, which stuck to him all his life.

The Prince came of age on August 12, 1783, but there were no great festivities over the event. The Court was quiet, because the Queen had just been confined, and the account we have of the doings at Windsor are very meagre. The *Morning Chronicle* of August 14 tells us that —

'*Windsor, 13 Aug.* — Yesterday, being the day on which his Royal Highness George, Prince of Wales, came of age, the same was observed, at this place, with every demonstration of joy, as far as could be consistent with the situation of Her Majesty. The Prince came down about eight in the morning, waited upon the King, with whom he breakfasted, and received the compliments from his brothers and sisters, the Duke of Cumberland, Duke of Montague, Lord Aylesbury, etc. After breakfast, his Highness retired to his own apartments, and, at noon, had a Levee; Colonel Dalrymple, with all the officers belonging to the regiment, were introduced to the Prince, and gave him joy of the day. Several of the nobility and gentry around the country waited upon his Royal Highness, and were very politely received.

'The Prince had ordered a dinner for his own suite, from Clode's, at the White Hart, and had a turtle dressed in London, which was brought down by Weltje, of St. James's Street. His Royal Highness dined with his Majesty, three of his brothers, five of his sisters, the Duke of Montague, Lord Aylesbury, and

Lady Charlotte Finch. After the cloth was removed, and a few glasses had gone round, the Prince went to his own apartments, and sat for some time with Lord Southampton, Lord Lewisham, Lord Boston, Lord Chewton and the rest of his suite. His Majesty went upon the Terrace at half past six; the Prince of Wales and his attendants soon followed. It is said, more genteel company scarce ever met on that spot.

'The Duchess of Ancaster, Lady Ferrers, the beautiful Miss Hudson, and a variety of women of rank, did honour to the day. It was quite dark before the company retired from the Terrace. The Duke of Queensbury joined his Royal Highness and his suite. The carriages were so numerous that they filled both Castle Yards.'

There were illuminations at Windsor and in London, where His Royal Highness's tradesmen and the Hon. Artillery Company (of which he was Captain-General) held good cheer; but it was felt that the coming of age had not been celebrated in a sufficiently national style, and a fête later on was talked of, which never came to pass. Perhaps the Prince's character had something to do with it, for the *Morning Herald* of August 15 says: 'The broad faced dissipation of a certain young gentleman, gives the most general disgust. Extravagance in the *extreme*, but ill suits the present state of the British empire.' They were outspoken in those days!

The Prince is now launched in life. He is Colonel of the 10th Light Dragoons, has £50,000 per annum allowed him by

Parliament, and the revenues of the Duchy of Cornwall, about £13,000 more. He has Carlton House fitting up for him; he is his own master, being no longer under paternal control, and his soul yearns towards his *âme damnée*, the Duke of Cumberland. This Prince was at Brighthelmstone, and thither Florizel went. Every authority but one says that the Prince of Wales paid a visit to the Duke in 1782; but I think that the one which has not slavishly copied from other sources is right, for two reasons: first, that in 1782 he was under strict paternal control, and could stir nowhere without his governor, and a visit to that uncle whom the King so disliked was the last thing to be thought of; and, secondly, we see in the description of Brighton in 1782, 'The Duke of C. is at the head of the whole.' If the heir to the throne had been there, the Duke would have taken 'a back seat,' and the papers would have given due prominence to the visit; and therefore I incline to the opinion that, since the days of his childhood, his first visit to the watering-place he afterwards made so famous was in September, 1783, on which occasion the town was illuminated and there was a display of fireworks. During his stay of eleven days, he hunted, went to a ball, and to the theatre, besides the ordinary amusements of the place. In fact, his visit seems so to have impressed him, that from that date he made Brighthelmstone his abiding-place for, at least, a portion of the year. Huish,²⁶ however, gives another version for his liking for the place:

'The Prince had now begun to manifest that predilection for

²⁶ 'Memoirs of George IV.,' by Robert Huish, 8vo., vol. i., p. 80; London, 1831.

Brighton, which induced him at a future period to make that town his residence. The report, however, which was current at the time, and which is actually founded on truth, goes so far as to state, that it was neither the marine views, nor the benefit of change of air, nor the salubrity of the place, which possessed, in the eyes of his Royal Highness, at this time, any great attractions; but that he was drawn thither by the angelic figure of a sea nymph, whom he, one day, encountered reclining on one of the groins on the beach. In this amour, however, his Royal Highness was completely the dupe. As far as personal charms extended, Charlotte Fortescue was of "the first order of fine forms"; but, as far as mental qualifications were to be considered, she was one of the most illiterate and ignorant of human beings. In artifice and intrigue she was unparalleled; and, withal, she knew how to throw such an air of simplicity and innocence over her actions, as would have deceived even a greater adept than his Royal Highness, in the real nature of her character. She soon discovered the exalted station of the individual whom she believed she had captivated by her charms; and, on the principle that the thing is of little value which is cheaply or easily obtained, she, for a time, frustrated every attempt of his Royal Highness to obtain a private interview with her. She kept her residence a complete secret, and, for some days, she was neither seen nor heard of. On a sudden, she would make her appearance, and then, suffused in tears, would speak of her approaching marriage, and her consequent departure from the country; and could that idea be borne by her

royal lover? Heaven and earth were to be moved to avert such a direful calamity; a regular elopement was proposed, and, in order to give the affair a highly romantic air, it was arranged that the dress of a footman was to be procured for the beautiful fugitive, and that the Prince was to have a postchaise in waiting a few miles on the London road, to bear away his valuable prize. There is, however, an old adage which says, that much falls between the cup and the lip, and, in this instance, the truth of it was fully confirmed. The hour was anxiously looked for which was to bring the lovers into the undisturbed society of each other; but, as the Prince was dressing for dinner, the arrival of George Hanger, who had just then begun his career of eccentricity and profligacy in the fashionable circles, was announced. The Prince invited him to dine; excusing himself, however, at the same time, for the early hour at which he would be obliged to leave him, as he had most important business to transact that night in the metropolis. Dinner being over, the Prince inquired the business which had brought his visitor to Brighton in so unexpected a manner.

"A hunt, a hunt, your Royal Highness," said Hanger, "I am in chace of a d – d fine girl, whom I met with at Mrs. Simpson's in Duke's Place; and, although I have taken private apartments for her in St. Anne's East, yet the hussy takes it into her head every now and then to absent herself for a few days; and I have now been given to understand that she is carrying on some intrigue with a *fellow* in this place. Let me but catch him, and I will souse him over head and ears in the ocean."

'The Prince now inquired what kind of a lady he was in pursuit of; and, by the description given, he doubted not for a moment, that the lady with whom he was to elope that very evening, on account of her approaching marriage, was the identical lady who had eloped from the protection of his visitor, and he began to consider how he could extricate himself with the best possible grace from the dilemma in which he was involved. That he was a dupe to the artifices of a cunning, designing girl, was now apparent to him; and, therefore, it would be his greatest pride and joy to outwit her. He, therefore, disclosed the whole of his intrigue with the runaway, and it was resolved that Hanger should put on one of the coats in which she was accustomed to see her royal lover, and take his seat in the chaise, instead of the Prince. The whole affair was well managed; the Prince remained at Brighton; Hanger bore off his lady to London, not a little chagrined at such an unexpected termination of her romantic elopement; but not many months elapsed before the lady gained an opportunity of repaying the Prince tenfold for the trick which he had played her.'

CHAPTER V

Memoir of, and anecdotes about, George Hanger

THE HON. GEORGE HANGER (afterwards the fourth and last Lord Coleraine) was at one time an especial friend of the Prince. He was educated at Eton and Göttingen, and was for some little time an officer in the first regiment of foot guards, which regiment he soon left in disgust at someone being promoted over his head. He then received an appointment from the Landgrave of Hesse Cassel as Captain in the Hessian Jäger Corps, then serving in America, and he was with this corps throughout the war. He, afterwards (in 1782), was made a Major in Tarleton's Light Dragoons, which was disbanded the following year, and he retired on half-pay. It was then that he joined the Prince's set, and received the appointment of equerry at a salary of £300 per annum, and this, combined with raising recruits for the East India Company, enabled him for a time to vie with the jovial crew with which he associated. But evil days fell upon him, and he dwelt in the King's Bench Prison from June 2, 1798, to April, 1799, and in 1800 set up for a time as a coal-merchant, and was nicknamed the Knight of the Black Diamond. He appears in many of Gillray's caricatures, but the most savage pictorial

satire on him (by Cruickshank) was issued with the *Scourge* for November 2, 1812, where he is represented as a tall, full-faced man, wearing a long drab-coloured coat with a cape, and a star upon his right breast. Each of his arms encircles a gin-drinking old woman, and at his feet, one of which is cloven like a satyr's, sprawls a young woman who applies a bottle to her lips. A dandy, standing near, inspects the scene through his quizzing glass, and observes: 'Hang her! She's quite drunk.' A label issuing from the mouth of the principal person makes him observe: 'As for me, my name is sufficient; I am known by the title of the Paragon of Debauchery, and I only claim to be the [Prince]'s *Confidential Friend*.' The letterpress description of the caricature contains the following illustrative paragraph:

'A tall, strapping-looking person, shabbily, but buckishly attired, with a peculiar cast of countenance, now stepped forward, and cried out, "My *name* is sufficient. Whoever has heard of – must know that I am without a rival in the annals of debauchery. I claim no higher honour than to be my *Prince's friend*.'"

On the death of his brother, on December 11, 1814, he succeeded to the title of Lord Coleraine, but he never assumed the title, and disliked being addressed by it. On his death, unmarried, on March 31, 1824, at the age of seventy-three, the barony of Coleraine became extinct.

Huish tells several stories about Hanger.²⁷ 'It is well known

²⁷ Vol. i., p. 97, etc.

that the above-mentioned person was the particular companion of his late Majesty, when Prince of Wales, and many of the youthful improprieties which he committed were ascribed, by the King, to the company which he kept; and, particularly, to the society of Sheridan and Major Hanger. On a particular occasion, when the latter was raising recruits, the King, hearing that the Prince was taken from place to place, by him and others in high life, collecting mobs, and throwing money to them in large quantities, for the sake of creating the fun of seeing a scramble, and other worse purposes, he, with much feeling, exclaimed, "D – n Sherry, and I must hang – hang – Hanger, for they will break my heart, and ruin the hopes of my country."

The following will be read as a rich treat to the lovers of fun and mischief: it shows the extraordinary gaiety of the Prince of Wales's disposition, and the familiar manner in which he lived with his companions:

It was at the celebration of her Majesty's birthday, 1782, that Major Hanger made his first appearance at Court; and it may be said to have been a *début* which proved a source of infinite amusement to all who were present, and to no one more so than the Prince of Wales, who was no stranger to the singularity of his character, and the general eccentricity of his actions. Being a Major in the Hessian service, he wore his uniform at the ball, which was a short blue coat with gold frogs, with a belt, unusually broad, across his shoulders, from which his sword depended. This dress, being a little particular, when compared with the

full-trimmed suits of velvet and satin about him, though, as professional, strictly conformable to the etiquette of the Court, attracted the notice of his Majesty and his attendants; and the buzz, 'Who is he?' 'Whence does he come?' etc., etc., was heard in all parts of the room. Thus he became the focus of attraction, and especially when the contrast presented itself of his selecting the beautiful Miss Gunning as his partner. He led her out to dance a minuet, but when, on the first crossing of his lovely partner, he put on his hat, which was of the largest Kevenhüller kind, ornamented with two large black and white feathers, the figure which he cut was so truly ridiculous and preposterous, that even the gravity of his Majesty could not be restrained: the grave faces of the Ministers relaxed into a smile, and the Prince of Wales was actually thrown into a convulsive fit of laughter. There was such an irresistible provocation to risibility in the *tout ensemble* of his appearance and style of movement, that his fair partner was reluctantly obliged to lose sight of good manners, and could scarcely finish the minuet; but Hanger himself joined in the laugh which was raised at his expense, and thereby extricated his partner from her embarrassment. This is, perhaps, the first time that the *pas grave* of a minuet has been considered as a mighty good jest, but there are moments when even the most serious circumstances serve only to produce a comic effect.

The Major now stood up to dance a country dance, but here his motions were so completely antic, and so much resembling those of a mountebank, that he totally discomfited his partner,

put the whole set into confusion, and excited a degree of laughter throughout the room such as had never before been witnessed in a royal drawing-room.

On the following day the subject of the Major's ludicrous début at Court became the topic of conversation at the convivial board at Carlton House, when the Prince proposed that a letter should be written to the Major, thanking him in the name of the company which had assembled in the drawing-room, for the pleasure and gratification which he had afforded them. The joke was considered a good one. Writing materials were ordered, and the Prince himself indited the following letter, which was copied by Sheridan, with whose handwriting the Major was unacquainted:

'St. James's Street,
'Sunday morning.

'The Company who attended the Ball on Friday last, at St James's, present their compliments to Major Hanger, and return their unfeigned thanks for the variety with which he enlivened the insipidity of that evening's entertainment. The *gentlemen* want words to describe their admiration of the truly grotesque and humourous figure which he exhibited: and the *ladies* beg leave to express their acknowledgements for the lively and animated emotions that his stately, erect, and perpendicular form could not fail to excite in their delicate and susceptible bosoms. His gesticulations and martial deportment were truly admirable, and have raised

an impression that will not be soon effaced at St James's.'

This letter produced a highly humorous scene, which often excited a laugh when the Prince related it to his guests, as one of the most humorous which had occurred to him during his life.

On the day subsequent to the receipt of this letter, the Prince purposely invited George Hanger to dine at Carlton House, and it formed part of the plot of his Royal Highness, that Sheridan should not be invited. After dinner the conversation turned, designedly, upon the leading circumstances of the late ball; and, on the Prince ironically complimenting the Major on the serious effect which his appearance must have had on the hearts of the ladies, he, in a very indignant manner, drew from his pocket the letter which he had received, declaring that it was a complete affront upon him, and that the sole motive of the writer was to insult him, and turn him into ridicule. The Prince requested permission to read the letter, and, having perused it, he fully coincided in the opinion of the Major, that no other motive could have actuated the writer than to offer him the greatest affront.

The Major's anger rose. 'Blitz und Hölle!' he exclaimed; 'if I could discover the writer he should give me immediate satisfaction.'

'I admire your spirit,' said the Prince; 'how insulting to talk of your grotesque figure.'

'And then to turn your stately, erect and perpendicular form into ridicule,' said Mr. Fox.

'And to talk of your gesticulations,' said Captain Morris.

'Sapperment!' exclaimed the Major, 'but the writer shall be discovered.'

'Have you not the slightest knowledge of the handwriting?' asked the Prince; 'the characters are, I think, somewhat familiar to me. Allow me to peruse the letter again.' The letter was handed to the Prince. 'I am certain that I am not mistaken,' he said; 'this is the handwriting of that mischievous fellow, Sheridan.'

'Sheridan!' exclaimed the Major. 'Impossible – it cannot be!'

'Hand the letter to Fox,' said the Prince; 'he knows Sheridan's handwriting well.'

'This is undoubtedly the handwriting of Sheridan,' said Fox, looking at the letter.

'Then he shall give me immediate satisfaction,' said the Major, rising from the table; and, addressing himself to Captain Morris, requested him to be the bearer of his message to Mr. Sheridan. Having written the note, in which a full and public apology was demanded, or a place of meeting appointed, Captain Morris was despatched with it; and in the meantime he (the Major) would retire to his lodgings to await the answer from Mr. Sheridan. The Prince now pretended to interfere, expressing his readiness to be a mediator between the parties, but at the same time he contrived, every now and then, to increase the flame of the Major's resentment by some artful insinuations as to the grossness of the affront, and complimenting him on the spirited manner in which he had behaved on the occasion. The Major was determined not to be appeased, and he left the room, muttering,

'D – n the impudent fellow! grotesque figure! perpendicular form! gesticulations!'

The Major had no sooner retired than the whole party burst into a loud laugh. The Prince had brought him to the very point he wished, and in about an hour Captain Morris arrived with Sheridan, who entered immediately into the spirit of the adventure. It was then agreed that Sheridan should accept the challenge, appointing the following morning at daybreak in Battersea Fields, and that Mr. Fox should be the bearer of Mr. Sheridan's answer to the offended Major, Mr. Sheridan undertaking, on his part, to provide the necessary surgical assistance.

On the following morning the parties were punctually on the spot; the Major, accompanied by Captain Morris, Mr. Sheridan by Mr. Fox, the Prince of Wales, disguised as a surgeon, being seated in the carriage which conveyed the latter gentlemen. The customary preliminaries being arranged, the parties took their stations. The signal to fire was given; no effect took place. The seconds loaded the pistols a second time; the parties fired again; still no effect was produced.

'D – n the fellow!' said the Major to his second, 'I can't hit him.'

'The third fire generally takes effect,' said Captain Morris, who with the utmost difficulty could keep his risible faculties in order, whilst the Prince, in the carriage, was almost convulsed with laughter at the grotesque motions of the Major.

The signal to fire was given the third time. The effect was decisive; Mr. Sheridan fell, as if dead, on his back.

'Killed, by G – d!' said Captain Morris. 'Let us fly instantly;' and, without giving the Major time to collect himself, he hurried him to the carriage, which immediately drove away towards town. The Prince descended from the carriage, almost faint with laughter, and joined Sheridan and Fox, the former of whom, as soon as the Major's carriage was out of sight, had risen from his prostrate position, unscathed as when he entered the field, for, to complete the farce, it had been previously arranged that no balls should be put into the pistols, and that Sheridan was to fall on the third fire. The Prince, with his two associates, immediately drove off to town, and a message was sent to Major Hanger, desiring his immediate attendance at Carlton House. The Major obeyed the summons, and he entered the apartment of the Prince with a most dolorous countenance.

'Bad business this,' said the Prince – 'a very bad business, Hanger; but I have the satisfaction to tell you that Sheridan is not materially hurt, and if you will dine with me this day, I will invite a gentleman who will give you an exact account of the state in which your late antagonist lies. Remain here till dinner-time, and all may yet be well.'

The Prince, from goodness of heart, and not wishing that the Major should have the painful impression on his mind that he had been the instrument of the death of a fellow-creature and one of the most convivial of their companions, had imparted

to the Major the consolatory information that his antagonist was not seriously injured, and the Major looked forward to the hour of dinner with some anxiety, when he was to receive further information on the subject. The hour came. The party was assembled in the drawing-room.

'Now, Hanger,' said the Prince, 'I'll introduce a gentleman to you who shall give you all the information you can wish.'

The door opened, and Sheridan entered. The Major started back in wonder.

'How – how – how is this?' he stammered. 'I thought I had killed you.'

'Not quite, my good fellow,' said Sheridan, offering the Major his hand. 'I am not yet quite good enough to go to the world above; and, as to that below, I am not yet fully qualified for it, therefore I considered it better to defer my departure from this to a future period; and, now, I doubt not, that his Royal Highness will give you an explicit explanation of the whole business – but I died well, did I not, Hanger?'

The Prince now declared that the whole plot was concocted by himself, and hoped that when the Major next fought such a duel, he might be in a coach to view it. Conviviality reigned throughout the evening; the song and glass went round; the Prince singing the parody on 'There's a difference between a beggar and a queen,' which was composed by Captain Morris, and which is to be found in the twenty-fourth edition of 'Songs Political and Convivial,' by that first of lyric poets.

One more anecdote of the Prince and George Hanger, from the same source,²⁸ and I have done with him.

'That the immense losses which the Prince of Wales sustained at the gaming table were not, always, the consequence of a run of ill luck, may be easily conjectured. Scheme after scheme was devised by which a heavy drain was to be made upon his finances; and he became, eventually, the dupe of a set of titled sharpers, who fattened on his credulity, and who, by acts of the most deliberate villainy, reduced him to a state of comparative pauperism. As a proof of the inventive spirit of these associates of the Prince, we have only to mention the celebrated wager between the turkeys and the geese, which emanated from the prolific head of George Hanger, and on the issue of which the Prince found himself minus several thousand pounds.

'During one of the convivial parties at Carlton House, George Hanger designedly introduced the subject of the travelling qualifications of the turkey and the goose, and he pronounced it as his opinion (although directly contrary to his real one), that the turkey would outstrip the goose. The Prince, who placed great reliance on the judgment of George Hanger on subjects of that nature, backed Hanger's opinion; and, as it may be supposed, there were some of the party who were willing to espouse the part of the goose: the dispute ended in the Prince making a match of twenty turkeys against twenty geese for a distance of ten miles, the competitors to start at four o'clock in the afternoon. The race

²⁸ Huish, vol. i., 164.

was to be run for £500; and, as George Hanger and the turkey party hesitated not to lay two to one in favour of their bird, the Prince did the same to a considerable amount, not in the least suspecting that the whole was a deep laid plan to extract a sum of money from his pockets, for his chance of winning, from the natural propensity of the turkey, was wholly out of the question.

"The Prince took great interest in this extraordinary wager, and deputed George Hanger to select twenty of the most wholesome and high feathered birds which could be procured; and, on the day appointed, the Prince and his party of turkeys and Mr. Berkeley and his party of geese, set off to decide the match. For the first three hours everything seemed to indicate that the turkeys would be the winners, as they were, then, two miles in advance of the geese; but, as night came on, the turkeys began to stretch out their necks towards the branches of the trees which lined the sides of the road. In vain the Prince attempted to urge them on with his pole, to which a bit of red cloth was attached: in vain George Hanger dislodged one from its roosting-place, before he saw three or four others comfortably perching among the branches – in vain was barley strewn upon the road; no art, no stratagem, no compulsion, could prevent them taking to their roosting-place! whilst, in the meantime, the geese came waddling on, and in a short time passed the turkey party, who were all busy in the trees, dislodging their obstinate birds; but, as to further progress, it was found impossible, and the geese were declared the winners.

'Trifling as this circumstance may appear, it will have the tendency of exposing the characters of the intimates of the Prince of Wales, and the singular expedients to which they had recourse to restore their shattered fortunes at the expense of his character and fortune.'

On the death of Lord Coleraine, a contemporary²⁹ thus sums up his character: 'He was, formerly, admitted amongst the convivial companions of his present Majesty; but, as the Prince advanced in life, the eccentric manners of the Colonel became somewhat too free and coarse for the Royal taste, and the broad vivacity of the facetious Humourist gave way to associates of a more refined description. But, though the Colonel was free in his manners, he never was inclined to give intentional offence, and the peculiarity of those manners precluded all idea of resentment, and laughter, rather than anger, was the result of his most extravagant sallies.

'He was capable of serious exertions of friendship, not by pecuniary sacrifices, for, of such, his situation hardly ever admitted, but by persevering zeal when he was likely to effect a beneficial purpose. He was well acquainted with military duty, and was never wanting in courage, or the spirit of enterprise. He is generally acknowledged to have been a very handsome man in early life, but his person was disguised by the singularity of his dress. Though disposed to participate in all the dissipations of higher life, he yet contrived to devote much of his time to

²⁹ *Gentleman's Magazine*, 1824, part i., 457, 458.

reading, and was generally well provided with topics for the usual conversations of the table, even in the most convivial circles. He was so marked a character that he might be considered as one of the prominent features of his time, and he was courted as well for the peculiarity, as for the harmless tendency of his humour.'

CHAPTER VI

The Prince goes to Brighton for his health – Description of Brighton in 1784 – Royal visitors – The Prince takes a house – Weltje – Sam House – Fox and the Prince – Brighton in 1785

IN 1784 the Prince of Wales had a somewhat serious illness, and we read in the *Morning Herald* of July 16 that 'His Royal Highness, the Prince of Wales, having been advised by his Physicians to sea bathing, we are informed from good authority, that his Royal Highness will set out on Monday next for Brighthelmstone. Mr. Weltje, the Clerk of the Kitchen, and Mr. Gill, the Purveyor of the Stables, are now at Brighthelmstone, preparing everything for his Royal Highness's reception.'

He left London on the evening of July 22, and the following are some newspaper cuttings which describe his visit and the general gaieties of that season at Brighton:

'*Brighthelmstone* will certainly prove the summer residence of the *loves* and *graces*, on account of the temporary residence there of the Heir apparent: not a cock loft but what is taken by some *expectant fair*, who means to make an *innocent conquest*, or an *illicit sacrifice*! – The *Knights of the Dice box* are collecting there

from all quarters, hoping for a plentiful harvest in so singular a season for universal *gul-* as well as *cul-libility*! A pretty sprinkling of Princes of the *Gallic blood* is, likewise, hourly expected to complete the curious *dramatis personæ*.³⁰

'*Extract from a letter from Brighthelmstone, July 25.* The Prince of Wales is here quite as a private gentleman, attended by Colonel Leigh, etc. He walks frequently upon the Steine, and behaves with great affability and politeness.'³¹

'Brighthelmstone Intelligence. *Brighthelmstone* is the center *luminary* of the *system* of pleasure: Lymington, Southampton and all other places within the *sphere* of its *attraction*, lose their gayest visitants, who fly to that resort: – the women, the pretty women, all hasten to see the *Paris* of the day! – On Monday last, the Dukes of *Chartres* and *Lauzun*, the Marquis *de Conflans*, the Comte *de Seguir*, and others, arrived to be present at the races. They came from France by the way of Dover, but had all their equipage sent over from *Dieppe*. The lively and engaging Comtesse *de Coniac* was to have met them by the latter route at Brighthelmstone; but some *dæmon*, unfriendly to gallantry, and to this place, interposed, and procured an *arret* to be expedited from the Queen of France's bedchamber, just as the sprightly belle was casting a longing eye from *Dieppe* over to the British coast, and preparing to step into the *pacquet*. This is a prodigious disappointment to the company, and particularly to the *Prince*.

³⁰ *Morning Herald*, July 27.

³¹ *Parker's General Advertiser*, July 28.

His Highness gave an elegant dinner at his house on the *Steine*. The *Duc de Chartres* and his friends were present: the meeting was festive and social. In the evening, this convivial party visited the Rooms: the company was genteel and numerous. The Prince danced with Lady *Elizabeth Conway*, and was acknowledged the best performer present.

'On Tuesday, the *Brighton Races* began, which afforded but very little sport. The Duke of Queensberry's was the favourite horse, but lost; and the *Duc de Chartres*, who betted him against the field, got rid of a good deal of money on the occasion. The sport was not better the next day, but rather worse, on account of the badness of the weather. All the Ladies attended both days, mostly in carriages. Lady *Charlotte Bertie* was the Constellation, or superior luminary of the course. *Micavit inter omnes, quantum inter ignes Luna minores*. Lady *Lincoln*, and her sister Lady *Betty Conway*, drove about in a phaeton, to the great annoyance of the beaux.

'The public entertainments at Brighthelmstone are, balls at the rooms twice a week, alternately at the *Ship*, and *Castle*, and plays, the other four nights, at the theatre. The balls are on Monday and Thursday; and no dress is required except in those that dance minuets. The rooms are, besides, open all the other nights for card parties, and on *Sunday* for a promenade. The Prince has not yet missed the Play house once, when there has been a performance at it, since his arrival. The pleasurable daughters of the place, have at their head, Mrs. *Smith*, Mrs. *Elliot*, and Mrs.

Walker; between whom an equipoise of rivalry and jealousy prevails, and what one has in a *dimple*, is counteracted by the lip, or the eye of the others.'³²

'Lewes Races. The *Prince of Wales* is so regardless of weather, that a shower of rain is never known to interrupt his excursions. His Highness's indifference on this head, reminds us of a remark of *Henry the Great*, "that fate does not depend upon a sunbeam!" – The example of the British prince was followed by his *insular* friends and *Parisian* visitors. The road from Brighthelmstone to Lewes, was crowded by *gentlemen jockies* and *jockey sharpeners*; carriages of various denominations, and a company of all descriptions. The *Steine* was depopulated of all save a few *living caricatures*, consisting of antique Females, and *balloonified* squires from the City, too awkward and unwieldy to wear boots, or venture on horseback: to this class of beings, the ball room was relinquished.

'The Course ground continued, during the races, frequented by fashionable guests. Besides the English and French princes, were present the Duc de Lauzun, Marquis de Conflans, Count Seguir, the Russian minister, and several others from the Continent. The Duke of Queensberry, Lord Cholmondeley, Lord Foley, and many more of the Jockey Club were on the ground.

'The Bets were high, though the sport was indifferent; the Duke de Chartres, Duke of Queensberry and Sir Charles Bunbury, were principally engaged in the success of the day. The

³² *Morning Herald*, August 9.

Gallic Duke was in such spirits, that it was said his Highness would have mounted an *Air balloon* had one been present.

'A *Pedestrian Race* was, also, proposed between a *fat gentleman*, and a *lean one*: but the former complaining that the atmosphere was low, gave up the contest as he was fearful he should be *hard blowed*!'³³

The Prince being at Brighton made all the difference in the gaiety of the place, and his occasional absence in London is thus commented upon: 'Brighthelmstone, comparatively speaking, within these few days, has become almost a desert; scarce a person of fashion remains; the whole company now consists of *antiquated virgins*, *emaciated beaux*, and wealthy citizens, with their wives and daughters; the latter of whom have some *weight* in continuing a few needy adventurers, who are as watchful as lynxes, for an opportunity of carrying off the golden prizes.'³⁴

Note how this all changes when he returns. 'Extract from a Letter from Brighthelmstone, dated Sep. 5. We are all alive and merry here. Besides the honour of his Royal Highness the Prince of Wales's company, we are favoured with those of the Duchess of Ancaster, Lady Charlotte Bertie, Lady Mary Brudenell, the Bishop of Winchester, Lord and Lady Beauchamp, the Right Hon. Mr. Fox, with many others; and, last night, the Right Hon. Mr. Pitt, accompanied by Mr. Steele, of the Treasury, arrived here.

³³ *Morning Herald*, August 10.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, August 21.

'The Prince of Wales was, last night, at the Theatre, accompanied by the Hon. Mr. Erskine, and the Hon. Mr. Onslow, to see the Beggar's Opera, the principal parts of which were represented by gentlemen, and well represented they were. Captain Ash's *Macheath* much exceeded many of the professional men on either of your London theatres. It was succeeded by a well-timed address, written and spoken by Mr. Bonner, craving the friendly attendance of the company to the future benefits of the several performers.'³⁵

We also learn by a newspaper paragraph³⁶ that 'the house that the Prince of Wales has at Brighthelmstone, is that which formerly belonged to Lord Egremont's brother, Mr. Wyndham. The Duke of Cumberland had it last year. The house is, or ought to be, the best in the place.'

This is the house which we have seen was negotiated for the Prince by Weltje, his clerk of the kitchen; at least, this was his nominal title, but in reality he was the Prince's purveyor of his household, and was much mixed up in his financial matters. Louis Weltje was a German of obscure origin, and it is said, at one time, sold cakes in the streets. However, he must have had something in him, and must also have been thrifty, for in the newspapers of 1782 and 1783 we find several mentions of Weltje's Club, and he had a famous pastry-cook's shop and restaurant in St. James Street, and afterwards in Pall Mall. In

³⁵ *Morning Herald*, September 9.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, August 27.

the satirical prints in the British Museum for 1783, drawn by Captain Hays, is 'Mr. Weltjee's Fruit Shop, Pall Mall.' Madame Weltje, a large woman, is seated at a horseshoe counter, on which is a variety of fruit. In the window are displayed pines, grapes, bottles, and jars. A manuscript note says her shop was 'next door neighbour to Mr. Neville.' He served the Prince for some years, but was at last superseded. On his retirement he bought a large house at Hammersmith, formerly in the occupation of Lord Allington, the supporters of whose arms, two talbots, decorated the gate-posts. In this house, which he bequeathed to his brother Christopher, he died, probably of apoplexy, in 1810, and was buried in Hammersmith Churchyard. His name still exists in the neighbourhood in Weltje Road, which runs from the Upper Mall to King Street West, and consists of sixty-eight houses.

We have seen that Fox was at Brighton in 1784. Fox, who was the 'guide, philosopher, and friend' of Prince Florizel, was at this time a man of about thirty-five or thirty-six, having been born in 1749. By his birth, education, and talents he should have been a fitting companion for the Prince, but he was lax in his morals, an inveterate gambler, and a hard drinker, and a worse comrade for a young man could scarcely be found. Indeed, at the end of the Westminster election of 1784 Gillray caricatured him in a satirical print entitled 'Preceptor and Pupil' as a loathsome toad with a fox's brush, who is whispering into the ear of the sleeping (or drunken) Prince: 'Abjure thy country and thy parents, and I will give thee dominion over many powers. Better to rule in Hell

than serve in Heaven!"

Apropos of this election, which lasted forty days, and brought Fox in second at the poll, it is perhaps as famous as any in our electoral history. Much to the disgust of his parents, the Prince threw himself heart and soul into the fray, wearing a 'Fox cockade' at Ranelagh, and allowing members of his household to canvas for his boon companion. During the election, Gillray produced a satirical print (April 18, 1784) called 'Returning from Brooks's,' where the Prince, exceedingly drunk, and wearing the 'Fox cockade,' is being helped along by Fox and Sam House, a publican who kept a house, called The Intrepid Fox, at the corner of Peter Street and Wardour Street. 'Honest Sam House,' as he was called, was a violent politician and Whig, and during this election kept open house at his own expense. House figures in many caricatures of the time, and his fame was even enshrined in verse:

'See the brave Sammy House, he's as still as a mouse,
And does canvas with prudence so clever;
See what shoals with him flocks, to poll for brave Fox:
Give thanks to Sam House, boys, for ever, for ever, for ever!
Give thanks to Sam House, boys, for ever!

'Brave bald-headed Sam, all must own, is the man,
Who does canvas for brave Fox so clever:
His aversion, I say, is to *small beer* and *Wray*.³⁷

³⁷ Sir Cecil Wray, one of the candidates.

May his bald head be honour'd for ever, for ever, for ever!
May his bald head be honour'd for ever!'

There is another satirical print, which is dated January, 1785, by an unknown artist, called 'Fox singing a Song to the P – e of W – l – s.' Fox and the Prince are playing cards and drinking. Fox sings:

1

'Tho' matters at present go cross in the realm,
You will one day be K – g, Sir, and I at the helm;
So let us be jovial, drink, gamble and sing,
Nor regard it a straw, tho' we're not yet the thing.
Tol de rol, tol, tol, tol de rol.

2

'The proverb informs us, each dog has his day,
So those that oppose us, this fate must obey;
But time's on our side, Sir, and now on the wing,
To make me a statesman, and you, Sir, the K – g.
Tol de rol, etc.

3

'In vain are harangues, I as well may be dumb,
And let motions alone, till our day, Sir, is come;
Then Thurlow and Pitt from their state we will fling,
They may go below stairs, Sir, so we are the thing.
Tol de rol, etc.

4

'Thus seated in state, Sir, we'll fill all our soul,
At the fountain of Venus, at Bacchus's bowl;
In all that we please, Sir, we'll take a full swing,
For who's to controul a Prime Statesman and K – g?
Tol de rol, etc.'

The Prince remarks: 'Fox, are you not the shuffler?'

'The Prince of Wales has again taken a house at Brighton for the season,' says the *Morning Post* of June 11, 1785, and he left London for his seaside residence on the 22nd of the same month. The same newspaper of June 28 reports that 'the visit of a certain gay, illustrious character at Brighton, has frightened away a number of old maids, who used constantly to frequent

that place. The history of the gallantries of the last season, which is in constant circulation, has something in it so voluminous, and tremendous to boot, that the old tabbies shake in their shoes whenever his R – I H – ss is mentioned.'

'*Lewes, July 2.* – The Prince of Wales, on Monday last, at Brighthelmstone, amused himself for some time, in attempting to shoot doves with single balls, but with what success, we have not learnt; though we hear that his Royal Highness is esteemed a most excellent shot, and seldom presents his piece without doing some execution. The Prince, in the course of his diversion, either by design, or accident, lowered the tops of several of the chimnies of the Hon. Mr. Wyndham's house.'³⁸

A few paragraphs from the *Morning Post* of this year will give us a good insight into the Brighton of the period.

July 6. – 'The *Brighthelmstone intelligence* has no novelty to recommend it; merely a repetition of the old story; *morning rides, champaigne, dissipation, noise and nonsense*: jumble these phrases together, and you have a complete account of all that's passing at *Brighthelmstone*!'

July 8. – 'A correspondent says, Brighthelmstone is much altered from what it was last season. Neither money, nor any speculating jewellers who give good *tick*, and discount upon a *gentle feeling*. The – has been tried and found wanting – all about him is not sterling – but one good *endorser* in the whole set, and he abroad. Times are bad.

³⁸ *Morning Post*, July 8, 1785.

'Mrs. Johnson and Windsor have undertaken to provide for the necessities of Brighton this year. The *female adventurers* of last season were totally ruined: even *Bet Cox*, who made as good a hand of it as any, swears she will not run the risk again, and that, *though as how* she was with the Prince, one night when he was drunk, yet that did not compensate her for the wear and tear with his attendants. We have not yet heard Mrs. *Smith's* opinion on the subject; but, as she was nearer the fire, she could not well escape being scorched.'

August 4. – 'Brighthelmstone is at present very thin of company, few females arriving there but the *corps d'amour*. Women of virtue and character shun these scenes of debauchery and drunkenness, ever attendant on the spot which is the temporary residence of a –.'

August 18. – 'His Royal Highness the Prince is so attached to his bathing residence, Brighthelmstone – he has so many sea nymphs there, rising from Old Ocean every morning to greet him; that, in the true spirit of an *English Prince*, his sole desire appears to *rule the waves*: and, when he comes to Town, he is actually like *a fish out of water*.'

August 25. – 'Plague upon the *skippers* that they do not understand the navigation of their own coasts! for, surely, some of the Margate Hoys have blundered by both the North and South Foreland, and landed their cargoes on the Sussex Shore. Never were there such a set of curmudgeonly knaves and dowdies, before, in Brighton, say the conscientious keepers of

the subscription books! The lodging-houses are full, the streets well frequented, and the Steyne crowded – but who bathes, who raffles, and who subscribes? They vow that they never had so little Gold in their Autumn crop, since they were obliged to content themselves with the profits of their fishing, to wash their smocks upon the beach, and to live on crabs and pickled herrings!

'In fact, the visitors of this place are either a wiser, or a poorer sort than formerly. *Snug* is the word with most of them; they give as little into amusements, dissipation and extra expences, as they can well avoid – hence, the obvious policy of the inhabitants to render the necessary ones as high and as productive as possible – they treat Londoners in their town as we treat Dutchmen and others, in our charge for lights and landmarks – make them come down handsomely, as it is to be done but seldom. The innkeepers here, are a kind of beasts of prey, whose rapacity is in proportion to their former abstinence: they are leeches, who think a plethora of the purse is no less dangerous than that of the body; and, though you come here only to have your constitution put to rights, they will, also, gladly take charge of your property.

'An Irish gentleman being asked, the other day, by a friend, which Inn he thought the best, observed that they were both bad enough; at one you were *imposed upon*; at the other, *cheated*. The Rooms have been pretty well frequented on a Sunday, when it is the Vauxhall price of admission. The play house must, long since, have shut up, were it not for the *extraordinary abilities* and *fertile*

resources of Mr. Fox,³⁹ and the patronage of the fair emigrants from Cleveland Row, Jermyn Street, and King's Place – there have been no gentlemen enactors, this year; so much the worse. With deference, be it said, to the judgement of certain titled ladies, who, adding to their *purity* by every successive plunge into the salt water, pronounced the mixture of gentlemen with professed actors, a perfect contamination. Better sense, however, and more extra liberality prevail at present; for ladies now ride to the Downs to see Earls and great folks play at cricket, with footmen and drivers, without having their delicacy wounded, or their finer feelings deranged. That game has become the favourite amusement with the young men of fashion here. Mr. *St. John* is the best bowler; Lord *Darnley* and *George Hanger* the best bats; *Bob* the postillion, the best stopper behind the wicket. As to his Royal Highness, he is but a young cricketer; the ladies, however, commend his agility; and, since Mrs *J – n's* squad arrived, he has been famous for catching and running.

'On Saturday last, the *Marquis de Conflans* took his departure for *Dieppe*. The Prince and his company went to see the Marquis embark, when a very extraordinary and humorous scene was presented. It being low water, the boat could not approach the shore – the Marquis was anxious to get on board, and stood, for some time, in suspense, when the Prince, to show him that persons of their rank should not have the propensities of cats, or the frippery of *petits maîtres*, taking one of his companions by the

³⁹ The lessee and manager.

hand, rushed at once into the water. The Marquis, *pour l'honneur de la France*, could not do otherwise than follow him; the line advanced with resolution, but could not long withstand the force of the waves, which overset them; they then rolled like porpoises in the water, till they got the Marquis aboard the packet; when they despatched him, in a proper state, to pay his respects to the *Dauphin*

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