

**THE OLD CHELSEA
BUN-HOUSE: A TALE
OF THE LAST CENTURY**

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The Old Chelsea Bun-House: A Tale of the Last Century by Anne Manning

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ANNE MANNING

**THE OLD CHELSEA
BUN-HOUSE: A TALE
OF THE LAST CENTURY**

THE
OLD CHELSEA BUN-HOUSE.

A Tale of the Last Century.

BY

THE AUTHOR OF 'MARY POWELL.'

Second Edition.

See how the World its Votaries rewards /
A Youth of Folly, an Old Age of Cards !
* * * * *
But trust me, Dears, Good-humour will prevail,
When Aims, and Fights, and Screams, and Scoldings fall,
Beauties in vain their pretty Eyes may roll,
Charms strike the Sight, but Merit wins the Soul.
Pope : *Rape of the Lock.*

LONDON :

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1860.



CHAPTER I.

Lady Betty's Folly.

It is a sad Thing when a Lady of Quality, who has been a Toast in her Youth, and has seen the white-gloved Beaux, as Mr. *Pope* calls them, bowing to her from the Pit, and kissing the scented Tips of their Gloves to her in the Ring; who has flaunted at *Vaux-hall*, and thone in a Side-Box of the Opera-House in *Lincoln's Inn Fields*; has run down *Handel*, and run after *Bononcini*; has had her gay Water-Parties to *Jenny's Whim*, attended by Violins and Hautboys; and has brought, not only her own Company, but her own Strawberries and Cherries to our Bun-house, as if our own were not good enough; it is mortifying, I say, when such a Lady of Quality falls into the fear and yellow Autumn of Life, and finds herself a disregarded Thing, with no resources but green Tea and Brag. And such is the Cafe with poor Lady *Betty Spadille*.

How well I remember her, on the Occasion I have somewhat maliciously alluded to, for it sticks in my Throat, arriving at our Bun-House in her peach-coloured Sacque, Mechlin Head, and red-heeled Shoes

the Foreparts richly embroidered with Silver; loudly talking and laughing, and turning her Head right and left, now to this Beau, now to t'other, who fluttered round her with their clouded Canes and perfumed Wigs; now bursting into what the *French* People call *des grands Eclats de Rire*, now flirting her Fan, or rapping it on the Shoulder of one of the Ladies who accompanied her. Having just set my Mark, a Sprig of Rosemary, in the midst of one of good Bishop *Atterbury's* Sermons, I thought within myself, "Is this a Creature that is formed for Eternity?" Meanwhile, two tall Lacqueys, with immense Shoulder-Knots, bore between them a great Hamper of *French* Wine; while a little black Page, in pale Blue, laced with Silver, tottered under the Fruit from *Rogers's*; and certainly it was very fine. I never saw such Strawberries and Cherries before nor since.

I did not think her a Belle of the first Order, setting her Rank and Style aside. Her Shape was fine; her Hand and Foot delicately formed; but she rolled her Eyes too much, and had too high a Colour. I don't believe she painted. Altogether, she seemed in the very Flush of Existence; as if she had never met with a Reverse, nor ever expected one. She seemed to think "Let us Eat and Drink," without adding, "To-morrow *we die*."

We had set our oval Walnut-wood Table under the umbrageous Shade of two large Elms, and had spread it with one of our best Tablecloths. This was super-

ciliously removed by the two Footmen, who spread a Tablecloth and Napkins they had brought with them. Our China Service and water Caraffes they condescended to use. Meanwhile, the Boatmen brought up a second Hamper, containing Ham, Tongue, Chicken, Sallet, and other Matters: but the Footmen, I should mention, brought the Plate, including not only silver Forks, but a silver Stew-Pan.

The gay Bevy having streamed hither and thither, making their humourous and contemptuous Remarks, which were continually intersperfed with, "Oh, my *Lord!*" and, "Oh, Sir *Charles!*" at length fettled down to their Repast. There were three Ladies and four Gentlemen. Also, there was a tall, slender Girl in Black, whom I concluded my *Lady's* own Woman, because she stood the whole Time, a little behind *Lady Betty*, holding her Handkerchief and Scent-Bottle, watching her Eye, and obeying her Commands, almost before spoken; notwithstanding which, my *Lady's* Lip was often put up, and such words as "Thou'rt strangely slow . . . Canst not hear me, Creature?" were muttered by her rosy mouth.

And there was pale Mr. *Fenwick*, sitting at his open Casement over the Bun-Shop, Book in Hand, hearing, seeing, and silently noting all.

One of the Gentlemen was my Lord *Earlstoke*, (to whom the Town gave *Lady Betty*;) a weak-eyed, puny Peer; another, Sir *Charles Sefton*, all Fashion and Froth; a third, a handsome young Gentleman, whom

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they called Mr. *Arbuthnot*: the fourth, who had the Wit and Sprightliness of all the Rest, (for whereas they continually laughed, he continually gave them Something worth laughing at,) was a lank, ungraceful, undersized Personage, of olivander Complexion, with projecting Teeth, quick, black Eyes, and a not unagreeable Physiognomy, though his Figure was mean and almost Distorted. His Name was *Caryl*, which I learned not at first, they were so given to address him by his baptismal Name of *Paul*.

Then, for the Ladies, there was Lady *Mary*, my Lord's Aunt, and the Duenna of the Party; and Lady *Grace*, a sweet pretty Creature, but empty and self-sufficient.

It might have been thought, that two able-bodied Men and a Foot-page were Servitors enow for a Party of seven; but on the contrary, they kept my younger Sister *Prudence*, who was then very pretty, continually afoot, tripping to and from the House on one impertinent Errand or another, while I attended to the general Customers. At length, coming up to me with a painful Blush on her Cheek, "*Patty*," says she, "do oblige me by changing Places, will you? I can't abide the ways of these Quality, and give no satisfaction, and only get scoffed at."

"Perhaps I may please them no better, *Prue*," said I, "however, I'll try." And as I proceeded to take her Place, I heard Mr. *Paul* (that's to say, Mr. *Caryl*;) observe to Sir *Charles*, "Humph! we've lost *Rachel* and got *Leah*."

This was not over-civil; but I took no notice.

"Now then," cries Lady *Betty*, in high Good-Humour, "I'll make you what we have called a *Peter-sham* Chicken, ever since Lady *Caroline's* Frolick. "Here are seven of us, and here are seven Chickens, "which must, in the first Place, be finely minced; fo "let each take one." And while every one was laughing and mincing their Chicken, she pulls off ever so many diamond Rings from her white Fingers, and gives them to her Woman to hold.

"Don't trouble yourself, my *Lord*," says she, carelessly, as he stoops to pick up one she had let fall on the Grass, "*Gatty* will find it. Here, Child, take "them all; and," (aside with a Frown), "be sure you "don't lose them. Now, *Pompey!* the spirit-Lamp; "three pats of Butter, and a Flaggon of spring Water. "The only variation I make in Lady *Caroline's* "cookery is to stew my Chicken in a silver Stew-Pan, "instead of in a China Dish, which might crack over "the Lamp. Prithee, *Pompey*, don't let the Grass "grow under your Feet!"

Methought, if her Ladyship had been *obliged* to cook her own Supper, she would have considered herself demeaned by it very much: however, there is nothing that Quality will not do for a Freak. By and by, she gets tired of stewing her Chicken over the Lamp, and bids the young Person she calls *Gatty* to carry it in-doors and dress it over the Fire. "And be sure, "Child, not to let it burn." As I did not seem wanted,

I shewed Mrs. *Gatty* the way to the Kitchen, and stood by while she stirred the Stew-Pan over the Fire. "I'm ready to drop!" says she, at length. "No wonder," said I, taking the silver Spoon from her, and using it myself, "you have never once sat down since you left the Boat, and 'tis the Dog-Days. Rest awhile, and I'll mind the Chicken." "Thank you heartily," says she, dropping into a Seat, and turning from Red to White, and then Red again. "May I take a draught of this cold Water?" "Aye, and welcome," said I, "so that you're not afraid of drinking it while you're so hot." "Oh, I'm not afraid," says she, drinking plentifully of it, and setting down the Mug with a Sigh of relief. "I'm better now, but there was such a glare upon the River."

"Are you her Ladyship's Woman?" said I. With that, she fetches a deep Sigh; and, says she, "I'm no better, now, and a hard Life to me it is. I am the Daughter of a poor Country Curate, who died and left a large Family penniless: but my *Mother*, who married him for love, had high Connections; so *Lady Betty* takes me for her Woman, partly, as she says, out of Charity, and partly because she prefers being served by a decayed Person of Condition. I have twenty Pounds by the Year, and indeed, 'tis hardly earned." "That I can well believe," said I. "But what can I do!" says she. "My *Lady* has engaged to give me enough cast-off Apparel, to keep me in Clothing; so that I shall be able to fend the