

The Fickleness of the Reading Public

"I usually associate with those of quality, which is how I came to write a book on the practices of the French court."

Helping herself to several of Lady Alyssa's truffles, Lady Kathryn begins her tale.

"My interest in the French monarchy was first awoken by Pierre, Marquis de Creme Brulee, (a distant cousin on the French side of the family) who spent an idyllic summer with Papa and I at Basingstoke one year. Pierre had spent some time in the court of the present King's father and painted such an interesting portrait of the goings on there that I felt obliged to write a small volume detailing the customs and habits of the French as a contribution to Anglo-French relations. Pierre was delighted."

She adds in a confidential manner "I do think the old duck was rather taken with me. But, of course, at that time I was still mourning Vlad's tragic and rather inexplicable death. They were quite blunt tent pegs you know."

"Initially the volume was called 'Conduct, Courtesy and Cultivation: the Three C's of the French Court'. However, my publishers (the venerable firm of Tancard, Skooner and Barell) suggested that I might enjoy improved sales if I titled it in the same manner as my other best sellers and thus I renamed it 'The Breeding of French Monarchs'. I considered it a matter of courtesy to write a letter to King Louis informing him that I had written a book detailing the practices of the French Court. I added that, if it pleased him, I would be honoured to present his Highness with a complimentary signed copy upon its publication. You can imagine my surprise when a mere *official* wrote back demanding that I cease any further correspondence with the King and destroy the book immediately. The letter also warned that the court would be forced resort to unsavoury means if I did not retract my threats. Although bewildered, I could hardly suspect anyone else when the final galley proofs went missing the very next day."

"Suitably outraged, I immediately set off to the continent to retrieve my stolen property - my cousin Fergus kindly accompanying me. Upon arrival in Paris we soon learnt that the King was in need of a Cultural Adviser as the last had recently resigned due to 'artistic differences'. I realised at once that this was the perfect cover to infiltrate the court. Of course Fergus was *entirely* unsuitable for the position of Cultural Adviser. His idea of culture chiefly consisted of playing old Scottish drinking songs using bodily functions never mentioned in proper company. But still, a sweet obliging man. I wrote a most impressive resume, which secured him an interview with the King. I did not hold much hope that he would pass such a test but disguised him as a Fine French Courtier as best I could and urged him, if possible, to say nothing at all during the interview."

"The interview was remarkably brief but I was delighted, if a little mystified, to find that the King was so taken with Fergus that he had not only appointed him Cultural Adviser, but as Grand Poohbah as well! Of course, after we entered the court as master and ahem wench, I understood why Fergus had made such a favourable impression. Whilst the old guard of the court tried to retain the high standards so described to me by Pierre, Louis XV was a great deal less cultivated than could perhaps be desired. Court conversation centred around the newest addition to the Kings antique collection of novelty codpieces and" Lady Kathryn clears her throat as her gaze involuntarily flickers towards the Marquise De Pommesfritte, "whether a certain young nobleman - who shall remain nameless - would be able to fulfill a bet and drink an amount of ale that was entirely inappropriate for a single person."

"Fortunately with Fergus entrenched in the King's confidence we soon learnt where my precious

galley proofs had been hidden. I taxed Fergus with their retrieval whilst I acted as decoy, distracting the King from his absence. Given the flexibility of French fingers, I'm sure you understand the dangerous position I found myself. A most trying set of circumstances . But the King's palms were pleasantly dry", admitted Lady Kathryn, "and Fergus soon returned triumphant. The King was rather startled, as Fergus's wig had come rather askew, and he was waving his stump quite wildly (in the manner he does when overexcited). We left without further explanation."

"Out of respect for the late King, I did not include any of the additional material that I had gathered but I did keep the proofs in my bodice until the book was printed, which rendered them completely secure - if a little smudged. Initial sales were excellent, but did peter out after some critics suggested that the title for the book was a little misleading. But then, critics will be critics. I can hardly be expected to satisfy everyone."

Back to [lady_kathryn_of_basingstoke](#)

From:
<https://curufea.com/> - **Curufea's Homepage**

Permanent link:
https://curufea.com/doku.php?id=roleplaying:munchausen:the_fickleness_of_the_reading_public

Last update: **2008/08/27 19:30**

