I am happy to welcome Maria Grace back to Outtakes as she introduces her latest release, The Trouble to Check Her, where Lydia Bennet must face the consequences of running off with Mr. Wickham. Here, Grace tells us how a jilted bride could make her former fiancé pay, literally.—Kim

By Maria Grace

Even after the decline of arranged marriage after 1780, marriage still remained largely a business transaction. Even the promise to marry was considered an enforceable contract, with a breach of promise suit a possible consequence of a broken engagement.

History

As early as the 15th century, English ecclesiastical courts equated a promise to marry with a legal marriage. By the 1600s, this became part of common law; a contract claim one party could make upon another in civil court suits. (And you thought this was just the stuff of modern daytime television!)

To succeed in such a suit, the plaintiff, usually a woman, had to prove a promise to marry (or in some cases, the clear intention to offer such a promise), that the defendant breached the promise (or the implied promise to promise), and that the plaintiff suffered injury due to the broken promise (or failure to make the implied promise). Don’t think about it too hard, it’ll make your head hurt.
Breach of Promise Claims

A breach of promise suit required a valid betrothal. Promises to marry when both parties were below the age of consent were not valid. Similarly, promises to marry made when one was already married (as in I'll marry you if/when my current spouse dies—how romantic) or between those who could not legally marry were not enforceable.

If significant and material facts were discovered that could have influenced the agreement, then betrothal could be dissolved without penalty. So issues like misrepresentation of one’s financial state, character, or mental or physical capacity presented valid reasons to end an engagement.

If a betrothal was valid, a breach of promise claim could be presented in court.

Reasoning

Why were such claims filed when it seems like it would be far easier, less painful, and less embarrassing for a couple to simply go their separate ways? When a promise to marry was broken, the rejected party, usually female, suffered both social and economic losses.

Socially, an engaged couple was expected to act like an engaged couple. Though it seems unfair in modern eyes, the acceptable behaviors she may have shared with her betrothed, would leave her reputation damaged if he left her. Moreover, though premarital sex was officially frowned upon, it was known that a woman was much more likely to give up her virginity under a promise to marry. But if that promise was not kept, her future search for a husband would be significantly hampered for having broken the code of maidenly modesty.

The loss of reputation translated to serious economic losses, since middle and upper class women did not work outside the home and required a household supported by a husband’s wealth. A woman with a tarnished reputation was unlikely to marry well.

Damage Awards

Perhaps as a result, a woman was far more likely to win a breach of promise claim than lose one. Middle-class ladies were generally able to obtained larger damage awards than working women, though cases varied greatly. About half of women winning damages obtained £50-£200. (For reference, middle class family of four could live comfortably on £250 a year.)

While these awards could indeed offer assistance to wronged plaintiffs, the system was also ripe for abuse. Jurors...
were often unduly sympathetic toward jilted women, especially when they were attractive or portrayed as particularly virtuous. Damage awards could easily be swayed by such sympathies, making false claims very tempting. All this sounds so much like modern reality television, doesn’t it?

The more things change, the more they stay the same!

*Images in the public domain, via Wikimedia Commons.*

**About The Trouble to Check Her**

Lydia Bennet faces the music…

Running off with Mr. Wickham was a great joke—until everything turned arsey-varsey. That spoilsport Mr. Darcy caught them and packed Lydia off to a hideous boarding school for girls who had lost their virtue.

It would improve her character, he said.

Ridiculous, she said.

Mrs. Drummond, the school’s headmistress, has shocking expectations for the girls. They must share rooms, do chores, attend lessons, and engage in charitable work, no matter how well born they might be. She even forces them to wear mobcaps! Refusal could lead to finding themselves at the receiving end of Mrs. Drummond’s cane—if they were lucky. The unlucky ones could be dismissed and found a position … as a menial servant.

Everything and everyone at the school is uniformly horrid. Lydia hates them all, except possibly the music master, Mr. Amberson, who seems to have the oddest ideas about her. He might just understand her better than she understands herself.

Can she find a way to live up to his strange expectations, or will she spend the rest of her life as a scullery maid?

*The Trouble to Check Her* is available on [Amazon](https://www.amazon.com), [Barnes and Noble](https://www.barnesandnoble.com), and [Kobo](https://www.kobobooks.com).

**About Maria Grace**

Though Maria Grace has been writing fiction since she was 10 years old, those early efforts happily reside in a file drawer and are unlikely to see the light of day again, for which many are grateful. After penning five file-drawer novels in high school, she took a break from writing to pursue college and earn her doctorate in educational psychology. After 16 years of university teaching, she returned to her first love, fiction writing.
She has one husband, two graduate degrees and two black belts, three sons, four undergraduate majors, five nieces, six new novels in the works, attended seven period balls, sewn eight Regency era costumes, shared her life with nine cats through the years, and published her 10th book last year.

She can be contacted at author.MariaGrace@gmail.com. You can also connect with her at:

- Facebook
- G+
- Amazon
- Random Bits of Fascination
- Austen Variations
- English Historical Fiction Authors
- Twitter
- Pinterest

It’s my pleasure to welcome Maria Grace back to Outtakes as she promotes her latest title, Twelfth Night at Longbourn, the fourth volume in the Given Good Principles series, a story about Kitty Bennet. Today, part two of two, Grace tells us about what boys wore when they outgrew their dresses. See yesterday’s post to learn what boys wore as infants and toddlers. – Kim

By Maria Grace

During the Regency, the point at which little boys stopped wearing dresses was called breeching and accompanied by a family ceremony.

Most boys were breeched about 4 years of age, several years earlier than their counterparts from the 1700s. Child rearing “experts,” though, argued for various ages, up to age 8. They agreed though that a child’s size was a most important consideration. Boys who were small for their age or sickly might be breeched later. On the other hand, boys might be breeched earlier if there was concern that a parent might not live to see their son breeched.

Mothers were primarily responsible for the decision for their sons to be breeched. Fathers might exert some pressure, though, if the mother delayed the event too long.
Social class and standing would greatly influence the nature of the breeching ceremony. For the family with little means, it might be a simple affair or receiving hand-me-downs from an older brother. For the aristocracy, it might be an elaborate affair.

During the Regency, the ceremony rarely took place on the little boy’s birthday. Rather, the convenience of extended family to attend the event might be the deciding factor for timing. If the child was the heir of an upper class family, the ceremony was likely to take place at the family’s country estate rather than in a town home. Extended family and close friends, like the child’s godparents, would be invited to attend.

In preparation for the ceremony, a mother would have at least one new suit of clothes made, assuming she had the means. Otherwise, hand-me-downs might be refreshed for the boy. Cotton or linen shirts, sashes, formal garments, and outerwear might also be acquired. Accessories like hats, gloves, stockings, and shoes could round out a little boy’s new wardrobe.

No single form existed for the breeching ceremony. Family and friends present, the little boy would make an appearance in his dress, then be led away behind a screen or to another room to change, with assistance, into his first set of distinctive male clothing. In some cases a barber might be present to give him his first masculine haircut. The shorn curls might be given to attendees as mementoes of the event.

Refreshments would be served when the newly minted young man returned in his new clothes. Well-wishers might slip coins or banknotes into his pockets as they congratulated him on his new status.

Skeleton Suits

A skeleton suit, one of those straight blue cloth cases in which small boys used to be confined before belts and tunics had come in ... An ingenious contrivance for displaying the symmetry of a boy’s figure by fastening him into a very tight jacket, with an ornamental row of buttons over each shoulder and then buttoning his trousers over it so as to give his legs the appearance of being hooked on just under his arm pits. (Charles Dickens, Sketches by Boz, 1838-39.)

At the end of the 1700s upper and middle class boys typically wore a skeleton suit after they were breeched and would continue in these garments until around the age of 11. These suits featured a high button waist, long pantaloons, rather than the knee breeches worn by older men, and jackets adorned with many buttons. A blouse with an open, often elaborate collar was worn under the jacket which might be buttoned to the pants to help hold them up. Young boys might also wear pantalettes underneath with a trim or frills showing at the ankles.

Skeletons suits were cut close to the body but with far more ease in the cut than the skin tight breeches and coats worn by men. Thus, though boys today would likely find them very uncomfortable, boys of the era would consider them neither tight nor constricting.

The blouses for the suits were typically white and made of linen or cotton. For every day wear, the pants and jackets might be made of yellow-brown nankeen or other sturdy washable fabrics. Into the 19th century, improved dyeing techniques allowed fabrics to be more...
colorfast, thus more colorful skeleton suits appeared. During the Regency, dark blue was a favorite color, especially for more formal suits made of silks or velvet.

On special occasions, boys might wear a round straw hat with a brim, and a wide ribbon band or a military style cap. Colorful sashes might also be added to the skeleton suits, tied in large poufy bows around the waist or over the shoulder. To finish their ensemble, boys would wear plain white stockings and flat shoes with a single strap over the instep, typically in black.

Little boys were permitted more latitude in their dress than adult men, particularly when out of the public eye. At times they were permitted to go without the jacket, presumably with some other mechanism to help hold up their pants. Some sources suggest some suits had midcalf length trousers and short or no sleeves. These were likely reserved for country wear, especially during warmer weather. It is also possible that in summer, skeleton suits might be worn without a shirt at all on very informal occasions.

A fashion conscious mother could keep up with trends in children’s clothing starting in a 1779 edition of the Lady’s Magazine, which devoted a small section to children’s clothes. These fashion plates started with girls’ clothes only, but by the Regency, boy’s clothes were included as well, since the same seamstresses who made ladies’ clothes also made little boy’s clothes. Children’s fashion illustrations did not appear frequently though. This irregularity had the effect of slowing the pace of change of children’s clothing, since there were fewer references available for new designs.

By 1840, skeleton suits were considered old fashioned and fell out of favor. However, their popularity as children’s wear influenced men’s fashion in the following years. Since the boys who wore skeleton suits did not associate long trousers with working class garb as their fathers did, but rather with comfortable clothing for both casual and formal wear, when they came of age, they did not want to trade in their comfortable trousers for the skin tight, restrictive knee breeches their fathers wore. So trousers rose in status and esteem, and breeches slowly fell out of fashion.

Previously: Boys in dresses and other quirks of Regency children’s fashions.

Public domain images via Wikimedia Commons

References


Though Maria Grace has been writing fiction since she was 10 years old, those early efforts happily reside in a file drawer and are unlikely to see the light of day again, for which many are grateful. She has one husband, two graduate degrees and two black belts, three sons, four undergraduate majors, five nieces, six cats, seven Regency-era fiction projects, and notes for eight more writing projects in progress. To round out the list, she cooks for nine in order to accommodate the growing boys and usually makes 10 meals at a time so she only cooks twice a month.

Connect with her by e-mail at author [dot] MariaGrace [at] gmail [dot] com, Facebook at facebook.com/AuthorMariaGrace, Amazon at amazon.com/author/mariagrace, her website Random Bits of Fascination, and Twitter @WriteMariaGrace.

---

Little Boys in Dresses? Typical Apparel in the 1800s

It’s my pleasure to welcome Maria Grace back to Outtakes as she promotes her latest title, Twelfth Night at Longbourn, the fourth volume in the Given Good Principles series, a story about Kitty Bennet. Today, part one of two, Grace introduces us to young boys’ apparel, which included dresses. Tomorrow, Grace will tell us about what boys wore when they outgrew those dresses. – Kim

By Maria Grace
Along with the political and social changes of the 1800s, dramatic changes in fashion ushered in the turn of the century as well. These changes not only encompassed adult styles, but the clothes worn by children saw large alterations, moving away from stiff and restrictive imitations of adult fashions to much freer, more comfortable clothing conducive to play. Two of the most distinct changes were dresses for little boys and skeleton suits for slightly older boys.

Infant Clothes

During the Regency, the majority of garments for infants and babies, whether swaddling bands for the first few months of life or simple gowns worn thereafter, were typically linen or cotton, either white or unbleached natural color cloth, possibly trimmed with colored ribbons. These ribbons would be chosen to the mother’s tastes, not restricted to blue for boys and pink for girls as would be seen much later in the century.

In wealthier families, babies had some “good” clothes to wear while being shown off to visiting family and friends. Typically these garments would be colored or trimmed in ways that would not stand up as well to the harsh laundry techniques of the day, so they would be worn sparingly.

During this era, parents felt little need to identify a small child’s gender by their clothing. Those personally acquainted with the family would already know the child’s gender, and for those who did not know the family that well, it was none of their business. Moreover, very young children rarely appeared in public. The age at which children began to be seen outside the house coincided with the age at which they would begin to wear gender differentiated clothing.

One distinctive feature of infant clothing still present in the early 1800s was leading strings. Leading strings were the fashion decedents of the hanging sleeves of the Middle Ages. They were attached to the back of children’s garments when the child began to move independently.

Leading strings might be sewn into individual garments when a family could afford multiple sets. For those of lesser means a single set could be pinned onto different garments. They could be used as a horse’s reins to guide the child during the process of learning to walk. This approach was most prevalent in the upper classes.

For middle and lower class women who enjoyed less help from servants, leading strings might be used more as a leash to limit a child’s movement. The strings could be fastened to a bed-post or heavy piece of furniture while indoors or something immobile like a fence or tree while outside.

Though this might be an uncomfortable idea to modern parents, in a world where child safety measures were largely nonexistent, these methods could help keep a child safe while their mother’s attention was diverted elsewhere. Leading strings were usually removed when children learned to walk well, certainly by age 3 or 4.

Boys in Dresses

Before learning to walk, babies wore long gowns that extended beyond their feet. Once out of infancy (walking age), both boys and girls were “shortcoated,” clothed in ankle length dresses. The early 19th century saw almost no difference between dresses for little boys and little girls. Little boys might wear their sisters’ hand-me-downs and vice-versa. Dresses might be made of chintz or printed cottons. They were worn with small white caps, sashes and petticoats or long ruffled pantaloons.

Though it is difficult for the modern observer to wrap their minds around dressing little boys like little girls, the fact was that dresses were considered children’s wear, not little girls’ clothes. Children’s dresses were distinct from women’s garments, so to the eye of the person in context, it was not a matter of boys in women’s garments. On a more practical note, in the days before disposable diapers and washing machines, dresses were much more practical garments for
children who were not toilet trained.

**Tomorrow:** When boys outgrow their dresses and are old enough to be breeched.

*Public domain images via Wikimedia Commons*

**References**


Dickens, Charles. *Sketches by Boz* (1838-39)

*Historic Boy’s Clothing*


Though Maria Grace has been writing fiction since she was 10 years old, those early efforts happily reside in a file drawer and are unlikely to see the light of day again, for which many are grateful. She has one husband, two graduate degrees and two black belts, three sons, four undergraduate majors, five nieces, six cats, seven Regency-era fiction projects, and notes for eight more writing projects in progress. To round out the list, she cooks for nine in order to accommodate the growing boys and usually makes 10 meals at a time so she only cooks twice a month.

Connect with her by e-mail at author [dot] MariaGrace [at] gmail [dot] com, Facebook at facebook.com/AuthorMariaGrace, Amazon at amazon.com/author/mariagrace, her website Random Bits of Fascination, and Twitter @WriteMariaGrace.
Today, I am glad to host Grace Elliot, author of historical romances, including *Verity's Lie*. Here, Grace discusses options available for book lovers during the Regency. – Kim

By Grace Elliot

If you are visiting this blog, then it's likely you are a bookworm, and a history loving one at that! But if you lived in the 18th century, then your addiction could be difficult to feed – unless you were wealthy.

Low priced books did exist, in the form of chapbooks. These were mass-produced 24-page booklets with a woodcut illustration on the front cover. The latter did not necessarily reflect the content, for example, the story of Dick Turpin had a Turk with a scimitar on the front cover. Chapbooks were retellings of folk stories such as Robin Hood or Tom Thumb, or accounts of sensational stories such as the criminal Jack Sheppard. Chapbooks were at their most popular in the 18th and 19th centuries, and were sold by street vendors who also touted sheet music and broadsides (single sheet reports of crime, gossip and deathbed confessions).

Chapbooks were cheap and designed for the masses; for those with money at the luxury end of the market were professionally printed books. To some extent these expensive books were fashion items because they manufactured either bound or unbound – if the latter, the purchaser could choose a binding to match his library décor!

What is perhaps surprising is the number of bookshops that existed as early as 1700. At the beginning of the 18th century it is estimated there were 200 booksellers operating in the 50 largest towns. By 1790, this had increased to 1,000 shops in 300 towns. That said, these shops sold diverse goods and the card of “William Owen, Bookseller” is illustrated with bottles – perhaps hinting that his primary trade was not paper goods.

The inability of booksellers to survive selling books alone was because of the price. In the 1770s a complete set of Shakespeare cost £3 at a time when a teacher earned £12 a year. A curate’s entire salary of £20 a year, could buy 12 novels. However, some members of the upper classes were happy to keep prices high, to prevent lower classes becoming infected with unsuitable ideas for their station. It was a perfectly conventional assumption at the time to think that knowledge was a dangerous commodity. Indeed, an attorney general wrote to one author:

“Continue…to publish…in octavo form [a luxury format], so as to confine it to that class of readers who may consider it coolly; so soon as it is published cheaply for dissemination among the populace it will be my duty to prosecute.”

So what of bookshops? To this day, you can visit Hatchard’s bookshop in Piccadilly and get a flavour of what a 19th century bookshop was like. Founded in 1797, Hatchard’s is the oldest bookshop in London and welcomed Jane Austen, Byron and Disraeli amongst its customers. Still trading today, the creaky wooden floors, quaint curved staircases and floor-to-ceiling books evoke a bygone atmosphere. Indeed, in my new release, *Verity’s Lie*, it is one of the heroine’s favourite haunts and she pays it a visit…with unexpected consequences.

Excerpt from *Verity’s Lie*

Verity suppressed a smile. If only she too could be free of Miss Mowlam, even for half an hour, but alas it was not to be; however, a different kind of escape waited within Hatchard’s book shop.

This was one of Verity’s favorite places. To browse the window display, which was crammed with books of all sizes with leather spines tooled in gilt, brought it own type of joy. The shop’s long frontage comprised central doors flanked by bay windows, and Verity approached it with anticipation. Her eyes danced from volume to volume, taking note which to ask for once inside.
Browsing the window brought her to the neighboring store, and it was then she noticed a chalk drawing on the pavement.

Curious, she stooped to examine a lively caricature of the Prince Regent, accurate to the popping waistcoat buttons over a burgeoning belly. A boy knelt over the sketch with chalk in one hand and charcoal in the other. Verity was shocked by the child’s appearance: barefoot and patched breeches held up with string.

He glanced up. “Please, miss. Spare a coin, miss?”

There was raw need written large on his face. The boy, she realized, was younger than she’d originally supposed.

“Where are your parents?” she asked gently.

“Dead, miss.” His tone flat and matter-of-fact.

“Where do you live?”

The boy’s gaze dropped to the ground. “Any where’s I can, miss.”

She frowned at his matted hair and ragged clothes. While growing up, crying herself to sleep for the want of her mother, she had always had food and shelter, but this child had nothing. With trembling fingers she pulled at her reticule’s drawstring.

“Who looks after you?” she persisted. A shadow fell across the edge of her vision.

Grace Elliot leads a double life as a veterinarian by day and author of historical romance by night. Grace lives near London and is passionate about history, romance and cats! She is housekeeping staff to five cats, two sons, one husband and a bearded dragon (not necessarily listed in order of importance), Verity’s Lie is Grace’s fourth novel. Find out more about Grace at her blog, Fall in Love With History, her website and her Amazon author’s page. You can also connect with Grace on Twitter @Grace_Elliot and Facebook.

The High Stakes of Etiquette for Young Ladies in the Regency

Today, it is my pleasure to welcome author Maria Grace back to Outtaktes. You might remember Grace from a post she did about laundry in the Regency, which made me all the more grateful for my front loader. Grace is visiting Outtaktes as she promotes her most recent title, All the Appearance of Goodness, the third book in her Given Good Principles series. In her post about Regency etiquette, Grace shows us a lot more than good manners is at stake. – Kim

By Maria Grace
During the Regency era, a young lady’s social standing depended on her reputation, which could be marred by something as simple as an immodest fall while exiting a carriage. So, to preserve her chances of making a good marriage – which for most was the making or breaking of their future life – the utmost care to all aspects of etiquette was required.

To complicate matters further, well-bred women were thought to have a “natural” sense of delicacy. Taste and poise, it was believed, should come naturally to a lady. It was an indictment against their breeding to be worried about looking correct. The significance of these matters could not be underestimated, for once a young woman’s reputation was tarnished, nothing could bring it back. Her future could be forever dictated by a single unfortunate incident.

Thus, although these patterns of etiquette might appear awkward and restrictive, especially for women, they safeguarded against misunderstanding and embarrassment.

**Ladylike Deportment**

Ladies were encouraged to maintain an erect posture when sitting or standing. Slouching or leaning back was regarded as slothful unless one was infirm in some way. A well-bred young woman walked upright and moved with grace and ease. She maintained an elegance of manners and deportment and could respond to any social situation with calm assurance and no awkwardness.

Proper ladies behaved with courteous dignity at all times to acquaintance and stranger alike. They kept at arm’s length any who presumed too great a familiarity. Icy politeness was their weapon of choice to put so-called “vulgar mushrooms” in their place. Extremes of emotion and public outbursts, even including laughter, were unacceptable, as was anything pretentious or flamboyant. A woman, though, could have the vapors, faint, or suffer from hysteria if confronted by vulgarity or an unpleasant scene.

**Chaperones**

Young women were protected zealously in company since to be thought “fast” was the worst possible social stigma. Young, unmarried women were never alone in the company of a gentleman, save family and close family friends. A chaperone was also required for a young single woman to attend any social occasion. Under no circumstances could a lady call upon a gentleman alone unless consulting him on a professional or business matter, and she never forced herself upon a man’s notice.

Except for a walk to church or a park in the early morning, a lady could not walk alone. She always needed to be accompanied by another lady, an appropriate man, or a servant. Though a lady was permitted to drive her own carriage, if she left the family estate, she required the attendance of a groom. Similarly, on horseback she should bring an appropriate companion to protect her reputation.

**Introductions**

The need for formal introductions was another means by which women’s reputations were protected. Until a formal acquaintance was recognized, individuals could not interact. Once the man of the house performed introductions for the women in his household, they could socialize with their new acquaintances.

Once introduced, it was essential for a lady to politely acknowledge that person with a slight bow of the shoulders anytime she encountered them in public. If she did not make such an acknowledgement, a gentleman did not acknowledge her. Failure to recognize an acquaintance was a breach in conduct and considered a cut. Manuals warned that a lady should never “cut” someone unless “absolutely necessary.”
Conversation

The heart of polite sociability was conversation, and ladies were encouraged to develop the art of pleasing and polite exchange. Acceptable topics were highly limited; the list of unacceptable topics far outnumbered the acceptable ones.

One did not ask direct personal questions of new acquaintances. Remarks, even complimentary ones, on the details of another’s dress might also be regarded as impertinent. Personal remarks, however flattering, were not considered good manners and might be exchanged only with close family and intimate friends. Similarly, scandal and gossip were omitted from public conversation. Proper ladies were expected to be shocked at the mention of anything evil, sexual, compromising, or related to bodily functions. Ladies were even warned against blowing their nose in company for similar reasons.

Touch

Not surprisingly, all forms of touching between members of the opposite sex were to be kept to a minimum. A gentleman might put a lady’s shawl about her shoulders, or assist her to mount a horse or enter a carriage, or take her arm through his to support her while out walking. Shaking hands, though, was considered less proper. A pressure of the hands was the only external signs a woman could give of harboring a particular regard for certain gentleman and was not to be thrown away lightly.

Dancing

In a society governed by such strict rules regulating the interaction of the sexes, the dance floor provided only of the only places potential marriage partners could meet and courtships might blossom. The ballroom guaranteed respectability and proper conduct for all parties since they were carefully regulated and chaperoned. Under cover of the music and in the guise of the dance, young people could talk and even touch in ways not permitted elsewhere.

At a public ball, the master of ceremonies would introduce gentlemen and ladies to enable them to dance, as a lady could not dance with a gentleman to whom she had not been introduced. At a private ball, though, all guests were assumed to be introduced and a lady could dance freely.

A young woman did not dance more than two pairs of dances with the same man or her reputation would be at risk. Even two dances signaled to observers that the gentleman in question had a particular interest in her. The day after a ball, a gentleman would typically call upon his principle partner, so a young lady who danced two sets with same gentleman might rightfully expect continued acquaintance with him.

At the Dining Table

A private ball also meant a dinner service. Depending on the hostess, the ladies might proceed to the dining room together, parading in rank order, or might be escorted in on the arm of a gentleman whose rank matched their own.

Within the dining room, guests were not assigned seats. The hostess sat at the head of the table with the ranking male guest at her right. The host took the foot of the table with the ranking female guest at his right. Other guests were free to select their own seats as they chose, though there was a tacit understanding that seats closest to the hostess should be taken by the highest ranking guests.

Each gentleman would serve himself and his neighbors from the dishes within his reach. If a dish was required from another part of the table, a manservant would be sent to fetch it. It was not good form to ask a neighbor to pass a dish. It was equally bad manners for the ladies to help themselves. Gentlemen also poured wine for the ladies near them.

Eating quickly or very slowly at meals was considered vulgar as was a lady eating or drinking too much. She must not eat her soup with her nose in the bowl nor bring food to her mouth with her knife – a fork or spoon was the proper implement for the job. Her napkin belonged in her lap, not tucked into her collar as the gentlemen did. She must not scratch any part of her body, spit, lean elbows on the table, sit too far from the table, pick her teeth before the dishes
are removed, or leave the table before grace is said.

The so many strictures, it is no wonder etiquette manuals abounded in the era and even less wonder that they were diligently studied by young ladies and their mothers alike.

References


Lane, Maggie – *Jane Austen and Food*. Hambledon (1995)


Trusler, John – *The Honours of the Table or Rules for Behavior During Meals*. Literary-Press (1791)


All images are in the public domain and from Wikimedia Commons, with the exception of the author photo and book cover image.

About Maria Grace

Though Maria Grace has been writing fiction since she was 10 years old, those early efforts happily reside in a file drawer and are unlikely to see the light of day again, for which many are grateful. She has one husband, two graduate degrees and two black belts, three sons, four undergraduate majors, five nieces, six cats, seven Regency-era fiction projects and notes for eight more writing projects in progress. To round out the list, she cooks for nine in order to accommodate the growing boys and usually makes 10 meals at a time so she only cooks twice a month. She is also a contributor to [*English Historical Fiction Authors*](http://www.enlishistoricalfictionauthors.com) and [*Austen Authors*](http://www.austenauthors.com).

She can be contacted at:

E-mail: author (dot) MariaGrace (at) gmail (dot) com

Facebook: [facebook.com/AuthorMariaGrace](http://facebook.com/AuthorMariaGrace)

Amazon.com: [amazon.com/author/mariagrace](http://amazon.com/author/mariagrace)

Her website, Random Bits of Fascination: [AuthorMariaGrace.com](http://AuthorMariaGrace.com)

Twitter: [@WriteMariaGrace](http://twitter.com/WriteMariaGrace)
ABOUT ME

I write fiction set in early medieval times, an intersection of faith, family, and power. My latest release is Queen of the Darkest Hour, in which Fastrada must stop a conspiracy before it shatters the realm. For more about me and my fiction, visit kimrendfeld.com or contact me at kim [at] kimrendfeld [dot] com.

QUEEN OF THE DARKEST HOUR

Queen of the Darkest Hour

KIM RENDFELD

SHORT STORY: BETROTHED TO THE RED DRAGON
Betrothed to the Red Dragon

KIM RENDFELD
The Ashes of Heaven's Pillar

KIM RENDFELD
The Cross and the Dragon

KIM RENDFELD
Copyright

Copyright for the content on this blog belongs to its creators. For permission to reproduce, contact kim [at] kimrendfeld [dot] com.