



Marguerite, Countess of Blessington: The Turbulent Life of a Salonnier and Author

Susan Matoff

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This new biography of Lady Blessington, the first in more than eighty years, illuminates the private and public life of this important but neglected salonnier and author. This study enriches our knowledge of the social, political, and literary history of the post-Romantic and early Victorian era. It examines Lady Blessington's close friendships with politicians and writers, especially Edward Bulwer Lytton and Benjamin Disraeli. Statesmen, diplomats, writers, and artists were her constant visitors, as they found her friendship and conversation invaluable to their professional and social lives.

The circumstances of a life lived in luxury and indulgence changed upon the death of Lady Blessington's husband, forcing her to support herself and several dependents with her writing. Throughout this biography, Lady Blessington's voice is evident and should reawaken scholarly and popular interest in her voluminous works. She wrote twenty novels in genres including silver-fork fiction, psychological drama, and verse narrative. She also produced four travel books, many short stories, and numerous poems and edited the popular literary gift annuals *Heath's Book of Beauty* and *The Keepsake*.

This book reveals the humanity of a woman whom contemporary gossip considered scandalous because of her alleged relationship with her stepdaughter's estranged husband, Count D'Orsay. Lady Blessington's struggle in the face of many challenges is an inspiring story of individual strength. It is a tale of a woman whose legacy of integrity, determination, and sheer hard work provides us with enlarged insights into an era and society often overlooked by history.



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