
Brief Biographical notes about Kettel and Blacke

ELIZABETH
GASKELL'S
HOUSE

We have been neighbours of the Gaskells for some considerable time, living at no 2 Swinton Grove, the red brick house next door. We rented the place shortly after it was finished in 1840, and we made friends with the dear Henry Micholls, who lived in this house before the Gaskells.

My own upbringing is of a typical middle class life with piano and elocution lessons, church-going, musical soirees and poetry evenings being very much the norm. My father and mother, Dr Robert and Mrs Frances Kettel, both supported my education through to Oxford. I am now a tutor in botany and the natural sciences at Manchester's new Owens College, and one day I hope to achieve a doctorate, 'Dr Violet Kettel' is a title to which I greatly aspire.

The so-called 'Lady' Gertrude Blacke's background is somewhat aristocratic, albeit very distant, and she lives the life of a genteel 'rentier' not having to work, receiving a modest income from a stake in a shipyard building the new ironclad warships for the Royal Navy. She is 18th in line to both the title and the estate at Fazackerley Hall near Liverpool, and will inherit both in due course if the other 17 predecease her in a particular order. Strangely enough, only two years ago, she was 36th in line; in the meantime there have been some very strange and unexpected deaths in her family.

No self-respecting interviewer would ever ask a Lady her age, so we will parry any questions of this sort. Who's Who reveals that we were born in 1810 and 1811 respectively.

We are both unashamed social climbers and have been trying to curry favour with the Gaskells for some time, albeit despite the intervening years we have only recently moved beyond 'nodding acquaintance' terms. Hence our offering to house-sit for them while they are away. We did the same with the rather doughty and formidable Dowager Lady Grantham of Downton Abbey a couple of years ago, but when we got to that stately pile we found that we had been 'had'. There were several other spinster ladies such as ourselves who had done exactly the same thing, and we all given rather menial tasks to do. Listen to our act and find out what happened to us !

We know that we will feel very much 'at home' with our esteemed audience in this delightful Drawing Room theatre. Kindly refrain from throwing rotten tomatoes at us as our costumes are very nice and it will spoil Mrs Gaskell's carpets and furniture.

Any resemblance between ourselves and anyone else either living or dead that you think you might know or might have seen on a televisual apparatus some decades ago is purely coincidental.
