



THE PAINTER AND THE LADY

or

GAINSBOROUGH AND THE DUCHESS (tentative titles)

(Story Synopsis)

by

Gerith von Vin

Prologue

In a modern picture gallery (tubular, chromium appointments and stark, functional architecture) stands a modern young woman dressed in natty flying tops. With her companion, an artist, she is absorbing a portrait of the famous Duchess of Devonshire by the great 18th Century painter, Gainsborough (She may, by implication, portray the composite picture of all modern English female youth and its enforced choice between love and duty.)

GAINSBOROUGH and the DUCHESS OF DEVONSHIRE are the present-day lovers.

By their dialogue, it develops that she has volunteered to ferry planes to Africa in the present war. She has induced her lover to come with her to the gallery for a nostalgic journey into the romantic past of the 18th Century. In her concentration upon the portrait of the Duchess of Devonshire, the pointed significance of the obstacles to their love (hers and Gainsborough's) the girl carries in her mood, her gaze upon her lover's face, etc., the presentiment of death.

After a brief lashing out at the needless horror of wars and the declaration of their own deathless love, the conflict between the English girl of action and the American artist of dreams flares up. It simmers down. The Duchess says:

"If we could only have lived in the 18th Century.....It was a tranquil age, Charles, subtle and slowly moving tempo, grace and dignity, watered silks and lily fingers..." She looks ruefully at her own hands. "...killing was not mechanized. Duelling swords were as destructive, compared to our modern slaughter, as the silvery tinkle of a music-box heard through an emerald disk...."

Gainsborough says:

"There is something curiously intoxicating in that age where there was leisure to acclaim a great artist...when a painting, a musical composition or a book could stir the whole civilized world."

The Duchess replies: (indicating the portrait of the Duchess)

"and it was in this world of elaborate manners and slow-moving beauty that Georgiana, lady Spencer, afterwards Duchess of Devonshire, fell in love with Thomas Gainsborough...when she was nine years old...Voice fades behind..."

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