

of their goodness. The king is certainly to all appearance younger by ten years than he was a year ago—strangers would suppose him not more than fifty years old, and from my heart I wish he were no more. He is so good, so rationally pious, and so kind and benevolent to everybody, that I cannot look at him without wishing that he might live for ever.

So enthusiastic a loyalist was naturally deeply agitated by the attempt made on the king's life by Hadfield in May 1800. It will be remembered that George III., when entering his box at Drury Lane, was shot at by Hadfield from his seat in the pit. The king, who was unharmed, prevented a panic by quietly sitting out the play.

God grant [writes Lady Hesketh] this wretched Hadfield may not escape the punishment he merits on the pretence of insanity. Nothing was so plain to me as that Sir W. Addington's stupid questions and the information he so kindly gave him, that that plea would lessen his offence, made the wretch take that ground, for at the beginning he was certainly as much in his senses as I am. I was quite amazed and shocked at Addington's behaviour before I had a key to it. It now turns out that he was *drunk*, and is therefore very properly set aside, for tho' justice may sometimes be blind, she never should be drunk! I hope all you good folks in Norfolk are delighted with the fortitude and extreme magnanimity of the King's behaviour on that occasion. Had he retired, the house would have been pulled to pieces in a moment—the Riot would have become general, and thousands of lives might have been lost! I believe I should have dyed had I been that night at the playhouse, but could I have survived, I should have thought it a most affecting and charming sight to see such a Monarch surrounded by such a family. I am assured that when the King came out of the box, all his sons pressed round him. The Prince of Wales knelt and kissed his hand, and said something in a low voice which affected the King extremely, who embraced him tenderly. It seems that Townsend, one of the Bow Street officers, took notice that when the house was filling, this Hadfield came in with four or five ill-looking fellows who took great pains to place him where he could have the best aim at the Royal Box, and having done this they went away themselves. How plain it is that the plot was laid and that the wretched man is only mad when he is drunk.

It need scarcely be said that Lady Hesketh was strictly conservative in all her tastes and habits. She loved the old school of manners and dress, and could not away with certain modern laxities which were gradually creeping into fashion. In one letter, after having commended the appearance of a