

LADY HESKETH AND "JOHNNY OF NORFOLK" 159

that he begins to interest himself in what interests all the world—his own *delightful works*! That he will suffer you to read them to him, did, indeed, make me shed tears of joy—but do not be angry if I say that I do envy you the delightful task of reading those heavenly poems. Had I a *voice*, depend upon it, I should set out directly to take this occupation from you, or at least to share it with you. What indeed would I not give to read that divine performance to the dear author of it, and it is so gratifying to me to think that he will consent to listen to them, that I can only hope you will not wait till you have laboured through the sixteen volumes [of Shakespeare] you talk of, before you enter upon this most pleasing of all tasks.

In the summer of 1799 Lady Hesketh was at Weymouth at the same time as George III. and his family. While there her whole time, she says, was taken up in looking at the Royal Family, who were parading under her windows half a dozen times a day.

You who are well acquainted with my *intense loyalty* [she continues] will readily imagine the pleasure it gave me to see the dear king so *well* and so *happy* as he always appeared to be. It is indeed a heart-cheering sight to behold this good and gracious monarch surrounded by his charming family (the females of it I mean) who all seem delighted in his company, and with whom he appears as easy and as happy as any private gentleman in his dominions. Indeed I must say that I never beheld so charming a picture of domestic comfort and felicity as these good people exhibit.

Lady Hesketh's loyalty naturally suffered no diminution when, on the occasion of another visit to Weymouth, she was admitted into the intimacy of the Royal Family.

I have enjoyed [she says] some most amusing and delightful days in their society on the "Royal Sovereign" [the royal barge] which is by much the most magnificent, and at the same time the most elegant thing I ever saw, and in the truest taste. A fine band of music on board adds greatly to the entertainment, the best part of which, however, consists in the easy gayety and affability of the whole Royal Family, who seem to endeavour to out-doo each other in kindness and graciousness to all who approach them. We dine at two o'clock, and the hours from ten in the morning to five or six in the evening when we come on shore pass only with too much rapidity. Of all the women I ever met with the Queen has the most superior talents for conversation, and it is indeed delightful to be with her Majesty, either in public or private, in both which situations I have frequently been admitted, and the princesses could not be kinder to me if I was their sister, and this to a woman of my age is certainly a strong proof