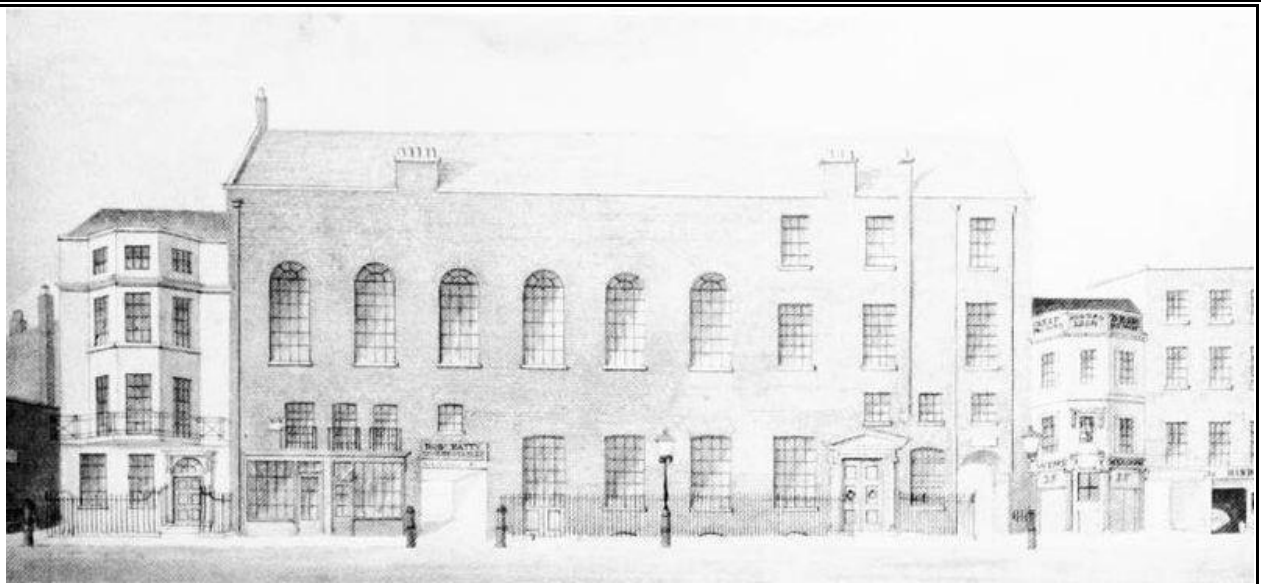




***This Regency Resource***  
***by***  
***Stephanie Boles***  
***Inspirational Author***  
***Romance that Speaks to the Soul***

**Coup de Grace at Almack's**



A debutante in the Regency period, might be presented at court in May, given a coming out ball then sent off, with proper chaperon, of course, into a whirlwind of balls, assemblies, suppers, routs and other social events bent toward making the acquaintance of prospective suitors.

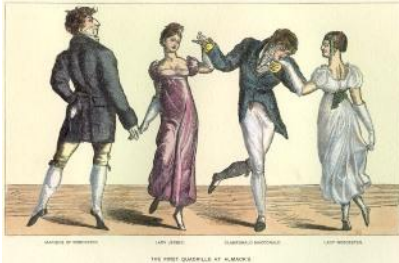
Deemed High Society's Marriage Mart the London season began with the convening of Parliament around February and lasted until July. Almack's being its very core. Many young debutantes began the season with one objective in mind, making a good match. It took no small amount of tenacity to rise to the occasion of achieving a good match. In le bon ton, the upper echelons of society, the competition for the few amiable, well-heeled, titled and not-so-decrepit gentlemen no doubt tested the newly presented debutante's tenacity to the breaking point.



The coup de grace for a debutante would have been a debut at Almack's Assembly Rooms. At Almack's a debutante had a greater chance of making the acquaintance of the finest of the ton's bachelors. But before she could be granted the lofty occasion of enjoying her coming out ball at Almack's she must first become a member of the exclusive and fashionable club. And that alone tested her tenacity.

In 1764 Almack's opened as a gambling club for both men and women but later became the very heart of London society. By 1814 seven formidable ladies presided over Almack's Wednesday night balls. They were Ladies Castlereagh, Cowper, Jersey, Sefton, Willoughby, Countess Leiven, and Princess Esterhazy. With the crook of a finger, a smile or a frown these ladies decided the social circumstances of not only current members but the prospective members as well.

Both men and women took the occasion to request subscription vouchers to Almack's. Acceptance into Almack's opened the doors of the ton for ladies and gentlemen alike. Members of Almack's were deemed the elite of London society. Indeed only the haut-ton of London Society crossed the portals into Almack's. Sadly, it was not unusual for the haut-ton to eschew those who had not been granted a subscription to Almack's.



The finest bachelors of the upper ten thousand could often be found at Almack's on Wednesday nights. To meet these bachelors a debutante had to purchase a subscription voucher to Almack's. Granted annually the vouchers cost ten guineas and were non-transferable. But to be given the opportunity to purchase a voucher potential members must first suffer through the assessment process to determine if they measured up to the strict standards of Almack's.

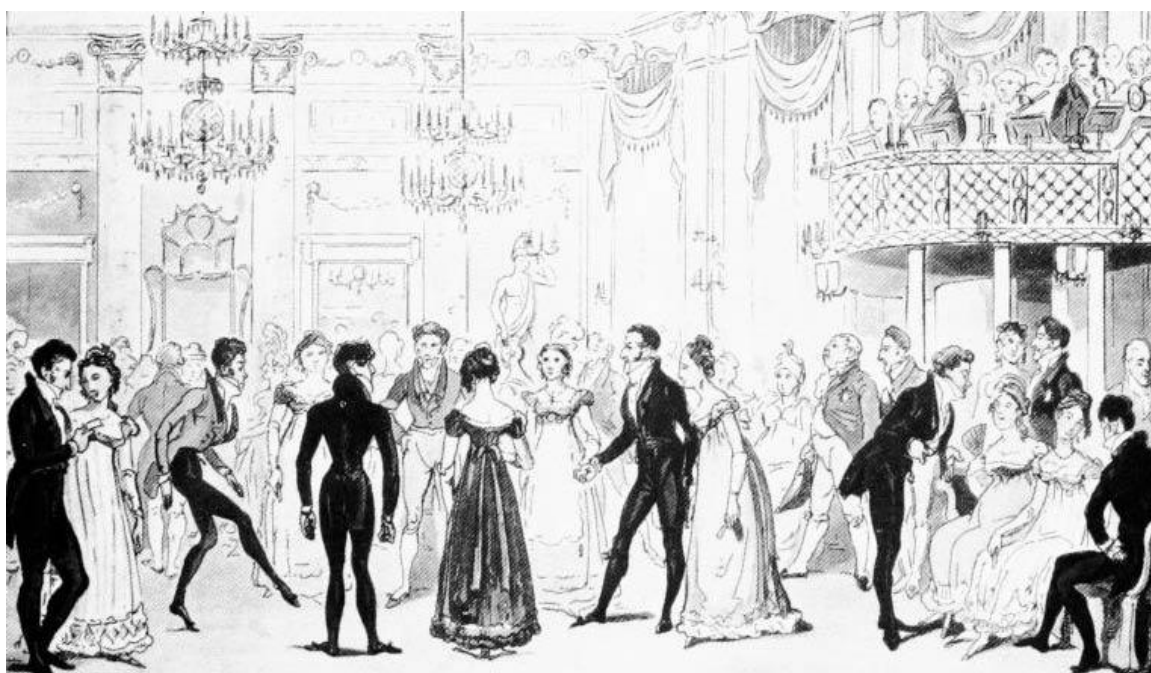
Debutantes wishing admittance would be presented to the committee of powerful and fearsome Lady Patronesses who met each Monday evening during the season to add members to the elite club. Sometimes the Patronesses met to revoke the vouchers of the members that had refused to comply with the Patronesses' austere rules.

After consideration the debutante either gained acceptance into Almack's or suffered rejection. Wealth did not guarantee admittance. The Patronesses frowned upon any members or potential members that flaunted their wealth with vulgarity. Title, good breeding and excellent conduct flung the doors of Almack's open wide for potential members. Although there may have been the occasional exception to the rule, the merchant class or 'cits' did not receive vouchers to Almack's.



The following quotation conveys, somewhat, the feelings of helplessness suffered by those rejected by the Patronesses of Almack's.

According to "The New Monthly Magazine," "This is selection with a vengeance; the very quintessence of aristocracy. Three fourths of the nobility knock in vain for admission. Into this sanctum sanctorum, of course, the sons of commerce never think of entering." Ben Wilson, "The Making of Victorian Values, Decency & Dissent in Britain: 1789-1837", The Penguin Press, 2007



Upon admittance to Almack's the debutante would, with any luck, make her debut there with a coming out ball. Afterward she would attend Almack's each Wednesday night for a ball, supper and dance with prospective suitors throughout the season in addition to her other social engagements.

***"If once to Almack's you belong,  
Like Monarchs you can do no wrong;  
But banished thence on Wednesday night,  
By Jove, you can do nothing right."***

Henry Luttrell (1765-1851), English writer of society verse.



*Happy Regency Reading,*

## ***Stephanie Boles Inspirational Romance Author***

### References

*"The Making of Victorian Values, Decency & Dissent in Britain 1789-1837"*, by Ben Wilson, The Penguin Press, 2007

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