



NAXOS
AudioBooks

COMPLETE
CLASSICS
UNABRIDGED



THE
Grand
Sophy

Georgette Heyer

Read by
Sarah Woodward

CD 1

1	The Grand Sophy	6:40
2	'Yes, my dear, no doubt...'	6:34
3	'If you're talking about that eldest boy...'	6:29
4	'No, no!' expostulated Lady Ombersley feebly.	7:03
5	Sir Horace, who was already bored with the subject...	6:47
6	At this, Lady Ombersley sat up with a jerk.	5:49
7	Chapter Two	5:10
8	'Augustus,' said Cecilia loftily...	5:31
9	'Only think how happy your sister is!'	5:46
10	He said: 'Well, upon my soul...'	5:49
11	Her charges now numbered three only...	5:46
12	Chapter Three	5:04
13	'Cousin Sophy, what is your dear little dog's name?'	4:41

Total time on CD 1: 77:15

CD 2

1	Sophy was then led up to the Blue Saloon...	6:25
2	Lady Ombersley assured her...	5:58
3	'Dearest Mama has such sensibility...'	6:03
4	'Come in, dear Sophy!'	6:21
5	He then drew Sophy to a sofa...	6:55
6	Chapter Four	5:50
7	Breakfast was served, at Ombersley House...	5:49
8	This civility augured well...	6:05
9	Arrived at Temple Bar...	6:04
10	Sophy laughed suddenly.	6:07
11	Chapter Five	5:00
12	'And now,' Sophy said buoyantly to Cecilia...	5:33
13	Mr Rivenhall, an intolerant man...	5:36

Total time on CD 2: 77:51

CD 3

1	Mr Wraxton, a pallid young gentleman...	5:59
2	'Forgive me!' interrupted Sophy...	6:09
3	Miss Wraxton inclined her head politely...	6:31
4	Chapter Six	7:23
5	Cecilia, wavering...	7:37
6	Mr Wychbold Considered this...	7:05
7	'Well,' said Sophy reasonably...	7:25
8	'Were you serious when you gave me...'	7:26
9	'I shall not force her into any marriage!'	7:05
10	Chapter Seven	7:31
11	'I am afraid her visit has brought extra cares upon you...'	7:38

Total time on CD 3: 77:53

CD 4

1	The phaeton swung through the gateway...	5:56
2	'It is also my concern to see that you come to no harm...'	5:18
3	Chapter Eight	7:30
4	What with his lordship's courtship...	7:12
5	Lady Ombersley, gathering that she had received...	7:19
6	Lady Ombersley made haste...	7:48
7	While all this was going on...	7:42
8	By the time the party on the south lawn entered the house...	7:23
9	Chapter Nine	7:55
10	He controlled himself with a strong effort.	7:32
11	Mr Rivenhall, who seemed to be resigned...	7:39

Total time on CD 4: 79:19

CD 5

1	The ball, which began at ten o'clock...	7:30
2	'Must it be rustication?' Lord Charlbury asked.	7:24
3	Chapter Ten	6:30
4	'Oh, no, you must not attempt...'	7:35
5	As this speech contained a dark threat...	6:44
6	Her eyes filled with tears...	6:58
7	It was at this inappropriate moment...	7:23
8	Chapter Eleven	6:56
9	Sophy, gathering the gist of all this...	7:10
10	'Hubert, you are not of age,' she said...	7:33
11	But when he had left her she sat for some time...	6:59

Total time on CD 5: 78:47

CD 6

1	Bear Alley, which led eastward...	5:57
2	Mr Goldhanger had the oddest feeling...	6:53
3	'But perhaps you have loving parents...'	6:28
4	Chapter Twelve	6:52
5	'Oh, my love, your maid says...'	6:41
6	'You must remember that I am betrothed to Miss Wraxton.'	6:58
7	'It certainly will not do!' interrupted his brother...	6:58
8	He was watching her closely, his brows knit.	7:01
9	Chapter Thirteen	6:21
10	He stared at her, an odd expression in his eyes...	5:11
11	This reproof had the effect...	5:35
12	He had already composed some moving lines...	6:08

Total time on CD 6: 77:08

CD 7

1	'Duelling pistols!' said Sophy, much impressed.	7:44
2	Chapter Fourteen	6:06
3	'Sophy!' ejaculated Mr Rivenhall, visibly shaken.	6:41
4	With all the wish in the world to tend Amabel...	6:24
5	But now you are here...	6:14
6	Lady Brinklow hailed this decision...	6:26
7	'No, no!' she said...	6:36
8	Chaper Fifteen	6:56
9	'You thought me cruel – unfeeling!'	6:39
10	As for Mr Rivenhall's extraordinary change of face...	6:49
11	'Oh, very well!' said his lordship.'	7:28

Total time on CD 7: 74:08

CD 8

1	They found the Marquesa alone...	5:37
2	'And what, sir, would you have me say to Mr Rivenhall?'	5:44
3	Chapter Sixteen	7:01
4	'Yes,' he concurred.	6:25
5	Mr Rivenhall, who had almost believed...	6:43
6	Five minutes later...	6:41
7	'I have seen the horse.'	7:17
8	Lord Charlbury then strolled about the gardens...	6:35
9	She laughed. 'What nonsense!'	7:11
10	Chapter Seventeen	6:35
11	'All over London! No, that it shall not be!'	5:51
12	Since Lord Bromford was ushered into the room at that moment...	6:25

Total time on CD 8: 78:11

CD 9

1	Meanwhile, Miss Wraxton, busily writing in the library...	6:39
2	'You're out there, old lady...'	6:36
3	'I am afraid, my boy,' said his uncle...	6:15
4	Chapter Eighteen	6:40
5	'Certainly that is so,' agreed the Marquesa.	6:59
6	Cecilia was carrying both a reticule and a feather muff...	6:38
7	Lord Bromford, always punctilious...	6:51
8	'Well, she is going to marry Charlbury,' said Sophy bracingly.	6:54
9	'How wet your coat is!' remarked Sophy...	6:42
10	'Thank you! If I cannot felicitate you...'	6:45

Total time on CD 9: 67:04

Total time on CDs 1–9: 11:27:36

Georgette Heyer

(1902–1974)

The Grand Sophy

The Napoleonic Wars cast a long shadow over the first two decades of the nineteenth century, and they feature heavily in many of Georgette Heyer's novels. The events of *The Grand Sophy* take place in 1816, a year after Napoleon's final campaign was brought to an end. It is made clear that Sophy herself, with her father Sir Horace, was at the centre of the action. Sir Horace states that they were 'in Brussels last year', Brussels being where the British army, under the command of the Duke of Wellington (1769–1852), was headquartered in 1815. Although it is not directly involved in the main narrative of the plot, this part of Sophy's colourful history is frequently alluded to in the novel, and it is crucial in establishing her character as capable and brave.

As is often the case with Georgette Heyer's work, references such as these are woven so deftly into the fabric of the book

that they pass almost unnoticed; although her knowledge of the Regency period was extensive, she wore her erudition lightly. In a throwaway comment, for example, Sir Horace reveals that Augustus Fawnhope – absent-minded suitor to Sophy's cousin Cecilia – was staying in Brussels 'with Stuart'; 'Stuart', in this context, probably refers to Charles Stuart, 1st Baron Stuart de Rothesay (1779–1845), a lifetime diplomat who in 1815 was the Ambassador to France, and who was also present in Brussels that year. Similarly, Sophy fleetingly mentions that she danced the quadrille with Fawnhope at the Duchess of Richmond's ball in Brussels. No more is said of this historic event, yet it has been described as 'the most famous ball in history'. It took place on 15 June 1815, the night before the critical Battle of Quatre Bras, and the guest list included such illustrious

names as William II of Orange (1792–1849), Prince Frederick William, Duke of Brunswick (1771–1815), who was killed the next day, and the Duke of Wellington.

The Grand Sophy was published in 1950, when Heyer was at the height of her popularity. It bears all the hallmarks of her best romances; it is witty, charming and brimming with historical insight. It features a number of familiar comic characters, including the kind-hearted, ineffectual Lady Ombersley, the humourless bluestocking Eugenia, a host of incorrigible children and, of course, the stern, proud but ultimately good-natured hero, Charles. Sophy herself is one of Heyer's most memorable creations. Resourceful, kind and utterly indefatigable, she is a spirited, likeable heroine. From the outset, she both shocks and endears herself to her family, pushing the restrictive boundaries of Regency propriety to their limits. Sophy shoots and rides with supposedly unfeminine skill, and Lady Ombersley is amazed that she wishes to deal directly with Hoare's Bank. Here Heyer once again weaves fact and fiction: now C. Hoare & Co., Hoare's

Bank is still extant; indeed, founded in 1672, it is the oldest privately owned bank in England. In an extraordinary sequence, Sophy visits a moneylender who has been blackmailing her cousin Hubert and threatens him with a gun, frightening him into giving back the bond and the emerald ring with which he has been threatening her hapless relative. Her excellent aim, discussed earlier in the novel during a conversation with Charles, becomes crucial during the final denouement, where she finds it necessary to wound one of her friends in the arm lightly.

Dress is another important means of characterisation for Heyer. When we are first introduced to Charles it is made clear that though his clothes are well-made he is no dandy (a group for whom Heyer frequently expressed disdain in her novels). Similarly, our opinion of Charles's fiancée Eugenia is influenced before we have even met her. Cecilia reports that 'Eugenia never wears modish gowns. She says there are more important things to think of than one's dresses,' to which Sophy responds, 'What a stupid thing

to say! Naturally there are, but not, I hold, when one is dressing for dinner.' The meaning is clear: Eugenia considers herself above such foolish considerations as dresses, but Sophy – wiser than her rival – knows that paying attention to her clothes does not make her frivolous.

Another source of humour in the novel is the would-be poet Augustus Fawnhope. Easily distracted, making frequent recourse to quotation, and always dreaming of his next *magnum opus*, Augustus is obsessed with beauty, and views the world through a literary haze. Indeed, literature is often a prominent theme in Georgette Heyer's novels. She inherited a love of books from her father, George Heyer, and two of her closest childhood friends, Carola Oman and Joanna Cannan, with whom she spent many hours discussing literature, both grew up to be authors. Heyer showed promise from an early age, writing her first book, entitled *The Black Moth*, at the age of 17. It was published, with George Heyer's help, in 1921, initiating a steady stream of novels. In 1926, Heyer had her first major success with *These Old Shades*.

By this time, she had been married for a year to a young mining engineer named Ronald Rougier and had already published five books.

From 1932 until her death in 1974, Heyer produced novels at the extraordinary rate of almost one a year, spawning a new literary genre: the Regency romance. Yet despite her undeniable success, she was frequently troubled by plagiarism and financial problems. Throughout the '50s and '60s, her company, Heron Enterprises, was a source of contention between her and the tax authorities, and a large chunk of the profits from books written around this time went towards paying back money to the Treasury. Plagiarism also became a problem: from the 1950s onwards, several other writers traded on her popularity by writing novels using names, phrases and events from her books. She was even accused by some of her fans of publishing substandard work under a pseudonym. Although Heyer sought legal advice on several occasions, she never chose to sue.

The Grand Sophy, published in 1950, is a product of these troubled years, yet

there is no trace of them in the novel, and it sparkles with all the vitality, humour and brilliance of her best work. Sophy is one of Heyer's most charming and adventurous protagonists, determinedly navigating her way through the social battlefield of Regency London with exuberance, enthusiasm and grace.

Notes by Caroline Waight



Sarah Woodward joined the Royal Shakespeare Company after leaving RADA and appeared in many Shakespearean roles including Juliet in *Romeo and Juliet*. Her other theatre credits include *The Sea*, *Kean* and *Wild Oats*. She has featured on several titles for Naxos AudioBooks, including *Dangerous Liaisons*, *Great Narrative Poems of the Romantic Age* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

Credits

Produced by Pippa Vaughan
Edited and mastered by Thomas Goose
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