



The Most Beautiful Man in Existence: The Scandalous Life of Alexander Lesassier

Lisa Rosner

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1833, Catherine Jane Hamilton returned from India to Edinburgh to seek a divorce from her husband, the physician Alexander Lesassier. The charge was adultery, and proof for it lay in a trunk containing her husband's personal papers. Catherine won her suit without difficulty and the trunk was deposited in the library of the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh. Alexander Lesassier died in 1839 during the First Afghan War; his trunk and its contents remained untouched for the next century and a half.

It has now been opened and a remarkable tale, told in remarkable detail, has spilled forth. The life of Alexander Lesassier, as expertly reconstructed by Lisa Rosner, affords startling insight into the sensibilities of an era and of the man who, in his own eyes and those of the women who adored him, was its most perfect creation.

Affable and self-absorbed, engaging and ignoble Lesassier was a physician, military surgeon, and novelist, who was also a shameless opportunist, charming scoundrel, seducer, and survivor. His is the story of a failed medical man who wanted to be something different and saw himself as entitled to more than he had; someone who can always be guaranteed to make the wrong choice, and then protest that he has done well.

This fascinating and deeply absorbing book offers rare insights into Georgian, Regency, and early Victorian Britain through the fortunes and misfortunes, hopes and whims, of "the most beautiful man in existence."

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