

# THE LIMNER COMPANY



**RICHARD COSWAY (1742 - 1821)**

**Portrait miniature of Lady Charlotte Townshend (1776-1856), wearing a plum coloured velvet gown with high ruff collar; circa 1797**

Circa: Circa 1797

Circa 1797

7.5 cm (3 inches) high

Watercolour on ivory

Ivory registration number: TJPXYVR2

Gilt-metal frame, the reverse glazed to reveal plaited hair

Lady Charlotte Townshend was one of six children of George Townshend, 1st Marquess Townshend (1724–1807) and his second wife Anne Montgomery (c.1752–1819), mistress of the robes for Caroline, Princess of Wales. On 17 August 1797, Charlotte married George William Frederick Osborne, Marquess of Carmarthen, eventually 6th Duke of Leeds (1775–1838), at East Rainham, Kent, with whom she had three children. This striking portrait by Cosway likely commemorates her marriage and belongs to a period in Cosway's career when he was experimenting with darker tones and a grey stippled background, quite unlike his characteristic bright blue splashes of watercolour.

The Townshend family were well-acquainted with the Cosways. Cosway certainly seems to have painted Charlotte's mother Anne on more than one occasion and they seem to have been regular visitors to the Cosway's house, frequenting their salons and parties at Schomberg House for which Horace Walpole describes as receiving 'bushels of little Italian notes of invitation' from Cosway's Italian wife Maria.

Charlotte had her portrait and portrait miniature painted by many artists, including by George Romney (at Raynham Hall) dated 1796 and in a double portrait by Andrew Plimer (sold Christie's, London). The



Romney portrait was connected to the artist from a note he wrote to his friend and patron William Hayley; that he had painted 'a lovely daughter of Lady Townshend'. According to the ledger, the portrait was commissioned by 'Colonel Barry', who can be identified possibly as Colonel Henry Barry (1750–1822), aide-de-camp to Lord Rawdon in the American Revolutionary War. The nature of Colonel Barry's relationship with Charlotte remains unknown.

For all its typical Cosway brilliance this portrait has been attributed in the past to Anne Mee (c.1770/5-1851). An inscription on the reverse mentions her name and it may be that she was a previous owner of the work – or simply that the palette was not thought to be typical of Richard Cosway and more akin to Mee's at this date.[1]

[1] For a similar example by Mee, which may explain some of the confusion, see Mee's portrait of Lady Caroline Lamb, née Ponsonby (1785-1828, sold Christie's, London, 20 November 2013, lot 20.