

The Diary of Elizabeth Elliot

A Persuasion Sequel

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am all anger and anxiousness. Penelope Clay had been my most intimate friend in many ways since before we were compelled to leave Kellynch. I insisted she accompany Father and me to Bath against Lady Russell's express wishes. Now, she has suddenly and with barely a word of regret or appreciation for all I have done for her or all I have been to her—or thought I was—abandoned me and my affections, very soon after my cousin William flew from Bath and from me. If the rumours are true, she has left to be his in London! I can scarcely believe it but I fear it is the fact. As they are both now banished from my life forever, I pray to have no need to mention either of them again. Oh how Anne was clever not to have surrendered to our cousin's overtures as I confess I nearly did before he turned—for reasons I shall never understand—his affections to her.

There. It is done. May they make each other miserable and, God willing, may Father find someone far more appropriate than Mrs. Clay to direct his own affections, as I suspect he might have done with *her*. As I think on it, I ought not to have thought so very highly of *that widow* and I surely ought not to have opened myself to her as I did.

I am here alone. Abandoned. My hopes of being properly solicited by a proper gentleman I fear are fading, as my looks soon will. Yes, Father has maintained his. But he is a *man*. Men can age well. Women cannot. A glance at Lady Russell and her crow's feet is enough to prove this. Anne, once so fine, has long since turned haggard and I fear that I can do nothing to prevent myself from becoming similarly so.

In our stay here, the gentlemen to whom I have been introduced are not nearly as pleasant as are those I have seen in our regular trips to London, but even they seem more

interested in *other* women who may not be as handsome as I am. But they are *younger*. I cannot change this. I cannot alter that with each day I am closer to being thirty. I had such hopes for my cousin for so long. For the first time, I actually fear that my life is not to be what I have long thought, and Father has long thought, it would be.

Anne. Suddenly contented Anne. I had never given a thought to envying her and now with her advances and my retreat I find that I am all envy about her. I confess to feeling some anxiety, though, for her. I realise that I have not been as appreciative of her as perhaps I might have been. She never understood how trying it was *to me* to be forced by Mother's death to take on all the duties as the mistress of Kellynch Hall. Lady Russell did what she could to ease the task, but only by experience can one truly understand how difficult it was, especially for a *girl* of sixteen.

Indeed, now that Anne has become attached to Captain Wentworth, I must also look at him differently. I will concede that there was a sort of what I thought was unalterable coldness between he and I, but I am no longer so certain in my initial view of him, particularly in light of what my recent experience has taught me. I hope that his view of me might be altered as well.

He has his twenty-five thousand. I expected, as did we all, that with that small fortune and his new wife, he would be allowed to savor both of them and become a gentleman of comfort and leisure.

Now comes word that Bonaparte himself has escaped his little island prison and anxiety increases each day. Must Britain again devote its men and its treasure to finally put down the tyrant?

Father and I are to travel to Kellynch—as guests of Lady Russell, which I know will be especially difficult for Father in just over a fortnight for Anne's wedding. Captain Wentworth, however, may now be required to report on board his ship even before then. Surely, he and Anne must be married before he is again afloat. But as each day brings alarming news of Bonaparte's advances, and the collapse of resistance to him, at least in France itself, we must prepare for the worst. "At most," says Father, "our Navy will be intercepting those seeking to run the blockade." He reminded me that it was likely to create opportunities for ambitious sailors like Wentworth—who he has come to admire to some extent. We will see if that happens or even if there will actually be a *war* in the end. Either way, it bodes ill for our plans to return to Kellynch for Anne's wedding.

That is enough to begin this Journal. I am quite alone. It seems a proper time to converse *with myself* in this unaccustomed manner. For now, it is late. I must adjourn to my bed and dream of never having to again set eyes upon two of the most disagreeable people I have ever met.

y optimism for the day proved unwarranted. We are being washed with late winter rain and must please ourselves without being able to set foot outside. If there were anyone worth visiting, I should have borne the weather, but there is not. Lady Dalrymple and Miss Carteret left town a fortnight ago. Anne, of course, is gone to Lady Russell at Kellynch Lodge, where Lady Russell is to aid in the wedding preparations. Captain Wentworth has dropped his anchor—which I assume is proper Navy talk—in Lyme Regis for the time being, with one of those captain friends of his, the one marrying one of the Musgrove girls, though I can never remember which is that one.

Even the Pump Room is just a shadow of what it was not a week ago. So I stay in with Father. He tries to read but seems lost without his Baronetage to peruse. As to that, for my part I am elated not to have to encounter a certain person described as the "heir presumptive" in one of Father's additions to it.

I daresay after I have had my midday meal, I will myself venture to the library and find some novel or other to allow me to pass the time. I would much prefer a turn around the green with its opportunity to enjoy the sight of one or two attractive gentlemen and allow them to enjoy the sight of me. Nobody will be out in this weather so neither shall I.

Te are not to go to Kellynch for Anne's wedding after all. It is as I expected. This morning, Father received an express sent from Kellynch Lodge by Anne. Captain Wentworth has been called to duty and is already flying to Plymouth. He has asked her to join him. It seems that the Navy had obtained a waiver for its officers and sailors to be married without all of the formalities, especially of the reading of the banns, before their ships leave port.

I read the letter when Father handed it to me. Anne says she hopes that Wentworth will be safe and that she further hopes that he will take her on board with him, as his sister was taken on board for many a cruise with Admiral Croft. As for the Admiral, Anne says he was far too senior to be called back and will remain in residence at Kellynch Hall.

When I finished reading, Father, who had risen and was looking out to Camden Place, quite cleansed by yesterday's downpour, turned to me and said, "perhaps this is a good thing. I do not know what people would think if I were at Kellynch but not at the Hall."

I believe I agree with him. Much as I would have liked to return to that familiar place, I would find it difficult as well not to be able to be at the Hall. Admiral Croft, I expect, would offer to have us stay there, but that would be even more awkward than sharing in Lady Russell's hospitality at the Lodge.

It does not matter in the end. Anne is to rush off to get married and may find herself aboard a frigate or some other boat rising and falling in the Channel or the Mediterranean and I cannot say I envy her that. I envy her other things. Not that.

Here in Bath, the weather has turned favourable and somewhat warm. I soon will be off to take a turn at a nearby green and maybe I will at least see someone worth receiving at least a nod from me.

received a letter from Anne. She has such a fine hand, which I recognised at once from the envelope. In it, she...I will copy it as it is again raining very hard and I feel no interest in returning to the novel whose first lines enticed me but so far has little further attraction.

March 15, 1815

Dear Elizabeth,

I have not spoken to you since I left Bath with Lady Russell. I had hoped and expected to spend some time with you when you came to Kellynch for my wedding, but that will not happen now. So I must write to you. I am to shortly travel to Plymouth. As I told Father, I am to be married to Frederick there and since my letter to Father I have received word that he will take me aboard the fine vessel of which he is captain. He cannot tell me its name—he says it will be forever the HMS Anne to him!—but is proud of it as it is newer and larger—a second rater with three decks and fully ninety-eight guns—than his prior ships. I know that there are many who believe a ship with a woman on board is cursed, but Admiral and Mrs. Croft have, I believe, proven otherwise.

I wish to speak to you, and hoped to speak to you when we were reunited, about circumstances of which I fear I may have played a role. That is about our cousin. Since I left Bath, I learned that so has your companion Mrs. Clay as well as our cousin. I promise you, Elizabeth, that I was as surprised that he took the slightest interest in me as anyone. I was ignorant of his inclination in that regard until it was well advanced. Had I known sooner, I would have done what I could to promote you to him. It is a blessing, I believe, that I did not, now that we and indeed

the world have discovered how inadequate and mercenary he is.

I have now gone from Father, as Mary did some years before. He will be in particular need from you as he was in the period after Mother's death and I expect that you will be as successful now as you were then.

I cannot say for how long this adventure with Bonaparte will last. I am assured that I am largely safe aboard a new and large Navy ship, at least should the war arise as it is expected to arise. I hope, then, that it will not be too long until I am back on terra firma. My fondest desire is for Frederick and I to be reunited with you. And Father, of course. And Mary. I wish you to know that I will do all that is in my power to support you and Father even as I set my own course and I hope that in some ways you, as my older sister, will help to guide me.

Anne

I am grateful to read such sweet sentiments. With Mr. Shepherd's daughter gone from my side—and my world!—I must look to Anne more than I ever have. I am surprised, though, to read how sympathetic she *now is* to what was forced upon me when Mother died. That cannot signify now. She is right. Matters are such that I believe Father, with this recent betrayal, will be in need of me as he was when Mother died. I pray, too, that I will be able to support him.

Te are anxious about the news that does reach us in Bath about M. Bonaparte. Initial thoughts that his escape would be short-lived and that the French people would see to his recapture proved wildly off the mark. Indeed, with each story that finds its way to us, we hear more and more that matters are going in quite the contrary direction. Bonaparte may actually rule France and may be able to raise an army that will again march across the continent.

We have no fears for our personal safety. He has no navy to do anything about us. There are those who believe Britain must play a role in putting him down for a second, and final time. I cannot say that I agree with that. Nor does Father. It is not our problem and it should be to the Dutch and the Prussians and whomever else might be *actually* threated to do something about it. I do believe though that Anne's arguments, made before the last peace began, that it was best to be rid of him with the allies before we faced him alone, may have some validity. I doubt that Father would even go that far, but as it is not a decision for either of us, all we can do is hope that we will in the end prevail.

Father has taken to sitting throughout the morning in his favoured chair after breakfast glaring at the stories he reads in the daily papers he sends a footman to get, including days old ones from London. He regularly tightens his grip on the poor paper and curses the damn fools, as he calls them, in Parliament and the War Office and even the Palace—but less frequently—though the papers seem to have little *actual* news about what is happening beyond the occasional dispatch from somewhere on the Continent. How much is to be believed, I cannot say, particularly given the discrepancies between the reports. I find my temper better served by ignoring the goings on, expecting that I will hear soon enough of something of significance even if I do not know how it will affect us—and in

the further belief that the Navy and especially \emph{HMS} Anne is likely safe.

s Father and I ate our breakfast together in the dining parlour, a footman entered with a letter to him. After opening and perusing it, he flashed it at me and said that we had received quite good news.

"We have been asked to have an extended visit to Lady Dalrymple in Ireland."

He slid the letter to me. It was written in a very small, very neat hand which the signature indicated was Miss Elinor Carteret's, writing on behalf of her mother. Lady Dalrymple, the true authoress of the thing, said how pleased she was that our family had renewed and reconciled our relationship with hers after that "unfortunate miscommunication" of so long ago that she could scarce recall its origins.

"A taste of English aristocracy," she put it, would be most welcome in her fine portion of the Irish southeast. The estate is called Astings and we know from her and Miss Carteret's many descriptions of it that it is in County Wicklow, not too distant from Dublin itself.

Her appeal to our position was enhanced by her appeal, Father said, to our *situation*. He leaned close to me to confess that matters had become quite *strained* even in the relatively modest quarters we have leased on Camden Place. "It would do well for us and our honour," he said, "to have at least some of the burdens on the Baronetcy eased by a stay for a decent period in Ireland."

I believe Father was more astute than I might have expected upon receiving the invitation in the assurance that he would be once again safe in the "bosom of the Elliot family," as he put it. "We shall be able to surrender the lease, and the great expense, here in Bath," he added, as if we had engineered the entire thing!

We are in complete agreement. We will vacate the house on Camden Place and at least temporarily relinquish it in favor of Wicklow.

He asked that I write to Lady Russell with this news, expressing our great and mutual regret for having to leave Bath and thus to create a large gulf between us and that fine lady. He and I expect that she will understand our motivation for the change.

Father is to have our Bath agent handle the details and I do not as of yet know when we will be leaving. But as I doubt there will much of worth to buy in Ireland, I must put my energies towards acquiring in Bath the dresses and boots and various other objects that will be necessary to maintain the honour of our family.

I also expect there will be sufficient capable merchants and dressmakers in Dublin that Lady Dalrymple can recommend.