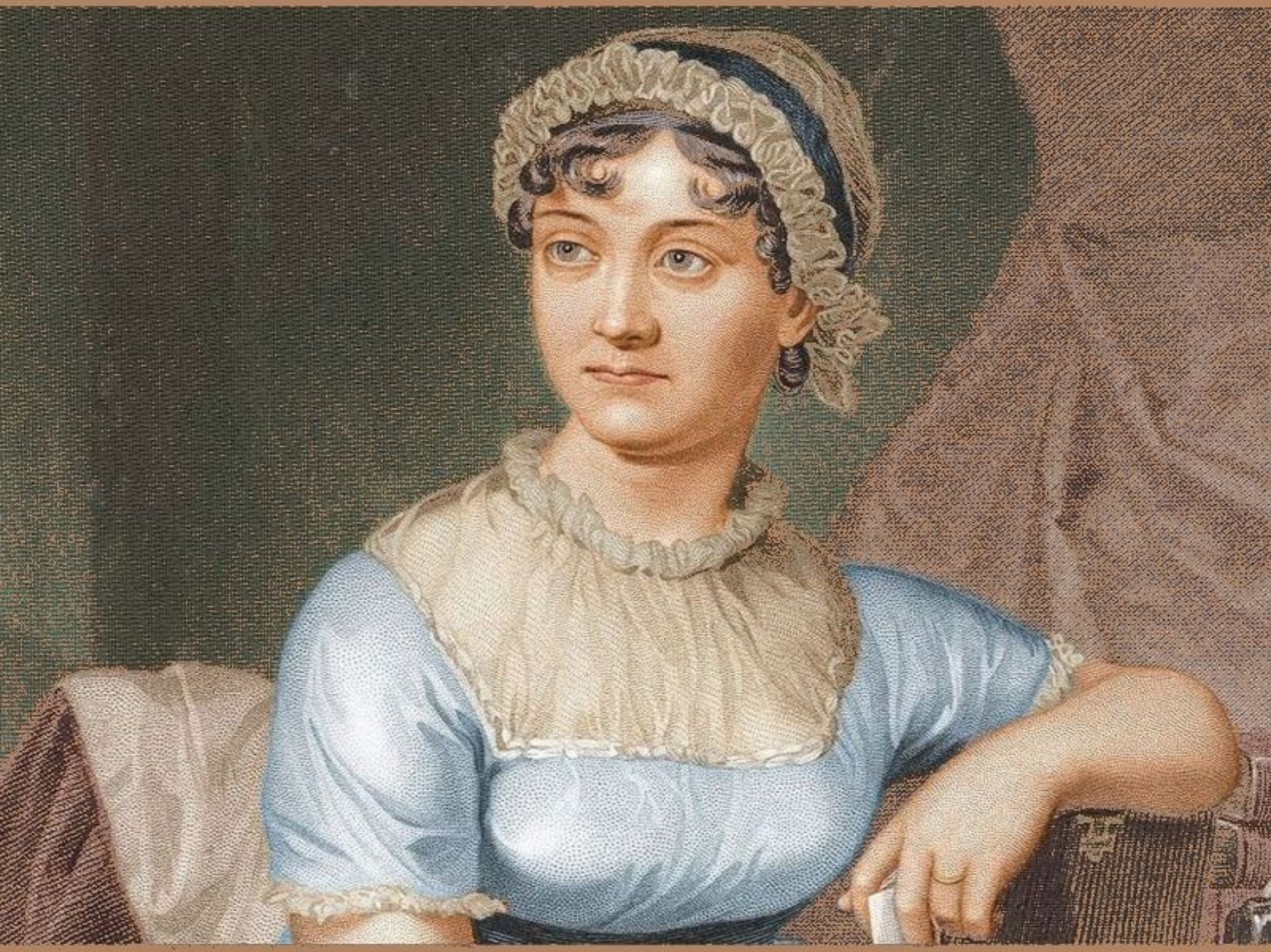
JANE AUSTEN



PERSUASION

Persuasion

Jane Austen

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An Introduction To 'Northanger Abbey' And 'Persuasion'

By Austin Dobson

EVEN at this distance of time, the genuine devotee of Jane Austen must be conscious of a futile, but irresistible, desire to 'feel the bumps' of that Boeotian bookseller of Bath, who having bought the manuscript of Northanger Abbey for the base price of ten pounds refrained from putting it before the world. What can have been the phrenological conditions of a man who could remain insensible to such a sentence as this, the third in the book ' Her father was a clergyman, without being neglected, or poor, and a very respectable man, though his name was Richard and he had

never been handsome'? That the sentence was an afterthought in the proof cannot be contended, for Northanger Abbey was published posthumously, and 'the curious eyes, that saw the manners in the face,' had long been closed under a black slab in Winchester Cathedral. Only two suppositions are possible : one, that Mr. Bull of the Circulating Library at Bath (if Mr. Bull it were) was constitutionally insensible to the charms of that master-spell which Mrs. Slipslop calls ' ironing ' ; the other, that he was an impenitent and irreclaimable adherent of the author of the *Mysteries of Udolpho*. The latter is the more natural conclusion. Nothing else can explain his suppression for so long a period of Miss Austen's 'copy' the scene of which, by the way, was largely laid in Bath itself. He was infatuated with Mrs. Radcliffe, and Mrs. Radcliffe's following : the Necromancer of the Black Forest, the Orphan of the Rhine, the Midnight Bell, the Castle of Wolfenbach, and all the rest of those worshipful masterpieces which Isabella Thorpe, in chapter vi., proposes for the delectation of Catherine Morland, and the general note of which Crabbe (one remembers Miss Austen's leaning to that favourite poet anticipates so aptly in *The Library* :

Hence, ye profane ! I feel a former dread,
A thousand visions float around my head :
Hark ! hollow blasts through empty courts resound,
And shadowy forms with staring eyes stalk round.

But whatever be the solution, the fact remains. Northanger Abbey, as the 'Advertisement ' to the first edition of 1818, said to be by the then deceased 'authoress,' informs us, was disposed of to a Bath bookseller and even announced as forthcoming, not long after it ' was finished [i.e. prepared for press] in the year 1803,' having been 'certainly first composed,' Mr. Austen-Leigh states, as far back as 1798 (the year after the first appearance of Mrs. Radcliffe's

Italian), when Sense and Sensibility and Pride and Prejudice were already existent in manuscript ' That any bookseller should think it worth while to purchase what he did not think worth while to publish seems extraordinary,' observes Miss Austen ; and it would seem more extraordinary still were there not several other equally well-authenticated instances of similar lack of enterprise or critical incapacity in those whose business lies in books. That this particular wiseacre should not have found out, after the successful publication of the first two novels, that he had an imprinted MS. by the same author in his own possession, is also extraordinary; and, all things considered, no one can greatly commiserate him when, in the absence of such knowledge, he was induced to sell back Northanger Abbey to Henry Austen for precisely the same amount he had paid for it at the beginning.

It has been said that we have Northanger Abbey in its original form - in other words, that it was not subjected, like Pride and Prejudice and Sense and Sensibility ', to reconstruction or revision long after it was first completed. That, subsequent to its recovery from the Bath bookseller, it was practically untouched by its writer, is clear from the 'Advertisement' above quoted, which expressly apologises for those parts of it which had grown 'comparatively obsolete ' in the thirteen years which had elapsed since it was finished (a statement which gives us 1816 as the date of the advertisement). But Miss Austen also adds that ' many more years had passed since it was begun.' Much, therefore, may have been done to modify and alter it between 1798 and 1803. Miss Austen, as we know, in her girlish efforts, had amused herself by ridiculing the silly romances of the circulating library, and it is probable that Northanger Abbey was originally only a more serious and sustained attempt to do for the Radcliffe school what Cervantes had done for *Esplandian* and *Florismarte of*

Hyrcania, and Mrs. Lenox for Cassandra and Cleopatra. But the ironical treatment is not always apparent, and there are indications that, as often happens, the author's growing interest in the characters diverts her insensibly from her purpose. There are, besides, passages, such as the spirited defence of novels at the end of chapter v., with its odd *boutade* against the Spectator, which have a look of afterthought ; and it is not very unreasonable to assume that, setting out with a purely satiric intent, Miss Austen ultimately moved in a diagonal between a study in irony and a story. One result of this is, that her attention not being wholly confined to the creation of character, her third novel (in the order of writing) contains no personage corresponding to Mr. Collins, or to the Mrs. Norris of her next book. But Mrs. Allen is 'perfectly well ' (as Gray would say) in her colourless kind ; and as a mere study there is nothing anywhere to approach, in its vivid fidelity, that extremely objectionable specimen of the horsey university man of the Gillray and Rowlandson era, Mr. John Thorpe, who, it may be noted, admires Mrs. Radcliffe and abuses Miss Burney. Of Catherine Morland it is perhaps sufficient to say that she is attractive in spite of her environment and her function, and that her native sense of fitness is stronger than her fictitious enthusiasm. She is evidently the person really intended when Henry Tilney speaks mockingly of Isabella Thorpe as 'open, candid, artless, guileless, with affections strong but simple, forming no pretensions, and knowing no disguise,' and, like the hero and his sister, we instinctively feel her unlessoned charm to be greater than her acquired opinions. Personally, we could have willingly surrendered a good deal of the clever raillery about Mrs. Radcliffe for a little more of Beau Nash's old city, which Miss Austen knew so thoroughly. But her nice sense of artistic restraint does not admit of this. Her characters turn out of the right streets into the right crescents and cross the right crossings, as they would have done in real life, but

of the topography of Bath itself, where the author lived so long, there is not as much in the whole of Northanger Abbey as there is in one chapter of *Humphry Clinker*.

It is the accident of posthumous publication which brings Northanger Abbey into the same volume with Persuasion. Both were first issued in 1818, after the author's death. But while Northanger Abbey had been ready for press in 1803, Persuasion was not begun until Emma was finished, and it was completed in August 1816, not many months before Miss Austen died. During its progress, indeed, her health had been slowly failing. The illness of her brother Henry in 1815, together with some subsequent family troubles, told severely upon her spirits, producing a perceptible decline in her customary vivacity and animation. By degrees she became a confirmed invalid, first substituting a donkey carriage for her long walks, and then spending most of her time on an improvised couch of chairs that served the office of the solitary sofa, of which she could not persuade herself to deprive her aged mother. Nevertheless, she worked at Persuasion with little abatement of her creative power, although of course there have been critics wise enough (after the fact) to discover in the book not only the sadness of impending calamity, but the evidence of defective vigour. One chapter, in fact, in going over her work, she felt to be inadequate ; and for a moment suffered some slight despondency. But a night's rest worked its usual remedy, and she speedily substituted two others (they are the last two chapters but one), concerning which we may confidently leave the reader to decide whether they are in any way inferior to the rest. The cancelled chapter, which may be found at pp. 167-180 of the second edition of Mr. Austen-Leigh's Memoir, certainly, as he contends, contains ' touches which scarcely any other hand could have given,' but there can be no doubt of the higher quality of those which took its place. After Persuasion^ no other finished

effort came from Miss Austen's pen. Upon a fitful revival of her strength at the beginning of 1817, she fell eagerly to work at a story, of which she wrote twelve chapters. It has no name, and the plot and purpose are undeveloped. But some of the personages sketched have more than promise. There is a Mr. Parker with fixed theories as to the fashionable watering-place he hopes to evolve out of a Sussex fishing village ; there is a rich and vulgar Lady Denham, who will certainly disappoint her relatives by the testamentary disposition of her property, and there are two maiden ladies who thoroughly 'enjoy' bad health, and quack themselves to their hearts' content. Whatever the plot to be unravelled, there is no sign that the writer's hand had lost its cunning. But by the 17th March 1817, the last date upon the manuscript, she had grown too ill to continue her work, and in the July following she was dead.

Of Emma, as already stated, she had said that she was going to take a heroine whom no one but herself would much like. Of Anne Elliot, the heroine of Persuasion, she wrote to a friend, ' You may perhaps like her, as she is almost too good for me.' She is too good for most of us, but not the less charming, and even the brilliancy of Elizabeth Bennett pales a little before the refined womanliness of this delightful English lady. Whether the future of Catherine Morland and Henry Tilney was wholly ideal may be doubted ; we may even have secret reservations as to the absolute bliss of Emma and her Knightley ; but there can be no sort of question as to the ultimate and unalloyed happiness of Anne Elliot and Captain Wentworth, who is another of those pleasant manly naval officers whom Miss Austen, drawing no doubt from material in her own family circle, depicts so sympathetically. They are generally the most earnest, and the most admirable of her male personages. Admiral Croft is also a seafaring character, with a seafaring wife to match, and the hearty attachment

of this couple goes far to answer those critics by whom it is sometimes affirmed that Miss Austen's pages present no pictures of contented married life. For Sir Walter Elliot (a study in the General Tilney vein) and his daughters, - for the Musgroves and Mrs. Clay, and for Anne's friend Lady Russell, there is not much to say, apart from their influence upon the conduct of the story, which, either of set purpose or by reason of the author's declining health, is rather quieter and more pensive in tone than its predecessors. But the genuine charm of its chief female character has secured its popularity, and many of Miss Austen's admirers, like Miss Martineau and Miss Mitford, give it the chief place in their affections.

The publication, at long intervals, of a series of prefaces has this among its drawbacks, that it sometimes becomes necessary to correct a statement which has been made too hastily. 'The words are utter'd, and they flee' - however much one may wish to call them back. In a note to the ' Introduction ' to Mansfield Park, the present writer announced that the first review of Miss Austen in the Quarterly was written by Sir Walter Scott, and in making this announcement he was under the impression that he was making it for the first time. Certainly the fact was not known to Mr. Austen-Leigh, who, speaking gratefully elsewhere of Sir Walter's later praises of his aunt's work, finds fault with this particular article as inferior to Whately's. Nor does it seem to have been known to Miss Austen's most accomplished biographer, Professor Goldwin Smith, who, after quoting Scott's commendations from the *Diary*, goes on to say that 'the Quarterly reviewed her in 1815, very poorly and in a doubtful strain.' Yet the information so obligingly afforded by Mr. John Murray was all the while lying *perdu* in a note to chapter IV. of Lockhart's *Life of Scott*. After explaining that he had been misled into ascribing Dr. Whately's article to his father-in-

law, Lockhart adds, 'The article which Scott did contribute to the Quarterly on the novels of Miss Austen was that which the reader will find in No. xxvii. [for October 1815]. Emma, and Northanger Abbey, in particular, were great favourites of his, and he often read chapters of them to his evening circle.' If this note escaped Mr. Austen-Leigh, he unwittingly confirms its last words, for he expressly refers to his personal knowledge of the well-worn condition of Sir Walter's own copy of Miss Austen's novels at Abbotsford.

Persuasion

Chapter 1

Sir Walter Elliot, of Kellynch Hall, in Somersetshire, was a man who, for his own amusement, never took up any book but the Baronetage; there he found occupation for an idle hour, and consolation in a distressed one; there his faculties were roused into admiration and respect, by contemplating the limited remnant of the earliest patents; there any unwelcome sensations, arising from domestic affairs changed naturally into pity and contempt as he turned over the almost endless creations of the last century; and there, if every other leaf were powerless, he could read his own history with an interest which never failed. This was the page at which the favourite volume always opened:

"ELLIOT OF KELLYNCH HALL.

"Walter Elliot, born March 1, 1760, married, July 15, 1784, Elizabeth, daughter of James Stevenson, Esq. of South Park, in the county of Gloucester, by which lady (who died 1800) he has issue Elizabeth, born June 1, 1785; Anne, born August 9, 1787; a still-born son, November 5, 1789; Mary, born November 20, 1791."

Precisely such had the paragraph originally stood from the printer's hands; but Sir Walter had improved it by adding, for the information of himself and his family, these words, after the date of Mary's birth--"Married, December 16, 1810, Charles, son and heir of Charles Musgrove, Esq. of Uppercross, in the county of Somerset," and by inserting most accurately the day of the month on which he had lost his wife.

Then followed the history and rise of the ancient and respectable family, in the usual terms; how it had been first settled in Cheshire; how mentioned in Dugdale, serving the office of high sheriff, representing a borough in three successive parliaments, exertions of loyalty, and dignity of baronet, in the first year of Charles II, with all the Marys and Elizabeths they had married; forming altogether two handsome duodecimo pages, and concluding with the arms and motto:--"Principal seat, Kellynch Hall, in the county of Somerset," and Sir Walter's handwriting again in this finale:--

"Heir presumptive, William Walter Elliot, Esq., great grandson of the second Sir Walter."

Vanity was the beginning and the end of Sir Walter Elliot's character; vanity of person and of situation. He had been remarkably handsome in his youth; and, at fifty-four, was still a very fine man. Few women could think more of their personal appearance than he did, nor could the valet of any

new made lord be more delighted with the place he held in society. He considered the blessing of beauty as inferior only to the blessing of a baronetcy; and the Sir Walter Elliot, who united these.jpgts, was the constant object of his warmest respect and devotion.

His good looks and his rank had one fair claim on his attachment; since to them he must have owed a wife of very superior character to any thing deserved by his own. Lady Elliot had been an excellent woman, sensible and amiable; whose judgement and conduct, if they might be pardoned the youthful infatuation which made her Lady Elliot, had never required indulgence afterwards.--She had humoured, or softened, or concealed his failings, and promoted his real respectability for seventeen years; and though not the very happiest being in the world herself, had found enough in her duties, her friends, and her children, to attach her to life, and make it no matter of indifference to her when she was called on to quit them.--Three girls, the two eldest sixteen and fourteen, was an awful legacy for a mother to bequeath, an awful charge rather, to confide to the authority and guidance of a conceited, silly father. She had, however, one very intimate friend, a sensible, deserving woman, who had been brought, by strong attachment to herself, to settle close by her, in the village of Kellynch; and on her kindness and advice, Lady Elliot mainly relied for the best help and maintenance of the good principles and instruction which she had been anxiously giving her daughters.

This friend, and Sir Walter, did not marry, whatever might have been anticipated on that head by their acquaintance. Thirteen years had passed away since Lady Elliot's death, and they were still near neighbours and intimate friends, and one remained a widower, the other a widow.

That Lady Russell, of steady age and character, and extremely well provided for, should have no thought of a second marriage, needs no apology to the public, which is rather apt to be unreasonably discontented when a woman does marry again, than when she does not; but Sir Walter's continuing in singleness requires explanation. Be it known then, that Sir Walter, like a good father, (having met with one or two private disappointments in very unreasonable applications), prided himself on remaining single for his dear daughters' sake. For one daughter, his eldest, he would really have given up any thing, which he had not been very much tempted to do. Elizabeth had succeeded, at sixteen, to all that was possible, of her mother's rights and consequence; and being very handsome, and very like himself, her influence had always been great, and they had gone on together most happily. His two other children were of very inferior value. Mary had acquired a little artificial importance, by becoming Mrs Charles Musgrove; but Anne, with an elegance of mind and sweetness of character, which must have placed her high with any people of real understanding, was nobody with either father or sister; her word had no weight, her convenience was always to give way--she was only Anne.

To Lady Russell, indeed, she was a most dear and highly valued god-daughter, favourite, and friend. Lady Russell loved them all; but it was only in Anne that she could fancy the mother to revive again.

A few years before, Anne Elliot had been a very pretty girl, but her bloom had vanished early; and as even in its height, her father had found little to admire in her, (so totally different were her delicate features and mild dark eyes from his own), there could be nothing in them, now that she was faded and thin, to excite his esteem. He had never indulged much hope, he had now none, of ever reading her

name in any other page of his favourite work. All equality of alliance must rest with Elizabeth, for Mary had merely connected herself with an old country family of respectability and large fortune, and had therefore given all the honour and received none: Elizabeth would, one day or other, marry suitably.

It sometimes happens that a woman is handsomer at twenty-nine than she was ten years before; and, generally speaking, if there has been neither ill health nor anxiety, it is a time of life at which scarcely any charm is lost. It was so with Elizabeth, still the same handsome Miss Elliot that she had begun to be thirteen years ago, and Sir Walter might be excused, therefore, in forgetting her age, or, at least, be deemed only half a fool, for thinking himself and Elizabeth as blooming as ever, amidst the wreck of the good looks of everybody else; for he could plainly see how old all the rest of his family and acquaintance were growing. Anne haggard, Mary coarse, every face in the neighbourhood worsting, and the rapid increase of the crow's foot about Lady Russell's temples had long been a distress to him.

Elizabeth did not quite equal her father in personal contentment. Thirteen years had seen her mistress of Kellynch Hall, presiding and directing with a self-possession and decision which could never have given the idea of her being younger than she was. For thirteen years had she been doing the honours, and laying down the domestic law at home, and leading the way to the chaise and four, and walking immediately after Lady Russell out of all the drawing-rooms and dining-rooms in the country. Thirteen winters' revolving frosts had seen her opening every ball of credit which a scanty neighbourhood afforded, and thirteen springs shewn their blossoms, as she travelled up to London with her father, for a few weeks' annual

enjoyment of the great world. She had the remembrance of all this, she had the consciousness of being nine-and-twenty to give her some regrets and some apprehensions; she was fully satisfied of being still quite as handsome as ever, but she felt her approach to the years of danger, and would have rejoiced to be certain of being properly solicited by baronet-blood within the next twelvemonth or two. Then might she again take up the book of books with as much enjoyment as in her early youth, but now she liked it not. Always to be presented with the date of her own birth and see no marriage follow but that of a youngest sister, made the book an evil; and more than once, when her father had left it open on the table near her, had she closed it, with averted eyes, and pushed it away.

She had had a disappointment, moreover, which that book, and especially the history of her own family, must ever present the remembrance of. The heir presumptive, the very William Walter Elliot, Esq., whose rights had been so generously supported by her father, had disappointed her.

She had, while a very young girl, as soon as she had known him to be, in the event of her having no brother, the future baronet, meant to marry him, and her father had always meant that she should. He had not been known to them as a boy; but soon after Lady Elliot's death, Sir Walter had sought the acquaintance, and though his overtures had not been met with any warmth, he had persevered in seeking it, making allowance for the modest drawing-back of youth; and, in one of their spring excursions to London, when Elizabeth was in her first bloom, Mr Elliot had been forced into the introduction.

He was at that time a very young man, just engaged in the study of the law; and Elizabeth found him extremely agreeable, and every plan in his favour was confirmed. He

was invited to Kellynch Hall; he was talked of and expected all the rest of the year; but he never came. The following spring he was seen again in town, found equally agreeable, again encouraged, invited, and expected, and again he did not come; and the next tidings were that he was married. Instead of pushing his fortune in the line marked out for the heir of the house of Elliot, he had purchased independence by uniting himself to a rich woman of inferior birth.

Sir Walter has resented it. As the head of the house, he felt that he ought to have been consulted, especially after taking the young man so publicly by the hand; "For they must have been seen together," he observed, "once at Tattersall's, and twice in the lobby of the House of Commons." His disapprobation was expressed, but apparently very little regarded. Mr Elliot had attempted no apology, and shewn himself as unsolicitous of being longer noticed by the family, as Sir Walter considered him unworthy of it: all acquaintance between them had ceased.

This very awkward history of Mr Elliot was still, after an interval of several years, felt with anger by Elizabeth, who had liked the man for himself, and still more for being her father's heir, and whose strong family pride could see only in him a proper match for Sir Walter Elliot's eldest daughter. There was not a baronet from A to Z whom her feelings could have so willingly acknowledged as an equal. Yet so miserably had he conducted himself, that though she was at this present time (the summer of 1814) wearing black ribbons for his wife, she could not admit him to be worth thinking of again. The disgrace of his first marriage might, perhaps, as there was no reason to suppose it perpetuated by offspring, have been got over, had he not done worse; but he had, as by the accustomary intervention of kind friends, they had been informed, spoken most

disrespectfully of them all, most slightingly and contemptuously of the very blood he belonged to, and the honours which were hereafter to be his own. This could not be pardoned.

Such were Elizabeth Elliot's sentiments and sensations; such the cares to alloy, the agitations to vary, the sameness and the elegance, the prosperity and the nothingness of her scene of life; such the feelings to give interest to a long, uneventful residence in one country circle, to fill the vacancies which there were no habits of utility abroad, no talents or accomplishments for home, to occupy.

But now, another occupation and solicitude of mind was beginning to be added to these. Her father was growing distressed for money. She knew, that when he now took up the Baronetage, it was to drive the heavy bills of his tradespeople, and the unwelcome hints of Mr Shepherd, his agent, from his thoughts. The Kellynch property was good, but not equal to Sir Walter's apprehension of the state required in its possessor. While Lady Elliot lived, there had been method, moderation, and economy, which had just kept him within his income; but with her had died all such right-mindedness, and from that period he had been constantly exceeding it. It had not been possible for him to spend less; he had done nothing but what Sir Walter Elliot was imperiously called on to do; but blameless as he was, he was not only growing dreadfully in debt, but was hearing of it so often, that it became vain to attempt concealing it longer, even partially, from his daughter. He had given her some hints of it the last spring in town; he had gone so far even as to say, "Can we retrench? Does it occur to you that there is any one article in which we can retrench?" and Elizabeth, to do her justice, had, in the first ardour of female alarm, set seriously to think what could be done, and had finally proposed these two branches of

economy, to cut off some unnecessary charities, and to refrain from new furnishing the drawing-room; to which expedients she afterwards added the happy thought of their taking no present down to Anne, as had been the usual yearly custom. But these measures, however good in themselves, were insufficient for the real extent of the evil, the whole of which Sir Walter found himself obliged to confess to her soon afterwards. Elizabeth had nothing to propose of deeper efficacy. She felt herself ill-used and unfortunate, as did her father; and they were neither of them able to devise any means of lessening their expenses without compromising their dignity, or relinquishing their comforts in a way not to be borne.

There was only a small part of his estate that Sir Walter could dispose of; but had every acre been alienable, it would have made no difference. He had condescended to mortgage as far as he had the power, but he would never condescend to sell. No; he would never disgrace his name so far. The Kellynch estate should be transmitted whole and entire, as he had received it.

Their two confidential friends, Mr Shepherd, who lived in the neighbouring market town, and Lady Russell, were called to advise them; and both father and daughter seemed to expect that something should be struck out by one or the other to remove their embarrassments and reduce their expenditure, without involving the loss of any indulgence of taste or pride.

Chapter 2

Mr Shepherd, a civil, cautious lawyer, who, whatever might be his hold or his views on Sir Walter, would rather have

the disagreeable prompted by anybody else, excused himself from offering the slightest hint, and only begged leave to recommend an implicit reference to the excellent judgement of Lady Russell, from whose known good sense he fully expected to have just such resolute measures advised as he meant to see finally adopted.

Lady Russell was most anxiously zealous on the subject, and gave it much serious consideration. She was a woman rather of sound than of quick abilities, whose difficulties in coming to any decision in this instance were great, from the opposition of two leading principles. She was of strict integrity herself, with a delicate sense of honour; but she was as desirous of saving Sir Walter's feelings, as solicitous for the credit of the family, as aristocratic in her ideas of what was due to them, as anybody of sense and honesty could well be. She was a benevolent, charitable, good woman, and capable of strong attachments, most correct in her conduct, strict in her notions of decorum, and with manners that were held a standard of good-breeding. She had a cultivated mind, and was, generally speaking, rational and consistent; but she had prejudices on the side of ancestry; she had a value for rank and consequence, which blinded her a little to the faults of those who possessed them. Herself the widow of only a knight, she gave the dignity of a baronet all its due; and Sir Walter, independent of his claims as an old acquaintance, an attentive neighbour, an obliging landlord, the husband of her very dear friend, the father of Anne and her sisters, was, as being Sir Walter, in her apprehension, entitled to a great deal of compassion and consideration under his present difficulties.

They must retrench; that did not admit of a doubt. But she was very anxious to have it done with the least possible pain to him and Elizabeth. She drew up plans of economy,

she made exact calculations, and she did what nobody else thought of doing: she consulted Anne, who never seemed considered by the others as having any interest in the question. She consulted, and in a degree was influenced by her in marking out the scheme of retrenchment which was at last submitted to Sir Walter. Every emendation of Anne's had been on the side of honesty against importance. She wanted more vigorous measures, a more complete reformation, a quicker release from debt, a much higher tone of indifference for everything but justice and equity.

"If we can persuade your father to all this," said Lady Russell, looking over her paper, "much may be done. If he will adopt these regulations, in seven years he will be clear; and I hope we may be able to convince him and Elizabeth, that Kellynch Hall has a respectability in itself which cannot be affected by these reductions; and that the true dignity of Sir Walter Elliot will be very far from lessened in the eyes of sensible people, by acting like a man of principle. What will he be doing, in fact, but what very many of our first families have done, or ought to do? There will be nothing singular in his case; and it is singularity which often makes the worst part of our suffering, as it always does of our conduct. I have great hope of prevailing. We must be serious and decided; for after all, the person who has contracted debts must pay them; and though a great deal is due to the feelings of the gentleman, and the head of a house, like your father, there is still more due to the character of an honest man."

This was the principle on which Anne wanted her father to be proceeding, his friends to be urging him. She considered it as an act of indispensable duty to clear away the claims of creditors with all the expedition which the most comprehensive retrenchments could secure, and saw no dignity in anything short of it. She wanted it to be

prescribed, and felt as a duty. She rated Lady Russell's influence highly; and as to the severe degree of self-denial which her own conscience prompted, she believed there might be little more difficulty in persuading them to a complete, than to half a reformation. Her knowledge of her father and Elizabeth inclined her to think that the sacrifice of one pair of horses would be hardly less painful than of both, and so on, through the whole list of Lady Russell's too gentle reductions.

How Anne's more rigid requisitions might have been taken is of little consequence. Lady Russell's had no success at all: could not be put up with, were not to be borne. "What! every comfort of life knocked off! Journeys, London, servants, horses, table--contractions and restrictions every where! To live no longer with the decencies even of a private gentleman! No, he would sooner quit Kellynch Hall at once, than remain in it on such disgraceful terms."

"Quit Kellynch Hall." The hint was immediately taken up by Mr Shepherd, whose interest was involved in the reality of Sir Walter's retrenching, and who was perfectly persuaded that nothing would be done without a change of abode. "Since the idea had been started in the very quarter which ought to dictate, he had no scruple," he said, "in confessing his judgement to be entirely on that side. It did not appear to him that Sir Walter could materially alter his style of living in a house which had such a character of hospitality and ancient dignity to support. In any other place Sir Walter might judge for himself; and would be looked up to, as regulating the modes of life in whatever way he might choose to model his household."

Sir Walter would quit Kellynch Hall; and after a very few days more of doubt and indecision, the great question of

whither he should go was settled, and the first outline of this important change made out.

There had been three alternatives, London, Bath, or another house in the country. All Anne's wishes had been for the latter. A small house in their own neighbourhood, where they might still have Lady Russell's society, still be near Mary, and still have the pleasure of sometimes seeing the lawns and groves of Kellynch, was the object of her ambition. But the usual fate of Anne attended her, in having something very opposite from her inclination fixed on. She disliked Bath, and did not think it agreed with her; and Bath was to be her home.

Sir Walter had at first thought more of London; but Mr Shepherd felt that he could not be trusted in London, and had been skilful enough to dissuade him from it, and make Bath preferred. It was a much safer place for a gentleman in his predicament: he might there be important at comparatively little expense. Two material advantages of Bath over London had of course been given all their weight: its more convenient distance from Kellynch, only fifty miles, and Lady Russell's spending some part of every winter there; and to the very great satisfaction of Lady Russell, whose first views on the projected change had been for Bath, Sir Walter and Elizabeth were induced to believe that they should lose neither consequence nor enjoyment by settling there.

Lady Russell felt obliged to oppose her dear Anne's known wishes. It would be too much to expect Sir Walter to descend into a small house in his own neighbourhood. Anne herself would have found the mortifications of it more than she foresaw, and to Sir Walter's feelings they must have been dreadful. And with regard to Anne's dislike of Bath, she considered it as a prejudice and mistake arising, first,

from the circumstance of her having been three years at school there, after her mother's death; and secondly, from her happening to be not in perfectly good spirits the only winter which she had afterwards spent there with herself.

Lady Russell was fond of Bath, in short, and disposed to think it must suit them all; and as to her young friend's health, by passing all the warm months with her at Kellynch Lodge, every danger would be avoided; and it was in fact, a change which must do both health and spirits good. Anne had been too little from home, too little seen. Her spirits were not high. A larger society would improve them. She wanted her to be more known.

The undesirableness of any other house in the same neighbourhood for Sir Walter was certainly much strengthened by one part, and a very material part of the scheme, which had been happily engrafted on the beginning. He was not only to quit his home, but to see it in the hands of others; a trial of fortitude, which stronger heads than Sir Walter's have found too much. Kellynch Hall was to be let. This, however, was a profound secret, not to be breathed beyond their own circle.

Sir Walter could not have borne the degradation of being known to design letting his house. Mr Shepherd had once mentioned the word "advertise," but never dared approach it again. Sir Walter spurned the idea of its being offered in any manner; forbad the slightest hint being dropped of his having such an intention; and it was only on the supposition of his being spontaneously solicited by some most unexceptionable applicant, on his own terms, and as a great favour, that he would let it at all.

How quick come the reasons for approving what we like! Lady Russell had another excellent one at hand, for being

extremely glad that Sir Walter and his family were to remove from the country. Elizabeth had been lately forming an intimacy, which she wished to see interrupted. It was with the daughter of Mr Shepherd, who had returned, after an unprosperous marriage, to her father's house, with the additional burden of two children. She was a clever young woman, who understood the art of pleasing--the art of pleasing, at least, at Kellynch Hall; and who had made herself so acceptable to Miss Elliot, as to have been already staying there more than once, in spite of all that Lady Russell, who thought it a friendship quite out of place, could hint of caution and reserve.

Lady Russell, indeed, had scarcely any influence with Elizabeth, and seemed to love her, rather because she would love her, than because Elizabeth deserved it. She had never received from her more than outward attention, nothing beyond the observances of complaisance; had never succeeded in any point which she wanted to carry, against previous inclination. She had been repeatedly very earnest in trying to get Anne included in the visit to London, sensibly open to all the injustice and all the discredit of the selfish arrangements which shut her out, and on many lesser occasions had endeavoured to give Elizabeth the advantage of her own better judgement and experience; but always in vain: Elizabeth would go her own way; and never had she pursued it in more decided opposition to Lady Russell than in this selection of Mrs Clay; turning from the society of so deserving a sister, to bestow her affection and confidence on one who ought to have been nothing to her but the object of distant civility.

From situation, Mrs Clay was, in Lady Russell's estimate, a very unequal, and in her character she believed a very dangerous companion; and a removal that would leave Mrs Clay behind, and bring a choice of more suitable intimates

within Miss Elliot's reach, was therefore an object of first-rate importance.

Chapter 3

"I must take leave to observe, Sir Walter," said Mr Shepherd one morning at Kellynch Hall, as he laid down the newspaper, "that the present juncture is much in our favour. This peace will be turning all our rich naval officers ashore. They will be all wanting a home. Could not be a better time, Sir Walter, for having a choice of tenants, very responsible tenants. Many a noble fortune has been made during the war. If a rich admiral were to come in our way, Sir Walter--"

"He would be a very lucky man, Shepherd," replied Sir Walter; "that's all I have to remark. A prize indeed would Kellynch Hall be to him; rather the greatest prize of all, let him have taken ever so many before; hey, Shepherd?"

Mr Shepherd laughed, as he knew he must, at this wit, and then added--

"I presume to observe, Sir Walter, that, in the way of business, gentlemen of the navy are well to deal with. I have had a little knowledge of their methods of doing business; and I am free to confess that they have very liberal notions, and are as likely to make desirable tenants as any set of people one should meet with. Therefore, Sir Walter, what I would take leave to suggest is, that if in consequence of any rumours getting abroad of your intention; which must be contemplated as a possible thing, because we know how difficult it is to keep the actions and designs of one part of the world from the notice and

curiosity of the other; consequence has its tax; I, John Shepherd, might conceal any family-matters that I chose, for nobody would think it worth their while to observe me; but Sir Walter Elliot has eyes upon him which it may be very difficult to elude; and therefore, thus much I venture upon, that it will not greatly surprise me if, with all our caution, some rumour of the truth should get abroad; in the supposition of which, as I was going to observe, since applications will unquestionably follow, I should think any from our wealthy naval commanders particularly worth attending to; and beg leave to add, that two hours will bring me over at any time, to save you the trouble of replying."

Sir Walter only nodded. But soon afterwards, rising and pacing the room, he observed sarcastically--

"There are few among the gentlemen of the navy, I imagine, who would not be surprised to find themselves in a house of this description."

"They would look around them, no doubt, and bless their good fortune," said Mrs Clay, for Mrs Clay was present: her father had driven her over, nothing being of so much use to Mrs Clay's health as a drive to Kellynch: "but I quite agree with my father in thinking a sailor might be a very desirable tenant. I have known a good deal of the profession; and besides their liberality, they are so neat and careful in all their ways! These valuable pictures of yours, Sir Walter, if you chose to leave them, would be perfectly safe. Everything in and about the house would be taken such excellent care of! The gardens and shrubberies would be kept in almost as high order as they are now. You need not be afraid, Miss Elliot, of your own sweet flower gardens being neglected."

"As to all that," rejoined Sir Walter coolly, "supposing I were induced to let my house, I have by no means made up my mind as to the privileges to be annexed to it. I am not particularly disposed to favour a tenant. The park would be open to him of course, and few navy officers, or men of any other description, can have had such a range; but what restrictions I might impose on the use of the pleasure-grounds, is another thing. I am not fond of the idea of my shrubberies being always approachable; and I should recommend Miss Elliot to be on her guard with respect to her flower garden. I am very little disposed to grant a tenant of Kellynch Hall any extraordinary favour, I assure you, be he sailor or soldier."

After a short pause, Mr Shepherd presumed to say--

"In all these cases, there are established usages which make everything plain and easy between landlord and tenant. Your interest, Sir Walter, is in pretty safe hands. Depend upon me for taking care that no tenant has more than his just rights. I venture to hint, that Sir Walter Elliot cannot be half so jealous for his own, as John Shepherd will be for him."

Here Anne spoke--

"The navy, I think, who have done so much for us, have at least an equal claim with any other set of men, for all the comforts and all the privileges which any home can give. Sailors work hard enough for their comforts, we must all allow."

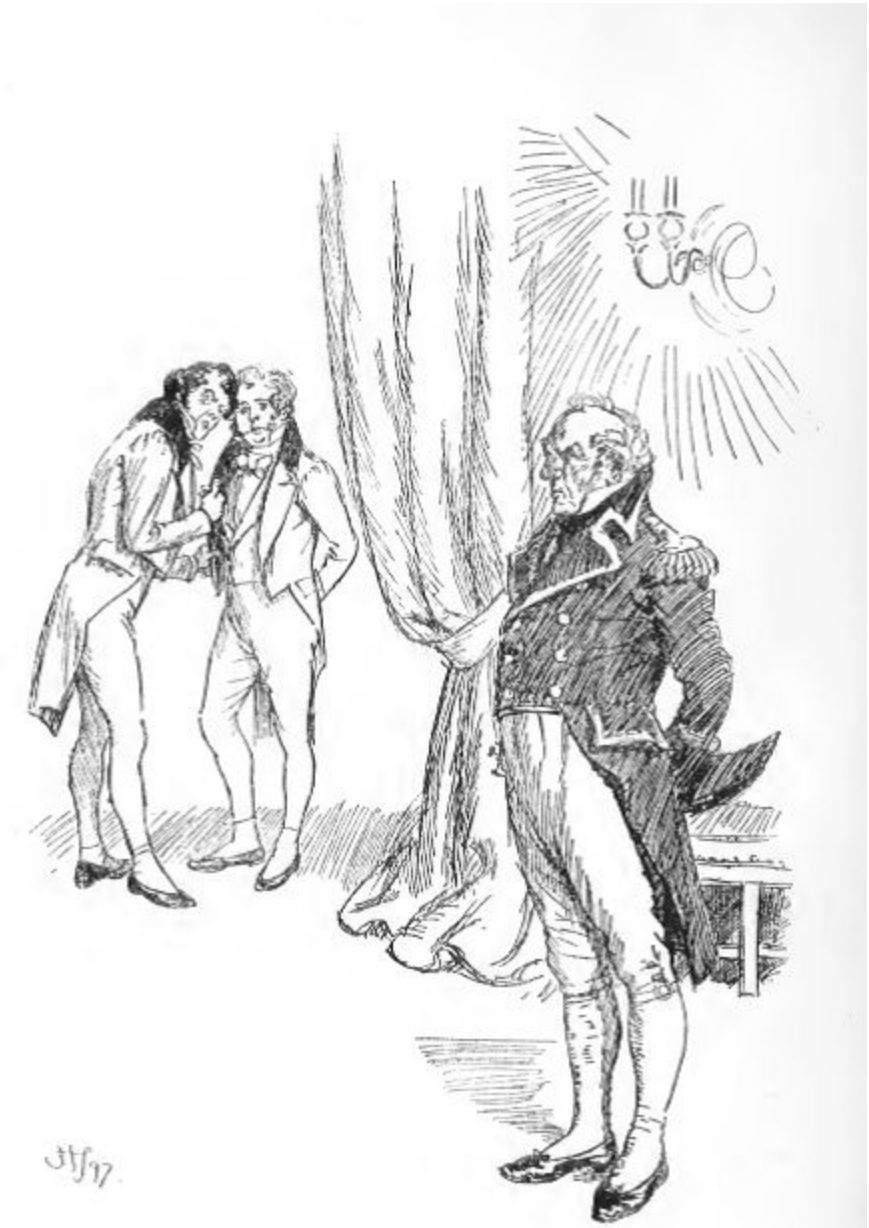
"Very true, very true. What Miss Anne says, is very true," was Mr Shepherd's rejoinder, and "Oh! certainly," was his daughter's; but Sir Walter's remark was, soon afterwards--

"The profession has its utility, but I should be sorry to see any friend of mine belonging to it."

"Indeed!" was the reply, and with a look of surprise.

"Yes; it is in two points offensive to me; I have two strong grounds of objection to it. First, as being the means of bringing persons of obscure birth into undue distinction, and raising men to honours which their fathers and grandfathers never dreamt of; and secondly, as it cuts up a man's youth and vigour most horribly; a sailor grows old sooner than any other man. I have observed it all my life. A man is in greater danger in the navy of being insulted by the rise of one whose father, his father might have disdained to speak to, and of becoming prematurely an object of disgust himself, than in any other line. One day last spring, in town, I was in company with two men, striking instances of what I am talking of; Lord St Ives, whose father we all know to have been a country curate, without bread to eat; I was to give place to Lord St Ives, and a certain Admiral Baldwin, the most deplorable-looking personage you can imagine; his face the colour of mahogany, rough and rugged to the last degree; all lines and wrinkles, nine grey hairs of a side, and nothing but a dab of powder at top. 'In the name of heaven, who is that old fellow?' said I to a friend of mine who was standing near, (Sir Basil Morley). 'Old fellow!' cried Sir Basil, 'it is Admiral Baldwin. What do you take his age to be?' 'Sixty,' said I, 'or perhaps sixty-two.' 'Forty,' replied Sir Basil, 'forty, and no more.' Picture to yourselves my amazement; I shall not easily forget Admiral Baldwin. I never saw quite so wretched an example of what a sea-faring life can do; but to a degree, I know it is the same with them all: they are all knocked about, and exposed to every climate, and every weather, till they are not fit to be seen. It is a pity they are

not knocked on the head at once, before they reach Admiral Baldwin's age."



'In the name of heaven, who is that old fellow?

"Nay, Sir Walter," cried Mrs Clay, "this is being severe indeed. Have a little mercy on the poor men. We are not all born to be handsome. The sea is no beautifier, certainly; sailors do grow old betimes; I have observed it; they soon

lose the look of youth. But then, is not it the same with many other professions, perhaps most other? Soldiers, in active service, are not at all better off: and even in the quieter professions, there is a toil and a labour of the mind, if not of the body, which seldom leaves a man's looks to the natural effect of time. The lawyer plods, quite care-worn; the physician is up at all hours, and travelling in all weather; and even the clergyman--" she stopt a moment to consider what might do for the clergyman;--"and even the clergyman, you know is obliged to go into infected rooms, and expose his health and looks to all the injury of a poisonous atmosphere. In fact, as I have long been convinced, though every profession is necessary and honourable in its turn, it is only the lot of those who are not obliged to follow any, who can live in a regular way, in the country, choosing their own hours, following their own pursuits, and living on their own property, without the torment of trying for more; it is only their lot, I say, to hold the blessings of health and a good appearance to the utmost: I know no other set of men but what lose something of their personableness when they cease to be quite young."

It seemed as if Mr Shepherd, in this anxiety to bespeak Sir Walter's good will towards a naval officer as tenant, had been.jpgted with foresight; for the very first application for the house was from an Admiral Croft, with whom he shortly afterwards fell into company in attending the quarter sessions at Taunton; and indeed, he had received a hint of the Admiral from a London correspondent. By the report which he hastened over to Kellynch to make, Admiral Croft was a native of Somersetshire, who having acquired a very handsome fortune, was wishing to settle in his own country, and had come down to Taunton in order to look at some advertised places in that immediate neighbourhood, which, however, had not suited him; that accidentally hearing--(it