
JANE AUSTEN
PERSUASION
INTRODUCED BY
LYNN TRUSS

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About the Book

Eight years ago Anne Elliot bowed to pressure from her family and made the decision not to marry the man she loved, Captain Wentworth. Now circumstances have conspired to bring him back into her social circle and Anne finds her old feelings for him reignited. However, when they meet again Wentworth behaves as if they are strangers and seems more interested in her friend Louisa. In this, her final novel, Jane Austen tells the story of a love that endures the tests of time and society with humour, insight and tenderness.

About the Author

Jane Austen was born in Steventon rectory on 16 December 1775. Her family later moved to Bath, then to Southampton and finally to Chawton in Hampshire. She published four of her novels in her lifetime, *Sense and Sensibility* (1811), *Pride and Prejudice* (1813), *Mansfield Park* (1814) and *Emma* (1816). Jane Austen died on 18th July 1817. *Northanger Abbey* and *Persuasion* were both published posthumously in 1818.

ALSO BY JANE AUSTEN

Sense and Sensibility
Pride and Prejudice
Mansfield Park
Emma
Northanger Abbey

Persuasion

Jane Austen

With an Introduction by Lynne Truss

VINTAGE BOOKS
London

Introduction

There have been two television adaptations of *Persuasion* in modern times. Broadly speaking, one of these adaptations (in 1995) got everything right, and the second one (in 2007) got everything wrong. I won't list every aspect of the 2007 version that irked me, partly because it might seem unkind to the actors, whose fault it wasn't; and partly because there was, around the same time, a *Mansfield Park* whose jaw-dropping enormities eclipse all other crimes against Jane Austen in any case. Produced on a visibly tight budget, this *Mansfield Park* portrayed Fanny Price as a strapping young woman who charged along corridors, carrying a toddler on each hip – thus thumbing the nose at any stick-in-the-mud Jane Austen fan who had made the ridiculous error of tuning in for a trip down memory lane. But it was the obvious parsimony of the production that began to alarm me, as the plot unfolded. Narrative highlights of *Mansfield Park* were surely under threat. 'How will they afford Fanny's exile to Portsmouth? They will need boats and docks and several new actors! And how will they manage the *ball*? They will need hundreds of extras and indoor lighting, and musicians and costumes and candles and also specialist choreography and dancing lessons!'

Playing Sir Thomas Bertram was the wonderful actor Douglas Hodge, and it's amazing that I still like him, when his main job was to deliver news that was devastating to any fan of the actual novel.

'We must have a ball for you, Fanny,' he said – with apparent sincerity.

‘Oh, I don’t want *a ball*,’ replied Fanny, wrinkling her nose. ‘I’d rather have *a picnic*.’

Sir Thomas did not blench.

‘Very well,’ he said. ‘We will throw for you a simple picnic on the lawn with just our closest friends! With what we save, I will ask your Aunt Norris to purchase a special tin of biscuits.’

But there remained the problem of the banishment to Portsmouth – and again there was a tête-à-tête between Sir Thomas and Fanny, this one proving to be a new low-water mark in Jane Austen adaptations.

‘I am very disappointed in your attitudes of late, Fanny, so I have devised a punishment.’

‘Oh no,’ gasped Fanny. ‘Not *Portsmouth*?’

‘Portsmouth? What, are you insane? No, I have decided that you will stay here at Mansfield Park *on your own*, while the rest of us go somewhere unspecified that doesn’t cost us anything. You will hear the suggestive sound of horses and coach wheels on a gravel drive, but won’t necessarily see us depart. And I hope you will dwell on your conduct while we are gone.’

Obviously, I am remembering approximately here, but my point is this: fans of Jane Austen never forgive a wonky adaptation. And what I principally couldn’t forgive in the 2007 *Persuasion* was this: repeatedly, we saw Anne Elliot (Sally Hawkins) alone and thoughtful, candlelit, with tears rolling down her face – and every time we caught her in solitary anguish, she raised her eyes and looked steadily into the camera (just before the adverts). ‘Pity me,’ said this tragic, tearful gaze. ‘Look, do I really deserve this?’ it said. And also: ‘You might not have noticed, so I’m underlining it a bit here, but this is quite a sad story and I’m right at the centre of it, yet absolutely powerless to make it happier. What on earth will become of me?’

Ever since, I have wondered: why was the direct gaze of Anne Elliot in this adaptation so offensive to me? After all, in

the scheme of things, it was nothing like putting Fanny Price under house arrest or reducing the Mansfield Park ball to a chequered tablecloth and a game of tag. Why shouldn't poor Anne Elliot appeal to the audience for a bit of sympathy? This was drama, after all – and in drama, as any fool knows, one is obliged to show, not tell.

It is customary to admire *Persuasion* above all other Jane Austen novels. While fans will have their favourites among the others, they will generally acknowledge that *Persuasion* is the masterpiece. It was Jane Austen's last completed novel (published posthumously at the end of 1817) and is a mature work in every sense. Supremely, it explores the effects of time – on personality, on feeling, and on love. The critic Tony Tanner playfully calls *Persuasion* a 'second novel' – meaning that there is, in the background, a first novel about the nineteen-year-old Anne Elliot and her love for Frederick Wentworth – the sort of novel, Tanner says, that Austen might have written when she was younger. This last point is arguable, but certainly the key to the brilliance of *Persuasion* is the reader's awareness of that lost narrative from the past – a shipwrecked story that this book strikes out from, into uncharted waters, with little hope of salvation. Seven years have passed since Anne gave up Wentworth, under advice from the family friend Lady Russell. She has never heard from him again. In the intervening period, Wentworth has bettered himself in the Navy, rising to the rank of Captain. And all the while Anne has remained at home, leading an unconsidered life (unconsidered in every sense). As we learn on the very first page of the novel, Anne's entire existence has already been summed up in the official records – in the Baronetage that her father prizes above all things – by nothing more than her name and her date of birth.

For all that the reader of *Persuasion* sees the world through the eyes and thoughts of Anne Elliot, what do we really know about her? We hardly notice, but Jane Austen

does not really account for those long despairing years. In Anne Elliot's place, many young women would surely have taken up some useful pastime such as goat husbandry, so that when the Captain re-appeared, they would quite happily send him packing for a second time, choosing the nice, steady goaty life over all the potential emotional upheaval. Or perhaps that's just me. All we know is that Anne has spent the years quietly, and that she rejected a proposal subsequent to Frederick Wentworth's: Charles Musgrove wanted to marry her, but since he was content to marry Anne's younger sister Mary instead, the rejection was not a mistake. We also know that Anne is a great reader; more importantly, however, we know that exposure to books has served to confirm her as an outsider. She has noted an important reality: that however much a woman might read, all the accounts of women are still written by men. The climax of *Persuasion* is a double one: there is the famous romantic pay-off (which is considerable) and there is also the moment when Anne gently drops the proto-feminist bombshell for which Jane Austen must always be saluted:

> Yes, yes, if you please, no reference to examples in books. Men have had every advantage of us in telling their own story. Education has been theirs in so much higher a degree; the pen has been in their hands. I will not allow books to prove anything. (Chapter twenty-three)

So what about the offensive gaze in that 2007 adaptation? Why was it such an outrage? Quite simply, it was because such a direct appeal is completely out of keeping with both the plot of *Persuasion* and of the character of Anne Elliot. Indirectness is both a theme of the book, and its narrative method, otherwise at the first meeting of Anne and the captain, there would be nothing to stop her saying, 'Look, Fred, I'm getting on. Do you still love me or not? Because

frankly I'm quite happy with these goats.' And he could say, 'Actually, I do still love you. Sod the goats, let's get out of here.' The tension in the story derives from the hesitancy, the silence, the heightened sensitivity of the invisible person who relies on clues for understanding. Are Captain Wentworth's many acts of kindness just a product of his good manners, or does he have feelings for her? Anyone who has yearned forlornly for another will recognise the agony of reading the portents to arrive at a wrong conclusion. 'He waited three whole days to text me back. I think he loves me!' It is important to remember that one of the meanings of the word 'persuasion' has nothing to do with other people applying pressure on you to change your mind. Persuasion is also intransitive – when one is 'persuaded' of something, one has mentally weighed up the evidence and reached a private conclusion. When sister Mary insists on joining the Musgrove girls on their 'long walk' in chapter ten, Anne is 'persuaded, by the looks of the girls, that it was precisely what they did not wish'. Looking back on the decision to reject Wentworth (in chapter four), she is now 'persuaded that under every disadvantage and disapprobation at home . . . she should yet have been a happier woman in maintaining the engagement'.

Just as there are dangers in both pride and prejudice, so there are dangers in being overly subject to persuasion in both its senses – as Anne Elliot surely is. She not only allowed Lady Russell to guide her actions (a policy she stoutly defends to the last); she also – in the modern term – is an 'over-thinker'. This is why *Persuasion* is so hard to adapt for drama: because it is so much about observing and drawing inferences; so much of it is about thinking.

So this is one good reason to abhor the Anne Elliot puppy appeal in that unfortunate adaptation. She really shouldn't be looking at us like that. Another obvious objection is that Anne is not self-pitying, and that tears are mentioned only

once in the book, when she plays the piano for the Musgrove girls to dance (in chapter eight). Also: *when she's pulling that face, who the hell is she looking at?* But I shan't go on. The final point is that when someone looks you in the eye and weeps, you always imagine they are thinking, 'What am I going to do? What will become of me?' And if there is one astonishing feature of *Persuasion*, it is that there is almost no sense of the future in it. Until the romantic conclusion arrives, the reader feels that time has already been stretched to its furthest limits in the seven years of Anne's unhappiness, and that it won't stretch any further. English is rare among languages in having no future tense – we can say 'I did' and 'I do', but to formulate a future tense, we have to say 'I will do' or 'I might do' or 'I hope to do'. No one misses that future tense while reading *Persuasion*. It is a novel written by a young woman approaching her own death; Anne Elliot is only twenty-six years old, but she seems to be standing at the end of time.

The great artistry of *Persuasion* is in the way its themes of love and loss are woven into the plot, so that (for example) the narrative surprise of Louisa Musgrove and Captain Benwick falling in love with each other just happens to serve every aspect of Jane Austen's enterprise. Such novelistic skill is outstanding. First, the sensational news of their surprise engagement serves a simple plot purpose, by releasing Captain Wentworth at a single stroke from any contractual misunderstandings, and leaving him free to turn his attentions to Anne. But at the same time, when Captain Benwick's place in the novel – standing as an ideal of constancy – is adroitly blown out of the water, the whole subject is thereby almost comically overturned, leaving the reader flailing. And finally, on top of this, the fact that the deeply grieving Captain Benwick can be cheered up by someone as lightweight as Louisa Musgrove causes such consternation in all the right-minded characters in the novel – Captain Harville, Captain Wentworth and Anne herself –

that, again, his engagement helps push the plot to its romantic resolution. It is when discussing this strange liaison with the shocked Captain Harville that Anne finally dares to speak aloud about loving when all hope has gone.

John Mullan, in his essential book *What Matters in Jane Austen?* (2012), makes a marvellous point about the talkative Captain Benwick, by the way: that we never hear him speak directly. All his dialogue is delivered indirectly by Jane Austen (and filtered by Anne): this in itself ought to warn us that he is not the honourable chap we assume he is. 'The effect is extraordinary,' writes Mullan, 'and surely affects readers who are not necessarily conscious of Benwick's speechlessness . . . The author's buried joke is that all his outpouring amounts to no real expression of individual feeling or opinion.' Of course, the amount people say (or don't say) directly is fabulously well judged throughout this novel, with Anne herself unheard until midway through chapter three – when her first words concern Admiral Croft. 'He is a rear admiral of the white' she says. 'He was in the Trafalgar action, and has been in the East Indies since; he was stationed there, I believe, several years.' After this purely factual intervention, she falls silent again, and the next time she speaks, it is (painfully) to supply the name 'Wentworth' when the agent Mr Shepherd can't remember the name of Admiral Croft's clergyman brother-in-law.

Perhaps I should re-watch the terrible *Persuasion* from 2007. Perhaps it will be better than I remember. But on the other hand, doesn't it end with Captain Wentworth purchasing Kellynch Hall as a nice surprise for Anne (this doesn't happen in the novel)? Oh well. At least all the events in Bath and Lyme were filmed in the right locations. We have to remember how tempting it must have been for the producers to have Sir Walter announce the move to Bath and then (what a brainwave!) have Lady Russell come round and simply talk him out of it.

Lynne Truss, 2014

VOLUME I

I

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 1801) he has issue Elizabeth, born June 1, 1785; Anne, born August 9, 1787; a still-born son, Nov. 5, 1789; Mary, born Nov. 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, Dec. 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 gifts, 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 judgment 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 every body 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 had 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 Tattersal’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 on 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.

II

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 any body else, excused himself from offering the slightest hint, and only begged leave to recommend an implicit deference to the excellent judgment 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 any body 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 every thing 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 his 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 our 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 any thing 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 judgment 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