The Visits of Elizabeth

by

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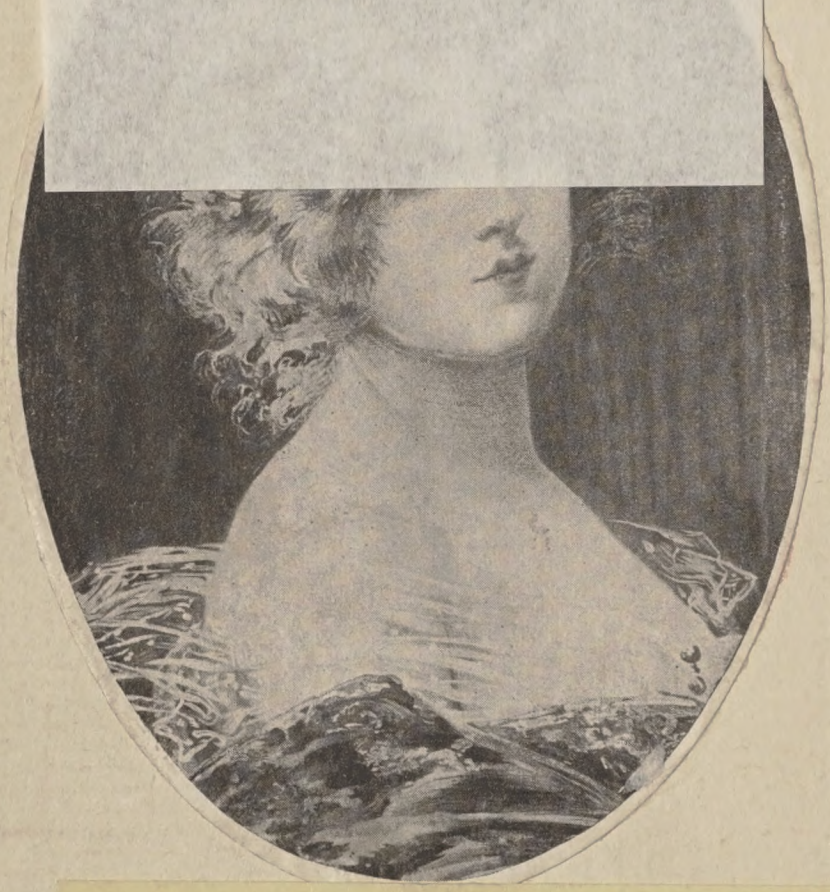

THE VISITS OF ELIZABETH.

It was perhaps a fortunate thing for Elizabeth that her ancestors went back to the Conquest, and that she numbered at least two countesses and a Duchess among her relatives. Her father had long since joined the majority, and, her mother being an invalid, they had lived a good deal abroad. But, at about seventeen, Elizabeth began to pay visits among her kinsfolk. It was after arriving at Naze-by Hall for a Cricket Week that she first wrote home.

Nazeby Hall

THE VISITS OF ELIZABETH.

Nazeby Hall,
August 3d.

Dearest Mamma,—

I got here all right, without even a smut on my face, for Agnes tidied me up in the brougham before we arrived at the gate. The dust in the train was horrid. It is a nice house. They were at tea when I was ushered in; it was in the hall—I suppose it was because it was so windy outside. There seemed to be a lot of people there; and they all stopped talking suddenly, and stared at me as if I were a new thing in the Zoo, and then after a minute went on with their conversations at the point they left off.

Lady Cecilia pecked my cheek, and gave me two

fingers; and asked me, in a voice right up at the top, how were you. I said you were better and—you know what you told me to say. She murmured something while she was listening to what a woman with a sweet frock and green eyes was saying at the other end of the table. There was heaps of tea. She waved vaguely for me to sit down, which I did; but there was a footstool near, and it was gloomy, so I fell over that, but not very badly, and got safely to my seat.

Lady Cecilia—continuing her conversation across the room all the time—poured out a cup of tea, with lumps and lumps of sugar in it, and lots of cream, just what you would give to a child for a treat! and she handed it to me, but I said, "Oh! please, Lady Cecilia, I don't take sugar!" She has such bulgy eyes, and she opened them wide at me, perfectly astonished, and said, "Oh! then please ring the bell; I don't believe there is another clean cup," and everybody stopped talking again, and looked at me, and the green-eyed lady giggled—and I rang the bell, and this time didn't fall over anything, and so presently I got some tea; and just as I was enjoying such a nice cake, and watching

all the people, quite a decent man came up and sat down behind me. Lady Cecilia had not introduced me to anybody, and he said, "Have you come a long way?" and I said "Yes." And he said, "It must have been dusty in the train," and I said it was —and he was beginning to say something more, when the woman with the green eyes said, "Harry, do hand me the cucumber sandwiches," and so he had to get up, and just then Sir Trevor came in, and he was glad to see me. He is a jolly soul, and he said I was eight when he last saw me, and seemed quite surprised I had grown any taller since! Just as though people could stay at eight! Then he patted my cheek, and said, "You're a beauty, Elizabeth," and Lady Cecilia's eyes bulged at him a good deal, and she said to me, "Wouldn't you like to see your room?" and I said I wasn't a bit in a hurry, but she took me off, and here I am; and I am going to wear my pink silk for dinner, and I will finish this bye and bye.

12.30. Well, I have had dinner, and I found out a good many of their names—they mostly arrived yesterday. The woman with the green eyes is Mrs. de Yorburgh-Smith. I am sure she is a pig. The

quite decent man, "Harry," is a Marquis—the Marquis of Valmond—because he took Lady Cecilia into dinner. He is playing in the Nazeby Eleven.

There is a woman I like, with stick-out teeth; her name is Mrs. Vavaseur. She knows you, and she is awfully nice, though so plain, and she never looks either over your head, or all up and down, or talks to you when she is thinking of something else. There are heaps more women, and the eleven men, so we are a party of about twenty-five; but you will see their names in the paper.

Such a bore took me in! He began about the dust again, but I could not stand that, so I said that every one had already asked me about it. So he said "Oh!" and went on with his soup.

At the other side was another of the Eleven, and he said, did I like cricket? and I said "No, I hated always having to field" (which was what I did, you know, when I played with the Byrne boys at Biarritz); and I asked him if he was a good player, and he said "No," so I said I supposed he always had to field too, then; and he said No, that sometimes they allowed him a bat, and so I said I was sure that wasn't the same game I played; and he laughed

as if I had said something funny—his name is Lord George Lane—and the other one laughed too, and they both looked idiots, and so I did not say any more about that. But we talked on all the time, and every one else seemed to be having such fun, and they all call each other by pet names, and shorten up all their adjectives (it is adjectives I mean, not adverbs); and I am sure you made a mistake in what you told me, that all well-bred people behave nicely at dinner, and sit up, because they don't a bit; lots of them put their elbows on the table, and nearly all sat anyhow in their chairs. Only Lady Cecilia and Mrs. Vavaseur behaved like you do; but then they are both quite old—over forty.

They all talk about things that no stranger could understand, but I dare say I shall pick it up presently. And after dinner, in the drawing-room, Lady Cecilia did introduce me to two girls—the Roose girls—you know. Well, Lady Jane is the best of the two; Violet is a lump. They both poke their heads, and Jane turns in her toes. They have rather the look in their eyes of people with tight boots. Violet said, "Do you bicycle?" and I said "Yes, sometimes;" and she said, with a big gasp:

"Jane and I adore it. We have been ten miles since tea with Captain Winchester and Mr. Wertz."

I did not think that interesting, but still we talked. They asked me stacks of questions, but did not wait for the answers much. Mr. Wertz is the African millionaire. He does not play cricket, and, when the men came in afterwards, he crossed over to us, and Jane introduced him to me when he had talked a little. He is quite a sort of gentleman, and is very at home with every one. He laughed at everything I said. Mrs. Smith (such bosh putting "de Yorburgh" on!) sat on a big sofa with Lord Valmond, and she opened and shut her eyes at him, and Jane Roose says she takes every one's friend away; and Lord George Lane came up, and we talked, and he wasn't such an idiot as at dinner, and he has nice teeth. All the rest, except the Rooses and me, are married—the women, I mean—except Miss La Touche, but she is just the same, because she sits with the married lot, and they all chat together, and Violet Roose says she is a cat, but I think she looks nice; she is so pretty, and her hair is done at the right angle, because it is like Agnes does mine, and she has nice scent on; and I

hope it won't rain tomorrow, and good-night, dear Mamma. Your affectionate daughter,

ELIZABETH.

P. S.—Jane Roose says Miss La Touche will never get married; she is too smart, and all the married women's men talk to her, and that the best tone is to look rather dowdy; but I don't believe it, and I would rather be like Miss La Touche. E.

Elizabeth received an immediate reply to her letter, and the next one began:

Nazeby Hall,
August 5th.

Dear Mamma,—

I am sorry you find I use bad grammar and write incoherently, and you don't quite approve of my style; but you see it is just because I am in a hurry. I don't speak it; but if I must stop to think of grammar and that, I should never get on to tell you what I am doing here, so do, dear mamma, try and bear it bravely. Well, everybody came down to breakfast yesterday in a hat, and every one was late —that is, every one who came down at all, the rest had theirs upstairs. The cricket began, and it was really a bore. We sat in a tent, and all the nice men were fielding (it is always like that), and the married lot sat together, and talked about their clothes,

and Lady Doraine read a book. She is pretty, too, but has big ears. Her husband is somewhere else, but she does not seem to miss him; and the Rooses told me her hair used to be black, and that they have not a penny in the world, so I think she must be clever and nice to be able to manage her clothes so well. They are perfectly lovely, and I heard her say her maid makes them. And Miss La Touche happened to be next me, so she spoke to me, and said my hat was "too devey for words" (the blue one you got at Caroline's); and by-and-by we had lunch, and at lunch Lord Valmond came and sat by me, and so Mrs. Smith did too, and she gushed at me, and he seemed rather put out about something —I suppose it was having to field all the time—and she talked to him across me, and she called him "Harry" lots of times, and she always says things that have another meaning. But they all do that—repeat each other's Christian names in a sentence, I mean—just like you said quite middle-class people did when you were young, so I am sure everything must have changed now. Well, after lunch all the people in the county seemed to come; some of them had driven endless miles, and we sat apart,

I suppose to let them see how ordinary we thought them; and Lady Cecilia was hardly polite, and the others were more or less rude; but presently something happened—I don't know what—and the nice men had not to field any more. Perhaps they could not stand it any longer, and so every one who had been yawning woke up, and Mr. Wertz, who had been writing letters all this time, appeared, and Lady Doraine made room for him beside her, and they talked; and when our Eleven had drank something they came and lay on the grass near us, and we had such a nice time. There is a beautiful man here, and his name is Sir Dennis Desmond, and his grandfather was an Irish king, and he talks to me all the time, and his mother looks at him and frowns; and I think it silly of her, don't you? And if I were a man I wouldn't visit with my mother if she frowned at me. Do you know her? She dresses as if she were as young as I am. She had a blue muslin on this morning, and her hair is red with green stripes in it, and she is all white with thick pink cheeks, and across the room she doesn't look at all bad; but close! Goodness gracious! she looks a hundred! And I would much

sooner have nice white hair and a cap than look like that, wouldn't you? I'll finish this when I come to bed.

12.30. What do you think has happened? Sir Dennis sat beside me on the sofa just as he did last night—but I forget, I have not yet told you of yesterday and last night; but never mind now, I must get on. Well, he said I was a perfect darling, but that he never could get a chance to say a word to me alone, but that if I would only drop my glove outside my door it would be all right; and I thought that such a ridiculous thing to say, that I couldn't help laughing, and Lady Cecilia happened to be passing, and so she asked me what I was laughing at, and so I told her what he had said, and asked why? And there happened to be a pause just then, and as one has to speak rather loud to Lady Cecilia to attract her attention, every one heard, and they all looked flabbergasted; and then they all shrieked with laughter, and Sir Dennis said so crossly "Little fool!" and Lady Desmond simply glared at me, and Lady Cecilia said, "Really Elizabeth!" and Sir Dennis got purple in the face, and Jane Roose whispered, "How could you dare with his wife listen-

ing!" and every one talked and chaffed. It was too stupid about nothing; but the astonishing part is, that funny old thing I thought was the mother is his wife!

Imagine! years and years older than him! Jane Roose said he had to marry her because her husband died; but I think that the most absurd reason I ever heard, don't you? Because lots of people's husbands die, and they don't have to get married off again at once, and, so, why should that ugly old thing, specially when there are such heaps of nice girls about?

Jane Roose said it was so honorable of him, but I call it crazy—unless perhaps he was a great friend of the husband's, who made him promise when he was dying, and he did not like to break his word. How he must have hated it. I wonder if he had ever met her before, or if the husband made him take her, a pig in a poke. I expect that was it, because he never could have done it if he had ever seen her.

I can't think why he is so cross with me, but I am sorry, as he is such a nice man. Now I am sleepy, and it is frightfully late, so I suppose I had

better get into bed. Agnes came up, and has been fussing about for the last hour.—Best love. from your affectionate daughter,

ELIZABETH.

Nazeby Hall,
August 7th.

Dearest Mamma,—

Yesterday was the best day we have had yet; the nice men had not to field at all, and the stupid cricket was over at four o'clock, and so we went into the gardens, and lay in hammocks, and Miss La Touche had such nice shoes on, but her ankles are thick. The Rooses told me it wasn't "quite nice" for girls to loll in hammocks—(and they sat on chairs)—that you could only do it when you are married; but I believe it is because they don't have pretty enough petticoats. Anyway, Lady Doraine and that horrid Smith creature made a place for me in the empty hammock between them, and, as I knew my "frillies" were all right, I hammocked too,

and it was lovely. Lord Valmond and Mr. Wertz were lying near, and they said agreeable things, at least I suppose so, because both of them—Lady Doraine and Mrs. Smith—looked purry-purry-puss-puss. They asked me why I was so sleepy, and I said because I had not slept well the last night —that I was sure the house was haunted. And so they all screamed at me, "Why?" and so I told them, what was really true, that in the night I heard a noise of stealthy footsteps, and as I was not frightened I determined to see what it was, so I got up—Agnes sleeps in the dressing room, but of course she never wakes—I opened the door, and peeped out into the corridor. There are only two rooms beyond me towards the end, round the corner, and it is dimly lit all night. Well, I distinctly saw a very tall grey figure disappear round the bend of the hall! When I got thus far, every one dropped their books and listened with rapt attention, and I could see them exchanging looks, so I am sure they know it is haunted, and were trying to keep it from me. I asked Mrs. Smith if she had seen or heard anything, because she sleeps in one of the rooms. She looked perfectly green, but she

said she had not heard a sound, and had slept like a top, and that I must have dreamt it.

Then Lady Doraine and every one talked at once, and Lord Valmond asked did any one know if the London evening papers had come. But I was not going to be put off like that, so I just said, "I know you all know it is haunted, and are putting me off because you think I'll be frightened; but I assure you I'm not, and if I hear the noise again I am going to rush out and see the ghost close."

Then every one looked simply ahuri. So I mean to get the ghost story out of Sir Trevor tonight after dinner—I had not a chance yesterday—as I am sure it is interesting. Mrs. Smith looked at me as if she wanted to poison me, and I can't think why specially, can you?

Twelve p. m. I asked Sir Trevor if the house is haunted, and he said, "God bless my soul, no!" and so I told him, and he nearly had a fit; so I know it is, but I am not a bit frightened.—Your affectionate daughter,

ELIZABETH.

Nazeby Hall,
Sunday.

Dearest Mamma,—

Agnes and I start home by the ten-thirty train tomorrow, and I am not a bit sorry, although I have enjoyed myself, and now I begin to feel quite at home with every one—at least, some of them; but such a tiresome thing happened last night. It was like this: After dinner it was so hot that we all went out on the terrace, and, as soon as we got there, Mrs. Smith and Lady Doraine and the rest said it was too cold, and went in again; but the moon was pretty, so I stayed alone, and presently Lord Valmond came out, and stood beside me. There is such a nice view, you remember, from there, and I didn't a bit want to talk.

He said something, but I wasn't listening when suddenly I did hear him saying this: "You ador-

able enfant terrible, come out and watch for ghosts tonight; and I will come and play the ghost, and console you if you are frightened!" And he put his horrid arm right round my waist, and kissed me—somewhere about my right ear—before I could realize what he was at!

I was in a rage! as you can fancy, Mamma, so I just turned round and gave him the hardest slap I could, right on the cheek! He was furious, and called me a "little devil," and we both walked straight into the drawing-room.

I suppose I looked savage, and in the light I could see he had great red finger marks on his face. Anyway, Mrs. Smith, who was sitting on the big sofa near the window alone, looked up, and said in an odious voice, that made every one listen, "I am afraid, Harry, you have not enjoyed cooing in the moonlight; it looks as if our sweet Elizabeth had been difficult and had boxed your ears!"

That made me wild, the impudence! That parvenue calling me by my Christian name! So I just lost my temper right out, and said to her, "It is perfectly true what you say, and I will box yours if you call me 'Elizabeth' again!"

Tableau!! She almost fainted with astonishment and fury, and when she could get her voice decent enough to speak, she laughed and said:

"What a charming savage! How ingenuous!"

And then Lady Cecilia did a really nice thing, which shows that she is a brick, in spite of having bulgy eyes and being absent and tiresome. She came up to me as if nothing had happened, and said: "Come, Elizabeth, they are waiting for you to begin a round game," and she put her arm through mine and drew me into the billiard room, and on the way she squeezed my arm, and said, in a voice quite low down for her, "She deserved it," and I was so touched I nearly cried. From where I sat at the card table I could see Mrs. Smith and Lord Valmond, and they were quarrelling. She looked like green rhubarb juice, and he had the expression of "Damn!" all over him.

Of course I did not say good-night to him, and I hope I will never see him again.—Till tomorrow, your affectionate daughter,

ELIZABETH.

Heaviland Manor

Heaviland Manor,
October 15th.

Dearest Mamma,—

I can't think why you made me come here! Agnes has been so sniffy and condescending ever since this morning; but I have remarked that Uncle John's valet is only about forty and has a roving eye! so perhaps by tomorrow morning I shan't have my hair screwed off my head! But I feel for Agnes, only in a different way.

It is a stuffy, boring place. You remember the house—enormous, tidy, hideous, uncomfortable; well, we had such a dinner last night after I arrived —soup, fish, everything popped on to the table for Great Uncle John to carve at one end, and Great Aunt Maria at the other! A regular Aquarium

specimen of turbot sat on its dish opposite him, while Aunt Maria had a huge lot of soles. And there wasn't any need, because there were four men servants in the room who could easily have done it at the side; but I remember you said it was always like that when you were a little girl. Well, it got on to puddings. I forgot to tell you, though, there were plenty of candles on the table, without shades, and a "bouquet" of flowers, all sorts (I am sure fixed in sand) in a gold middle thing. Well, about the puddings—at least four of them were planted on the table, awfully sweet and jammy, and Uncle John was quite irritated with me because I could only eat two; and Aunt Maria, who has got as deaf as a post, kept roaring to old Major Orwell, who sat next her, "Children have no healthy appetites as in our day. Eh! What?" And I wanted to scream in reply, "But I am grown up now, Aunt Maria!"

Uncle John asked me every question over and over, and old Lady Farrington's false teeth jumped so once or twice that I got quite nervous. That is the party, me, Major Orwell, Lady Farrington, and Uncle and Aunt.

When dessert was about coming, everything got lifted from the table, and before you could say "Jack Robinson" off whisked the cloth! I was so unprepared for it that I said "Oh!" and ducked my head, and that made the cloth catch on old Lady Farrington's cap—she had to sit on my side of the table to be out of the draught—and wasn't it dreadful, it almost pulled it off; and with it the grey curls fixed at the side, and the rest was all bald, so that was why it was so loose, there was nothing to pin it to! And she glared at me, and fixed it as straight as she could, but it had such a saucy look all the rest of the evening.

I did apologize as well as I could, and there was such an awkward pause; and after dinner we had coffee in the drawing-room, and then in a little time tea, and between times they sat down to whist, all but Aunt Maria—so they had to have a dummy. She wanted to hear all about you, she said; and so I had to bellow descriptions of your neuralgia, &c., and Aunt Maria says, "Tut, tut!" as well as "Eh! what?" to everything, I had not remembered a bit what they were like; but I was only six, wasn't I, when we came last?

After she had asked every sort of thing about you under the sun, she kept giving longing glances at the dummy's cards; so I said, "Oh! Aunt Maria, I am afraid I am keeping you from your whist," and as soon as I could make her hear, you should have seen how she hopped up like a two-year-old into the vacant seat; and they were far more serious about it than any one was at Nazeby, where they had hundreds on, and Aunt Maria and the others only played for counters—those long mother-o'-pearl fish kind. I looked at a book on the table, Lady Blessington's Book of Beauty, and I see then every one got born with champagne-bottle shoulders. Had they been paring them for generations before, I wonder? Because Old John, the keeper at Hendon, told me once that the best fox-terriers arrive now without any tails, their mothers' and grandmothers' and great-grandmothers' having been cut off for so long; but I wonder, if the fashion changed, how could they get long tails again? There must be some way, because all of us now have square shoulders. But what was I saying? Oh! yes, when I had finished the Beauty Book, I heard Aunt Maria getting so cross with the old boy

opposite her. "You've revoked, Major Orwell," she said, whatever that means.

Then hot spiced port came in—it was such a close night—and they all had some, and so did I, and it was good; and then candles came. Such lovely silver, and so beautifully cleaned; and Aunt and Uncle kissed me. I dodged Lady Farrington's false teeth, because, after her cap incident, she might have bitten me. And Uncle said, "Too late, too late for a little one to sit up—no beauty sleep!" And Aunt Maria said, "Tut, tut!" and I thought it must be the middle of the night—it felt like it. But do you know, Mamma, when I got upstairs to my room it was only half-past ten! ! !

I have such a huge room, with a four-post feather bed in it. I had let Agnes go to bed directly after her supper, with a toothache, so I had to get undressed by myself; and I was afraid to climb in from the side, it was so high up. But I found some steps with blue carpet on them, as well as a table with a Bible, and a funny old china medicine spoon, and glass and water-jug on it; and the steps did nicely, for when I got to the top I just took a header into the feathers. It seemed quite comfy at

first, but in a few minutes! Goodness gracious! I was suffocated! And it was such a business getting the whole mass on the floor; and then I did not know very well how to make the bed again, and so I had not a very good night, and overslept myself in the morning. So I got down late for prayers. Uncle John reads them, and Aunt Maria repeats responses whenever she thinks best, as she can't hear a word; but I suppose she counts up, and, from long habit, just says "Amen" when she gets to the end of—thirty, say—fancying that will be right; and it is generally. Only Uncle John stopped in the middle to say, "Damn that dog!" as Fido was whining and scratching outside, so that put her out and brought in the "Amen" too soon.

After breakfast Aunt Maria jingled a large bunch of keys and said it was her day for seeing the linen-room, and wouldn't I like to go with her, as all young people should have "house-wifely" ideas. So I went. It is so beautifully kept, and such lovely linen, all with lavender between it; and she talked to the housekeeper, and looked over everything—she seemed to know each sheet by name! And from there to the store-room, all as neat as a new

pin; and from there to interview all the old people from the village, who were waiting with requests, and some of them were as deaf as she is. So the housekeeper had to scream at both sides, and I was tired when we got back, and did want to rush out of doors; but I had to wait, and then walk between Lady Farrington and Aunt Maria, up and down the path in the sun, till lunch at one o'clock; and after that we went for a drive in the barouche, with the fattest white horses you ever saw, and a coachman just like Cinderella's one that had been a rat. He seemed to have odd bits of fur on his face and under his chin, and Aunt Maria said that he suffered from a sore throat, that was why, which he caught at Aunt Mary's wedding—and so I counted up—and as Aunt Mary is your eldest sister, it must have been more than twenty years ago. I do call that a long sore throat, don't you? and I wouldn't keep a coachman with a beard, would you?

We went at a snail's pace, and got in at four o'clock, and then there was tea at half-past, with the nicest bread-and-butter you ever tasted. And after that I said I must write to you, and so here I am,

and I feel that if it goes on much longer I shall do something dreadful. Now good-bye, dearest Mamma.

Your affectionate daughter,

ELIZABETH.

Heaviland Manor,
October 18th.

Dearest Mamma,—

I am glad Saturday will soon be here, and that I can come home, but I must tell you about yesterday. First, all the morning, it rained, and what with roaring at Aunt Maria, and holding skeins of wool for Lady Farrington, I got such jumps that I felt I should scream unless I got out, so after lunch, while they were both having a nap in their chairs, I slipped off for a walk by myself—it was still raining, but not much; I took Fido, who is generally a little beast, and far too fat.

We had had a nice scamper, and had turned to come back not far from the Park—when who do you think should come riding up?—Lord Valmond! The last person one expected to see down

here! He never waited a second when he saw me, but jumped off his horse and beamed—just as if we had parted the best of friends! ! ! Did you ever hear such impudence! Of course I should have walked on without recognizing him, if I had been left to myself, but he took me so by surprise, that I had shaken hands before I knew, and then it was too late to walk on. It appears he has a place down here, which he never comes to generally, but just happened to now—to see how the pheasants were doing. He began at once to talk, as if I had never been angry, or boxed his ears at all! It really exasperated me; so at last I said he had better get on his horse again, as I wanted to run on with Fido, so then he said he had just been on his way to call on Aunt Maria, and would come with me.

I said I was sure that wasn't true, as he was going the other way. So he said that he had only been going that way to give his horse a little exercise, and that he intended to go in at the other gate.

So I said I was sure that wasn't true either, as there was no way round that way, unless one jumped the park palings. So he said that was

what he had intended to do. Just then we came to the turnstile of the right-of-way, so I just slipped through and called out, "Then I won't keep you from your exercise," and walked on as fast as I could.

What do you think he did, Mamma? Simply got on his horse, and jumped those palings there and then! I can't think how he wasn't killed. There was almost no take-off, and the fence is so high. However, there he was, and I could not get away again, because, if I had run, the horse could easily have kept up with me. But I only said "Yes" and "No" all the way to the house, so he could not have enjoyed it much. We went straight to the drawing-room, where tea was almost up, and there was Lady Farrington alone—still asleep, and her cap had fallen right back, and all the bald was showing; and just then a carriage drove up to the door, and we heard visitors and the footsteps in the hall. I had just time to cry to Lord Valmond, "Keep them back while I wake her!" and then I rushed to Lady Farrington, and shouted in her ear, "Visitors! and —and—your cap is a little crooked!" "Eh! what?" she screamed, and her teeth as nearly as possible

jumped on to the carpet. She simply flew to the mirror, but, as you know, it is away so high up she couldn't see, so she made frantic efforts with her hands, and just got it to cover the bald, but in a rakish, one-sided way, when the whole lot streamed into the room. Lord Valmond looked awfully uncomfortable. Goodness knows what he had said to them to keep them back! Anyway, Harvey announced "Mrs. and the Misses Clarke." and a thin, very high-nosed person, followed by two buffish girls, came forward. Lady Farrington said, "How do ye do?" as well as she could. They were some friends of hers and Aunt Maria's, who are staying with the Morverns, I gathered from their conversation. They must have thought she had been on a spree since last they met! I could hardly behave for laughing, and did not dare to look at Lord Valmond.

They had not been there more than five minutes when another carriage arrived, and two other ladies were announced. "The Misses Clark!" The other Clarkes glared like tigers, and Lady Farrington lowered her chin and eyelashes at them (she has just the same manners as the people at Nazeby, al-

though she is such a frump—it is because she is an Earl's daughter, I suppose), and she called out to Harvey at the top of her voice, "Let Lady Worden be told at once there are visitors." The poor new things looked so uncomfortable, that I felt, as I was Aunt Maria's niece, I, at least, must be polite to them, so I asked them to sit down, and we talked. They were jolly, fat, vulgar souls, who have taken the Ortons' place they told me, and this was their return visit, as the Ortons had asked Aunt Maria to call. They were quite old maids, past thirty, with such funny, grand, best smart Sunday-go-to-meeting looking clothes on.

It appears that Harvey had sent a footman up to Aunt Maria's door, to tell of the first Clarkes' arrival, and then, terrified by Lady Farrington's voice, had rushed up himself to announce the second lot, and he met Aunt Maria on the stairs coming down, and of course she never heard the difference between "Mrs." and the "Misses," and thought he was simply hurrying her up for the first set. So in she sailed all smiles, and as Mrs. Clarke was nearest the door, she got to her first, and was so glad to see her.

"Dear, dear, years since we met, Honoria," she said; "and these are all your bonny girls, tut, tut!" and she looked at the fat Clarks who came next. "Ah! yes, I can see! What a wonderful likeness to poor dear Arthur!"

Furious glances from Mrs. Clarke, whose daughters are my age!

"And this must be Millicent," she went on, taking the second fat Clark's hand. "Yes, yes; why, she takes after you, my dear Honoria, tut tut!" and she squeezed hands, and beamed at them all in the kindest way. Mrs. Clarke, bursting with fury, tried to say they were no relations of hers; but, of course, Aunt Maria could not catch all that, only the word "relations," and she then caught sight of the buff Clarkelets in the background.

"Ah! yes, I see, these are your girls; I have mistaken your other relations for them." Then she turned again to the fat Clarks, evidently liking their jolly faces best. "But one can see they are Clarkes. Let me guess. Yes, they must be poor Henry's children!" At this, Lord Valmond had such a violent fit of choking by the tea-table that Aunt Maria, who hears the oddest, most unexpected things,

caught that, and saw him, and saying "How d'ye do?" created a diversion. Presently I heard Lady Farrington roaring in a whisper into her ears the difference between the Clarkes and Clarks, and the poor dear was so upset; but her kind heart came up trumps, and she was awfully nice to the two vulgar Clarks, who had the good sense to go soon, and then the others went. Then she got Lord Valmond on to her sofa, and he screamed such heaps of nice things into her ear, just as if she had been Mrs. Smith, and she was so pleased. And Uncle John came in, and they talked about the pheasants, and he asked Lord Valmond to dinner on Saturday night, and he looked timidly at me, to see if I was still angry with him and wanted him not to come, so I smiled sweetly, and he accepted joyfully. Isn't it lovely, Mamma? I shall be home with you by then, and Lady Farrington and Major Orwell are going too! So he will have to play dummy whist all the evening with Uncle and Aunt, and eat his dinner at half-past six! Now, good-night.

Your affectionate daughter,

ELIZABETH.

Carriston Towers

Carriston Towers,
October 27th.

Dearest Mamma,—

I shall never again arrive at a place at three o'clock in the afternoon; it is perfectly ghastly! As we drove up to the door—it was pouring with rain—I felt that I should not like anything here. It does look such a large grey pile; and how cold and draughty that immense stone hall must be in winter! There were no nice big sofas about, or palms, or lots of papers and books; nothing but suits of armour and great marble tables, looking like monuments. I was taken down endless passages to the library, and there left such a long time that I had got down an old Punch and was looking at it, and trying to warm my feet, when Lady Carriston came in with Adeline. I remember how I hated playing with her years ago; she always patronised me, being

three years older, and she is just the same now, only both their backs have got longer and their noses more arched, and they are the image of one another. Adeline seems very suppressed; Lady Carriston does not—her face is carved out of stone. They look very well bred and respectable, and badly dressed; nothing rustled nicely when they walked, and they had not their nails polished, or scent on, or anything like that; but Lady Carriston had a splendid row of pearls round her throat, on the top of her rough tweed dress and linen collar.

They pronounce their words very distinctly, in an elevated kind of way, and you feel as if icicles were trickling down your back, and you can't think of a thing to say. When we had got to the end of your neuralgia and my journey, there was such a pause! and I suppose they thought I was an idiot, and only too glad to get me off to my room, where Adeline took me, and left me, hoping I had everything I wanted, and saying tea was at five in the blue drawing-room. And there I had to stay while Agnes unpacked. It was dull! It is a big room, and the fire had only just been lit. The furniture is colourless and ugly, and, although it is all comfor-

table and correct, there are no books about, except "Romola" and "Middlemarch" and some Carlyle and John Stuart Mill, and I did not feel that I could do with any of that just then. So there I sat twiddling my thumbs for more than an hour, and Agnes did make such a noise, opening and shutting drawers, but at last I remembered a box of caramels in my dressing-bag, and it was better after that.

Agnes had put out my white cashmere for tea, and at five I started to find my way to the blue drawing-room. The bannisters are so broad and slippery, the very things for sliding on. I feel as if I should start down them one day, just to astonish Adeline, only I promised you I would be good. Well, when I got to the drawing-room, the party—about twelve—had assembled. The old Earl had been wheeled in from his rooms: he wears a black velvet skull-cap and a stock, but he has a splendid and distinguished old face. If I were he, I would not have such a dull daughter-in-law to live with me as Lady Carriston is, even if my son was dead. The boy Charlie Carriston was there too; he does look a goose. He is like those pictures in the Punch that I was looking at, where the family is so

old that their chins and foreheads have gone. He is awfully afraid of his mother. There were two or three elderly pepper-and-salt men, and that Trench cousin, who is a very High Church curate (you know Aunt Mary told us about him), and there are a Sir Samuel and Lady Garnons, with an old maid daughter, and Adeline's German governess, who has stayed on as companion, and helped to pour out the tea.

The conversation was subdued; about politics and Cabinet Ministers, and pheasants and foxes, and things of that kind, and no one said anything that meant anything else, as they did at Nazeby, and the German governess said "Ach" to everything, and Lady Garnons and Miss Garnons knitted all the time, which gave their voices the sound of one-two-three when they spoke, although they did not really count. No one had on tea-gowns—just a Sunday look of clothes. I don't know how we should have got through tea if the coffee-cream cakes had not been so good. The old Earl called me to him when we had finished, and talked so beautifully to me; he paid me some such grand old-fashioned compliments, and his voice sounds as if

he had learnt elocution in his youth; there is not a word of slang or anything modern; one quite understands how he was able to wake up the House of Lords before his legs gave way. It seems sad that such a ninny as Charlie should succeed him. I feel proud of being related to him, but I shall never think of Lady Carriston except as a distant cousin. Both Charlie and Adeline are so afraid of her that they hardly speak.

I shan't waste any of my best frocks here, so I made Agnes put me on the old blue silk for the evening. She was disgusted.

At dinner I sat between Charlie and one of the pepper-and-salts—he is an M.P. They are going to shoot partridges to-morrow; and I don't know what we shall do, as there has been no suggestion of our going out to lunch.

After dinner we sat in the yellow drawing-room; Lady Carriston and Lady Garnons talked in quite an animated way together about using their personal influence to suppress all signs of Romanism in the services of the Church. They seemed to think they would have no difficulty in stopping it. They are both Low Church, Miss Garnons told

me, but that she herself held quite different views. Then she asked me if I did not think the Reverend Ernest Trench had a "soulful face," so pure and abstracted that merely looking at him gave thoughts of a higher life. I said, No; he reminded me of a white ferret we had once, and I hated curates. She looked perfectly sick at me and did not take the trouble to talk any more, but joined Adeline, who had been winding silk with Fraulein Schlarbaum, for a tie she is knitting. So I tried to read the Contemporary Review, but I could not help hearing Lady Carriston telling Lady Garnons that she had always brought up Adeline and Charlie so carefully that she knew their inmost thoughts. (She did not mention Cyril, who is still at Eton.)

"Yes, I assure you, Georgina," she said, "my dear children have never had a secret from me in their innocent lives."

When the men came in from the dining-room, one of the old fellows came and talked to me, and I discovered he is the Duke of Lancashire. He is ordinary looking, and his shirts fit so badly—that nasty sticking-out look at the sides, and not enough starch. I would not have shirts that did not fit if

I were a duke, would you? They are all staying here for the Conservative meeting to-morrow evening at Barchurch. These three pepper-and-salts are shining lights in this county, I have gathered. Lady Carriston seems very well informed on every subject. It does not matter if she is talking to Mr. Haselton or Sir Andrew Merton (the two M.P.'s), or the Duke, who is the M.F.H., or the curate; she seems to know much more about politics, and hunting, and religion than they do. It is no wonder she can see her children's thoughts!

At half-past ten we all said good-night. The dear old Earl does not come in from the dining-room; he is wheeled straight to his rooms, so I did not see him. Miss Garnons and Adeline both looked as if they could hardly bear to part with their curate, and finally we got up stairs, and now I must go to bed.

Best love from your affectionate daughter,

ELIZABETH.

P.S.—Everything is kept up with great state here; there seemed to be a footman behind every one's chair at dinner.

Carriston Towers,
October 28th.

Dear Mamma,—

I was so afraid of being late for breakfast this morning that I was down quite ten minutes too soon, and when I got into the breakfast-room I found Charlie alone, mixing himself a brandy cocktail. He wanted to kiss me, because he said we were cousins, but I did not like the smell of the brandy, so I would not let him. He made me promise that I would come out with him after breakfast, before they started to shoot, to look at his horses; then we heard some one coming, and he whisked the cocktail glass out of sight in the neatest way possible. At breakfast he just nibbled a bit of toast, and drank a glass of milk, and Lady Carriston kept saying to him, "My dear, dear boy,

you have no appetite," and he said, "No, having to read so hard as he did at night took it away."

The Duke seemed a little annoyed that there was not a particular chutney in his curried kidneys, which I thought very rude in another person's house; and, as it was Friday, the Reverend Mr. Trench refused every dish in a loud voice, and then helped himself to a whole sole at the side-table.

The food was lovely. Miss Garnons did not eat a thing, and Lady Garnons was not down; nor, of course, the old Earl.

After breakfast we meandered into the hall. Smoking is not allowed anywhere except in the billiard-room, which is down yards and yards of passages, so as not to let the smell get into the house. We seemed to be standing about doing nothing, so I said I would go up and get my boots on, or probably there would not be time to go with Charlie to see his horses before they started.

You should have seen the family's three faces! Charlie's silly jaw dropped, Adeline's eyebrows ran up to her hair almost, while Lady Carriston said in an icy voice: "We had not thought of visiting the stables so early."

Did you ever hear of anything so ridiculous, Mamma? Just as though I had said something improper! I was furious with Charlie, he had not even the pluck to say he had asked me to go; but I paid him out. I just said, "I concluded you had consulted Lady Carriston before asking me to go with you, or naturally I should not have suggested going to get ready." He did look a stupid thing, and bolted at once; but Lady Carriston saw I was not going to be snubbed, so she became more polite, and presently asked me to come and see the aviary with her.

As we walked down the armour gallery she met a servant with a telegram, and while she stopped to read it I looked out of one of the windows, the wall is so thick they are all in recesses; and Charlie passed underneath, his head just level with the open part. The moment he saw me he fished out a scrap of paper from his pocket, and pressed it into my hand, and said, "Don't be a mug this time," and was gone before I could do anything. I did not know what to do with the paper, so I had to slip it up my sleeve, as with these skirts one hasn't a pocket, and I did feel so mad at having done a thing

in that underhand way. The aviary is such a wonderful place, there seem to be birds of every kind, and the parrakeets do make such a noise. There are lots of palms here and seats, but it is not just an ideal place to stay and talk in, as every creature screams so that you can hardly hear yourself speak. However, Miss Garnons and Mr. Trench did not seem to think that, as while Lady Carriston stopped to say "Didysy, woodsie, poppsie Dicksie" to some canaries, I turned a corner to see some owls, and there found them holding hands and kissing (the White Ferret and Miss Garnons, I mean, of course —not the owls). They must have come in at the other door, and the parrots' noises had prevented them from hearing us coming. You never saw two people so taken aback! They simply jumped away from one another. Mr. Trench got crimson up to his white eyelashes and coughed in a nervous way, while poor Miss Garnons at once talked nineteen to the dozen about the "darling little owlies," and never let go my arm until she had got me aside, when she at once began explaining that she hoped I would not misinterpret anything I had seen; that of course it might look odd to one who did not un-

derstand the higher life, but there were mysteries connected with her religion, and she hoped I would say nothing about it. I said she need not worry herself. She is quite twenty-eight, you know, Mamma, so I suppose she knows best; but I should hate a religion that obliged me to kiss White Ferret curates in a parrot-house, shouldn't you?

Lady Carriston detests Mr. Trench, but as he is a cousin she has to be fairly civil to him, and they always get on to ecclesiastical subjects and argue when they speak; it is the greatest fun to hear them. They walked on ahead and left me with Miss Garnons until we got back to the hall.

By this time the guns had all started, so we saw no more of them. Then Adeline suggested that she and I should bicycle in the Park, which has miles of lovely road (she is not allowed out of the gates by herself), so at last I got up to my room, and there, as I was ringing the bell for Agnes, Charlie's piece of paper fell out on the floor. I had forgotten all about it. Wasn't it a mercy it did not drop while I was with Lady Carriston! This was all it was: "Come down to tea half an hour earlier; shall sham

a hurt wrist to be back from shooting in time.—Charlie."

I could not help roaring with laughter although I was cross at his impertinence, taking for granted that I would be quite ready to do whatever he wished. I threw it in the fire, and, of course, I sha'n't go down a moment before five. Adeline has just been in to see why I am so long getting ready. —Good-bye, dear Mamma,

Love from your affectionate daughter,

ELIZABETH.

Carriston Towers,
Saturday.

Dearest Mamma,—

Oh! what a long day this has been! But I always get so muddled if I don't go straight on, that I had better finish telling you about Friday first. Well, while Adeline and I were bicycling, she told me she thought I should grow quite pretty if only my hair was arranged more like hers—she has a jug-handle chignon—and if I had less of that French look. But she supposed I could not help it, having had to spend so much time abroad. She said I should find life was full of temptations, if I had not an anchor. I asked her what that was, and she said it was something on which to cast one's soul. I don't see how that could be an anchor—do you, Mamma? because it is the anchor that gets

cast, isn't it? However, she assured me that it was, so I asked her if she had one herself, and she said she had, and it was her great reverence for Mr. Trench, and they were secretly engaged!—and she hoped I would not mention it to anybody; and presently, when he joined us, would I mind riding on, as she had so few chances to talk to him? That she would not for the world deceive her mother, but there were mysteries connected with her religion which Lady Carriston could not understand, being only Low Church. But when they saw a prospect of getting married they would tell her about it; if they did it now, she would persuade the Duke not to give Mr. Trench the Bellstoke living, which he has half promised him, and so make it impossible for them to marry.

I asked her if Mr. Trench was Miss Garnon's anchor too?—and she seemed quite annoyed, so I suppose their religion has heaps of different mysteries; but I don't see what all that has got to do with telling her mother, do you? And I should rather turn Low Church than have to kiss Mr. Trench, anyway. He came from a side path and joined us, and as soon as I could I left them; but

they picked me up again by the inner gate, just as I was going in to lunch, after having had a beautiful ride. The park is magnificent.

At lunch I sat by the old Earl. He said my hair was a sunbeam's home, and that my nose was fit for a cameo; he is perfectly charming. Afterwards we went *en bloc* to the library, and the Garnons began to knit again. Nobody says a word about clothes; they talked about the Girls' Friendly Society, and the Idiot Asylum, and the Flannel Union, and Higher Education, and whenever Lady Garnons mentions any one that Lady Carriston does not know all about, she always says, "Oh! and who was she?" and then, after thoroughly sifting it, if she finds that the person in question does not belong to any of the branches of the family that she is acquainted with, she says "Society is getting very mixed now." Presently about six more people arrived. There seems to be nothing but these ghastly three-o'clock trains here. All the new lot were affected by it, just as I was. There were endless pauses.

I would much rather scream at Aunt Maria for a whole afternoon than have to spend it with Lady

Carriston. When I got up to my room I was astonished to find it was so late. I had not even scrambled into my clothes when the clock struck five. I had forgotten all about Charlie and his scrap of paper, but when I got into the blue drawing-room, there he was, with his wrist bandaged up, and no signs of tea about. What do you think the horrid boy had done, Mamma? Actually had the big gold clock in my room put on! ! ! There were ten chances to one, he said, against my looking at my watch, and he knew I would not come down unless I thought it was five. I was so cross that I wanted to go upstairs again, but he would not let me; he stood in front of the door, and there was no good making a fuss, so I sat down by the fire.

He said he had seen last night how struck his grandfather had been with me, and he did want me to get round him, as he had got into an awful mess, and had not an idea how he was going to get out of it, unless I helped him. I said I was sorry, but I really did not see how I could do anything, and that he had better tell his mother, as she adored him so.

He simply jumped with horror at the idea of telling his mother. "Good Lord!" he said, "the old girl would murder me," which I did not think very respectful of him. Then he fidgeted, and humm'd and haw'd for such a time that tea had begun to come in before I could understand the least bit what the mess was; but it was something about a Cora de la Haye, who dances at the Empire, and a diamond necklace, and how he was madly in love with her, and intended to marry her, but he had lost such a lot of money at Goodwood, that no one knew about, as he was supposed not to have been there, that he could not pay for the necklace unless his grandfather gave him a lump sum to pay his debts at Oxford with, and that what he wanted was for me to get round the old Earl to give him this money, and then he could pay for Cora de la Haye's necklace!

He showed me her photo, which he keeps in his pocket. It is just like the ones in the shops in the Rue de Rivoli that Mademoiselle never would let me stop and look at in Paris. I am sure Lady Carriston can't have been having second sight into her children's thoughts lately.

Just then Lady Garnons and some of the new people came in, and he was obliged to stop. We had a kind of high tea, as the Conservative meeting was to be at eight, and it is three-quarters of an hour's drive into Barchurch, and there was to be a big supper after. Lady Carriston did make such a fuss over Charlie's wrist. She wanted to know was it badly sprained, and did it ache much, and was it swollen, and he had the effrontery to let her almost cry over him, and pretended to wince when she touched it! As we were driving in to the meeting he sat next me in the omnibus, and kept squeezing my arm all the time under the rug, which did annoy me so, that at last I gave his ankle a nasty kick, and then he left off for a little. He has not the ways of a gentleman, and I think he had better marry his Cora, and settle down into a class more suited to him than ours; but I sha'n't help him with his grandfather.

Have you ever been to a political meeting, dear Mamma? It is funny! All these old gentlemen sit up on a platform and talk such a lot. The Duke put in "buts" and "ifs" and "thats" over and over again when he could not think of a word, and you

weren't a bit the wiser when he had finished, except that it was awfully wrong to put up barbed wire; but I can't see what that has to do with politics, can you? One of the pepper-and-salts did speak nicely, and so did one of the new people—quite a youngish person; but they all had such a lot of words, when it would have done just as well if they had simply said that of course our side was the right one—because trade was good when we were in, and that there are much better people Conservatives than Radicals. Anyway, no one stays a Radical when he is his own father, as it would be absurd to cut off one's nose to spite one's face—don't you think so, Mamma? So it is nonsense talking so much. One or two rude people in the back called out things, but no one paid any attention; and at last, after lots of cheering, we got into the omnibus again. I was hungry. At supper we sat more or less anyhow, and I happened to be next the youngish person who spoke. I don't know his name, but I know he wasn't any one very grand, as Lady Carriston said, before they arrived in the afternoon, that things were changing dreadfully; that even the Conservative party was being invaded by

people of no family; and she gave him two fingers when she said "How d'ye do?" But if he is nobody, I call it very nice of him to be a Conservative, and then he won't have to change afterwards when he gets high up. The old Earl asked me what I thought of it all, so I told him; and he said that it was a great pity they could not have me at the head of affairs, and then things would be arranged on a really simple and satisfactory basis.

After breakfast this morning most of the new people went, and the Duke and the pepper-and-salts: Lady Carriston drove Lady Garnons over to see her Idiot Asylum. They were to lunch near there, so we had our food in peace without them, and you would not believe the difference there was! Everyone woke up. Old Sir Samuel Garnons, who had not spoken once that I heard since I came, joked with Fraulein Schlarbaum. Charlie had two brandies-and-sodas instead of his usual glass of milk, and Adeline and Miss Garnons were able to gaze at their anchor without fear.

This afternoon I have been for a ride with Charlie, and do you know, Mamma, I believe he is try-

ing to make love to me, but it is all in such horrid slang that I am not quite sure.

I must stop now.

With love,

From your affectionate daughter,

ELIZABETH.

P. S.—Sunday. I missed the post last night. We did spend a boring evening doing nothing, not even dummy whist, like at Aunt Maria's, and I was so tired hearing the two old ladies talking over the Idiots they had seen at the Asylum, that I was thankful when half-past ten came. As for today, I am glad it is the last one I shall spend here. There is a settled gloom over everything, a sort of Sunday feeling that makes one eat too much lunch. Mr. Trench had been allowed to conduct the service in the Chapel this morning, and Lady Carriston kept tapping her foot all the time with annoyance at all his little tricks, and once or twice, when he was extra go-ahead, I heard her murmuring to herself "Ridiculous!" and "Scandalous!" What will she do when he is her son-in-law?

Adeline and Miss Garnons knelt whenever they could, and as long as they could, and took off their

gloves and folded their hands. I think Adeline hates Miss Garnons because she is allowed to cross herself; and of course Adeline daren't, with her mother there.

After tea Charlie managed to get up quite close to me in a corner; and while out loud he was explaining how his new bicycle-wheel worked, he got in between, in a low voice, that I was "a stunner," and that if I would just "give him the tip" he'd "chuck Cora tomorrow;" that I "could give her fits!" And if that is a proposal, Mamma, I don't want any more.

We are coming by the early train tomorrow; so, till then, good-bye.

Your affectionate daughter,

ELIZABETH.

Chevenix Castle

Chevenix Castle,
November 20th.

Dearest Mamma,—

I am sure I shall enjoy myself here. The train was so late, and only two other people were coming by it besides me, so we all drove up in the omnibus together. One was a man, and the other a woman, and she glared at me, and fussed her maid so about her dressing-bag, and it was such a gorgeous affair, and they had such quantities of luggage, and the only thing they said on the drive up was how cold it was, and they wondered when we should get there. And when we did arrive there was only just time to rush up and dress for dinner; all the other people had come by an earlier train. I left these two pets in the care of the Groom of the Chambers, as even Cousin Octavia had gone upstairs, and

there was not a soul about, but she had left a message for me; and while Agnes was clawing the things out of the trunks, I went to her room. She was just having her hair done, but she did not mind a bit, and was awfully glad to see me. She is a dear. Her hair is as dark as anything underneath, but all the outside is a bright red. She says it is much more attractive like that, but it does look odd before the front thing is on, and that is a fuzzy bit in a net, like what Royalties have. And then she has lots of twist-things round at the back, and altogether it doesn't look at all bad when the diamond stick-ups are in and she is all arranged. She went on talking all the time while her maid was fixing it, just as if we were alone in the room. She told me I had grown six inches since she was with us at Arcachon three years ago, and that I was quite good looking. She said they had a huge party for the balls, some rather nice people, and Lady Doraine and one or two others she hated. I said why did she have people she hated—that I would not if I were a Countess like her; so she said those were often the very ones one was obliged to have, because the nice men wouldn't come without them.

She hoped I had some decent clothes, as she had got a tame Millionaire for me. So I said if it was Mr. Wertz she need not bother, because I knew him; and, besides, I only intended to marry a gentleman, unless, of course, I should get past twenty and *passe*, and then goodness knows what I might take. She laughed, and said it was ridiculous to be so particular, but that anyway that would be no difficulty, as everyone was a gentleman now who paid for things.

Then she sent me off to dress, just as she began to put some red stuff on her lips. It is wonderful how nice she looks when everything is done, even though she has quite a different coloured chest to the top bit that shows above her pearl collar, that is brickish-red from hunting. So is her face, but she is such a dear that one admires even her great big nose and little black eyes, which one would think hideous in other people. I met Tom just going into her room as I came out; he said he had come to borrow some scent from her. He looks younger than she does; but they were the same age when they got married, weren't they?

He kissed me and said I was a dear little cousin,

and had I been boxing any one's ears lately. Before I could box his for talking so, Octavia called out to him to let me go, or I should be late, and had I not to scurry just! Agnes fortunately had everything ready, but I fussed so that my face was crimson when I got downstairs, and every one was already there.

There seemed to be dozens of people. You will see in the list in the Morning Post tomorrow what a number of the Nazeby set there are here.

Lord Valmond is here, but he did not see me until we were at dinner. I went in with Mr. Hodgkinson, who is contesting this Division; he is quite young and wears an eyeglass, which he keeps dropping. He really looks silly, but they say he says some clever things if you give him time, and that he will be a great acquisition to the Party he has joined now, as it is much easier to get made a peer by the Radicals; and that is what he wants, as his father made a huge fortune in bones and glue.

He did not talk to me at all, but eat his dinner at first, and then said:

"I don't believe in talking before the fish, do you?"

So I said: "No, nor till after the ices, unless one has something to say."

He was so surprised that his eyeglass dropped, and he had to fumble to find it, so by that time I had begun to talk to old Colonel Blake, who was at the other side of me.

Lady Doraine was looking so pretty; her hair has grown much fairer and nicer than it was at Nazeby. Lord Doraine is here, too; his eyes are so close together! He plays a game called "Bridge" with Mr. Wertz and Mr. Hodgkinson and Tom all the time—I mean in the afternoon before dinner—so Mr. Hodgkinson told me when we got to dessert. I suppose it was the first thing he had found to say! So I asked him if that was a kind of leap-frog; because don't you remember we called it "Bridge" when you had to jump two? He said "No;" that it was a game of cards, and much more profitable if one had the luck of Lord Doraine, who had won heaps of money from Mr. Wertz. Afterwards, in the drawing-room, Lady Doraine came up to me and asked me where I had been hiding since the Nazeby visit. She has such a splendid new rope of pearls, and such lovely clothes. The

Rooses are here too, and Jane has a cold in her head: she says she heard by this evening's post that Miss La Touche is going to be married to old Lord Kidminster, and that he is "too deaf to have heard everything, so it is just as well." I can't see why, as Miss La Touche is so nice, and never talks rubbish; so I think it a pity he can't hear all she says, don't you?

Lady Doraine calls Octavia "darling!" She stood fiddling with her diamond chain and purring over her frock, so I suppose she is fond of her in spite of Octavia hating her.

After dinner Lord Valmond came up to me at once, looking like thunder, so I felt obliged to ask him how he had enjoyed his dinner with Aunt Maria! He said he would be even with me some day! Then he said Mr. Hodgkinson was an ass, and that he had been watching us at dinner. And then Lord Doraine came up and Lady Doraine introduced him to me, and he said a number of nice things, and he has a charming voice; and Mr. Wertz came up too, and spoke to me; and then Lady Doraine called Lord Valmond to come and sit on the little sofa by her, and she looked at him so fondly

that I thought perhaps Lord Doraine might not like it. He tried not to see, but Mr. Wertz did, and I think he must have a kind heart, because he fidgeted so, and almost at once went and joined them to break up the tete-a-tete, so that Lord Doraine might not be teased any more, I suppose. And every one went to bed rather early, because of the ball and shoot tomorrow, and I must jump in too, as I am sleepy, so good-night, dearest Mamma.

Your affectionate daughter,

ELIZABETH.

Chevenix Castle,
November 21st.

Dearest Mamma,—

Such a lot to tell you, and no time, as I must go down to tea. We passed rather a boring morning after the men had started for their shoot. Only a few people were down for breakfast, and none of the men who weren't guns. I suppose they were asleep. But Lady Gertrude Fenton was as cross as a bear because she wanted to go and shoot too. She is just like a man, and does look so odd and almost improper in the evening in female dress. And Tom won't have women out shooting, except for lunch. Lady Doraine and Lady Greswold talked by the fire while they smoked, and Lady Greswold said she really did not know where the peers were to turn to now to make an honest penny,

their names being no more good in the City, and that it was abominably hard that in future, she had heard, they would have to understand business and work just like ordinary Stock Exchange people if they wanted to get on, and she did not know what things were coming to.

At lunch, in the *chalet* in the wood, it was rather fun. Mr. Hodgkinson and Lord Doraine sat on either side of me. Lord Valmond came up with the last guns, rather late, and he looked round the table and frowned. He seems quite grumpy now, not half so good-tempered as he used to be. I expect it is because Mrs. Smith isn't here.

Mr. Wertz was so beautifully turned out in the newest clothes and the loveliest stockings, and he had two loaders and three guns, and Lord Doraine told me that he had killed three pheasants, but that the ground was knee-deep in cartridges round him, and that Tom was furious, as he like an enormous bag. So I asked why, if Mr. Wertz was not a sportsman, had he taken the huge Quickham shoot in Norfolk? Then Mr. Hodgkinson chimed in: "Oh, to entertain Royalty and the husbands of his charming lady friends!" and he fixed his eyeglass

and looked round the corner of it at Lord Doraine, who drank a glass of peach brandy.

After lunch the men had to start quickly, as we had dawdled so, and so we turned to go back to the house.

Octavia put her arm through mine, and we were walking on, when Lady Doraine joined us, with the woman who had glared at me in the omnibus. She looked as if she hated walking. She is not actually stout, but everything is as tight as possible, and it does make her puff. She was awfully smart, and had the thinnest boots on. Lady Doraine was being so lovely to her, and Octavia was in one of her moods when she talks over people's heads, so we had not a very pleasant walk, until we came to the stable gate, when Octavia and I went that way to see her new hunters. We had hardly got out of hearing when she said:

"Really, Elizabeth, how I dislike women!"

So I asked her who the puffing lady was, and she said a Mrs. Pike, the new Colonial millionairess.

"Horrid creature, as unnecessary as can be!"

So I asked her why she had invited her, then. And she said her sister-in-law Carry had got round

Tom and made a point of it, as she was running them, and now Carry had got the measles and could not come to look after the creature herself; and it would serve her right if Folly Doraine took them out of her hands. And so you see, mamma, everything has changed from your days, because this isn't a person you would dream of knowing. I don't quite understand what "running them" means, and as Octavia was a little out of temper, I did not like to ask her; but Jane Roose is sure to know, so I will find out and tell you. I went and played with the children when we got in. They are such ducks, and we had a splendid romp. Little Tom is enormous for five, and so clever, and Gwynnie is the image of Octavia when her hair was dark. Now I must go down to tea.

7.30. I was so late. Every one was there when I got down, in such gorgeous tea-gowns; I wore my white mousseline delaine frock. The Rooses have the look of using out their summer best dresses. Jane's cold is worse. The guns had got back, and came straggling in one by one, as they dressed, quickly or slowly; and Lord Doraine had such a lovely velvet suit on, and he said such nice

things to me; and Lord Valmond sat at the other side, and seemed more ill-tempered than ever. I can't think what is the matter with him. At last he asked me to play Patience with him; so I said that was a game one played by oneself, and he said he knew quite a new one which he was sure I would like to learn; but I did not particularly want to just then. Lady Doraine was showing Mr. Wertz her new one, at the other side of the hall. There are some cosy little tables arranged for playing cards, with nice screens near, so that the other people's counting, &c., may not put one out.

Mrs. Pike was too splendid for words, in petunia satin, and sable, and quantities of pearl chains; and Tom was trying to talk to her. Nobody worries about Mr. Pike much; but Lord Doraine took him off to the billiard-room, after collecting Mr. Wertz, to play "Bridge"—everybody plays "Bridge," I find—and then Lady Doraine came and joined Lord Valmond and me on the big sofa.

Valmond hardly spoke after that, and she teased him, and said: "Harry, what a child you are!" and she looked as sweetly malicious as the tortoiseshell cat at home does when it is going to scratch while

it is purring. And presently Dolly Tenterdown came over to us (he is in Cousin Jack's battalion of the Coldstreams, and he looks about fifteen, but he behaves very "grown up"), and he asked Lady Doraine to come and teach him her New Patience; and they went to one of the screen tables, and Lord Valmond said he was a charming fellow, but I thought he looked silly, and I do wonder what she found to say to him. She must be quite ten years older than he is, and Jane Roose says it is an awful sign of age when people play with boys.

Lord Valmond asked me to keep him some dances tonight, but I said I really did not know what I should do until it began, as I had never been at a ball before. I haven't forgiven him a bit, so he need not think I have. Now I must stop. Oh! I am longing to put on my white tulle, and I do feel excited.

Your affectionate daughter,

ELIZABETH.

P. S.—I asked Jane Roose what "running them" means, and it's being put on to things in the City, and having all your bills paid if you introduce them

to people; only you sometimes have to write their letters for them to prevent them putting the whole grand address, &c., that is in the Peerage; and she says it is quite a profession now, and done by the best people, which of course must be true, as Carry is Tom's sister. E.

Chevenix Castle,
November 22nd.

Dearest Mamma,—

Oh! it was too, too lovely last night. I am having my breakfast in bed today, just like the other grown-up people, and it really feels so grand to be writing to you between sips of tea and nibbles of toast and strawberry jam! Well, to tell you about the ball. First, my white tulle was a dream. Octavia said it was by far the prettiest debutante frock she had ever seen; and when I was dressed she sent for me to her room, and Tom was there too, and she took out of a duck of a white satin case a lovely string of pearls, and put it round my throat, and said it was their present to me for my first ball! Wasn't it angelic of them? I hugged and kissed them both, and almost squashed Tom's buttonhole into his pink coat, I was so pleased, but he said he didn't mind; and then we all went down together,

and no one else was ready, so we looked through the rooms. The dancing, of course, was to be in the picture-gallery, and the flowers were so splendid everywhere, and Octavia was quite satisfied. It is a mercy it is such a big house, for we weren't put out a bit beforehand by the preparations.

I don't know if you were ever like that, Mamma, but I felt as if I must jump about and sing, and my cheeks were burning. Octavia sat down and played a valse, and Tom and I opened the ball by ourselves in the empty room, and it was fun, and then we saw Lord Valmond peeping in at the door, and he came up and said Tom was not to be greedy, and so I danced the two last rounds with him, and he had such a strange look in his eyes, and he never said one word until we stopped. And then Octavia went out of the other door, and I don't know where Tom went, but we were alone, and so he said, would I forgive him and be friends, that he had never been so sorry for anything in his life as having offended me. He really seemed so penitent, and he does dance so beautifully, and he is so tall and nice in his pink coat; and, besides—I remembered his dinner with Aunt Maria! So I said All

right, I would try, if he would promise never to be horrid again; and he said he wouldn't; and then we shook hands, and he said I looked lovely, and that my frock was perfect; and then Tom came back and we went into the hall, and everybody was down, and they had drawn for partners to go into dinner while we were in the ballroom. Tom had made Octavia arrange that we should draw, as he said he could not stand Lady Greswold two nights running. Octavia said she had drawn for Lord Valmond, because he wasn't there, and that his slip of paper was me, and he said on our way into the dining-room that Octavia was a brick. We had such fun at dinner, now that I have forgiven him, and have not to be thinking all the time of how nasty I can be—we get on splendidly.

Mr. Wertz was at the other side of me with Mrs. Pike; but as he isn't "running" them he had not to bother to talk to her, and he is really very intelligent, and we three had such an amusing time. Lord Valmond was in a lovely temper. Jane Roose said afterwards in the drawing-room that it was because Mrs. Smith was coming with the Courceys to the ball. Lady Doraine had drawn Mr. Pike, who is

melancholy-looking, with a long Jew nose; but she woke him up, and got him quite animated by dessert; and Mrs. Pike did not like it one bit. I overheard her speaking to him about it afterwards, and he said so roughly, "You mind your own climbing, Mary; you ought to be glad, as it's a titled lady!" Well, then, by the time we were all assembled in the hall, every one began to arrive. Oh, it was so, so lovely! Every one looked at me as I stood beside Octavia at first, because they all knew the ball was given for me, and then for the first dance I danced with Tom, and after that I had heaps of partners, and I can't tell you about each dance, but it was all heavenly. I tried to remember what you said and not dance more than three times with the same person; but, somehow, Lord Valmond got four, and another—but that was an extra.

Mrs. Smith did come with the Courceys, and she was looking so smart with a beautiful gown on, and Jane Roose said it was a mercy Valmond was so rich; but I don't see what that had to do with it. I saw him dancing with her once, but he looked as cross as two sticks, perhaps because she was rather late. Do you know, Mamma, a lot of the Beauties

we are always reading about in the papers, as having walked in the Park looking very lovely, were there, and some of them are quite, quite old—much older than you—and all trimmed up! Aren't you astonished? And one has a grown-up son and daughter, and she danced all the time with Dolly Tenterdown, who was her son's fag at Eton, Lord Doraine told me. Isn't it odd? And another was the lady Sir Charles Helmsford was with on the Promenade at Nice, when you would not let me bow to him; do you remember? And she is as old as the other!

Lord Doraine was rather a bother, he wanted to dance with me so often; so at last I said to Octavia I really was not at my first ball to dance with old men (he is quite forty), and what was I to do? And she was so cross with him, and I could see her talking to him about it when she danced with him herself next dance; and after that till supper he disappeared—into the smoking-room, I suppose, to play "Bridge."

I went in to supper first with the Duke of Meath —he had just finished taking in Octavia—he is such a nice boy; and then, as we were coming out,

we went down a corridor, and there in a window-seat were Lord Valmond and Mrs. Smith, and he was still gloomy, and she had the same green-rhubarb-juice look she had the last night at Nazeby. He jumped up at once, and said to me he hoped I had not forgotten I had promised to go in to supper with him, so I said I had just come from supper; and while we were speaking Mrs. Smith had got the Duke to sit down beside her, and so I had to go off with Lord Valmond, and he seemed so odd and nervous, and as if he were apologising about something; but I don't know what it could have been, as he had not asked me before to go in to supper with him. He seemed to cheer up presently, and persuaded me to go back into the supper room, as he said he was so hungry, and we found a dear little table, with big flower things on it, in a corner; but when we got there he only played with an ortolan and drank some champagne, but he did take such a while about it; and each time I said I was sure the next dance was beginning he said he was still hungry. I have never seen any one have so much on their plate and eat so little. At last I insisted on going back, and when we got to the

ballroom an extra was happening, and he said I had promised him that, but I hadn't. However, we danced, and after that, having been so long away at supper, and one thing and another, my engagements seemed to get mixed, and I danced with all sorts of people I hadn't promised to in the beginning. And at last it came to an end, and when the last carriage had driven away, we all went and had another hot supper.

Mr. Pike would sit next to Lady Doraine, and he was as gay as a blackbird, and I heard Octavia saying to Lady Greswold that Carry had better hurry up and get that house in Park Street, or Lady Doraine would have it instead. Then we all went to bed, and Lord Valmond squeezed my hand and looked as silly as anything, and Jane Roose, who saw, said I had better be careful, as he was playing me off against Mrs. Smith, which was great impertinence of her, I think—don't you?—especially as Mrs. Smith had gone, so I can't see the point.

Now I am going to get up.

Your affectionate daughter,

ELIZABETH.

Chevenix Castle,
November 25th.

Dearest Mamma,—

Octavia is writing to you, and we have such a piece of news for you; but first, I must tell you about Thursday and yesterday. The morning after the ball here no one came down till lunch, and in the afternoon Lady Doraine suggested we should have some tableaux in the evening, and so we were busy all the time arranging them. They were all bosh, but it was so amusing. Mrs. Pike lent every one her tea-gowns—she has dozens—and they did splendidly for the Queen of Sheba; and Mr. Pike played Charles I. having his head cut off, as Lady Doraine told him he had just the type of lofty melancholy face for that. I was the old woman in the

shoe, with all the biggest people for children; but the best of all was Dolly Tenterdown as "Bubbles." Lord Doraine and Mr. Wertz and Tom and some others played "Bridge" all the time while we were arranging them; but Lord Valmond was most useful, and in such a decent temper. After they were over we danced a little, and it was all delightful.

Yesterday, the day of the county ball in Chevenix, they shot again; and it rained just as we all came down ready to start for the lunch; so we couldn't go, and had to lunch indoors without most of the men. Mr. Pike hadn't gone shooting, because I heard Tom saying the night before to Lady Doraine that he wouldn't chance the party being murdered again, and that she must keep him at home somehow. And she did, and taught him Patience in the hall, after lunch; and Mrs. Pike went and wanted to learn it too, but Lady Doraine—who was lovely to her—somehow did not make much room on the sofa, so she had to go and sit somewhere else.

Half the people were playing Bridge, and the rest were very comfortable, and smoking cigarettes, of course; so Mrs. Pike did too. Her case is gold,

with a splendid monogram in big rubies on it; but I am sure it makes her feel sick, because she puffs it out and makes it burn up as soon as she can without its being in her mouth. She had to go and lie down after that, as she said she would be too tired for the ball; but nobody paid much attention.

It was more lively at tea-time, when the guns came in. And Lord Doraine would sit by me; he talked about poetry, and said dozens of nice things about me, and all sorts of amusing ones about every one else; and Lord Valmond, who had gone to write some letters at a table near, seemed so put out with every one talking, that he could not keep his attention, and at last he tore them up, and came and sat close to us, and told Lord Doraine that he could see Mr. Wertz was longing for "Bridge." And so he got up, and laughed in such a way, and said "All right, Harry, old boy." And Valmond got crimson—I don't know what at—and looked as cross as a bear for a few minutes. We had rather a hurried dinner.

My white chiffon is as pretty as the tulle, and Octavia was quite pleased with me. There were omnibuses and two broughams for us to go in.

Octavia took me with her alone in one. I wanted to go in one of the omnibuses—it looked so much gayer—but she wouldn't let me. It is not much of a drive, as you know, and we all got there at the same time almost, and our party did look so smart as we came in.

Octavia sailed like a Queen up the room to a carpeted raised place at the end, and there held a sort of court.

The Duchess of Glamorgan was already there with her three daughters, and their teeth stick out just like Mrs. Vavaseur's; only they look ready to bite, and she was always smiling. The men of their party were so young and looked as if they would not hurt a fly, and the Duchess had me introduced to her and asked about you. And Mrs. Pike tried to join in the conversation, and the Duchess fixed on her pince-nez and looked at her for quite ten seconds, and then said, when she had retired a little, "Who is this gorgeous person?" And when I said Mrs. Pike, she said, "I don't remember the name" in a tone that dismissed Mrs. Pike from the universe as far as she was concerned; and Jane Roose says she is almost the only Duchess who

won't know parvenues, and that is what makes her set so dull.

There were such a lot of funny frumpy people at the other end of the room—"the rabble," Mrs. Pike called them. "Let us walk round and look at the rabble," she said to Lord Doraine, who was standing by her. And they went.

I had such lots of partners, I don't know what any one else did; I was enjoying myself so, until after supper, which I had with Lord Valmond, and Octavia and the little Duke were at our table too, and it was so gay. But after that there was a polka. I danced it with some idiot who almost at once let yards and yards of my chiffon frills get torn, so I was obliged to go to the cloak room to have it pinned up. It was a long way off, and when I came out my partner had disappeared, and there was no one about but Lord Doraine; and the moment I saw him I hated the look in his eyes, they seemed all swimmy; and he said in such a nasty fat voice: "Little darling, I have sent your partner away, and I am waiting for you. Come and sit out with me among the palms;" and I don't know why, but I felt frightened, and so I said, No! that I was going

back to the ball room. And he got nearer and nearer, and caught hold of my arm, and said, "No, no, you shall not unless you give me a kiss first."

And he would not let me pass. I can't imagine why, Mamma, but I never felt so frightened in my life; and just then, walking aimlessly down the passage, came Lord Valmond, and he saw us and came up quickly, and I was so glad to see some one that I ran to him, as Lord Doraine let me pass directly he caught sight of Harry—I mean Lord Valmond—and he was in such a rage when he saw how I was trembling, and said, "What has that brute been saying to you?" and looked as if he wanted to go back and fight him; but I was so terrified that I could only say, "Do come away!" So we went and sat in the palm place, and there was not a soul there, as every one was dancing; and I really don't know how it happened, I was so upset about that horrid Lord Doraine, that Harry tried to comfort me, and —he kissed me again—and I hope you won't be very cross, Mamma; but, somehow, I did not feel at all angry this time. And I thought he was fond of Mrs. Smith; but it isn't, it's Me! And we are en-

gaged. And Octavia is writing to you. And I hope you won't mind. And the post is off, so no more.

From your affectionate daughter,

ELIZABETH.

P. S.—I shall get married before the Drawing Room in February, because then I can wear a tiara.