

COUNTING  
ONE'S BLESSINGS

*The Selected Letters of  
Queen Elizabeth The Queen Mother*

EDITED AND WITH A PREFACE BY  
WILLIAM SHAWCROSS

MACMILLAN

‘Letters are like wine; if they are sound they ripen with keeping’

SAMUEL BUTLER

‘Sometimes, one’s heart quails at the thought of  
the things that lie ahead, and then one counts one’s blessings  
– and things don’t seem so bad!’

THE QUEEN,  
5 May 1939 to the Archbishop of Canterbury

## PREFACE

HER MAJESTY THE QUEEN graciously permitted me to compile and edit this collection of letters of Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother. I am deeply indebted to her. As a result of her generosity, I was allowed unrestricted access to the Royal Archives, where I had worked on the official biography of Queen Elizabeth, published in 2009, and to all other sources which I had used for that book.

As well as to Her Majesty the Queen, I am very grateful to other members of the Royal Family who have helped me, in particular the Duke of Edinburgh, the Prince of Wales, the Duchess of Cornwall, the Duke of York, the Earl of Wessex, the Princess Royal, the Duke of Gloucester, the Duke of Kent, Princess Alexandra, Viscount Linley, Lady Sarah Chatto and the Earl of Snowdon for their assistance.

I thank Her Majesty for permission to quote material from the Royal Archives, as well as from all other letters subject to her copyright. Anyone who has worked in these archives knows what a pleasure that is. Once again, I was assisted in the most efficient and supportive way by the Registrar, Pam Clark, and her staff, including Jill Kelsey, Allison Derrett and Lynne Beech. Felicity Murdo-Smith kindly assisted in transcribing letters in the Archives. The Curator of the Royal Photograph Collection, Sophie Gordon, the Assistant Curator, Lisa Heighway, and Shruti Patel and her staff at the Royal Collection Photographic Services were all immensely helpful in providing photographs to illustrate this book.

At Glamis Castle, the ancestral home of the Bowes Lyon family, I must thank the Earl of Strathmore for permission to quote papers within the family's possession. The Archivist at Glamis, Ingrid Thomson, helped me in every way, tracing names and dates and letters. Among other members of the Queen Mother's family, Sir Simon and Lady Bowes Lyon again allowed me access to their papers at St Paul's Walden, one of the Bowes Lyon family homes, and I must thank Queen Elizabeth's nieces, Lady Mary Clayton, Lady Mary Colman and the Hon. Mrs Rhodes (née Margaret Elphinstone) for their assistance. I have also been generously assisted by Queen Elizabeth's nephew the Hon. Albemarle Bowes Lyon and

her great-nephew James Joicey-Cecil, by her cousin John Bowes Lyon and by her great-nieces Rosemary Leschallas, Lady Elizabeth Shakerley and Rosie Stancer, and by Jenny Gordon-Lennox.

I am much indebted to everyone who allowed me to quote from their own letters and who gave me access to letters from Queen Elizabeth which they held. These include Sir Antony Acland, Sir Edward Cazalet, Mrs Alan Clark, Lady Katharine Farrell, the Hon. George Fergusson, Canon Dendle French, the Earl of Halifax, Mrs Anthony Harbottle, Sally Hudson, Carol Hughes, Joanna Johnston, Henrietta Knight, Mark Logue, David Micklethwait, John Murray, the Hon. Lady Murray, Susan Crawford Phipps, Lady Penn, Anthony Russell-Roberts, the Marquess of Salisbury, Alexandra Sitwell, Susanna Sitwell and the Osbert Sitwell Estate, Sir Jock Slater, Earl Spencer, Lord Tweedsmuir, Violet Vyner, Cath Walwyn, Diana Way, Robert Woods, Lady Wyatt.

I have received help from the staff of many archives and libraries as well as from the archivists of private collections. They include Dr Nicholas Clark, Librarian at the Britten–Pears Foundation; Tanya Chebotarev, curator of the Bakhmeteff Archive, Columbia University; Helen Langley, Curator, Modern Political Papers, Department of Special Collections and Western Manuscripts, Bodleian Library; Michael Meredith, Librarian at Eton College; Susan Worrall, Cadbury Research Library: Special Collections, University of Birmingham; Allen Packwood, Director, and Madelin Terrazas, Archives Assistant, at the Churchill Archives Centre, Churchill College, Cambridge; Giles Mandelbrote, Librarian, and the Trustees of Lambeth Palace Library; Kathryn McKee at St John’s College, Cambridge; Alison Metcalfe at the National Library of Scotland; Vicki Perry, Head of Archives and Historic Collections at Hatfield House; Bruce Bailey, archivist at Althorp; staff at the Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas at Austin; staff at the Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library and Museum, Hyde Park, New York. I am grateful to them all.

I have been helped by many members of the Royal Household, as I was with my official biography of Queen Elizabeth. They include Sir Christopher Geidt, The Queen’s Private Secretary, and Samantha Cohen, her Assistant Private Secretary. Sir Christopher has a superb understanding of the monarchy’s place in British life and I am grateful to him for approving this collection. Miss Cohen oversaw the publication of my biography of Queen Elizabeth with consummate talent and grace, and was especially generous with her time on this work also.

I am indebted to the Royal Librarian, the Hon. Lady Roberts, and to

Sir Hugh Roberts, former Director of the Royal Collection, and to his successor Jonathan Marsden. All of them gave me the benefit of their knowledge and insights. So too did Lady Susan Hussey and the Hon. Mary Morrison, each of whom has served the Queen for over fifty years.

In the office of the Duke of Edinburgh, Dame Anne Griffiths was extremely helpful and at Clarence House I was assisted by Sir Michael Peat, Private Secretary to the Prince of Wales, and his successor William Nye, as well as by David Hutson, Virginia Carington and Paddy Harverson.

I thank Ailsa Anderson, Press Secretary to The Queen, always a fount of impeccable and witty advice, Zaki Cooper and other members of the Palace press office. As always, the Buckingham Palace switchboard under Michelle Redpath was marvellously efficient.

Many of the Queen Mother's Household and friends provided me with great help. They include Dame Frances Campbell-Preston, Martin and Catriona Leslie, Jamie Lowther-Pinkerton, Lucy Murphy, Leslie Mitchell and Jacqui Meakin. Ashe Windham, former equerry and friend of Queen Elizabeth, and Lady Penn, former lady in waiting to Queen Elizabeth, gave me particular friendship and assistance.

There are many others to whom I am grateful for different forms of help. They include Sir Eric and Lady Anderson, Fiona Bruce, Sir Edward and Lady Cazalet, Miss Pamela Fleetwood, Dame Drue Heinz, Nigel Jaques, Lady Rupert Nevill, Patty Palmer Tomkinson, Brigadier Andrew Parker Bowles, Simon Parker Bowles, Major Johnny Perkins, Lord and Lady Sainsbury, the Dowager Countess of Strathmore, Colin Thubron, the Duchess of Westminster.

As with my biography of Queen Elizabeth, I owe debts to other writers, particularly to Hugo Vickers, author of many books on the monarchy, including *Queen Elizabeth* (2005), who gave me generous access to letters in his own archives.

Above all I am indebted to those who helped me most closely, in particular Lady Elizabeth Leeming, a skilled editor in her own right, great-niece of Queen Elizabeth and sister of the Earl of Strathmore, the head of the Bowes Lyon family. She tirelessly worked through many drafts of this book and, through her careful research, discovered not only family facts but also many others. She and her husband Antony were also very hospitable to me, allowing me to work and stay in their house in Cumbria. I am once again very grateful to Sheila de Bellaigue, former Registrar of the Royal Archives, who was my peerless scholarly companion

on this book, as on the official biography. Without her meticulous scholarship and erudition I could never have completed either book.

My literary agents, Carol Heaton in London and Lynn Nesbit in New York, were supportive and helpful as always. In New York I was happy to be published by Jonathan Gelassi of Farrar Strauss and in London I was fortunate that once again Georgina Morley of Macmillan was my editor. It was not a simple book to create but she accomplished it with patience, charm and skill. Peter James copyedited the book with precision, Jacqui Graham arranged publicity with skill, Tania Wilde was coolheaded and managed all the final details of publication with dexterity. As before, I was privileged to have Douglas Matthews create the index.

Finally, I am grateful to my family, especially my wife Olga, and Conrad, Ellie, Alex and Charlie for their patience while I had the joy of assembling these letters.



LETTERS HAVE ALWAYS been treasured, sometimes revered. Archives and museums all over the world cosset them. So do people, in the drawers of their desks, in bundles hidden in boxes, in attics or in wardrobes. Letters are history, public and personal. They can evoke times, characters, hopes and fears like almost nothing else. And, above all, they can evoke love. There is almost nothing so exquisite as a letter bearing, describing, offering love. The crackle of paper drawn out of envelopes has a mystery, if not a magic, that evokes an age gone by. The letters of many prominent people – statesmen, politicians, writers, artists, lovers, kings and queens – can command both awe and high prices.

Throughout the ages, letter writing has flourished. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, pen and paper were almost as natural and frequent a means of communication as word of mouth for those with money and time. In central London and other great cities, the postal services were superb and swift – letters written and posted in Mayfair would be delivered in Belgravia an hour or so later. Mornings in many households, both grand and less so, were given over to letter writing, certainly by the lady of the house.

But today letters sometimes seem of another time, almost as ancient as calligraphy. In this digital age into which the world has been thrust, almost without warning, the art of letter writing is already being swamped by emails, text messages and tweets and many more means of communication that only recently could hardly be imagined. How will historians

of the future manage without the glorious primary source of private thoughts in private letters?

Of course, lamenting the death of letter writing long predates the current revolution in technology. Roger Fulford, the editor of an earlier collection of royal letters, pointed out in 1964 that phrases such as ‘Nobody writes letters nowadays’ and ‘The art of letter writing is dead’ were already constant lamentations in the middle of the twentieth century.

Fulford was introducing the first of what became five volumes of correspondence between Queen Victoria and her daughter Victoria, the Princess Royal and later Crown Princess of Prussia and mother of the last Kaiser of Germany. He ruminated about how such mid-nineteenth-century letters should be presented to readers of the 1960s. Should they be to and fro, or is a one-sided correspondence enough? Should they deal with a specific period of a life, or with the whole life? He did not lack for material – for over forty years, the Queen wrote to her daughter at least twice a week and the Princess replied almost as often. All those letters have survived. The Queen alone wrote half a million words to this one daughter.

Roger Fulford had to decide whether to publish a selection of the most interesting letters from four decades in a single volume, or to concentrate on a shorter period in order to be able to show ‘the interests and occupations of the Queen’. He chose the latter and his first volume, *Dearest Child*, covers only four years, ending with the death of the Queen’s husband and the Princess’s father, Prince Albert, in December 1861.

In this book, by contrast, I have chosen letters from all ten decades of Queen Elizabeth’s life. I hope nevertheless to have avoided the ‘distracting’ effect of a selection which ‘jumps the reader from decade to decade’, in Fulford’s words.<sup>1</sup> And I hope also that the wide variety of those to whom the letters are addressed reflects the breadth of this Queen’s interests and occupations.

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WHEN I BEGAN RESEARCH in the Royal Archives on the official biography of Queen Elizabeth, box after box of material was brought to my desk and I was immediately struck by the wonderful letters she wrote.

Unlike Queen Victoria, she had beautiful clear handwriting from the age of ten to the age of a hundred. From childhood onwards, her words danced on the page, teeming with vitality, ebullience and

optimism. Although by today's standards her formal education was limited, her letters showed a relish for language, and sparkled with the sheer joy of living.

I quoted from many such letters in the biography. But there were far more which I was not able to include even in part, let alone in whole, for simple reasons of space. And so I must repeat my gratitude to Her Majesty The Queen for granting me the huge pleasure, and responsibility, of delving again into Queen Elizabeth's letters to make the selection in this book.

The structure is simple. I have followed the path of her life and have written short passages and notes to provide context and information about those to whom she was writing and those whom she mentions. I have kept her childhood spelling but corrected her rare mistakes as an adult. In addition, I have included extracts from diaries that she kept in her early years and quotations from her remarkable recorded conversations in the 1990s with Eric Anderson, then Provost of Eton College, in which she recalled many incidents and relationships throughout her life.\*

The letters span the entire twentieth century, as did her life. They are drawn from the thousands that Queen Elizabeth wrote to family and friends. Naturally, not all of these have survived. In all families, letters are thrown away, letters are put somewhere safe and forgotten, letters are lost. Sometimes letters are deliberately destroyed.

When I made my first trip to Glamis Castle I was astonished to be handed a box containing hundreds of letters written during the First World War by the adolescent Elizabeth to Beryl Poignand, her governess and friend. Many of these letters are ten or more pages long and some are filled with girlish enthusiasms, even nonsense, but almost all of them are fun – except, of course, those that deal with sombre matters of war and death. Many of them discuss the soldiers who came to convalesce at Glamis during the war, and with whom Elizabeth and Beryl made friends and played games. They show the spontaneous, joyous side of her character which she later had to control as the wife of a prince – in public at least.

Prince Albert, the second son of King George V and Queen Mary, fell in love with her in 1920 and the letters between them during their

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\* *Conversations with Eric Anderson 1994–5* (RA QEQM/ADD/MISC) and throughout. Quotations from these conversations appear in italics.

courtship – he did most of the courting – are at times almost unbearably poignant, testament to his dedication and to her hesitancy. After their marriage in April 1923, letters between them are much rarer, probably because they spent very little time apart.

There are almost no letters from Elizabeth to her father; sadder still, many of those to her mother are missing. They had an extraordinarily close, affectionate relationship, and as a child Elizabeth confided completely in her mother. The day after her wedding to the Prince, now Duke of York, Elizabeth wrote to her, ‘I could not say anything to you about how utterly miserable I was at leaving you and Mike & David & father. I could not ever have said it to you – but you know I love you more than anybody in the world mother, and you do know it, don’t you?’<sup>2</sup> Lady Strathmore replied at once, ‘I won’t say what it means to me to give you up to Bertie – but I think you know that you are by far the most precious of all my children, & always will be.’<sup>3</sup>

As soon as she entered the Royal Family, the Duchess of York made it a rule never to talk (let alone write) about her new relations, even to her Strathmore family. This discretion was wise and she maintained it for the rest of her life. Nevertheless, her letters to her mother would probably have included more accurate reflections of her thoughts and hopes and fears than any others. Unfortunately few of these letters have been found.

It is important to remember that for the first twenty-two years of her life Elizabeth Bowes Lyon was a private individual with no expectation of becoming a public figure, let alone a prominent member of the Royal Family. And after she became Duchess of York and then Queen, she continued to write private letters to friends and family with little thought that they would one day be published. Indeed, one or two of the recipients of her letters said to me, quite understandably, that they regarded their missives from Queen Elizabeth as private and not for publication.

Princess Margaret felt strongly about this; she made little secret of the fact that in the 1990s she ‘tidied’ her mother’s papers and consigned many of them to black bin-bags for burning. These bags, she said, included letters from the Princess of Wales to the Queen Mother. After the Princess’s death in 1997, her mother, Frances Shand Kydd, shredded the correspondence she found in her daughter’s home.

Everyone is entitled to privacy, especially in a world where far too much becomes too public too fast. In letters, each of us sometimes

writes things in haste which, on consideration, we might have phrased differently – and would not wish to see published. Sometimes letters are too long, or too repetitive. I have tried to edit these letters with these concerns in mind.

The vagaries of life have already made their selection of Queen Elizabeth's letters. Yet so many have survived that the hardest task has been to decide what to discard from the pen of this prolific and talented letter-writer. I can only hope that this book truly displays the great loves – for God, for family, for Britain and for life – which, from first to last, inspired Queen Elizabeth and her writing.

PART ONE

# ELIZABETH

'A flashing smile of appreciative delight'

LORD GORELL

ELIZABETH ANGELA MARGUERITE BOWES LYON, born on 4 August 1900, was the ninth child of Lord and Lady Glamis, Claude and Cecilia. She was followed in 1902 by her brother David, to whom she became exceptionally close. Cecilia Glamis called these last two children 'My two Benjamins'. They had eight siblings: Violet, born in 1882, was followed by Mary Frances (May), Patrick, John (Jock), Alexander (Alec), Fergus, Rose and Michael. (Violet died of diphtheria in 1893 at the age of eleven, just two weeks before the birth of Michael.) In 1904 Claude Glamis's father, the thirteenth Earl of Strathmore and Kinghorne, died and he succeeded to the title.

Life for these children was as contented and secure as any childhood could be. In the first decade of the twentieth century, visitors to St Paul's Walden Bury, their handsome Queen Anne house of rose-red brick in the fields of Hertfordshire, found a bustling, happy household, full of laughter, kindness and a wish to do good in the community.

Elizabeth's first biographer, Cynthia Asquith, later wrote, 'Its atmosphere of a happy English home recalls to one's memory so many of the familiar delights of childhood – charades, schoolroom tea, homemade toffee, Christmas Eve, hide-and-seek. Nowhere in this well-worn house, one feels, can there ever have been very strict rules as to the shutting of doors, the wiping of boots, or the putting away of toys.'<sup>1</sup>

Throughout Elizabeth's childhood, country-house life continued with little change. White tablecloths were still spread for tea on spacious lawns; field sports, especially shooting, were immensely popular among the aristocracy and their friends.

Years later, in conversation with Eric Anderson, Queen Elizabeth remembered her childhood years:

We were a very big family, you see. I had six brothers. I was nearly the youngest. It's so nice being brought up by elder

brothers. They kept a good eye you know. I was the youngest practically except for one little brother and so we were cherished and also disciplined, which is a very good thing. We all liked each other tremendously, I think. My very elder sister was at the very beginning of the family. She was a long way up. My middle sister was an absolute angel. Everybody loved her. In a way, my generation was very lucky – you feel very safe in a big family. It was a great thing to be loved.<sup>2</sup>

Cecilia Strathmore was the greatest influence on the household. She was a woman of both gaiety and religious conviction who brought up her children in love of God, love of family and love of country. 'Noblesse oblige' may not have been a term she used, but Lady Strathmore certainly impressed on her children that they had been born very lucky and that their responsibility, indeed their duty (an important word to her), lay in being generous to others, especially those less fortunate. 'Work is the rent you pay for life,' she would tell her children.

Elizabeth was from infancy vivacious, loving the company of adults as well as of her siblings. One of her governesses later recalled that she had 'a small dainty figure, a narrow, finely shaped rather pale little face, dark hair and lovely violet-blue eyes'.<sup>3</sup>

An admirer, Lord Gorell,\* later recalled that she had even as a child 'that blend of kindness and dignity that is the peculiar characteristic of her family. She was small for her age, responsive as a harp, wistful and appealing one moment, bright eyed and eager the next, with a flashing smile of appreciative delight'.<sup>4</sup>

Her brothers were all sent to Eton, but Elizabeth was educated at home by governesses. After lessons, she and David would play together in the outbuildings around the house, and explore the vegetable garden. One governess observed, 'Lady Elizabeth was adept at crawling under the netting and filling herself with strawberries while lying on her stomach'.<sup>5</sup> Elizabeth herself recalled the 'absolute bliss' of being in the stable surrounded by the smell of horses and leather, bits of which the groom allowed her to polish.

Every August, the family travelled to the Strathmores' Scottish home, Glamis Castle. They would go up by train, with some of their

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\* Ronald Gorell Barnes, third Baron Gorell (1884–1963), Liberal peer and author.

servants, for the opening of the grouse season on 12 August. It was a great adventure for a child – Glamis was a thrilling place, with its tower, its turrets, its history and its myths.

The Castle was lit by hundreds of candles – electric light did not come until 1929 – and there were immense fires in many rooms. Two pipers marched around the table at the end of dinner, and then there were games or songs in the drawing room, led by Cecilia at the piano. Lord Gorell wrote later that the family was without any stiffness or formality. ‘It was all so friendly and kind . . . No wonder little Elizabeth came up to me once as my visit was nearing its end and demanded “But why don’t you beg to stay?”’<sup>6</sup>

Both houses employed many of the local people. At Glamis, the Castle provided employment for inhabitants of the village near by; in Elizabeth’s memory all those who worked there – housemaids, kitchen maids, grooms – were friends of the family.

The new century into which Elizabeth was born was seen at the time as a moment of great optimism. Nineteenth-century industrialization had enriched Europe and North America as never before. Railways, steamships, motor cars and even bicycles had created an almost unprecedented revolution in transport. Aged ten, Elizabeth wrote an essay entitled ‘A recent invention, Aeroplanes’: ‘An aeroplane is usually shaped like a cigar, and has a propellor at one end, and on each side the great white wings, which makes it look like a bird [. . .] They are not quite safe, yet, and many, many axidents have happened.’<sup>7</sup>

Among her happiest childhood memories were the trips she made to Italy with her mother to visit her maternal grandmother in her various homes in Florence, San Remo and Bordighera.\* Two affectionate letters to her father from Italy survive and one of them opens this collection.

At Christmas 1909 she was given a diary and for a few weeks thereafter she kept it diligently – ‘Jan 1 1910 – I had my first newew – great exitment.’<sup>8</sup> This was John, Master of Glamis, first son of her eldest brother Patrick, Lord Glamis, who had married Lady Dorothy Osborne, daughter of the Duke of Leeds, in 1908.

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\* Lady Strathmore’s father, Charles Cavendish-Bentinck, had died, aged only forty-seven, in 1865. Her mother, Caroline, married again in 1870, becoming Mrs Harry Scott of Ancrum; she was widowed again in 1889.

In July 1910, only weeks after the death of King Edward VII and the accession of his son, King George V, Elizabeth's older sister May got married. By now Elizabeth had developed her happy letter-writing habit and wrote to May, 'Darling May-Di-kin', several times on her honeymoon. And whenever her mother was away, Elizabeth wrote her affectionate letters.

Elizabeth was dismayed when David was sent to preparatory school and then to Eton, but she wrote to him constantly. She remained at home whether in the country or at their rented house in London, in St James's Square, with a succession of governesses, while making short forays to small schools including that of the Misses Birtwhistle in Sloane Street. She said later that she did not think she learned anything there – 'A little bit of poetry I certainly remember. So I'm afraid I'm uneducated on the whole.'<sup>9</sup> In fact her school reports, preserved in the archive at Glamis, show her doing well in English, scripture and history, not so well in mathematics.

Probably the most effective governess was a young German woman, Käthe Kübler, who arrived in 1913. She was struck by Elizabeth's love of her mother and their shared devotion to the Bible, which they read together every day. But she was shocked by how disorganized Elizabeth's education had been. 'With true German thoroughness I drew up a timetable for her lessons and a plan of study, both of which were approved by Lady Strathmore.'<sup>10</sup> Fräulein Kübler's work was brought to an end by the outbreak of war on Elizabeth's fourteenth birthday, 4 August 1914. On that day, everyone's world changed for ever.

Elizabeth's brothers Patrick, Jock, Fergus and Michael all marched off at once to war, with hundreds of thousands of young men from all over Europe. Like many great country houses, Glamis and St Paul's Walden Bury were converted into convalescent homes for wounded soldiers. Elizabeth was told by her mother that her task – her duty indeed – was to make the soldiers feel at home, visiting the wards, talking, running errands, playing cards with them. She did it all with grace and ease. One soldier said later, 'She was always the same, asking, "How is your shoulder? Do you sleep well? Does it pain you? Why are you not smoking your pipe? Have you no tobacco? You must tell me if you haven't and I'll get some for you."' For her fifteen years she was very womanly, kind hearted and sympathetic.' Everyone in the Castle 'worshipped' her.<sup>11</sup>

Her closest companion throughout the war was Beryl Poignand, whom Lady Strathmore engaged as her governess and companion in November 1914. Thirteen years older than Elizabeth, Beryl became her best friend and co-conspirator, and Elizabeth's extraordinary letters to her were full of the joy, excitement and fears of adolescence. Beryl ceased to be Elizabeth's governess in 1917 but remained a close friend thereafter.

Like so many families, the Strathmores tasted tragedy in the First World War. Fergus, serving as an officer with the Black Watch, was killed at the Battle of Loos in September 1915. Elizabeth and her family, particularly her mother, were devastated. When her brother Michael was reported missing in 1917, the family went through more agony until he was discovered to have been taken prisoner, at which moment she wrote one of her typically exuberant letters to Beryl to declare that she was '!!MAD WITH JOY!!'<sup>12</sup>

Her share of wartime suffering did not end with the Armistice of November 1918. Nine months later, one of her closest friends was killed in August 1919, fighting for the White Russian cause. She was inconsolable.

By this time Elizabeth was no longer a carefree girl but a mature young woman. She was beautiful, charming, even coquettish, and attracted the attention of many young men. But there was much more to her. She had always displayed great sensitivity, and as a result of the sufferings of her own family and of the wider circle in which she had moved during the war, she had acquired an understanding of human problems, strengths and frailties which was to stand her in good stead in later life.

10 February 1909 to Lord Strathmore

Poggio Ponente  
Bordighera  
Italy

My darling Father, Thank you very much for the interesting letter you sent me. Yesterday I went down to the sea shore and enjoyed myself very much on the rocks. I could not go far because of the sea, it was lovely? Mother and Auntie Vava\* went to Florence on Sunday evening at 7 o'clock. There is a dear little donkey here called Marguarita and we put it in a little carriage and I drive it is so quiet have got nothing more to say except it is a lovely garden my best love to yourself good by from your very loving Elizabeth

Xxxxxxxxxxxxxx  
Ooooooooooooo

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Cecilia Strathmore's mother, Mrs Harry Scott, spent a good deal of time in Florence and in Bordighera, on the Italian Riviera. Elizabeth and her mother made several visits there. When in England, she lived at Forbes House, Ham.

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Diary: 1 January 1910

I had my first new great excitement. Same day went to Lady Littens Fancy dress party and had great fun. Jan 2 Sunday – did nothing went to church. Jan 3 lessons in the morning – in the afternoon I went to a party at Kings Walden there was a Xmas tree. Jan 4 had lessons in the

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\* Violet Cavendish-Bentinck (1864–1932), known as 'Vava', Cecilia Strathmore's younger sister and twin of Hyacinth. She never married and lived with her mother, Mrs Scott, at Ham, and later at Dawlish in Devon.

morning. At 7 in the evening May, Rosie, David and I went to Lady Verhner in Fancy dress it was great fun, there were programs too and supper at half past nine. We went away at ten. It was from 7 to 12.

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Elizabeth began her diary on 1 January 1910. Her handwriting was strong and even, but her interest in recording her life waned – as so often happens.

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### 16 July 1910 to May Elphinstone

20 St James's Square\*

S.W.1

Darling May-Di-kin,

This letter will reach you just after the one I wrote last night, perhaps you will think it funny me writing so soon, but I have got such a lot more to ask and tell you, that I am writing before I forget it. Aslin has been a donkey, she has been looking in all your draws (I don't mean what you wear) and was going to send you those fans (you know the ones you told me you were going to leave behind) and all sorts of things, but Mama told her not to touch a thing, except the trousseau dresses and things.

David and I are going down to Ham in an hour for Sunday and on Tuesday we go to P.W. [St Paul's Walden].

wasn't it funny when they showered Sidney and you with rice,<sup>†</sup> how far did you go with the shoes fastened on the motor, the boys told Charles May to stand in front of them so you would not see.

Good bye Darling May

From your loving E.A.M.B.L.

PS Please tell me if I am to call Sidney Darling or Dear.

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\* The Strathmores rented 20 St James's Square, designed by Robert Adam for Sir Watkin Williams-Wynn in the 1770s, from late 1906 to 1920.

† Elizabeth's elder sister, May (1883–1961), married Sidney Herbert, sixteenth Baron Elphinstone, at St Margaret's Westminster on 14 July 1910. Elizabeth was a bridesmaid at the wedding. Lord Elphinstone had been a big-game hunter and explorer. In 1900 he had travelled to the Tian Shan Mountains on the Sino-Russian border. He lived at Carberry Tower outside Edinburgh.

*'We always had cricket week at Glamis. A good many Eton people came and played . . . it was great fun, it really was. We played the neighbours, my father bowled. We played the Airlies\* from next door. Then there was a very good team called the Dundee Drapers.† It was easier then. People stayed in the house. I don't suppose you could do that nowadays. What used to be so good was that lovely weekend in London at Lord's in the old days when Eton played Harrow. That died didn't it after the last war?'*

~

Sunday 20 November 1910 to Lady Strathmore

St Paul's Walden Bury  
Welwyn

Darling Darling Lovie

I am writing to tell you Alec‡ is much much better. In fact he feels nearly quite well.

Yesterday afternoon, Furgus made a big oven in the Yew Roundabout. We took down a frying pan, and roasted chesnuts and potatoes. Darling, Mother I do hope that the visit wasn't very dull. Jockie got up early this morning and went to Holy Communion, he is going with Fergie and us again at 11. Everybody sends there love to You, Father, and Rosie. Please give mine too from your very loving Elizabeth

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\* The Earl and Countess of Airlie lived near by at Cortachy Castle.

† One newspaper described a typical match: 'This year the Glamis team includes the Earl of Strathmore (captain), the Earl of Airlie, Lord Carnegie, Lord Coke, and two of the young Lyons. It puts on no aristocratic airs however, it plays with the local Forfarshire clubs, one of them being the Dundee Drapers.' (*Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser*, 10 September 1910)

‡ Alec, the Strathmores' third son, had been injured at Eton when he was hit on the head by a cricket ball. This appears to have caused a tumour and he suffered from headaches thereafter. He died in his sleep on 19 October 1911, aged twenty-four. His humour and bravery under suffering were mentioned in many letters after his death.

Tuesday 13 December 1910 to Lady Strathmore

St Paul's Walden Bury

Darling Sweetie Lovie Mother

I hope Alec is much better. Please please don't worry too much about him. We do miss you so! Hester Astly has got a party on the 17th of this month, it is a sort of meeting to explain the Childrens Union. If we are not to go please tell Lady Hastings. Outside your bedroom door here there is a long parcel which has the smell and touch of Umbrella's! May is here and this afternoon we went into the wood with Ferges and her and we got some wild hyacinth bulbs in a place where they will not show. Poor Juno's right leg is very lame! and her shouldour. I hope you won't mind lovie, dovie but I took your rain umbrella to church with me on Sunday because it was raining so hard. [. . .] Miss Wilkie has not been here yet, but she sent me a letter to say what she would like David and me to do she said – essays, music, geograpy, and sums. Good-bye darling lovie dovie from your very loving Elizabeth

PS David's love and May's and Furges's, my love to Alec, Father and Rose.

~

16 December 1910 to Fenella Trefusis

St Paul's Walden Bury

My Dear Neva,\*

Thank you very very much for the delicious box of chocolates. You did not put who it was from, but two or three day's later Rosie wrote and told me it was you. Is'nt it awful perhaps we are going to have Xmas in London!!!! Think of it Xmas in London. Yours was the first present I have recieved. It was most awfully kind of you to think of us. I have'nt the slitest notion of where you are staying so I am going to look in the Red Book. I am afraid you will hardly be able to read my writing as it is nearly tea-time and the lamps have not come yet. It has been raining and blowing for the last three days.

---

\* Hon. Fenella Hepburn-Stuart-Forbes-Trefusis (1889–1966), known in the Strathmore family as 'Neva', younger daughter of the twenty-first Baron Clinton. She married Hon. John Bowes Lyon, 'Jock', on 29 September 1914.

David send's his love and wants me to thank you for his chocolates.

Good-bye with much love from  
Elizabeth

~

17 February 1911 to Miss Ela Collins

St Paul's Walden Bury

Dear Miss Ela Collins\*

I hope you are feeling quite well. We are at St Pauls Walden, and it is a lovely day. This morning David and I got up at 6 o'clock.

We first went and let out – Peter, Agiratem, Bumble-bee, Lion-mouse, Beauty and Delicate, our six silver-blue Persian kitten-cats. After that we went to see the ponies, then we fed the chickens, there are over three hundred. Then we went to get Judy, Juno, her four puppies, and Major. Then we went to look for eggs for breakfast. After that we had breakfast, then went for a ride. After that lessons till lunch-time. Then lessons till half past four, then we took our tea into the wood and when we came home I began to write this letter.

Good-bye Miss. Ela & with

Love from

Elizabeth A. M. B. Lyon

~

*'I spent half my life in the stables when I was a child. And of course the groom was one's best friend who allowed one to sit and polish bits of leather. Absolute bliss.'*

~

Wednesday 11 October 1911 to Lady Strathmore

Carberry Tower

Musselburgh

Darling Precious, I must just write a line to say goodnight and to tell you about the journey. Well about three miles from Perth we heard ssssssss, and we found a tyre had burst. Charles only took ten minutes

---

\* Unknown.

putting on the other one, so we only just caught the train. We had a very nice journey, but it was very foggy when we got to Edinburgh. [. . .]

Do give Rosie, Father and Alec my love, and a lot of kisses.

Good night darling precious lovie duck from your more than loving Elizabeth.

~

26 December 1911 to the Hon. Clarence Bruce\*

St Paul's Walden Bury

Dear 'Rotton Tomato'

Thank you very very much for the dee-licious peppermints. Its awfully kind of you to think of me. I hope you have had a very happy Xmas, and I hope you will have a very nice New Year. You know in your letter you put 'from the Green Tomato'. Well it isn't 'Green' its 'Rotton'. I haven't forgotten you in the least. I am afraid I cant write you a very long letter, as I have got so many to write. I hope you are very well. Thank you again very much for the Peppermints.

Good-bye, Yours Affec Elizabeth Lyon

PS Please excuse my bad writing.

[With two small drawings of heads, one scowling, the other smiling. Also a Christmas card signed 'Elizabeth Lyon', with a piece of dried heather inside.]

~

Diary: Saturday 17 February 1912

At St Pauls Walden with Rosie, Father, David. Went out riding with Rosie from eleven o' clock, till three o' clock. Great fun. Lovely Day. Sunday Feb. 18 Went to Church with, Rosie, David & Father. Lovely day. Went for walk with R, D & F. [. . .]

~

---

\* The Bruces of Aberdare, an influential Welsh coal and iron family. Hon. Clarence Bruce (1885–1957) became third Baron Aberdare on the death of his brother in 1929. He stayed at Glamis in October 1908 and 1909. Years later, after the announcement of her engagement, Elizabeth wrote to him: 'Thank you so very much for the tomato! How clever of you to remember our old joke . . .' (27 January 1923, reproduced courtesy of Glamorgan Archives DBR/176)

*'St Paul's and Glamis are both very much the same in one's mind. We loved Glamis very much. Well, I think I stayed in them fifty fifty . . . St Paul's is a dear old Queen Anne house – rather lovely gardens – and, of course, in those days very, very villagey. Before buses the villages focused on each other you know. It was very medieval in a way. We all adored my mother who really ran everything. My father, as people were in those days, was rather inclined not to take great part in running the family. He lived more of his own life.'*

~

### Diary: March 1912

Wednesday Not at all well. Took some Gregory Powder.\* Grannie and Auntie arrived in the afternoon was not allowed to see them in case I had influenzer. [. . .] Dr Thomas came.† Felt quite well, a little tired. He said it was just a chill. So I came downstairs and saw Grannie. Michael arrived with his friend Lyonel Gibbs before lunch. They played tennis in afternoon. [. . .] Grannie gave me a little cup. Goodnight.

~

### Friday 10 May 1912 to Lady Strathmore

St Paul's Walden Bury

Darling Precious Love

I hope you had a good journey to Glamis (kiss kiss kiss). This morning Lady Kinnaird sent me a beautiful little snuff-box of ~~tortashell~~ tortoisshell inlaid with mother-of-peal and gold. I think I have got a little chill today because my head is aching and I cant write properly. We read the bible this morning about Samson. We have got to do lessons in a minute so my writing will be very bad. David's bycicle has come, I cant help envying him. It is so hot today that its quite uncomfortable, one person in London has already died of the heat. I am missing you dreadfully lovie. Please give Darling

---

\* 'Gregory's Powder', the commonly used name for 'Rhubarb Compound Powder', a foul-tasting brew that was nevertheless popular for its ability to settle the stomach without side-effects; it was also used as a laxative for children.

† Dr Bernard Thomas, the family doctor from the surgery in Welwyn.

Mickie a lot of love and say to him from me 'Fie! Fie! who forgot the cigarettes'. I think it is the heat which has given me a headache because I have been to the Ahem. Please give Darling Father my love too. I simply must fly to lessons, but I will write you a longer letter tomorrow.

kiss.-kiss.-kiss.-kiss.-kiss.-kiss.-kiss.-kiss kisskisskisskisskisskiss for you.  
Ditto for Father & Mickie. Ditto trice for you lovie from your more than loving

Elizabeth

XoXoXoXoXoXoXoXoXoX

~

## 19 September 1912 to Lady Strathmore

Carberry Tower

My Darling Precious Love

I hope you are having fun at Pauly. Is it nice weather. Yesterday here, it was gloriouse. We went to see Roslin Chapel.\* I took some photographs of it.

I never in my life have seen such a beautiful thing the shape, the carving its too lovely. We also went to see some Prehistoricle caves, where Robert the Bruce is supposed to have hidden. I cannot remember the name of the place but I will tell you in my next letter Love. There are huge cliffs on each side of the river, running by the house, and they are finding new ones, and secret passages everywhere.

The Baby, Sidney and May are very well. I am writing this in bed, before I go and see May to have a cup of tea. I hope you are very well Lovie, and are having lots of fun. I believe we are going to see Nina Balfour† this afternoon, it is about forty miles there.

---

\* Roslyn Chapel, situated in fine landscape seven miles south-east of Edinburgh, founded in 1446 as the Collegiate Chapel of St Matthew by William St Clair. The architecture of the Chapel is richly beautiful and complex; its history has been turbulent. The building was seized by Protestant reformers in 1571, in 1592 the altars were demolished and it fell into disrepair. By the time Elizabeth visited, however, the Chapel was a consecrated church again. (The Earl of Rosslyn, *Roslyn Chapel*, The Rosslyn Chapel Trust, 1997)

† Lady Helena Balfour (1865–1948), née McDonnell, daughter of fifth Earl of Antrim, married to Captain Charles Barrington Balfour of Newton Don near Kelso, and Balfour House,

Good-bye darling Preaciously lovie duckie dodulums,  
 from your very loving  
 Elizabeth

~

*[My mother] would say, now darling you must look at these two houses, we were passing. One was ugly and one was beautiful in her eyes. So we had to learn. This is the beautiful one, you see, and bypass the ugly one.'*

~

17 October 1912 to Lady Strathmore  
 Glamis Castle  
 Glamis  
 N.B.\*

My Darling very Preasious LoveableLove

I hope you had a very good journey. Please give every kind of message to David.

And do bring him up if you can. Lovie I was so sorry to have cried when you went away. I couldnt help it though. Love if you could get something for the dessert for our party do and put it down to Father. I am writing just as I am getting into bed, your train is just passing through Glamis Lovie darling.

Good night Love, I hope David is all right.

Your very very loving Elizabeth

~

David had started prep school at St Peter's Court in Broadstairs, Kent, in September 1912. Elizabeth missed him greatly. Princes Henry and George, two of King George V's younger sons, also attended this school.

~

---

Balgonie, Fife. In the summer she lived at Bisham Abbey on the Thames. She was a great friend of Cecilia Strathmore.

\* 'North Britain' was often shortened to 'N.B.' in Scottish postal addresses in the nineteenth century; the practice gradually died out but there was evidently still such writing paper at Glamis.

## Diary: 3–7 January 1913

January 1st

Overeat myself.

Thursday Jan 2nd

Headache in the morning. very good tea. Christmas cake, Devonshire Cream, honey, jam, buns & tea. eat too much.

Friday Jan 3rd

Not quite the thing today Breakfast very good. Sausages, kedgeree, Brown Bread, Scones & honey. Excellent lunch – beefsteak – 3 helps – ham and roley poley. I eat a good deal.

Sat Jan 4th

I am putting on weight. My waist measurement today 43 inches. Appetite good.

Sunday 5th

Appetite still good, After healthy breakfast went to church. Came back very hungry for lunch. Roast beef, chicken, Yorkshire pudding, Plum pudding, cheese, cake & oranges. Oh, my poor tummy. Just going to have tea. Am very hungry.

Monday Jan 6th

Quite an ordinary breakfast. No jam today! Rode Wonder in the morning & came in simply ravenous for lunch. Omelette – two helps of roast chicken, finished up the bread sauce – five chocolate éclairs rium rium. Chocolate éclairs for tea – as no one else liked them, finished them up. Wish I was allowed more supper – always so hungry by the time I go to bed.

Tuesday Jan 7th

Barrel of apples arrived today – had one for breakfast. 10 am eat an apple. 11 am had an apple for 11 o'clock lunch. 12. had an apple. Roast pigeons and chocolate pudding & apples for lunch! 3 pm eat an apple. 3.15 pm David and I fought and have got bruise on my leg because he said I was greedy. eat two apples for supper.\*

~

---

\* Elizabeth did not write this diary entry herself. The handwriting could be that of either Mike or Jock, teasing her, as her brothers often did, for the enthusiasm she showed for her food.

**Diary: Tuesday 15 April 1913**

At present we are at Poggio Ponente. This evening we are starting to Florence, Mother, Auntie, David & me, by the 7.30 from Bordighera. We are very busy packing. I have got 25 francs to spend, but I can always get some out of the Post Office Savings Bank if I see anything extra pretty. We are only staying till Friday evening.

~

**Diary: Wednesday 16 April 1913**

We have arrived in Florence at about 7 o'clock. We went straight to the Hotel Minerva. It is just next door to the Santa Maria Novella Church. Poor Mother was not feeling at all well, but she came with us all the same. First to the Duomo, then the Baptistry, the Singing Gallery, then we went and had lunch at 11.30 at a resturant. We also went to Cettèpassi, and arranged about the pearls. I also bought an old cross, pearls & red stones, it was very pretty £6.0.0, but Mother paid half. In the afternoon we hired an open motor and drove right around Florence, up to Fiesole, where we saw the old roman remains and the Cathedral. It was lovely. 50 francs. In the evening Auntie & I did a little shopping.

~

**Diary: Thursday 17 April 1913**

Mother was quite well that day. In the morning Mrs Jefferson took David & I to see St Marco's Convent, where Savoronola was a long time, we saw a lot of Michael Angelo's pictures. On the way back I bought 4 very pretty old cups & saucers. Then Mother, Auntie [Vava], D & I went to see Meacci,\* Auntie gave us each a picture by him.

Very pretty ones, she also gave Mother a lovely one. Then we went back to lunch. Directly after we went to the Pitti Gallery, and then to Canta Gali, David & I each bought 3 plates, & Mother gave

---

\* Ricciardo Meacci (1856-[1938]), Florentine painter popular among the British community. Ten years later Meacci was commissioned by Aunt Vava to create an elaborate triptych as a wedding present for Elizabeth. He also painted another wedding present, a headboard incorporating the arms of the Strathmores and of the British Royal Family.

us each a pretty blue jar. Then Angelina took us to see Caponi, I love it. After that we met M & A at Jiacosa and had tea.

~

*'When we were children both my grandmothers lived in Italy in the winter, and I just loved Italian things. I had a very clever Cavendish-Bentinck aunt, who took us to the Uffizi in Florence. She only allowed us to look at one picture . . . it was wonderful. Instead of poor little legs getting flabby with exhaustion, I remember looking at the Primavera. I can see it now. I suppose I was ten. I thought it was very clever of her really.'*

~

18 July 1913 to David Bowes Lyon

St Paul's Walden Bury

My Darling David

I hope you are very well. We have come down here for good now, at least till you come home. Fraulein\* goes to Germany on Tuesday 22nd next. Well, and 'ow are yer, Hay? Boo, you haint no good, you haint woggeling yer tooth. Oi ham. Dur. Whats the good o' not woggeling. Hay? Aint no good at all. Arthur Duff has given me a new pony. Its 16 years old, but awfully good still. Only 11 more days now [until the summer holidays].

HOORAY,  
WHAT HO!  
PIP, PIP.

---

\* Käthe Kübler, the daughter of a Prussian official living in Erlangen, came to the Strathmores in 1913, aged twenty-one, as a governess to Elizabeth. On 12 July 1914 she left to take her month's holiday. War began and she never returned; she volunteered for the German Red Cross in Erlangen and was sent to nurse in field hospitals in northern France, from where she continued to correspond with Elizabeth. Two wartime letters from her survive in the archives at Glamis. In 1933 Käthe Kübler wrote to her former pupil defending Hitler, something she may have come to regret. She came to see the Queen in 1937 and asked to dedicate her memoir *Meine Schülerin – die Königin von England* to her. Queen Elizabeth said many years later, in conversation with Eric Anderson: 'She was headmistress of a big school in Munich and then those horrible Nazis discovered she was a Jew and she was out in a day. She was sacked.'

Its a very short time. Everybody's well. Do write me a letter soon.  
Please do Ducky.

Goodbye your very very very very very very very loving Elizabeth  
XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

~

30 November 1913 to David Bowes Lyon

St Paul's Walden Bury

My darling David,

Thank you so much for your delightful pc. I'm afraid Ive been a dreadful long time writing but Ive been horribly busy, trying to knit Xmas presents and doing lessons.

Only 18 days to the holidays. 2 weeks and 4 days. It's nice to think about. Mother got two enormous stockings the other day. I do look forward to us two opening them. I suppose next week you'll write and wish Fergie a happy Christmas and a bright New Year. I really don't know what to give him Its so awfully difficult to give a man something which he really likes, except guns and motors. Good thought. I might send him a motor. Shall we give it between us? Only a few hundreds! [. . .]

Ta Ta young-feller-me-lad  
From your respactable E

~

Friday 26 June 1914 to Lady Strathmore

Glamis Castle

My Darling Mother

Most terrible goings-on here. At this present moment Fraulein is crying and sobbing in her room, and David is doing lessons with Mr Hewett. They had a dreadful quarrel just before tea, two at lunch, and I really don't know what to do. For the last week I haven't had one single moment of peace, even in my room, and its too awfull. I cant tell you how I look forward to Thursday, oh it will be nice. I really cant help just one tear now and then. But I do hope you will enjoy your weekend at Ham House, was Bisham fun? Only six more days! Hooray. We are going to tea with Freda Robertson tomorrow Saturday, and

Gavin\* is going to take us out in his motor, one day. Everybody is very well, I don't know about Fraulein, but I do pity her poor thing, and I'm afraid she'll go away for good, with a bad feeling against this family, though I believe she quite likes me. I had such a nice letter from Mikie this morning, so funny, I'm going to wait till I'm cheerfull again to reply to him. Good-bye lovie, from your very very loving Elizabeth

~

Saturday 27 June 1914 to Michael Bowes Lyon

Glamis Castle

My Darling Mike

Thank you most awfully for your delightful episal. I was glad to get it, and it made me laugh some, you bet. I suppose you'r moving around pretty slick just now, dinner, balls ect. I hope you are having plenty of champenge, clarit, 'oc, mosel, and baeer, Baaeer, Baaeer, wonderful baeer, fill yourself right up to here (neck). That was by Shakespeare. Oi ad an horful noice toime yesterday playing 'opscotch with Fairweather,† oi can taal you he got a talent for 'opscotch.

We are coming down on Thursday next, it will be nice seeing you all again. I'ts not very peaceful here! I am sorry to see by your picture that Spicer has'nt been shaving his nose lately, do tell him before I come down. Williams is playing the concertina most wonderfully, it's really a delight to hear him, he attracts crowds of people from all round. How's old Rosie. I hope your health is good. Been to 'Hullo Tango' lately? I went to the Alhambra last night, jolly good show. Waal, good-bye Mike old gump, (Mike Gump) Ha Ha I do call that funny. From your very loving and sweetly Elizabeth

~

*'The war broke out on my birthday. We went to the theatre and two people in the box were called up and one was a [young man called] William who had been in the Eton Eleven. I can't remember who the other one was. The streets were full of people shouting, roaring, yelling their heads off – little*

---

\* Gavin Ralston, factor (agent) at Glamis, 1913–49.

† Several generations of the Fairweather family worked at Glamis in the first half of the twentieth century. This could have been William or George Fairweather, who in turn held the post of Head Keeper.

*thinking what was going to happen.’ Soon after this, Elizabeth went to see her brother Mike off at the station, on his way to war: ‘There was a very young little officer going off, and his mother – I can see her now – was weeping. And I remember my brother leaning out of the train and saying “Don’t worry, I’ll look after him.” And do you know, he was killed the next day. It was so awful when one thinks about it.’*

~

20 October 1914 to Beryl Poignand

Glamis Castle

Dear Miss Poignand\*

Mother wishes me to write and tell you our address in Herts:  
St Pauls Walden Bury  
Welwyn  
Herts

She is very busy as we have just heard this morning that my brother Michael is starting for the front at any time, so I expect she will fly down South to say good-bye.

Please excuse my bad writing, as I’m in rather a hurry.

Yours sincerely  
Elizabeth Lyon

~

9 August 1915 to Beryl Poignand

Glamis Castle

My Dear Miss Poignand

Thank you very very much indeed for your long and amusing letter, no news of you, comments on my letter, but all the same great

---

\* Dorothy Irene Beryl Poignand (1887–1965), daughter of Colonel George and Catherine Maud Poignand. Engaged by Cecilia Strathmore as governess to Elizabeth, 1914–17. She quickly became, and remained for many years, Elizabeth’s most intimate confidante outside her family. During the Second World War she was temporarily employed by the Royal Household in the Central Chancery of the Orders of Knighthood, and stayed on until 1949. In 1947 she helped organize the exhibition of Princess Elizabeth’s wedding presents and compiled the catalogue. Until her death in 1965 she remained in touch with Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother, whose letters to Beryl were subsequently returned by her cousin Mrs Leone Poignand Hall.

fun talking or rather writing about our mutual friends. First I will try and answer one or two of your questions.

We sat in the stalls at the Hippodrome, right in the middle just under the gangway thing, so I got a lot of extra amusement, because you see the actors & actresses all walk along it.

2) Yes, we did have rather an exciting journey up to Glamis, in this way. Two most beautiful sailors were also travelling in the same corridor. [. . .] We had long conversations in the corridor in the morning, David and I were travelling alonio. Rather amusing, what?

3) My hat is only a rotten little shiny rainproof one.

The soldiers are charming. My dear Miss Poignand you are missing something! One is a fisherman and a Naval Reserve, he has been shipwrecked five times. Blue eyes, black hair, so nice. Reminds me of Henry.\* By the way it's getting awful. The vulgar and insulting telegrams on my birthday were about darling Henry's stomach, was it real or a cushion, he was just having his 25th anniversary on the stage & such insults. Really it's awful. Dear Beautiful One,† I do so miss him, it was great luck, before I went, he had to pass right under the window so I had a good look at him, he really, honestly (bar rot) is very good looking and clean. You know what I mean by clean, not like Fatty.‡ [. . .]

Wouldn't it be wonderful if Fenella succeeded in getting a photograph of Henry, he would go first place on my dressing table. But I'm afraid he's too modest to have any published. Father gave me a little horseshoe in pearls and diamonds for my birthday. [. . .] It's very pretty stones, tho' it would have been prettier not a horseshoe.

I must end now, haven't I written a lot of rot? Can you read my writing? David is yelling for me

au revoir, y l

Elizabeth

~

---

\* Henry Ainley (1879–1945), a classical actor who starred in numerous theatre productions and many films over a forty-five-year career. Elizabeth had a crush on him in the early part of the war and frequently went to his performances.

† A chauffeur working with the Red Cross, whose headquarters was in St James's Square, close to the Strathmore home. Elizabeth and Beryl very much admired him.

‡ Another Red Cross chauffeur. Elizabeth pretended he was Beryl's heart-throb.