Persuasion by Jane Austen Chapter 1 Sir Walter Elliot, of Kellynch Hall, in Somersetshire, was a man who, for his own amusement, never took up any book but the Baronetage; there he f
und occupation for an idle hour, and consolation in a distressed one; there his faculties were roused into admiration and respect, by contemplating the limited remnant of the earliest pate
nts; there any unwelcome sensations, arising from domestic affairs changed naturally into pity and contempt as he turned over the almost endless creations of the last century; and there,
if every other leaf were powerless, he could find his own history with an interest which never failed. This was the page at which the favourite volume always opened: "ELLIOT OF KELLY
NCH HALL. "Walter Elliot, born March 1, 1760, married, July 15, 1784, Elizabeth, daughter of James Stevenson, Esq. of South Park, in the county of Gloucester, by which lady (who died 18
00) he has issue Elizabeth, born June 1, 1785; Anne, born August 9, 1787; a still-born son, November 5, 1789; Mary, born November 20, 1791." Precisely such had the paragraph originally
stood from the printer's hands; but Sir Walter had improved it by adding, for the information of himself and his family, these words, after the date of Mary's birth-- "Married, December 16, 1
810, Charles, son and heir of Charles Musgrove, Esq. of Uppercross, in the county of Somerset," and by inserting most accurately the day of the month on which he had lost his wife. Then
followed the history and rise of the ancient and respectable family, in the usual terms; how it had been first settled in Cheshire; how mentioned in Dugdale, serving the office of high sheri
ff, representing a borough in three successive parliaments, exertions of loyalty, and dignity of baronet, in the first year of Charles II, with all the Marys and Elizabeths they had married; for
ming altogether two handsome duodecimo pages, and concluding with the arms and motto:--"Principal seat, Kellynch Hall, in the county of Somerset," and Sir Walter's handwriting again i
n this finale:-- "Heir presumptive, William Walter Elliot, Esq., great grandson of the second Sir Walter." Vanity was the beginning and the end of Sir Walter Elliot's character; vanity of perso
n and of situation. He had been remarkably handsome in his youth; and, at fifty-four, was still a very fine man. Few women could think more of their personal appearance than he did, nor c
ould the valet of any new made lord be more delighted with the place he held in society. He considered the blessing of beauty as inferior only to the blessing of a baronetcy; and the Sir W
alter Elliot, who united these gifts, was the constant object of his warmest respect and devotion. His good looks and his rank had one fair claim on his attachment; since to them he must
have owed a wife of very superior character to any thing deserved by his own. Lady Elliot had been an excellent woman, sensible and amiable; whose judgement and conduct, if they migh
t be pardoned the youthful infatuation which made her Lady Elliot, had never required indulgence afterwards.--She had humoured, or softened, or concealed his failings, and promoted his
respectability for seventeen years; and though not the very happiest being in the world herself, had found enough in her duties, her friends, and her children, to attach her to life, and ma
difference to her when she was called on to quit them.--Three girls, the two eldest sixteen and fourteen, was an awful legacy for a mother to bequeath, an awful charge rather, to confide to
conceited, silly father. She had, however, one very intimate friend, a sensible, deserving woman, who had been brought, by strong attachment to herself, to settle close by her, in the villag
r kindness and advice, Lady Elliot mainly relied for the best help and maintenance of the good principles and instruction which she had been anxiously giving her daughters. This friend, a
ver might have been anticipated on that head by their acquaintance. Thirteen years had passed away since Lady Elliot's death, and they were still near neighbours and intimate friends, an
e remained a widower, the other a widow. That Lady Russell, of steady age and character, and extremely well provided for, should have no thought of a second marriage, needs no apolog
the public, which is rather apt to be unreasonably discontented when a woman does marry again, than when she does not; but Sir Walter's continuing in singleness requires explanation.
known then, that Sir Walter, like a good father, (having met with one or two private disappointments in very unreasonable applications), prided himself on remaining single for his dear dau
s' sake. For one daughter, his eldest, he would really have given up any thing, which he had not been very much tempted to do. Elizabeth had succeeded, at sixteen, to all that was possibl
her mother's rights and consequence; and being very handsome, and very like himself, her influence had always been great, and they had gone on together most happily. His two other ch
n were of very inferior value. Mary had acquired a little artificial importance, by becoming Mrs Charles Musgrove; but Anne, with an elegance of mind and sweetness of character, which m
have placed her high with any people of real understanding, was nobody with either father or sister; her word had no weight, her convenience was always to give way--she was only Anne.
ady Russell, indeed, she was a most dear and highly valued god-daughter, favourite, and friend. Lady Russell loved them all; but it was only in Anne that she could fancy the mother to re
in. A few years before, Anne Elliot had been a very pretty girl, but her bloom had vanished early; and as even in its height, her father had found little to admire in her, (so totally different
elicate features and mild dark eyes from his own), there could be nothing in them, now that she was faded and thin, to excite his esteem. He had never indulged much hope, he had now n
ding her name in any other page of his favourite work. All equality of alliance must rest with Elizabeth, for Mary had merely connected herself with an old country family of respectability
and had therefore given all the honour and received none: Elizabeth would, one day or other, marry suitably. It sometimes happens that a woman is handsomer at twenty-nine than she w
nd, generally speaking, if there has been neither ill health nor anxiety, it is a time of life at which scarcely any charm is lost. It was so with Elizabeth, still the same handsome Miss Elliot t
hirteen years ago, and Sir Walter might be excused, therefore, in forgetting her age, or, at least, be deemed only half a fool, for thinking himself and Elizabeth as blooming as ever, amid
d looks of everybody else; for he could plainly see how old all the rest of his family and acquaintance were growing. Anne haggard, Mary coarse, every face in the neighbourhood worst
ease of the crow's foot about Lady Russell's temples had long been a distress to him. Elizabeth did not quite equal her father in personal contentment. Thirteen years had seen her mis
, presiding and directing with a self-possession and decision which could never have given the idea of her being younger than she was. For thirteen years had she been doing the hon
own the domestic law at home, and leading the way to the chaise and four, and walking immediately after Lady Russell out of all the drawing-rooms and dining-rooms in the cou
nty. Thirteen years had she been the first lady in the county, presiding at the head of her father's table, and distributing the best of tickets for the best of balls; and thirteen springs shewn their blossoms, as she travelled up to L
ondon with her father to spend a few weeks' annual enjoyment of the great world. She had the remembrance of all this, she had the consciousness of being nine-and-twenty to give her some regre
ts and some apprehensions; she was as fully satisfied of being still quite as handsome as ever, but she felt her approach to the years of danger, and would have rejoiced to be certain of b
eing solicited by baronetcy within the next twelvemonth or two. Then might she again take up the book of books with as much enjoyment as in her early youth, but now s
he lived to be presented, married, and settled; and the blank which must ever present near her, had left it open on the table ever since, as the most tolerable employment for a
long morning, when the family, must ever present the remembrance of what she had been, when no one else came near her. She had, while a very young girl, as she
had been, married to a man who had not been known to the world, but Sir Walter might be excused, therefore, in forgetting his origin, as he could not but feel that he
had done no discredit to it, making allowance for the difference between a baronet's daughter and a commoner's daughter. Mr Elliot was a young man, just
as he should be, when he was introduced to her as the heir of Kellynch Hall; he was talked of and expected, and again expected, and he did not disappoint
expectation, he was all that he should be, and she had every thing else to be expected in time; he was introduced, he was received, he was
purchased independence by unity and kindness; he was a man of fashion and fashionable manners, and he was pleasing; but he was not Sir Walter
taking the young man's part, he was not to be blind to his merits, he was not to be insensible to the honour of his attention, he was
approbation was expressed, but apparently very coldly. Sir Walter was not to be easily prevailed upon to like any relation of Lady Elliot's heir, and
si dered him unworthy of it: all acquaintance between the cousins was decidedly cut; and Sir Walter had not been in the habit of seeing them
ma n for himself, and still more for being her father's heir, and when he married, he married
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stice and equity. "If we can persuade your father to all this," said Lady Rus
l hope we may be able to convince him and Elizabeth, that Kellynch Hall ha
ery far from lessened in the eyes of sensible people, by acting like a man o
thing singular in his case; and it is singularity
er all, the perso n who h as contr
act er of an ho nest ma n." This w as the prin cip le o n whic h An ne wanted her father to be proceeding, his friends to b
expedition which the most comprehensive retrenchments could secure, and saw no dignity in anything short of it. She wanted it to be prescribed, and felt as a duty. She
elf-denial which her own conscience prompted, she believed there might be little more difficulty in persuading them to a complete, than to half a reformation. Her knowledge of her father an
abeth inclined her to think that the sacrifice of one pair of horses would be hardly less painful than of both, and so on, through the whole list of Lady Russell's too gentle reductions. How A
nne's more rigid requisitions might have been taken is of little consequence. Lady Russell's had no success at all: could not be put up with, were not to be borne. "What! every comfort of li
fe knocked off! Journeys, London, servants, horses, table--contractions and restrictions every where! To live no longer with the decencies even of a private gentleman! No, he would soone
r quit Kellynch Hall at once, than remain in it on such disgraceful terms." "Quit Kellynch Hall." The hint was immediately taken up by Mr Shepherd, whose interest was involved in the realit
y of Sir Walter's retrenching, and who was perfectly persuaded that nothing would be done without a change of abode. "Since the idea had been started in the very quarter which ought to d
ictate, he had no scruple," he said, "in confessing his judgement to be entirely on that side. It did not appear to him that Sir Walter could materially alter his style of living in a house which
had such a character of hospitality and ancient dignity to support. In any other place Sir Walter might judge for himself; and would be looked up to, as regulating the modes of life in whate
ver way he might choose to model his household." Sir Walter would quit Kellynch Hall; and after a very few days more of doubt and indecision, the great question of whither he should go w
as settled, and the first outline of this important change made out. There had been three alternatives, London, Bath, or another house in the country. All Anne's wishes had been for the latt
er. A small house in their own neighbourhood, where they might still have Lady Russell's society, still be near Mary, and still have the pleasure of sometimes seeing the lawns and groves o
f Kellynch, was the object of her ambition. But the usual fate of Anne attended her, in having something very opposite from her inclination fixed on. She disliked Bath, and did not think it a
greed with her; and Bath was to be her home. Sir Walter had at first thought more of London; but Mr Shepherd felt that he could not be trusted in London, and had been skilful enough to di
ssuade him from it, and make Bath preferred. It was a much safer place for a gentleman in his predicament: he might there be important at comparatively little expense. Two material advan
tages of Bath over London had of course been given all their weight: its more convenient distance from Kellynch, only fifty miles, and Lady Russell's spending some part of every winter th
ere; and to the very great satisfaction of Lady Russell, whose first views on the projected change had been for Bath, Sir Walter and Elizabeth were induced to believe that they should lose
neither consequence nor enjoyment by settling there. Lady Russell felt obliged to oppose her dear Anne's known wishes. It would be too much to expect Sir Walter to descend into a small
house in his own neighbourhood. Anne herself would have found the mortifications of it more than she foresaw, and to Sir Walter's feelings they must have been dreadful. And with regard
to Anne's dislike of Bath, she considered it as a prejudice and mistake arising, first, from the circumstance of her having been three years at school there, after her mother's death; and sec
ondly, from her happening to be not in perfectly good spirits the only winter which she had afterwards spent there with herself. Lady Russell was fond of Bath, in short, and disposed to thi
nk it must suit them all; and as to her young friend's health, by passing all the warm months with her at Kellynch Lodge, every danger would be avoided; and it was in fact, a change which
must do both health and spirits good. Anne had been too little from home, too little seen. Her spirits were not high. A larger society would improve them. She wanted her to be more known.
The undesirableness of any other house in the same neighbourhood for Sir Walter was certainly much strengthened by one part, and a very material part of the scheme, which had been ha
ppily engrafted on the beginning. He was not only to quit his home, but to see it in the hands of others; a trial of fortitude, which stronger heads than Sir Walter's have found too much. Kell
ynch Hall was to be let. This, however, was a profound secret, not to be breathed beyond their own circle. Sir Walter could not have borne the degradation of being known to design letting
his house. Mr Shepherd had once mentioned the word "advertise," but never dared approach it again. Sir Walter spurned the idea of its being offered in any manner; forbad the slightest hin
t being dropped of his having such an intention; and it was only on the supposition of his being spontaneously solicited by some most unexceptionable applicant, on his own terms, and as
a great favour, that he would let it at all. How quick come the reasons for approving what we like! Lady Russell had another excellent one at hand, for being extremely glad that Sir Walter a
nd his family were to remove from the country. Elizabeth had been lately forming an intimacy, which she wished to see interrupted. It was with the daughter of Mr Shepherd, who had return
ed, after an unprosperous marriage, to her father's house, with the additional burden of two children. She was a clever young woman, who understood the art of pleasing--the art of pleasin
g, at least, at Kellynch Hall; and who had made herself so acceptable to Miss Elliot, as to have been already staying there more than once, in spite of all that Lady Russell, who thought it a f
riendship quite out of place, could hint of caution and reserve. Lady Russell, indeed, had scarcely any influence with Elizabeth, and seemed to love her, rather because she would love her,
than because Elizabeth deserved it. She had never received from her more than outward attention, nothing beyond the observances of complaisance; had never succeeded in any point wh

as good, but not equal to Sir Walter's apprehension of
st kept him within his income; but with her had die
pend less; he had done nothing but what Sir Walte
ring of it so often, that it became vain to attempt concea
o say, "Can we retrench? Does it occur to you that the
usly to think what could be done, and had finally
e drawing-room; to which he expedients she afterward
easures, however good in themselves, were insufficient f
zabeth had nothing to propose of deeper efficacy. She felt he
ning their expenses without compromising their dignity, or rel
ose of; but had every acre been alienable, it would have ma
ll. No; he would never disgrace his name so far. The Kellyn
erd, who lived in the neighbouring market town, and Lady R
y one or the other to remove their embarrassments and redu
who, whatever might be his hold or his views on Sir Walter, w
ve to recommend an implicit reference to the excellent judgement
inally adopted. Lady Russell was most anxiously zealous on the su
ny decision in this instance were great, from the opposition of two leading
licitous for the credit of the family, a aristocratic in her ideas of w
strong attachments, most correct in her conduct, strict in h
generally speaking, rational and consistent
se who possessed her full high new idow
our, an obliging land lord, the house band of
ideration under his present difficulty s.
of economy, she made exact calculations,
consulted, and in a degree was influenced by her in m
esty against importance. She wanted more vigorous measures
sell, looking over her paper, "much may be done. If he will ad
s a respectability in itself which cannot be affected by these r
f principle. What will he be doing, in fact, but what very many
which often makes the worst part of our suffering, as it al
acted debts must pay them; and though a great deal is

f the state required in its possessor. While Lady Elliot lived, there had been method, moderation, and economy, which had
d all such ight-mindedness, and from that period he had been constantly exceeding it. It had not been possible for him to s
r Elliot was imperiously called on to do; but blameless as he was, he was not only growing dreadfully in debt, but was hea
ling it longer, even partially, from his daughter. He had given her some hints of it the last spring in town; he had gone so far even as t
re is any one else in which we can retrench?" and Elizabeth, to do her justice, had, in the first ardour of female alarm, set serio
prop osed these two branches of economy, to cut off some unnecessary charities, and to refrain from new furnishing th
s a dded the happy thought of their taking no present down to Anne, as had been the usual yearly custom. But th
or the real extent of the evil, the whole of which Sir Walter found himself obliged to confess to her soon after
rs elf ill-used and unfortunate, as did her father; and they were neither of them able to devise any mean
i nquishing their comforts in a way not to be borne. There was only a small part of his estate that Sir Walte
de no difference. He had condescended to mortgage as far as he had the power, but he would never conde
ch estate should be transmitted whole and entire, as he had received it. Their two confidential friends, Mr
us sell, were called to advise them; and both father and daughter seemed to expect that something should be struc
ce their expenditure, without involving the loss of any indulgence of taste or pride. Chapter 2 Mr Shepherd, a civil, cautious l
ould rather have the disagreeable prompted by anybody else, excused himself from of fering the slightest hint, and only begge
of Lady Russell, from whose known good sense he fully expected to have just such resolute measures advised as he meant to s
bject, and gave it much serious consideration. She was a woman rather of sound than of quick abilities, whose difficulties in comin
principles. She was of strict integrity herself, with a delicate sense of honour; but she was as desirous of saving Sir Walter's feelin
hat was due to them, as anybody of sense and honesty could well be. She was a benevolent, charitable, good woman, and
er n otions of decorum, and with manners that were held a standard of good- breeding. She had a cultivated mi
udice s on the side of ancestry; she had a value for rank and consequence, which blinded her a little to th
of ity of a baronet all its due; and Sir Walter, independent of his claim s as an old acquaintance, an at
e dign e and her sisters, was, as being Sir Walter, in her apprehension, entitled to a great deal of compa
f he r very dear friend, the father of t. But she was very anxious to have it done with the least possible pain to him and Elizabeth. She
An n ng: she consulted Anne, who never seemed considered by the other s as having any interest in t
doub of retrenchment which was at last submitted to Sir Walter. Every emendation of Anne's had been
of doi reformation, a quicker release from debt, a much higher tone of indifference for everything but ju
scheme
e complete
opt these regulations, in seven years he will be clear; and
eductions; and that the true dignity of Sir Walter Elliot will be v
of our first families have done, or ought to do? There will be no
ways does of our conduct. I have great hope of prevailing. We must be serious and decided ; for aft
due to the feelings of the gentleman, and the head of a house, like you r father, there had, as by the accustomary intervention of kind friends, they had been informed, spoken most disrespectfully of them all, mo
e urging him. She considered it as an act of indispensable duty to clear away the claims of creditors with all the
rated Lady Russell's influence highly; and as to the se ver e de gree of s
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They must retrench; that did not admit of a doub
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