Marianne Oliver Townsend [5D16]

Marianne June 1857



Marianne and her husband Commander John Townsend RN [622]
Circa 1857



Some of Marianne's Paintings

Langdon House, Wandsworth, London, before 1887



Street Scene, Italy 1890s



Marianne August 1870



Transcript of Love Letters between John Townsend [622] and Marianne Oliver Townsend [5D16]

September 5 1856. White Lion Hotel, Tenby,

Dearest Minnie,

It would not be right or honourable in me to permit myself to continue any longer the extreme itinerary that subsists between us, without this communication.

Let me at once say that I regard you with the truest love and affection, and that I feel the deepest concern for your happiness. I cannot help feeling that there is a presumption in my so expressing myself. You have youth and accomplishments, neither of which do I posses. Indeed so much older am I than you, (41 last March), that it almost appears like folly to ask you if you regard my unworthy self with any tender feeling than a mere cousinly one. I have not even wealth to assist me to offer you a comfortable home, such a one as wealth alone can procure. Indeed in this latter respect I do not posses altogether more than between three and four hundred pounds a year.

In spite of all these drawbacks however, I cannot help feeling that you will not be altogether surprised at the receipt of this letter.

I have always admired the womanly delicacy of your conduct towards me, but could not help believing that you appear pleased whenever you saw me, and that you seemed happy when I was with you. Your pointing out to me those beautiful lines of Tennyson P.145 of the "In Memoriam", assuming it possible that such could be your feelings towards me, has greatly affected me.

If I thought it were more for your happiness that I should never see your face again, such should be the case. I have often asked myself whether I ought not to avoid you altogether and let you be attracted by some one more nearly your own age, and who might be better off in the world in regard to fortune. But you have looked so kindly on me at times and I have felt so drawn towards you by congeniality of tastes and other circumstances, that I

have permitted myself to continue much associated with you until now that this letter is the result.

Pray let me have even so few lines in reply. You can send by post, as getting a Messenger may be inconvenient to you.

Believe me to be dearest Minnie. Ever, yours with sincerest affection,

John Townsend.

Written on Sunday evening Sept'r 7. 1856. 1 The Paragon, Tenby,

My dear, kind, John,

What am I to say? Your noble straightforward letter has so taken me by surprise that I feel quite bewildered & scarcely able to write, tho' in justice to you I must do so at once as otherwise you may think I have not received yours, and I want you to have this before we meet at the picnic to morrow.

I did not get yours till we were sitting down to dinner having come home after the Sacramental Service, and since then I have been endeavouring to commune with my own heart & beseeching of Our Father in Heaven to guide me aright. They are all gone to Penally Church now & having been poorly I am not expected to go, & so I have this quiet time.

And now that you have gone so far as to offer me the love of a true & generous & tender heart, for such I know is yours, I must in all truth and honesty to you as well as my own heart acknowledge that since you were staying with us in September. 1855 I looked up to you in a way I never did to any one else & liked you better than any one I can but before. My feelings are easily seen. I may have shown them too plainly, but I did not mean to do so. I could not tell that you cared for me more than others. I thought you liked Lily Poole as well or <u>better</u> & often thought what a good wife she would make you. But by degrees I came to the conclusion that you never would marry, & since you have been here, placed in the position of an elder brother (which you so kindly took, seeing the rather intimate terms on which we were thrown with the young men) I have looked on you so much as a protector that I felt more than ever at home with you & have talked more openly to you than ever, <u>not for a moment</u> imagining that you looked on me in any way but as a cousin - <u>perhaps</u> a favourite cousin.

I don't know why I showed you those lines of Tennyson's - they are special favourites with me, but I never thought of the possibility of such an allusion occurring to you. Now you know something of my feelings tho' I fear they are miserably expressed.

Will you believe that I am most deeply grateful & thank you from my inmost heart. I know full well the value of true love and should feel it almost a sin to reject such love.

I cannot say all I think - but I know that in writing as you have done you have paid me the highest compliment & honour that man can pay to woman & I do indeed appreciate it.

There is nothing in the world I would rather avoid than giving you pain - it would grieve me more than I can say to do so, and were I perfectly certain that the decision rested with me I think I could only say "If I can indeed make you happy, let me do so." That is, <u>one thing considered</u> - <u>Do you</u> love God <u>first</u> & <u>best</u>? - Would you seek to serve him truly the rest of your life & to <u>give up</u> your <u>time</u> & <u>talents</u> to his Service & glory in any way that you could, <u>not</u> for love to <u>me</u>, but for love still greater, to <u>him</u> who first loved us? Dear John have you thought of this? I have never said much to you on this subject but I feel strongly - I could not be the wife of any man who was not "of the same mind in Christ Jesus". - I want to be <u>led onward</u> in the right way too.

I don't think I can be wrong in saying that I believe you feel far more on these subjects than anyone knows or thinks, but that is not enough.

Tell me another thing - Would your dear Mother have liked it? I thought she rather wished to avoid intimacy with your cousins. Have you thought of what my Mother & Grand-Mother will say?

I doubt not they will object most strongly if they do not positively forbid it. - You must have seen as well as I have, that they never welcomed you warmly to the house, & threw cold water on our intercourse whenever they could. I am sure at first they feared the result of the intimacy (Latterly I think the possibility of cause for fear vanished from their minds).

Grandmama even forbad my writing to you, & don't you remember their stopping our music one night. - I am of age and therefore you may say, am at liberty to act for myself, but

I cannot feel that I should be justified in doing so. I think the decision ought to rest with them. - I don't know very much of money matters but I know it takes several hundred a year to live comfortably in England. - I have very little - less than a thousand pounds.

I think you must know that; but I value love far, far more than money and I think people may be just as happy with a sufficiency as with a large fortune. Still it is only right to think of what may be. - My health is far from strong, & poverty & sickness do not agree. But as I said before I do not think the decision will be left in my hands.

We must trust in God to do whatever is best for each of us. It is not a comfort to feel that he has already ordered it all, & that nothing can happen except what He permits. So let us leave it with Him & pray to be guided by Him in all things. Now I must stop - But again let me thank you with my whole heart for your love to me & desire for my happiness.
I never can think of you but with true gratitude & affection.
May God bless you. Ever believe me y'rs most affectionately **M.O.Townsend.**

Friday Sept 12. 1856. 6 Rodney Place, Clifton,

Dearest darling Minnie,

I hardly know whether this letter will reach you at "Tenby", or whether it will have to be forwarded to you after leaving. Before I say anything further let me tell you the result of my interview with your Mother and afterwards with Mrs. Oliver. Your Mother has received me most kindly and affectionately, and has given her free consent. She said there was no one she would sooner have for a son in law than me, & then she shook hands with me and kissed me. Mrs. Oliver was very cordial, but expressed to me her surprise. She also asked about pecuniary matters. On this latter head I believe I have satisfied her. It now only requires your own personal satisfaction of all I have said about you. Your sister Kate, as you know before this, is perfectly satisfied and pleased. She has taken a view in my favour most warmly and affectionately…….My brother Aubrey has acted in such a kind manner. He is ready to do anything that rests with him to assist us. I need not now trouble you with all the details. He certainly is the best and most generous of brothers. In the evening your Mother went to church, so I contrived to have an interview with her in the drawing room by herself on her return. At first she was a little excited but that soon wore off and she became quite calm and listened to all I had to say most attentively. I spoke to her very quietly and deliberately, and I believe with some firmness. She quietly assented to all I had to say, telling me that she thought you were quite old enough to judge for yourself, & that she should not oppose your wishes. I was certainly surprised at the readiness, and facility with which I upset all her preconceived ideas. By her own express desire I at once went to speak to Mrs. Oliver. Mrs. Oliver was less ready to realise the nature of my communication, and expressed great surprise, whereas your Mother said she had for a long time suspected something of the sort. She even adverted to her having tried to throw cold water on the matter. The only objection Mrs. Oliver raised was about money. All this of course will have to be gone into. At present all that is wanted is your own sweet presence here. Thus you see dearest Minnie that difficulties have disappeared in a most unexpected manner…….It does truly seem to me like a dream, that with in these few days I should have proposed to you, been accepted by you in so tender & affectionate a manner, and that the difficulties which appeared so great with reference to your Mother and Mrs. Oliver should have disappeared so easily. Pray our union dearest Minnie be not only for this world, but for eternity also. It is now late and so I will say goodnight & God bless you, & send you safe home. Ever dearest Minnie your most aff'y & truly attached **John Townsend.**

Transcript of a letter from Marianne to her son Edward Mansel Townsend [630] concerning her financial situation, the will of Elise Townsend [443] and the sale of Castletownshend (Geraldine Townsend [252])

December 27th. 1897 22 Corso Umberto,
Naples, Italy.

My dearest Eddie,

I was truly thankful to hear from you that dearest May has written so kindly & pleasantly about money matters & that she wishes to have it all divided equally. - But I want

you not to say anything whatever about this arrangement to your Grandmother or Aunts or Uncles for I fear if G.M. knew it she would cut me out of the £50 per annum, which she has been by way of allowing me for a few years past. It has always hitherto gone to pay off Aunt B's Mortgage, so I have not had any of it, but in another year that will be paid off, & then of course I expect to have the benefit of it, but it is perfectly possible that G.M. might say I don't want it now I have the legacy from Cousin Elise - i.e. if she knows of these legacies being put together & divided equally, wh. will give me I suppose £30 more than I sh'ld otherwise have. - I am writing the same to May, for it is a matter of importance to me, as without that help, how can I ever hope to settle down anywhere in a little house, for I should have to buy some furniture & linen wherever I might be. You know all the good linen was destroyed by the fire, & the money I got from the Insurance Office had to advance for dear Jack's expenses - £95, which has never been repaid to me, tho' Uncle E. undertook to do so……I wish you had not arranged to send the books & earrings here, for it makes me quite miserable to take any jewellery about with me. I left nearly everything of the kind in charge of Alice & Edward at Monte Triano, three years ago, being quite afraid to take such things into Southern Italy. Some little things were stolen from me by servants at a hotel in Florence - taken off the dressing table in my room, & I felt it was better not to risk anything good, so I have worn scarcely anything but the cheap little brooches one can buy for a few francs, & a chain & bracelet wh. I either wear when travelling or carry in my small courier bag, with my purse……I am sorry Mr. Barber behaved so badly. He must be a disagreable man. I hear John Stocco met him at Elise's house in her life time, & didn't like him. She told John Stocco just when she was making her will - (he saw her when she was very ill in bed) that she "wished to leave him the plate, but must ask her solicitor whether she had the power to do so." I don't believe she ever asked any one whether she had the power to deal with it. Had they looked up her husband's will they must have seen that she had not. But I do think when she had nearly about £50,000 to leave (including value of house & jewels &c) that, as £30,000 of that was her husband's, she ought to have left all his money to his relations, not to her own friends of cousins. Those two young men Maurice & Hubert have next to nothing I believe, & she only left them £1,000 each. Do you know that the old place of Castle Townshend has been sold! & sold to a self made man, a rich Cork merchant, Sir John Arnott. An iron foundry man I think, & he & his family are settling down there now! It was greatly in debt I believe, but I suppose some of the property remains to the family - I do not know any thing more. The whole property was entailed on Mrs. Mundy & her sister Mrs. Vernon, & after that, was to go to Maurice & Hubert I thought. I think Mrs. Mundy is still living, & her sister also. - I want you to explain to me about Law Nugent. Who told you that he is not married? I want to know all about it, & I wrote to tell you that a lady who passed as his wife stayed with him at cousin Elise's home, while May was there, & she & Law were both very kind to May. If Elise found out that he was not married, though living with that lady, surely she would never have left him all the family pictures? - Please explain clearly about this, in a letter, not on a card. Cards are very convenient & cheap, but you never ought to write any private business matters on them. It is most unwise to publish your affairs, & wrong to publish those of other people. - Here in Italy it matters very little because the Italians don't understand English, but any where else it would never do. - I will try & pay Somerville the £3 - 0 - 0 as you suggest, but I am rather close run, for I have only received £80 - this year from Bryan, I suppose the rest has been taken for succession duty. Can you tell me what is the amount charged to me for succession duty? and how much percent to you & the girls? I have never heard. I thought it was to be the same amount for you as for me. I believe that's all I have to say upon business. ……Kisses many to all three, & much love to you both with best wishes for the New Year, from yr. loving Mother, **M.O.T.**