

AN ELOPMENT:

In 1870 **Thomas Coleman** and **Prudence Vaston** travelled to Edinburgh, obtained a certificate from the sessions clerk of the city and were married on 3rd June 1870. Thomas and Prudence were accompanied to Edinburgh by a Miss Francis and James was their tireless horseman.

The letter below was written by Thomas to his father. I have a copy of a typed transcript and have made my own. I do not know who made the typed transcript and do not know if the original letter still exists.

Pete Coleman, 15/04/2025

Honord Sir,

I know have it in my power to inform you the long wished for ceremony has been performed. We arrived here about 10 o'clock yesterday morning and after making the necessary preparation of finding clergyman of the Protestant Church and his procuring a certificate from the sessions clerk of the city which I find is of the nature of a licence in England, about 6 o'clock in the afternoon we went to church and were married.

I believe I may say with great certainty Edinburgh was never reached much sooner from London than by us.

I must omit telling you the method we took to escape from the old lady at Vauxhall; but from thence we started by dint of resolution about 11 o'clock on Thursday night and came here as above. The distance is 400 miles and upwards. It would be narrative sufficient to fill this sheet were I to tell you of the plan founded for escape, nor do I think it necessary now but will give you particulars when I have the pleasure of seeing you. This I must tell you; that from first sight of Miss Francis with whom I fixed this plan 6 hours had not elapsed before we were in the post chaise¹. There's great merit due to us effecting our escape, but Providence has been concerned for us I may say in every step. We bought the same chaise all the way from London without an accident happening. I took care to have the chaise greased every 50 miles but I am satisfied James will have it in his power to say what few men living can say himself; which is that he rode 400 miles in 60 hours. It is to me wonderful how he supported it for so long together, but I shall have a respect for him because he was so resolute. I don't' think he trotted or walked his horse 10 miles the whole journey. He gave it up twice to be sure, the first time at Warrington in Lancashire. There we took him into the chaise for two stages; then he mounted his horse again with fresh spirit and so continued about 69 miles off Edinburgh and he then was extremely ill so much so I wished him to have a surgeon bleed him, and I would get another person to come with us; but he would not hear of it and was determined if it cost him his life to go through with it. And when I found him so determined I hired him a chaise and brought him by that conveyance till the last stage before we came to Edinburgh and there he would ride again. The poor ladies as you may suppose were most extremely ill by the great fatigue and want of sleep. Mrs C (as I may now call her) did not sleep five minutes the

whole distance. Miss Francis had some sleep but as for myself I had not the least desire nor was I the least fatigued till I attempted to rise this morning and I wanted assistance. Mrs C alarmed me very much yesterday about half an hour after we got here by a sudden chilliness and extreme heats and so alternately for half an hour. But we took a short walk and that relieved her greatly. She's much better this morning. Poor James continues hardly. He took 3 Anderson Scotts pills² last night and some sask³ whey which were of great service to him.

Let me entreat you here not to make any notice of our marriage to any person but such of my friends as were privy to the whole process till you – or rather Miss Osbourne have announced it in the Hereford papers and in as plain a manner as she pleases. But I suppose before this Mr Vaston is returned into Herefordshire or wrote to Mr Bernard, or in short that the matter is known of our flight and therefore to require secrecy is unnecessary. But I must beg you nor any of my intimate friends will not show any great marks of your joy by any means whatever as it will seem as if you are triumphing at your having outwitted Mr Bernard and Mr V. And let me desire that there might be nothing of the kind. I shall write to Mr Sharpe in London to desire him to put it in the London Evening in the same plain manner as I wish. I cannot at present fix which day we shall be I London but will write to inform you at the first opportunity; I fancy we shall return to the same lodgings I was at in town as it is so comfortable a house and so good a woman.

Let me hear the first opportunity you can how Mrs V acted upon it. We suspect she went into Herefordshire immediately but I requested her to stay in town till our return in a letter I desired might be given her the morning after we got off.

Please make our best compliments to Miss Osbourne, and I shall be glad to hear from her soon. I have some inclination to write to Dr Poplowe and I think I shall do it today, knowing he might have some weight with Mr Bernard in bringing about a reconciliation.

We shall today see the form of celebrating the King's birthday in Edinburgh. My (sol.?) of London and the Devine who joined us together dine with us tonight and has promised to place us where we shall(a line here obliterated)..... He is a man I admire much and was exceeding particular in asking me questions before our marriage. So far from being the man I expected the parson would be who was to marry us, whom I fancied would be exorbitant in his demands, that he would not give the sessions clerk the money he asked being £2.7s for the certificate but compelled him to take the in general which is about £1/10s. The whole will be an expensive affair but not now to be considered. Pray inform my aunt of it and give my love to the family.

I am your dutiful son Thos. Coleman Edinburgh 5 June 1780

Send the enclosed⁴ to Mr Ward immediately and put the other in the post office for Howforth

DRAMATIS PERSONAE:-

Thomas Coleman - born 1756 died aged 80 in 1836

Prudence Vaston – born 1762 died aged 48 in 1811

Edward Coleman: Thomas's father and recipient of this letter.

"The old lady at Vauxhall" was probably Prudence's mother.

Mr Vaston: presumably, Thomas Vaston, Prudence's father.

Mr Bernard: presumably, Thomas Bernard, Prudence's grandfather.

Mr Sharpe: apparently a friend of Thomas, aware of the elopement and trusted to place a notice of his marriage in the London Evening

Dr Poplowe, Thomas is to write to Dr Poplowe seeking his support as Dr P *"has some weight with Mr Bernard in bringing about a reconciliation."*

Miss Francis, no record, yet

Miss Osbourne, no record, yet

Mr Ward, no record, yet

Notes:-

1 Poste chaise: A post-chaise was a private, horse-drawn carriage used for long-distance travel in the 18th and early 19th centuries. It was a fast and comfortable mode of transport, offering a more private experience than public stagecoaches. Post-chaises were hired at posting stations, where fresh horses were available to ensure rapid travel.

2 Anderson's Pills / Scotch Pills: A popular remedy first marketed around 1635 by Edinburgh-born physician Patrick Anderson (1579/80 - circa 1660). Mildly aperient pills containing aloes, colocynth, and gamboge, sold as sovereign remedy for cleansing the system after over-indulgence. Anderson claimed to have found the formula in Venice.

3 Sack-whey: An alcoholic drink of sherry with whey (weak milk) and sugar.

4 Mr Ward and "the enclosed": to be investigated further

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Edinburgh 5 June 1780.

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