

## A Devonshire Wedding

An account by Anna Wilhelmina Merivale of her brother John Herman's marriage to her childhood friend Louisa Drury of Cockwood in July 1805

Nancy Merivale  
Barton Place  
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To Mrs Jenkins  
Rochester

July 11th 1805

My Dearest Mina

I take the 1st opportunity of giving you an account of the long talked of Wedding, which was celebrated yesterday at DAWLISH Church, after John's illness was so speedily removed by DEVONSHIRE Air, that at his last appearance at COCKWOOD, all the party were of the opinion that he never looked better in his life, and he certainly talked with such effect, that Dr DRURY was soon brought to the Opinion that "the sooner the Comedy was concluded the better", and accordingly Thursday the 10th was fixed on but a few days before, and you may suppose we were all in some degree of Bustle and fuss during the Interval.

### WEDNESDAY morning

We all rose earlier than usual as we had to breakfast at 8 o' clock, before proceeding to the church, and after the ceremony was performed it was agreed we were to proceed to CHUDLEIGH - see UGBROOKE and Chudleigh Rock etc. and then take a late dinner at the Clifford Arms.

You shall see how this well connected scheme was adopted - but to proceed in proper order.

The Bride's dress was of thick Mull Muslin, with a rich satin work Pattern on thinner Muslin let down the front, a large straw Bonnet, with a veil of Mama's netting, almost twice as deep and 10 times more beautiful than ours, and an elegant cambric Habit shirt, which was not a little admired by me, it being my own handiwork.

The Bridesmaids' Gowns like the Bride's, - Habit Shirts and Veils inferior tho' elegant, and a hat instead of a Bonnet.

The Gentleman happened, tho' undesignedly, to have got coats all alike, of dark blue, which was, I think, proper enough; that Colour, you know, denoting Constancy, Loyalty and all that is good.

Now you shall see the Order of Procession, as 'EARL Court-Marshall' Drury directed it.

1st - Papa, mounted on Sprightly, (*the Merivales' elderly horse*) in a suit of true Blue.

2nd - CHARLES (Drury) mounted on a fine black Steed, likewise in true Blue.

3rd - Dr Drury driving Fanny (Merivale) in his Chair.

1st Chaise - The BRIDE. Mrs DRURY. The BRIDEGROOM

2nd Chaise - Mrs MERIVALE. Miss MERIVALE. Two livery Servants behind - and by the sides - who do you think? but DASH himself! who seemed to enjoy the Wedding so much that you might almost have taken him for the Bridegroom himself by the high spirits he manifested on the occasion, and a great Gig Dog of Dr Drury's called SEIZER.

The weather was as truly delightful as heart could wish when we set out, and we had a pretty drive thro' the retired lanes between COCKWOOD and DAWLISH, tho' I confess I felt a little trepidation, and some people no doubt felt a little more.

When we came to Dawlish we passed thro' the back of the Town to the Church. Our Chaise being last, by the time we came by there were a good many people come to their Doors and Windows to see so long a Procession, and by the time it was finished I suppose it was known all over DAWLISH.

LOUISA, weeping a little, and trembling a great deal, was led into the church by Dr Drury, Mr RALFE was there at the same time, and the Ceremony took place immediately.

Mrs DRURY and Mama were very much affected, and Dr Drury was, I think, a little nervous, for he made a mistake in giving the wrong hand.

John behaved with great firmness and propriety, and dear Louisa was quite distinct in all she had to say, not excepting the word "OBEY" about which Dr Drury had before declared he would keep a very sharp look out.

In going out of the Church we were met by the Ringers etc, who were asking as we passed, " Who is she?", and afterwards as a matter of rather more importance to them, "Who is HE?", and then having received the accustomed "Compliment" from the Bridegroom they set up their Peal of Bell ringing.

The Weather had by this time greatly changed, and it began to look rather cloudy, however, as the wind still continued in the north, and Mr RALFE assured us the Glass continued very high we were in hopes it would clear up, and resumed our Journey as before, only that Fanny went in the Chaise with Mama, and I in the Chair with Dr Drury. And here a great many old Proverbs and moral sayings would come in with great effect. I, greatly preferring the open Carriage, and having the choice given me of the first or last part of the drive, desired Fanny might go in the first stage, which was only 3 miles, wisely determining to have the other 8 miles for my Share.

The Consequence was, what perhaps such Greediness deserved, that before we had gone a mile, the rain had come on so violently that I was forced to retreat to the Chaise, but not without already experiencing a trifling wetting.

It was now determined that we should dine very early that we might take the chance of the afternoon, but alas the afternoon was wetter than the morning, and instead of Ugbrooke Park and Chudleigh Rock, and the fine prospect of the Vale, our only walk was the dining room at the Clifford Arms - our only Prospect 3 Tailors working in an opposite window, and a Traveller for orders who was making an enormous dinner in a room of which our windows commanded a view.

I should not, however, forget a large picture of a most grotesque Man in a wig, which made such an impression on my mind, that I was sadly afraid that I should dream of him on the Bride-cake, and this, having been drawn thro'the Ring with all proper Ceremony must be quite infallible.

At 7, we took leave, Dr and Mrs Drury with the Bride and Bridegroom, going to Cockwood, and Charles proceeding with us to Barton Place.

And we all agreed on parting, that our wedding was something like the one recorded in the Vicar of Wakefield, in which he says, "If there was not much Wit, there was a great deal of Laughter."

Good part of this morning has been devoted to cutting up great bits of Wedding Cake and making up Parcels to send to our Friends.

How I wish your and all your dear Party were near enough to have a share.

Mama says she wishes to add a few lines to my Aunt, so I must, therefore, conclude.

Yr Aff: Nancy Merivale

***John Herman and Louisa were happily married until his death in 1844. They had twelve children, all of whom survived into adulthood.***