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Elizabeth Balcombe Abell

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Recollections of the Emperor Napoleon

After Napoleon Bonaparte's defeat at Waterloo (1815), the British government exiled him to the island of St. Helena, where he forged a friendship with Betsy Balcombe (later Abell, 1802–71), the thirteen-year-old daughter of the government official in whose premises he stayed while Longwood House was being prepared as his residence. In these vivid memoirs, first published in 1844, Abell recalls her time spent with Napoleon, painting a portrait of a humorous and boyish character, of whom she was initially afraid, but then came to view as a friend and companion. Recounting his arrival, his opinions on music, wine and religion, his thoughts on his surrender and his battle tactics, his way of life, and his departure for his permanent incarceration at Longwood, Abell's recollections, which offer an unusual view of one of the most significant figures of modern history, have since inspired many documentaries, dramas and children's stories.

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Recollections of the Emperor Napoleon

*During the First Three Years of his
Captivity on the Island of St. Helena*

ELIZABETH BALCOMBE ABELL



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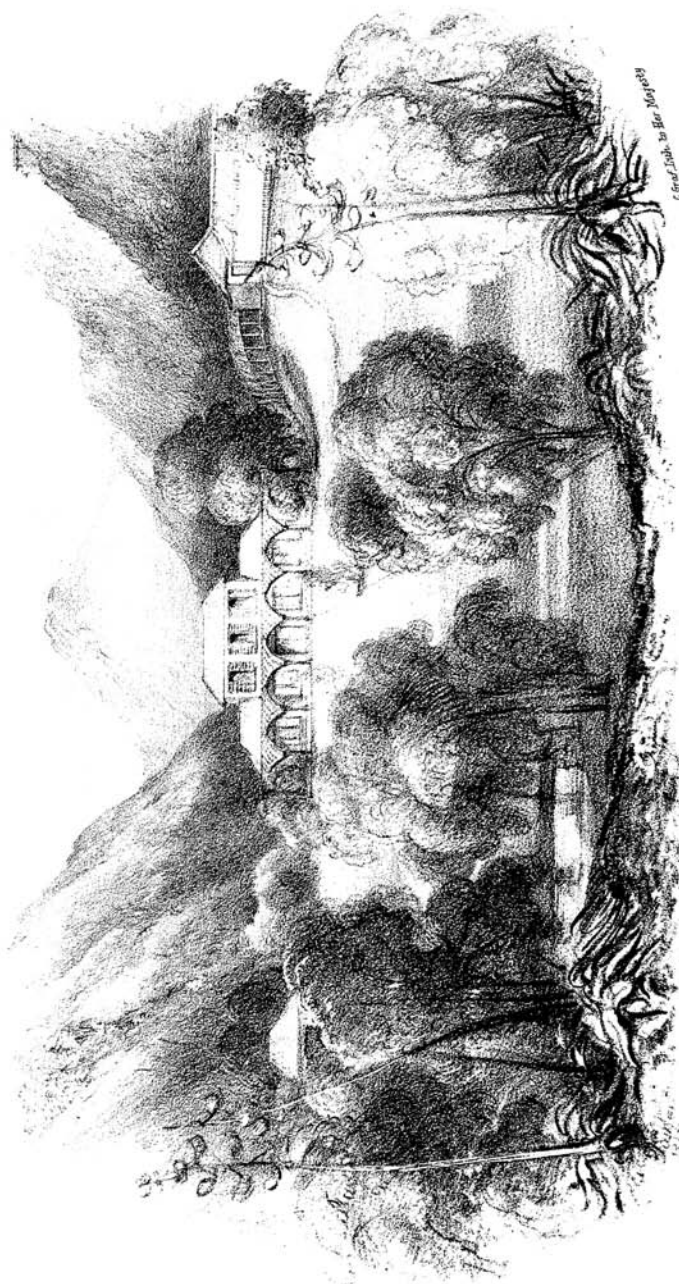
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THE BRIARS ST. HELENA.

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RECOLLECTIONS
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AT
SAINT HELENA.



BY MRS. ABELL.

LONDON:

JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET.

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OF THE
EMPEROR NAPOLEON,
DURING THE
FIRST THREE YEARS OF HIS CAPTIVITY
ON THE
ISLAND OF ST. HELENA :
INCLUDING THE TIME OF HIS RESIDENCE AT HER FATHER'S
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PREFACE.

THE writer of the following pages trusts she will not be thought presumptuous in presenting them to the public. Thrown at a very early age into the society of Napoleon, and of those who composed his suite, she considers it an almost imperative duty to communicate any fact or impression, which, though uninteresting in itself, may still be worth recording as relating to him, and as serving to elucidate his character. Could these recollections of the emperor have been published without having her name appended to them, they would long ago have appeared, but feeling that the sole merit to which they could lay claim consisted in their being faithful records of him, and that if produced

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anonymously, there would be no guarantee for their truth; being moreover desirous to shun publicity, and unequal to the task of authorship, the undertaking has been postponed from time to time, and, perhaps, would have been delayed still longer, but for the pressure of calamitous circumstances, which compels her to hesitate no more, but, with all their imperfections on their head, to send these pages at once into the world.

The authoress may compare her feelings, as she launches her little vessel on the waters, to those of Shelley, when, having exhausted his whole stock of paper, he twisted a bank-note into the shape of a little boat, and then committing it to the stream, waited on the other side for its arrival with intense anxiety. Her ship-building powers, she fears, are as feeble, her materials as frail; but she has seen the little Paper Nautilus floating with impunity and confidence on the bosom of that

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mighty ocean, which has engulfed many a noble vessel: accepting the augury, she intrusts her tiny bark to the waves of public opinion, not with confidence, however, but with timidity and hesitation,—yet is her solicitude not altogether unenlivened by the hope that it may reach its haven, if wafted by friendly breezes and favoured by propitious skies.

The writer must crave indulgence for the frequent mention of herself during the narrative. The nature of the subject renders this unavoidable.

LUCIA ELIZABETH ABELL.

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