

Notes from Sanditon on Whiners and Hypochondriacs

CHAPTER 5.

When they met before dinner, M^r P. was looking over Letters.—“Not a Line from Sidney!”—said he.—He is an idle fellow.—I sent him an account of my accident from Willingden, & thought he would have vouchsafed me an Answer.—But perhaps it implies that he is coming himself.—I trust it may.—But here is a Letter from one of my Sisters. *They* never fail me.—Women are the only Correspondents to be depended on.—Now Mary, (smiling at his Wife)—before I open it, what shall we guess as to the state of health of those it comes from—or rather what w^d Sidney say if he were here?—Sidney [p. 58] is a saucy fellow, Miss H.—And you must know, he will have it there is a good deal of Imagination in my two Sisters’ complaints—but it really is not so—or very little—They have wretched health, as you have heard us say frequently, & are subject to a variety of very serious Disorders.—Indeed, I do not believe they know what a day’s health is;—& at the same time, they are such excellent useful Women & have so much energy of Character that, where any Good is to be done, they force themselves on exertions which to those who do not thoroughly know them, have an extraordinary appearance.—But there is really no affectation about them. They have only weaker constitutions & stronger minds than are often met with, either separate or together.—And our Youngest B^r—who lives with [p. 59] them, & who is not much above 20, I am sorry to say, is almost as great an Invalid as themselves.—He is so delicate that he can engage in no Profession.—Sidney laughs at him—but it really is no Joke—tho’ Sidney often makes me laugh at them all in spite of myself.—Now, if he were here, I know he w^d be offering odds that either Susan Diana or Arthur w^d appear by this letter to have been at the point of death within the last month.”—[Having run his eye over the Letter, he shook his head & began—“No chance of seeing them at Sanditon I am sorry to say.—A very indifferent account of them indeed. Seriously, a very indifferent account.—Mary, you will be quite sorry to hear how ill they have been & are.—Miss H., if you will give me leave, I will read Diana’s Letter aloud.—I like to have my friends acquainted with each [p. 60] other—& I am afraid this is the only sort of acquaintance I shall have the means of accomplishing between you.—And I can have no scruple on Diana’s account—for her Letters shew her exactly as she is, the most active, friendly, warm hearted Being in existence, & therefore must give a good impression.” He read.—“My dear Tom, We were all much grieved at your accident, & if you had not described yourself as fallen into such very good hands, I sh^d have been with you at all hazards the day after the rec^{pt} of your Letter, though it found me suffering under a more severe attack than usual of my old grievance, Spasmodic Bile & hardly able to crawl from my Bed to the Sofa.—But how were you treated?—Send me more Particulars in your next.—If indeed a simple Sprain, as you denominate it, [p. 61] nothing w^d have been so judicious as Friction, Friction by the hand alone, supposing it could be applied *instantly*.—Two years ago I happened to be calling on M^{rs} Sheldon when her Coachman sprained his foot as he was cleaning the Carriage & c^d hardly limp into the House—but by the immediate use of Friction alone, steadily persevered in, (& I rubbed his Ankle with my own hand for six Hours without

Commented [MKH1]: I highlighted the bits in yellow that pertain directly to Arthur Parker—as written by Jane Austen.

Intermission)—he was well in three days.—Many Thanks my dear Tom for the kindness with respect to us, which had so large a share in bringing on your accident—But pray never run into Peril again, in looking for an Apothecary on our account, for had you the most experienced Man in his Line settled at Sanditon, it w^d be no recommendation to us. We have entirely done with the whole Medical [p. 62]Tribe. We have consulted Physician after Phyⁿ in vain, till we are quite convinced that they can do nothing for us & that we must trust to our own knowledge of our own wretched Constitutions for any [relief](#).—But if you think it advisable for the interest of the *Place*, to get a Medical Man there, I will undertake the commission with pleasure, & have no doubt of succeeding.—I [could soon](#) put the necessary Irons in the fire.—As for getting to Sanditon myself, it is quite an Impossibility. I grieve to say that I dare not attempt it, but my feelings tell me too plainly that in my present state, the Sea air w^d probably be the death of me.—And neither of my dear Companions will leave me, or I w^d promote their going down to you for a fortnight. But in truth, I doubt whether Susan's nerves w^d be equal to the effort. [p. 63]She has been suffering much from the Headache [and](#) Six Leaches a day for [10 days together](#) relieved her [so little](#) that [we](#) thought it right to change our measures—and being convinced on examination that much of the Evil lay in her Gum, I persuaded her to attack the disorder there. She has [accordingly](#) had 3 Teeth drawn, & is decidedly better, but her Nerves are a good deal deranged. She can only speak in a whisper—and fainted away twice this morning on poor Arthur's [trying to suppress a cough](#). [He, I am happy to say is tolerably well—tho' more languid than I like—and I fear for his Liver.](#)—I have heard nothing of Sidney since your being together in Town, but conclude his scheme to the I. of Wight has not taken place, or we should have seen him in his way.—Most sincerely do we wish you a good [p. 64]Season at Sanditon, & though we cannot contribute to your Beau Monde in person, we are doing our utmost to send you Company worth [having](#); & think we may safely reckon on securing you two large Families, [one](#) a rich West Indian from Surry, the other, a most respectable [Girls](#) Boarding School, or Academy, from Camberwell.—I will not tell you how many People I have employed in the business—Wheel within wheel.—[But](#) Success more than repays.—Yours most affec^{ly}—&c”

Continued from Chapter Five

But then, *we* have been so healthy a family, that I can be no Judge of what the habit of self-doctoring may do.—” “Why to [own](#) the truth, said M^{rs} P.—I *do* think the Miss Parkers carry it too far sometimes—and so do you my Love, you know.—[You often think they w^d be better, if they w^d leave themselves more alone—and especially Arthur.](#) I know you think it a great pity they sh^d give *him* such a turn for being ill.—” “Well, well—my dear Mary—I grant you, it *is* unfortunate for poor Arthur, that, at his time of Life he sh^d be encouraged to give way to Indisposition. It *is* bad;—it *is* bad that he should be fancying himself too sickly for any Profession—and sit down at [1 & 20](#), on the interest [p. 67]of his own little Fortune, without any idea of attempting to improve it, or [of engaging](#) in any occupation that may be of use to himself or others.—But let us talk of pleasanter things.

From Chapter Nine

And as for poor Arthur, he w^d not have been unwilling himself, but there is so much Wind that I did not think he c^d safely venture,—for I am *sure* there is Lumbago hanging about him—and so I helped him on with his great Coat & sent him off to the Terrace, to take us Lodgings.

From Chapter Ten

Arthur had found the air so cold that he had [p. 134]merely walked from one House to the other as nimbly as he could,—& boasted much of sitting by the fire till he had cooked up a very good one.

Continued in Chapter Ten

“We sh^d not have one at home, said he, but the Sea air is always damp. I am not afraid of any thing so much as Damp.—” “I am so fortunate, said C. as never to know whether the air is damp or dry. It has always some property that is wholesome & invigorating to me.—” “*I like the Air too, as well as any body can; replied Arthur, I am very fond of standing at an open Window when there is no Wind—but unluckily a Damp air does not like *me*.—It gives me the Rheumatism.—You are not rheumatic I suppose?—*” “Not at all.” “That’s a great blessing.—But [p. 138]perhaps you are nervous.” “No—I believe not. I have no idea that I am.”—“*I am very nervous.—To say the truth* Nerves are the worst part of my Complaints in my opinion.—My Sisters think me Bilious, but I doubt it.—” “You are quite in the right, to doubt it as long as you possibly can, I am sure.—” “If I were Bilious, he continued, you know Wine w^d disagree with me, but it always does me good.—The more Wine I drink (in Moderation) the better I am.—I am always best of an Even^g.—If you had seen me today before Dinner, you w^d have thought me a very poor Creature.—” Charlotte could believe it—. She kept her countenance however, & said—“As far as I can understand what nervous complaints are, I have a great idea of the efficacy of air & exercise for them:—daily, regular Exercise;—and I [p. 139]should recommend rather more of it to *you* than I suspect you are in the habit of taking.”—“Oh! I am very fond of exercise myself—he replied—& mean to walk a great deal while I am here, if the Weather is temperate. I shall be out every morning before breakfast—& take several turns upon the Terrace, & you will often see me at Trafalgar House.”—“But you do not call a walk to Traf: H. much exercise?—” “Not, as to mere distance, but the Hill is so steep!—Walking up that Hill, in the middle of the day, would throw me into such a Perspiration!—You would see me all in a Bath by the time I got there!—I am very subject to Perspiration, and there cannot be a surer sign of Nervousness.—”

So far from dry Toast being wholesome, *I think it a very bad thing* for the Stomach. Without a little butter to soften it, it hurts the Coats of the Stomach. I am sure it does.—I will have the pleasure of spreading some for you directly—& [p. 143]afterwards I will spread some for myself.—Very bad indeed for the Coats of the Stomach—but there is no convincing *some* people.—It irritates & acts like a nutmeg grater.—” He could not get the command of the Butter however, without a struggle; His Sisters accusing him of eating a great deal too much, & declaring he was not to be trusted;—

and he maintaining that he only eat enough to secure the Coats of his Stomach;—& besides, he only wanted it now for Miss Heywood.—Such a plea must prevail, he got the butter & spread away for her with an accuracy of Judgement which at least delighted himself; but when her Toast was done, & he took his own in hand, Charlotte c^d hardly contain herself as she saw him watching his sisters, while he scrupulously scraped off almost as much butter as he put [p. 144] on, & then seize an odd moment for adding a great dab just before it went into his Mouth.

The following excerpts are from Kate Riordan's "Sanditon" which is based on Andrew Davies' TV adaptation of the unfinished novel

From Chapter Three

Arthur, a man whose natural indolence benefitted from his sister's horror of dangerous exertion, shook his large head gravely. "I thought I would never leave my bed."

"But we rallied, as you see," Diana went on, "and came to call on you as soon as we arrived. We were told you were on the cliff walk, so we decided to brave it and surprise you!"

Arthur squinted suspiciously at the clear sky. "I wish we hadn't now. Damn chilly breeze. I think I might have caught my death."

"Then we must get you both indoors without delay," cried Mr. Parker.

"Our lodgings are nearest," said Arthur. "Come and take tea with us there. And let's all of us for God's sake get out of this howling gale!"

Continued in Chapter Three

"Come and sit by me, Miss Heywood," said Arthur. "Warm yourself. You must be as chilled to the bone as I am."

Charlotte suppressed a smile. "Thank you, but I don't find the weather chilly at all."

He gazed at her in admiration and wonder. "What a constitution you must have! I like the air, you know, as much as anyone, but it doesn't like me. My nerves, you see. My sister thinks me bilious, but I doubt it. If I were bilious, wine would disagree with me, but it always does my nerves good. Do you know, the more I drink, the better I feel. I often wake up in the morning feeling very groggy, but after a few glasses of wine I'm right as rain. That is quite remarkable, don't you think?"

Charlotte was not sure that she did. "You don't think regular exercise...?"

"Regular exercise? I wish my nerves were up to it, Miss Heywood, indeed I do, but strong wine is the only thing that does me any good at all. Though I can take a little toast with butter on it—no

more than six or seven slices, though...With plenty of butter, that's the secret. Toast with no butter is an abomination; very bad for the coats of the stomach."

Notes on Arthur Parker

- Weak Constitution (Physical Frailty, Easily Susceptible to Illness)
- Delicate/Invalid
- Lumbago (Lower Back Pain)
- Afraid of Damp Air because it Gives Him Rheumatism (Inflammation and Damage in the Joints that Causes Stiffness, Swelling, and Fatigue)
- Nervousness (Perspiration)
- Bilious (An Illness Caused by Too Much Bile; Can Cause Vomiting; Troubled by Indigestion)

Hypochondria (Illness Anxiety Disorder)—Excessive and persistent worry about having a serious medical condition even though significant physical symptoms are absent.