

Rushton Manor, Essex  
April 12, 1817

My dearest cousin:

It is dreadfully flat here since you have been gone, and it only makes it worse to imagine all the things I shall be missing. Aunt Elizabeth says I am too young for a Season, though I am turned eighteen. She will probably keep me here until I am quite on the shelf. So I rely on you, dearest cousin, to write and tell me everything! If I am not to be allowed to enjoy a Season of my own, I can at least take a vicarious delight in your triumph! I am quite convinced you will take London by storm.

Not that we are without amusement in Essex; quite the contrary! Aunt Elizabeth and I called at the vicarage yesterday and spent a stimulating afternoon listening to the Rev. Martin Fitzwilliam discoursing on the Vanities of Society and the Emptiness of Worldly Pleasures. Aunt Elizabeth hung on every word, and we are to return and take tea next Thursday. I am determined to have the headache Thursday, if I have to hit my head with a rock to do it.

There is, however, a ray of hope. Lady Tarleton is to have a party for her niece in two weeks. The invitation arrived this morning, and Papa says we are to go! And Aunt Elizabeth approves! She thinks it is to be an informal hop, as Lacy Tarleton's niece is not yet out, but Patience Everslee told me in the greatest confidence that there is to be waltzing! I only hope my brother Oliver will stay long enough to accompany us. He has been moping around the house like a sick sheep ever since you and Georgina left, and yesterday he asked Papa, very casually, whether Papa did not think it would be a good idea for him to go to Town this year for a week or two. He thinks he is being very sly, but if he puts off making his arrangements for another day or two Papa will have accepted Lady Tarleton's invitation and Oliver will have to stay here until after the party. I have not, of course, pointed this out to him.

And there may be more excitement to come. Sir Hilary Bedrick has just been named to the Royal College of Wizards; the whole village is buzzing with the news. It seems rather odd to me, for he has never done anything in the least noteworthy, and I cannot imagine that the Royal College would have taken him simply because of that enormous library of musty old spellbooks at Bedrick Hall. He and Lady Bedrick left yesterday for London, where he will be installed, but all of us expect great things when they return. Except, of course, for Aunt Elizabeth, who looks at me sideways and says darkly that magic is for heathens and cannibals, not for decent folk. She is still annoyed with me because of the incident with the goat; she simply will not believe that it was all for a joke on Robert Penwood, and nothing to do with magic.

Do, please, try to find me those silks I asked you about before you left, and if you should happen to find a pair of long gloves that would match my green muslin, please, please send them at once! I should so like to look well at Lady Tarleton's party. And do, do write and tell me everything you are doing!

Your loving cousin,

*Cecelia*