

Chapter XIII.Further Trial - but Peace at the Last.

In the summer of 1650, news came from Scotland that Charles II had landed there, and this, together with the great increase in his following throughout both Kingdoms, caused great excitement. One, Sir Henry Mildmay, a renegade Royalist, who had frequently acted as investigator for the Parliament, now reported to his masters that he considered the peace of the Commonwealth would be endangered by the continuance of the royal children within it, and suggested that they should be detained elsewhere. The matter was accordingly discussed in Parliament, and it was agreed that the children should be removed, but it was left to the Council of State to decide where that place should be.

As soon as the poor little Princess heard that a change in their place of residence was once again mooted, she wrote to the Council, begging them to allow her to remain at Penshurst on the score of her ill-health; but to this plea, the Council heartlessly paid no heed. Still greater lack of feeling followed, as is exhibited in the following letter sent to Colonel Sydenham, governor of the Isle of Wight, and signed by one of the most brutal of the regicides, he who presided at the King's trial.

"Sir,

"The Parliament hath appointed that the two children of the late King, who are now at the Earl of Leicester's, at Penshurst, shall be sent out of the limits of the Commonwealth: I have referred the same to this council to see done accordingly; and until that can be done, we have thought it fit and necessary they be sent to Carisbrooke Castle. I have sent you this notice hereof before, that you might be ready for them. And for that we are informed there are designs of mischief carrying on in several places, we recommend that island to your more especial care. And if there be any persons therein whom you shall judge may bring danger thereunto, you are hereby desired and authorised to put them out of the isle, and to seize upon and secure the houses, arms, and ammunition, of any whom you shall suspect will make an ill use of them to interrupt the public peace.

"Signed in the names and by order of the Council of State, appointed by the authority of Parliament.

"Joseph Bradshaw, President.

"Whitehall, **29th August, 1650".

Mr. Anthony Mildmay, "an honest and faithful gentleman", brother of Sir Henry, and who was governor of Carisbrooke Castle and had been carver to the late King when he was there, also received an order that he and his wife should conduct the captives to the Isle of Wight. Into their care then, the Earl and Countess of Leicester had regretfully to surrender the royal children on August 9th, 1650.**

It can be imagined how poignant was the parting on both sides, for apart from having to resign charges who had greatly endeared themselves, Leicester and his lady must have felt the brutality of the choice made of Carisbrooke. Before their separation, the Princess left in the hands of Lord Leicester, to await her further instructions, a peal necklace and a diamond ornament, the only things of any value that she possessed.

The poor little pair accompanied as well as by their new custodians and Mr. Lovel, with much furniture from St. James', set out on their long and sorrowful journey. They were landed on Tuesday, August 13th, at Cowes, though there is no record where they were lodged there, for they did not arrive at Carisbrooke till August 16th.

When the coach in which, with Mr. and Mrs. Mildmay, they were driven, approached the village, they saw set high upon an extensive green hill, the great Castle where their beloved Father had endured all but his final imprisonment, and Elizabeth experienced anew the pangs of sorrow she knew all too well. At the gateway guards were stationed, but did not salute them as the coach entered and passed into the courtyard before the governor's lodgings. Mr. Mildmay handed the royal children out of the coach, and he and his wife courteously conducted them to their rooms. As with beating heart, Elizabeth entered these she asked:

"Are these indeed the very rooms that the King our Father occupied?"

** How to reconcile these two dates is impossible.

"Yes, Madam", answered Mildmay. "The ante-room through which you have just passed was used by him, and his second bed-chamber leads out of it. You are now in what served as his first Presence Chamber, and your own bedroom is above his second Presence Chamber".

The Princess and her brother were tended with all due care and kindness, though they received none of the recognition of their royal station to which they were accustomed. For Parliament had ordered that they should be "treated as the children of a gentleman", and denied any higher status. So the title of Princess was forbidden to Elizabeth, although she was still styled "Lady". Henry, deprived of his title, became "Harry Stuart", and was addressed by the attendants as "Master Harry". A gentleman usher, a gentlewoman, a laundrymaid and a groom of the chamber were allotted to wait upon them, and £1,000 per annum was voted for their maintenance. But now, as never before, they felt helpless prisoners, forbidden even to receive the grace of kissed hands to which they had throughout their lives heretofore been accustomed. But one small pleasure they found in making a pet of their Father's favourite greyhound, Gipsy, which had not yet been claimed by his faithful friend, the Duke of Richmond, to whom the King had left the dog.

Elizabeth now more than ever lived in the past with the memory of her Father, and found much comfort in the Preces Privatae of Bishop Lancelot Andrewes. Daily she prayed for the soul of her Father, that he might have rest and light perpetual, and she found perfect expression of her needs in the Bishop's prayer:—

"Thou, O Lord, art the succour of the succourless, and the hope of them that are past hope, the Saviour of the tempest-tossed, the harbour of the voyagers, the physician of the sick. Remember, O Lord God, all spirits and all flesh, and for us, direct the end of our lives to be christian, well-pleasing, and, (if it like Thee), painless in peace, Lord, O Lord, gathering us together under the feet of Thine elect, when Thou wilt and as Thou wilt, only without shame and sins".

But despite her growing weakness, and her inward fretting for her Father, the Princess, heroic as ever, did not forget the needs of her brother. Like his Father, he delighted in the game of bowls, for the pursuit of which pastime, a fine green had been laid for the King without the curtain walls. Here Elizabeth made every effort to join Henry, for as she handled the woods, she could think

of those dear hands which had held them before her on this same lovely tree-shaded ground.

On Monday, August 22nd, when she was playing there with Henry, they were caught in a sudden heavy downpour; and lame and enfeebled as she was, it was some little while before the Princess could gain the postern door and pass through it, the passage, and the court beyond, to the Governor's lodging. When at length she had painfully climbed up to her bed-chamber, she was wet through, and next day, uncomplaining as she generally was, she had to own to a headache. Her gentlewoman, greatly concerned for the poor little lady, to whom already she had become warmly attached, brought Mrs. Mildmay to see her. They then found she was very feverish, and so a cooling drink was prepared for her, which seemed at first to abate the fever, but not for long. So poorly did she continue to be that on Sunday, September 1st, she kept her bed, and from it, she never rose again.

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That Sunday morning, as on all Sunday mornings, despite the tyranny of the regicide's triumph, the Faithful of the island, as on the mainland, did not fail to supplicate the All-Father in the suffrages of the Litany. So despite the proscription of the Prayer Book and the sequestration of churches, there arose to Heaven the heart-felt petitions "that it may please Thee to preserve all sick persons and young children, and to shew Thy pity upon all prisoners and captives: to defend and provide for the fatherless children and all that are desolate and oppressed". And for the little captive Princess the response was not long tarrying.

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The Governor neglected no means in his power to secure for Elizabeth every medical attention, and at once called in from Newport, Dr. Bagnall, a kind and able physician, as well as several other neighbouring doctors. But when none of them were able to effect any improvement in her condition, which they now regarded as serious, Mildmay sent an express messenger up to London to consult Sir Theodore Mayerne. He, being now well over 80, was too old himself to travel to the bedside of his little Princess, but sent to her aid several doctors with many a prescription. They, however, arrived too late, for all the speed they made.

Elizabeth knew she was dying, and her gentlewoman bore witness to her "unparalleled piety", as shewn by her very many "rare ejaculatory expressions". Again Bishop Andrewes aided her devotions, so she prayed :

"Abide with me, O Lord, for even now it is towards evening with me, and the day is far spent of this travail-ling life. Let Thy strength be perfected in my weakness. Into Thy hands, O Lord, I commend myself, my spirit, soul and body: Thou hast created and redeemed them, O Lord, Thou God of truth. Lord, I will sleep, but my heart shall be awake: visit me, O Lord, with the visitation of the saints. I will lay me down in peace and take my rest, for it is Thou, Lord, only that makest me to dwell in safety. Into Thy hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit, for Thou hast redeemed me, O Lord, Thou God of truth".

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Ar Mindful of the kindness she had ever received from Lord and Lady Leicester, she charged Mr. Lovel to convey to them her last remembrances, and in token of her gratitude for their kindness, bequeathed them the diamond ornament she had left in their keeping. To Henry, all she had to leave him as a memorial of the tender love she bore him was her pearl necklace. To the last, she pressed to her heart, her Father's last letter, worn with much reading.

They knew that the end was near: her gentlewoman, her brother and their tutor, gathered together in her chamber on that Sunday, September 8th. At sight of Henry, then just over 11 years old, Elizabeth, with wan smile, whispered:-

"Kiss me, Harry!"

Stooping over her, he kissed her convulsively, whilst the tears coursed down his cheeks. Then flinging himself down on his knees by her bedside, sobbing bitterly, he buried his face in his hands. His sister feebly stretched out one of hers to clasp one of his, to which he held tenaciously, till she released it, and putting her hands together, murmured:

h "Lord Jesus, save me! Let Thine angels deliver me", after which she seemed to fall peacefully asleep. Quietly then they all left the room that she might not be disturbed in her slumber. But on her gentlewoman's return, she found that the gentle Princess was in her last sleep, with her hands clasped in prayer, and one cheek resting on an open Bible, her Father's last and most cherished gift. And so, about 3 o'clock on that afternoon, gathered by the angels,

she passed into the Haven where she would be, in the Land that, for her was never very far off. As the day of her birth had been the Feast of the Holy Innocents, so also the day of her passing was not without its application to her life, for it was the Commemoration of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Elizabeth's body was embalmed, and "carefully bestowed in a coffin of lead", for burial in St. Thomas', Newport - the parish church of the capital of the island presumably being preferred to that of Carisbrooke to shew the Princess greater honour.

On September 20th, the coffin was brought "in a borrowed coach", attended by her grief-stricken little brother, their custodians, the tutor, and other attendants to Newport, where, at the entrance to the town, it was met by the Mayor and Aldermen in all their civic array, supported by their officers.

The streets through which the coffin, covered by a white pall, passed, were strewn with flowers, and bands of young people, also in white, as was the custom at a maiden's funeral, followed after the civic procession. Crowds of loyal country folk lined the streets on the way to the ancient Church to shew their little Princess a last reverence.

"Aye, she were a little saint, if ever there were one", observed one woman to her neighbour, "and they do tell me she were wunnerful clever, too; a downright scholar, up from her very childhood".

"She were nobbut a child now, poor maid", returned the woman spoken to. "Not fifteen till come Childermas".

"Ah well", replied the first speaker, "the poor little chicken will be happy now, for they do say it was fretting for her Father killed her, and she were the apple of his eye, if all tales be true. God rest their souls!"

And so the little Princess Elizabeth made her last journey, and like her Father, the White King, but in other fashion, "went white to her grave".

At the Church door, the little company of mourners alighted, Henry, manfully striving to stifle his sobs, following close behind the coffin, as the big bell tolled.

Heedless of the proscription of the Prayer Book, the priest who was awaiting the arrival of the body, began the processional Anthems of the Burial of the Dead. So once again, unconsciously in death, as at her birth, she had the appointed services of the Church, all others of which had been denied her, and cruelly supplanted, through her almost life-long captivity.

At last had come her release: "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" and in the vault specially made for her "about the middle of the east part of the chancel", her worn-out little body was laid to rest "in sure and certain hope of the Resurrection to Eternal Life", her beloved little brother casting a handful of earth on the coffin.

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"Remember them, O Lord our Father, who with purity of heart and sanctity of soul and body, have departed from this world, and have come to Thee. Grant that they may attain to the Port in which the tempest-tossed rest, to the supper prepared for the blessed. Them, who in the spiritual bosom of Baptism have put Thee on splendidly, and have believed in Thy Name, give them rest, gathering them together in a green pasture, and lead them forth beside the waters of comfort, far from all grief, sorrow, and mourning, in the glorious light of Thy Saints.

Amen. Amen".

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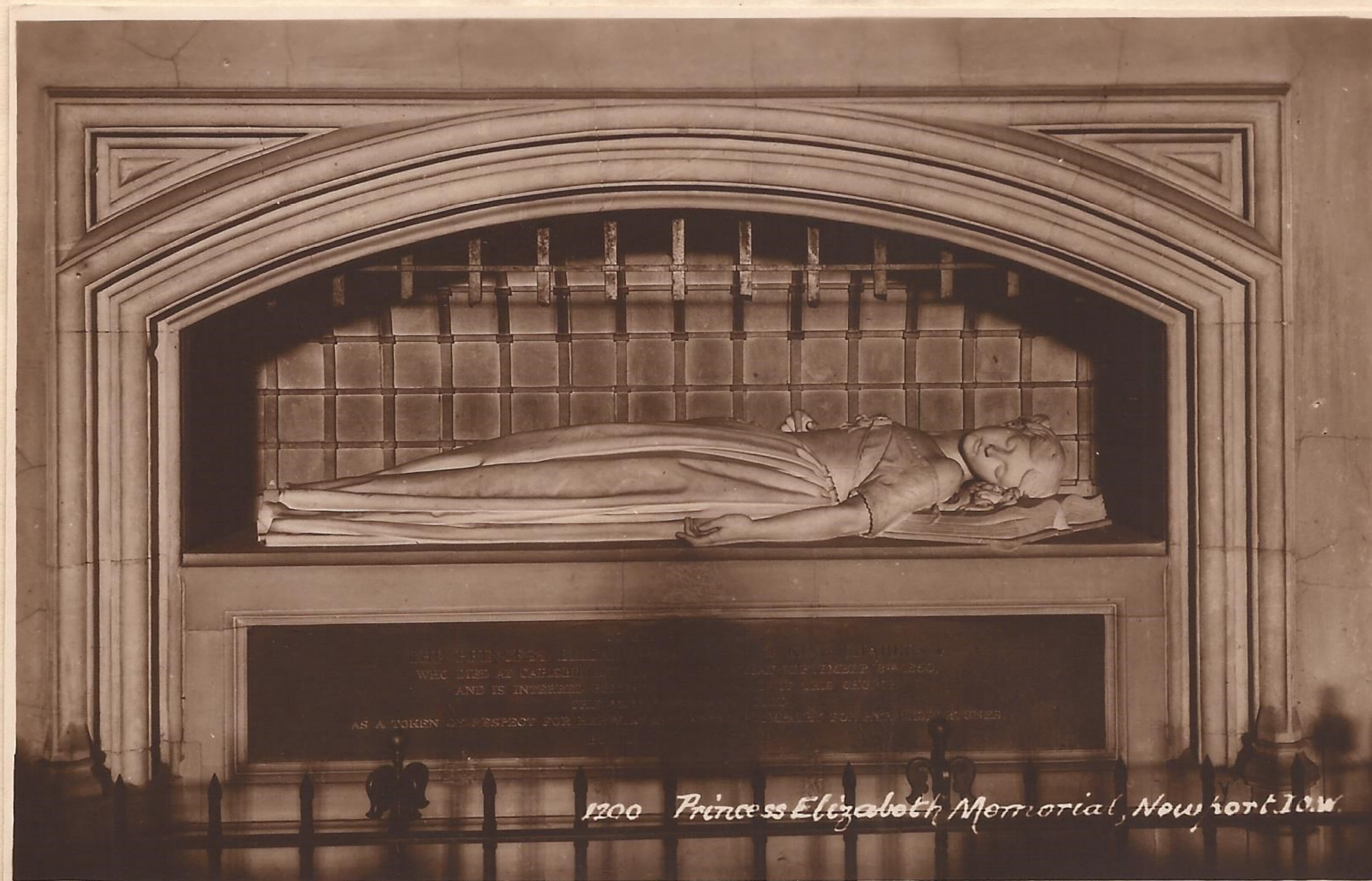
All that marked the Princess' grave at the time was a simple "E.S". cut in stone in the nearest wall, and in time, this obscure resting place of a King's daughter was forgotten. But in 1793, another grave was being prepared there, and a leaden coffin, surmounted by an urn, was rediscovered, the coffin plate stating simply :

"Elizabeth, 2nd daughter of the late King Charles, deceased September 8th, MDCL".

Soon after this discovery, a small brass plate with a brief inscription was placed in the floor over the vault, just within the screen. Just over 60 years later, when it was necessary to rebuild the Church, Queen Victoria paid a most beautiful tribute to the poor little Princess by the erection of a lovely monument, in white marble, to her memory. This represents Elizabeth lying on a mattress, her cheek resting on a Bible open at the words: "Come unto Me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest". From the Gothic arch beneath which the figure reposes, hangs an iron grating, with its bars broken asunder, typifying the captive's release by death, and the inscription on the monument thus gracefully records a graceful act:—

"To the Memory of the Princess Elizabeth, Daughter of Charles I., who died at Carisbrooke Castle, on Sunday, September 8th 1650, and is interred beneath the Chancel of this Church. This Monument is erected, a token of respect for her Virtues and of sympathy for her Misfortunes, by Victoria R., 1856".

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1200 Princess Elizabeth Memorial, New Port Law.