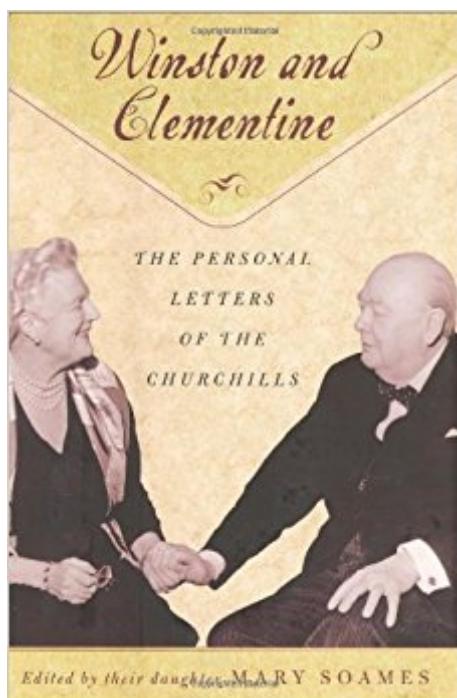


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Winston And Clementine: The Personal Letters Of The Churchills



Synopsis

Winston and Clementine Churchill wrote to each other constantly throughout the fifty-seven years of their life together, from the passionate and charming exchanges of their courtship and early marriage until the year before Winston's death in 1965. Written solely for each other's eyes, spontaneously and with great candor, their letters provide rare and revealing insights into both the great political and social events of a turbulent century and the intimate world of an extraordinary partnership. Here are Winston's and Clementine's vividly expressed reactions to the social reforms of the era, the harrowing experience in the trenches of the western front, the personalities of world leaders, the early defeats and the long-awaited victories of the Second World War. In moving detail we hear of Churchill's dramatic career and his final, deeply felt reflections on the fading of his enormous powers. Here also are domestic minutiae, society gossip, financial anxieties and minor quarrels, private jokes, and endearments. To read these letters is to view the grand sweep of history reflected in the daily triumphs and tragedies of two allies in love, politics, and life. Mary Soames, the only surviving child of this remarkable couple, has brought her parents to life as no biography could. We hear Winston in his own voice, broken and somber, contemplating the failure of the Dardanelles campaign in 1915, the nadir of his career. And we hear Clementine, compassionate and strong, responding with words of measured advice, her love, and her belief in his historic destiny. Above all, their correspondence illuminates what Soames calls "their enduring and heroic partnership," a partnership that was not free of troubles but was built on a foundation of affection, humor, and loyalty. Bringing these letters together for the first time, Winston and Clementine is a personal and often surprising portrait of one of history's titanic figures. It is also an important and powerful document of our times.

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Customer Reviews

"I seize this fleeting hour of leisure to write and tell you how much I liked our long talk on Sunday," Winston Churchill wrote to Clementine Hozier in April 1908, shortly after their third meeting, "and what a comfort and pleasure it was to me to meet a girl with so much intellectual quality and such strong reserves of noble sentiment." They were married by September; he was 29, she 19. They would remain married--though, due to political circumstances, they were not always together--until his death in 1965. During that time, their daughter Mary Soames remarks, some 1,700 items of personal correspondence passed between the two. Winston and Clementine is far from a complete collection, but it does offer a comprehensive overview of their epistolary relationship and the deep love and mutual respect upon which their marriage was based. It may be somewhat disconcerting to see the man who stirred a nation to war with "blood, toil, tears, and sweat" and other memorable phrases sending "kisses to my sweet and beloved Clemmie cat," yet it also makes the imposing statesman seem more human. Sometimes Clementine would send written messages to Winston even when they were together; it was an opportunity to gather her thoughts, or avoid taking up her husband's time with arguments when he was busy managing the war. In June 1940, for example, she told him that "there is a danger of your being generally disliked by your colleagues and subordinates because of your rough sarcastic and overbearing manner.... I cannot bear that those who serve the Country and yourself should not love you as well as admire and respect you." A few of the letters are accompanied by little cartoon animals that they would draw for each other: she always drew the posterior view of a sitting cat, while he would sketch pug dogs, and later pigs. Even toward the end, when they both had to deal with increased infirmity and tragedies among their children, they still found time to send "little love messages" to each other. Looking back at their marriage, with Soames's edifying commentary sprinkled throughout (as well as a quite well-done biographical dictionary), is an experience both revealing and touching.

Soames, daughter of Winston and Clementine Churchill and author of other books on the family, has edited a collection of her parents' letters, some of them published here for the first time. From their marriage in 1908 until his death in 1965, the couple wrote letters, telegrams, and notes to each other on a regular basis. Interwoven with news of war and politics are the concerns about their

children and family, endearments, chastisements, quarrels, and reconciliations that make up all marriages. Soames indicates which collection the letters are from, provides explanatory text and footnotes, and includes a biographical appendix with information on frequently mentioned people. She has also included some of the doodles and caricatures her parents often put in their letters. While not an essential purchase, this will be a welcome addition to public and academic libraries with strong Churchill collections. Julie Still, Rutgers Univ., Camden, NJCopyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc.

I recently read this paperback book and thought it was fantastically interesting. We all think we know as much as we need to about the wonderful Winston Churchill, but this is a fascinating review of 20th century history, and I hadn't known the following points I learned in this book: We think of WC mostly as a WW2 leader of the British, but I hadn't known he was previously a very distinguished wartime soldier. First in the Boer war, later in WW1, where under fire he was constantly in danger of death, and wrote, "Our death is simply an event, and not necessarily the most important one in our lives." I also tended to think of aristocracy as having been an issue of the 19th century, but was (sort of) surprised to learn that so many people in Churchill's circle, including friends and military officers (and the Churchills themselves!) were actually members of the aristocracy. Churchill was personally acquainted with so many historical figures: Coco Chanel, Virginia Wolf, Ike, Montgomery, FDR, Harry Hopkins, Ari Onassis, Grace Kelly, etc, etc, etc. My main reason for reading this book was to discover whether it's true that FDR and Hopkins were "pro" "Uncle Joe" and the communists. The book was compiled by Mary Soames, sole surviving child of the Churchill's, and she obviously wanted to steer clear of any politics that would alienate an American audience. However, it's certainly true that WC despised Communists and the USSR, wasn't too impressed by Harry Hopkins, etc. I had read that WC was more in favor of an attack on the Nazis from the south, but I hadn't known that Churchill was embarrassed by his disastrous support of the ill-fated allied invasion toward Constantinople in WW1, nor that the British had been repulsed from the Greek Dodecanese during 1943. (Success there would have kept the USSR out of Eastern Europe!) So all in all, the issue is a wash. Churchill grew old in Eisenhower's time, and died, in sad old age, at the age of 91, in 1965. "Clemmie" was a decade younger, and died at about the same age. So for anyone interested, as I am, in 20th century history will certainly want to read this tremendous book.

A treasure trove of information about a great love and marriage and a wonderful working collaboration that saved the world from Hitler.

Great book! Just what I wanted. Great delivery time.

This is not an analysis of the relationship or Winston's political career it is simply the letters between a couple who loved each other. It is a reflection of history and the private lives of a great man and the woman who stood beside him!

A personal view of a marriage and history in the making.

Just a few tears but I'm not complaining for a low price book! No markings, no writings, smells like an old book but to me that's a very great smell :)

The real service that this book performs is to remind the reader that great historical figures are not one dimensional. Churchill was a renaissance man, warrior, journalist, historian, memoirist, politician and statesman. He was arguably the single greatest personage of this century and his name has become a symbol for the indomitable spirit of a free people. The collection of letters sent to and received from his wife are entertaining as well as educational. They provide a feel for the time in which they were written and place many of Churchill's famous accomplishments (and failures) in proper context. Amazingly, unlike today when the more we know of a public figure, the smaller they seem, in Churchill's case one comes away convinced that this was a great man in the truest sense, and that much of his greatness is due in no small part to his marriage to Clementine.

Winston and Clementine: Happily Ever After
This is the story of a political marriage. In some ways it will be familiar to the contemporary reader, though it began and ended a long time ago. Both husband and wife in this marriage were interested in politics. The husband was elected again and again over decades to high office. For decades his wife fought at his side, entertained at his table, offered her judgment to him and his colleagues and his enemies. She took his place in his absence, and sometimes in his presence. She became an international figure. She had power, and she used it. Always she had a mind of her own. Sometimes this couple would quarrel. Once a serving dish was thrown. There was a period, not too long, when one of the partners was out of sympathy with the other, or anyway in sympathy with another. They knew trouble. They lost a daughter and many friends to death, and some friends to betrayal. They fought political wars at home in which their own party tried to deprive them of office. They fought shooting wars abroad-including the worst ever.

More than once, they seemed down and out. Their livelihood as much as their career was threatened. After decades of struggle they reached the summit of power and they knew the adoration of a nation and a world. By then they had grown old together. Readers of this story will find that wives did not enter politics yesterday, and private lives were influential in politics before last week. But in other respects this story is unlike anything we have known in this time. Here are two people who won every honor that human affairs can offer, and they won them together. Meanwhile they operated upon those natural and traditional lines that involve that deepest of partnerships. Their division of labor augmented the strength of them both beyond what either could do, apart or together, if they both had done the same parts of the job. True, this is the story of a political partnership. More than that, it is a marriage. The editor of this book is the youngest child of Winston and Clementine, Mary, now Lady Soames. She brings to the work care, intimacy, and insight. She has adopted some of the best devices of Sir Martin Gilbert, Churchill's official biographer, to make the book available to the reader unfamiliar with the times and the people. Her notes are useful. She lets the letters themselves convey the story. One sees right away the amazing pace at which these people lived. Winston Churchill was a soldier whose bravery and judgment in battle were beyond doubt. He wrote every line of every speech he ever gave, save perhaps one, and they are not surpassed in eloquence or impact or amplitude. He wrote serious books, nearly forty of them. He served in the British House of Commons, and mostly in the Cabinet. Meanwhile he made his living writing and speaking in publications and before audiences all over the world. Their house teemed all day and much of the night with secretaries, researchers, and colleagues. He wrote once that statesmen should exist in a condition of "stress of soul." Ever he took that advice for himself. And necessarily, then, he imposed it upon his wife. Winston Churchill and Clementine Hozier were married in September 1908, and they remained so until parted by death in 1965. Martha Washington, wishing to keep her relations with our Founding Father private, burned most all of the letters that passed between them. The Churchills' letters are preserved intact in their remarkable abundance. Partly because they were so busy, and partly because they took many vacations apart, occasions to write were frequent. In their day the post traveled rapidly-Fed Ex was not necessary; e-mail was unavailable; the telephone came along, but its frequent use developed later. And so they wrote, and well they wrote. Nuggets are found in every shaft of this mine. Sir Winston is candid with his wife as with no other, especially in times of triumph or stress. When the first war begins, he unveils his character: "Everything trends towards catastrophe & collapse. I am interested, geared up and happy. Is it not horrible to be built like that? ... Yet I wd do my best for peace, & nothing wd induce me wrongfully to strike the blow." Another time, in a very different mood, he writes: "you have

seen me very weak & foolish & mentally infirm this week...." And then the man of unbreakable will proceeds: "I cannot tell you how much I love & honor you and how sweet & steadfast you have been through all my hesitations & perplexity." Clementine often bears the burden of saying to her husband what others cannot. When the first war begins, she cautions him about the feelings of a dismissed Admiral: "there only remains the deep wound in an old man's heart. If you put the wrong sort of poultice on it, it will fester." When the second begins, she writes: "...there is a danger of your being generally disliked by your colleagues & subordinates because of your rough sarcastic & overbearing manner.... Therefore with terrific power you must combine urbanity, kindness and if possible Olympic calm." The letters of Winston are often more abstract and reflective than those of his wife. Sometimes they are effectively first drafts of things he will later publish. His life is saved once in the trenches by an annoying general who makes him walk two miles under fire just for a little chat; when he returns his dugout and all in it are destroyed. He reflects: "it is all chance or destiny and our wayward footsteps are best planted without too much calculation. One must yield oneself simply & mentally to the mood of the game: and trust in God which is another way of saying the same thing...." At the same time, one sees in the husband a sharp need for his wife. It is he who is "lonely among crowds." It is he who has no one but her "to break the loneliness of this bustling existence." History has more to say of Winston than of Clementine. He saved his country and more in a desperate crisis, and he leaves behind him a written account of prudential wisdom that is not surpassed. Both his words and his deeds exhibit a longing for honor. He fought for it. He met its demands with utter resolve and lifelong resilience. But of course there was more to his life than that. Honor itself is limited by the high purposes that define it, including the promises and affections that make a family. So he could write to her, at one of the lowest points in his life: "the nearer I get to honor, the nearer I am to you." Churchill ends *My Early Life*, his explicitly autobiographical work, with the passage: "Events were soon ...to absorb my thoughts and energies at least until September 1908, when I married and lived happily ever afterwards." And so together they did. And do.

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