

## Elizabeth von Arnim

Writer

\* 1866, † 1941

Her real name is

**MARY ANNETTE COUNTESS VON ARNIM**, born BEAUCHAMP, called MAY by her family.

Her first publication was a novel, "Elizabeth and her German Garden", anonymously published. Since this book was a success right from the start, the following works she signed only "by the author of Elizabeth and her German Garden". Henceforth the autobiographic figure of Elizabeth represented the person herself. The only novel she wrote using a pen name, was "Christine": by Alice Cholmondeley. Only recently she became known in Germany by the name of Elizabeth von Arnim, since her publications between 1898 and 1940 now are again published under that name. This also applies to books written after 1916, the year of her marriage to Francis Russell, Viscount of Amberly.



Elizabeth von Arnim,  
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Her father was the merchant Henry Herron Beauchamp who had left London for Australia in 1848 from London to Australia. There he gathered his substantial wealth. Her mother was Elizabeth (Louey) Beauchamp, born Weiss Lassetter. The English writer Katherine Mansfield (originally Kathleen Mansfield Beauchamp), 1888-1923, was her cousin.

## CV

- 1866 Mary Annette (May) was born on 31<sup>st</sup> August in Kirribilli Point, New South Wales, Australia.
- 1870 The family Beauchamp moved back to England.
- From 1871 Several extended travels of the family to The Continent.
- 1884 End of schooling. May showed musical talent and took up piano, harp, violin, organ, and singing lessons.
- 1889 long journey to Italy with her father, met Henning Count von Arnim of the family branch of Golm-Guestow. Henning called his branch von Arnim-Schlagenthin, having inherited the estate Schlagenthin from his mother.
- 1891 Wedding of Henning and May. The couple started living in Berlin, but May was not happy there.
- 1896 May discovered Henning's estate Nassenheide, NW of Stettin, which she adored. She refurbished it and the family



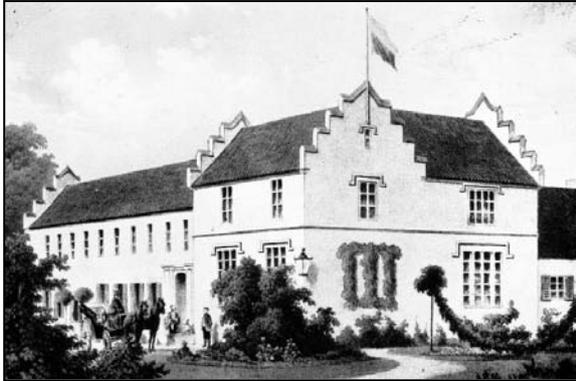
Henning Count von Arnim,  
\* 1851, † 1910

- moved there. Henning took on its management himself.  
They have now 3 daughters. May devoted herself to reviving the park and started her German Garden.
- 1897 May started writing.
- 1898 Her first Novel "Elizabeth and her German Garden" appeared in London to great acclaim.  
May decided to continue writing in the same way. She started on "The Solitary Summer", which was printed the following year.
- 1899 From now on her novels appeared in short intervals.  
Henning is sued because of a dubious financial transaction of a Stettin Bankhouse, where he was Chairman. He won the court case and was rehabilitated.
- 1908 May left Nassenheide and moved with her 4 daughters and one son to England. There is no record of whether it was due to the long years of connubial "misunderstanding" or financial hardship. It was not regarded by the couple as official separation.
- 1908 – 1910 Henning remained in Nassenheide. Finances got tighter: The payments for courtcases to rehabilitate his father Harry led to the sale of Nassenheide, to avoid confiscation.  
Difficult negotiations. Henning was a passionate agriculturist, but a poor salesman.
- 1910 Henning had to treat his poor health in health clinics.  
He died on 20<sup>th</sup> August in Bad Kissingen, surrounded by his wife and 3 daughters.
- 1912 May built a new house in Switzerland for the family, "Chalet Soleil".
- 1913 May returned to England in the wake of the 1<sup>st</sup> World War, regaining
- 1914 English Citisanship
- 1916 11<sup>th</sup> Feb. she married Francis Russell, Earl of Amberly.  
Soon it was obvious that this partnership does not work.  
The daughters Eva and Elizabeth moved to USA. May followed to get away from Russell who was betraying her.  
2<sup>nd</sup> June, her 4<sup>th</sup> daughter Felicitas, died from pneumonia in Bremen, where she had served as a nurse in a military hospital.
- 1917 Reconciliation between the Russells failed.
- 1919 Separation from Russell but no divorce.  
Elizabeth lived and wrote in her new home "Chalet Soleil" mainly, but also spendet long periods in London.
- 1929 "Chalet Soleil" is sold.
- 1930 In Mougins nr Cannes Elizabeth created a new home "Mas des Roses".
- 1931 Francis Russell died in Marseilles, France.
- 1939 Elizabeth was alarmed by the political developments in Germany and Europe and moved to the USA.
- 1940 Mary Annette (Elizabeth) Countess Russell died in Charleston S.C., USA.
- 1947 The urn with her ashes was brought home to England to the cemetery of Tylers Green, nr Penn, Buckinghamshire.



Mary Annette Countess  
Russell,  
born Beauchamp,  
called Elizabeth von Arnim

The novels of Elizabeth von Arnim are very autobiographical, though they don't depict plain reality, neither that of Elizabeth, nor of her entourage. They show life as the author likes to see it, and sometimes also according to readers' taste. The books



Nassenheide

should sell, and they did! Especially the first, "Elizabeth and her German Garden", which was reprinted 21 times in the first 8 months. This explains somehow the choice of signing subsequent books as "by the author of Elisabeth and her German Garden".

The descriptions are marginally touching on the truth, but they are so plausibly completing her characters, almost shaped into caricatures, that they at least mirror or underline reality, the reader's

benevolence and understanding implied. They either find their prejudices proved or smile at exaggerations. They lead us to insights about the life and sensibilities of the author.

May did look onto her marriage to Henning, that had never been easy or harmonious, with appreciation only after many years have passed. The tensions had been too prominent: She – a little stubborn, independence demanding English lady in the light of the new women's lib movement, He – a Prussian conservative nobleman, who could not secure operational success with his estates.

In spite of having the German citizenship through marriage she always remained English at heart. She hated the imperial Berlin. In her books she created a figure called "the fierce one", that could have been applied to her husband. Nevertheless she loved him. On 10<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1929, 19 years after his death, May wrote into her diary: "great revival of H. and the Arnims. Read old diaries. How happy was I then, so happy in my heart..." (taken from "Das Geschlecht von Arnim, Chronik der Familie im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert, Teil IV, Hrsg. Der Familienverband, Neustadt/Aisch, 2002)

### Works:

(I cite the titles according to their first titles. If there is a different title, be it in English or German, you will find it for the same book.

- a. Elizabeth and her German Garden. 1898 – Elizabeth und ihr Garten.
- b. The Solitary Summer, 1899 – Der einsame Sommer, Einsamer Sommer.
- c. The April Baby's Book of tunes, 1900, - April, May and June.
- d. The Ordeal of Elizabeth, 1901.
- e. The Pius Pilgrimage, 1901.
- f. The Benefactress, 1901, - Anna Estcourt.
- g. The Adventures of Elizabeth in Ruegen, 1904, - Elizabeth auf Ruegen.
- h. The Princess Priscilla's Fortnight, 1905, - Priscilla auf Reisen.
- i. Fraeulein Schmidt and Mr. Anstruther, 1907, - Fraeulein Schmidt und Mr. Anstruther .
- j. The Caravaners, 1909, - Die Reisegesellschaft; Englische Reise.
- k. Priscilla Runs Away, 1910, act version of no.h. (The P.P's Fortnight).
- l. The Pastor's wife, 1914, - Die preussische Ehe.

- m. Christine, 1917, under pen name Alice Cholmondeley.
- n. Christopher und Columbus, 1919, - In ein fernes Land; - Jenseits des Meeres.
- o. In The Mountains, 1920, - Tagebuch eines Sommers; - Ein Chalet in den Bergen.
- p. Vera, 1921, - Der normale Ehemann; - Vera.
- q. The Enchanted April, 1922, - Urlaub von der Ehe; - Verzauberter April.
- r. Love, 1925, - Die unvergessliche Stunde; - Liebe.
- s. Introduction to Sally, 1926; - Hochzeit; - Flucht und Ehestand der schoenen Salvatia; - Sallys Glueck, - Die Gluecksammlerin.
- t. Expiation, 1929, - Das Geheimnis der Schwestern; - Wiedergutmachung.
- u. Father, 1931, - Vater.
- v. The Jasmine Farm, 1934, - Jasminhof; - Die Farm im Jasmin.
- w. All the Dogs of my Life, 1936, - Alle meine Hunde.
- x. Fanny, 1939, - as sequence novel Mr. Skeffington, 1940, - Die sieben Siegel der Lady Frances; - Mr. Skeffington.
- y. The Matchmakers, no year.

### **Biographies:**

Charms, Leslie de\*: Elizabeth of the German Garden, William Heinemann Ltd., London 1958

\*Pseudonym for Elizabeth Butterworth, born von Arnim, daughter of Henning Graf von Arnim & Mary Annette (Elizabeth) Gräfin von Arnim, born Beauchamp.

Juengling, Kirsten & Rossbeck, Brigitte: Elizabeth von Arnim, eine Biografie, Insel taschenbuch 1840, Inselverlag, 1996

Usborne, Karen: Elizabeth von Arnim, Eine Biografie, Schoeffling & Co., Frankfurt/Main 1994

written by Jasper von Arnim, 2003

translated by Gisela Baronin von Keyserlingk, 2010