

A Story of Mother Elizabeth Seton

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To Brother Richard Shea, C.S.C.



A STORY OF MOTHER ELIZABETH SETON

Elizabeth Ann Bayley, who is known to all of us as Mother Elizabeth Seton, was born in New York on a terribly hot August day in 1774.

Her daddy was Doctor Richard Bayley, famous for his loving care of the sick, and for the intense study he was making of croup, a disease which in those days, and for many years thereafter, made life miserable for thousands. Doctor Bayley even went to England to study under a famous doctor there who was making some progress toward a cure for

this disease.

Doctor Bayley was in London at the time when the American colonies issued their Declaration of Independence. He knew that would mean war, for England would not sit back and let the control of this nation slip from her. And the doctor at that time was sympathetic to England.

So, Doctor Bayley signed up as a surgeon in the British army and set sail for America. It took two weeks to make the crossing, and he was met at the boat by his wife and two daughters. They were delighted to see him, but as soon as they heard he was to go on at once and join General Howe's army in Newport, Rhode Island, their gladness ended quickly.

"I'm sorry I must go so soon, my dear," said Doctor Bayley, but I feel sure that the war will not last very long!"



Some days later, Mrs. Bayley with her two beautiful daughters accompanied Doctor Bayley to the station where he was to leave for Newport. It was a sad parting for all, but especially for Mrs. Bayley who was always fearful for her husband's health when he was away from her. She knew that when he got absorbed in his work, he gave no thought to himself.

Early in the spring of 1777 another daughter was born to Dr. and Mrs. Bayley. War conditions prevented the doctor from coming home to see his little daughter. Mrs. Bayley understood, and since she and her daughter were both getting along well, she did not beg for him to come.

A couple of months later, however, a letter did come to camp for Doctor Dick, as his men loved to call him. It begged for him to come at once for his wife was dying!

Doctor Bayley at once got permission to resign from Howe's army and hurried back to his home in Newtown, New York.

A few days after his arrival, and in spite of all he and other doctors could do, his good wife died, leaving behind her a brokenhearted husband, and three young daughters, too young to fully realize their loss.

One of the things Mrs. Bayley had begged her husband to do was to remarry so that the children would have the care they really needed.

So, after a year of mourning, Doctor Bayley married Charlotte Barclay. Miss Barclay loved the doctor's children, and after the marriage, she gave them all of her love and attention.

When Elizabeth was old enough, she went to a private school where her favorite subjects were French and music. She learned to speak and write the language well. And all who heard her play the piano agreed she was a real musician.

Elizabeth was nine years old when the war for independence was finally over and the English left our country. And she was very happy to learn that her parents decided to remain in New York, and her father would continue his medical practice. Peace was what she wanted.