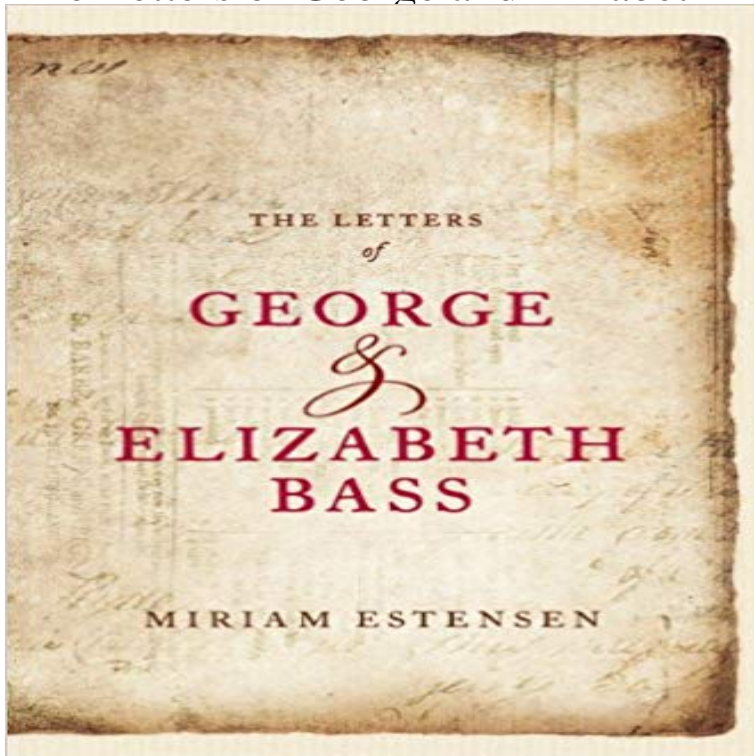


## The Letters of George and Elizabeth Bass



In August 1800, George Bass returned to England after five years in the British colony of New South Wales. Gifted, ambitious and impatient with the limitations of a naval career, he took leave from the navy to purchase a ship of his own and organise a commercial venture to Sydney. He also met Elizabeth Waterhouse, and fell very much in love. They were married on 8 October 1800. On 9 January 1801, George Bass sailed for Australia. For the next two years, and across two oceans, letters were the only link between George and Elizabeth Bass. His were brief, dashed across the page with an impatient hand, embedded with tantalising references to his life at sea or the colony of New South Wales and filled with love for his wife. Hers were many pages of small, neat script with news of her friends and family, her own thoughts and pursuits, and her yearning for a husband who would never return. The separate worlds in which George and Elizabeth lived also come to life in their letters: an England of domestic chatter and streets filled with soldiers awaiting a Napoleonic invasion; the hot humid coastal towns of Brazil, where Bass sought to sell his merchandise and took on board firewood, fresh water and tobacco; Sydney society and the disappointment of the ladies in Elizabeth not having come with her husband to join their small social circle; the exotic and languid Pacific islands where trade was difficult and ship labour hard. Rich in detail and deeply personal, *The Letters of George and Elizabeth Bass* provides a uniquely vivid and intimate portrait of the lives of these two young people and the era in which they lived.

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