Eminent Women Series

EDITED BY JOHN H. INGRAM

JANE AUSTEN

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BY

MRS. CHARLES MALDEN

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PREFACE.

THE life of Jane Austen, which extended over only forty-two years, and was chiefly passed among her own nearest relations in the quiet of a country parsonage, varied only by an occasional visit to London, to Bath, or to the sea-side, affords but little material for a biographer to deal with.

Her writings were, in fact, her life, and an attempt to give anything beyond the very briefest sketch of her career must resolve itself into a criticism of those writings. By these she is known to her many admirers, and it is with the hope of making them even better known and more widely appreciated, that this little book is offered to the public.

The writer wishes to express her obligations to Lord Brabourne and Mr. C. Austen Leigh for their kind permission to make use of the Memoir and Letters of their gifted relative, which have been her principal authorities for this work.

S. F. M.

May 1889.

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JANE AUSTEN.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY.

More than twenty years ago a gentleman visiting Winchester Cathedral asked a verger to show him Jane Austen's tomb. The man took him readily to a large slab of black marble set in the pavement near the centre of the north aisle, and the visitor stood for some time studying the inscription with keen interest; then, as he was turning away, the verger said in an apologetic tone, "Pray, Sir, can you tell me whether there was anything particular about that lady; so many people want to know where she was buried?" Such ignorance of *Mansfield Park* and *Emma* may be pardoned in a verger; perhaps it would have been rather more extraordinary if he had seemed to know anything about them, but it is strange to think how many hundreds of educated people there were then who delighted in every line of Jane Austen's writings, yet even so many years after their publication knew nothing about the life of their author, and could

hardly have told whether she had lived in this century or in the last.

Rarely has a great writer's life been so completely hidden from the public throughout its entire course, and, indeed, for many years afterwards, as Jane Austen's, for no memoir of her was attempted until quite sixty years after she had passed away. Yet few authors could better have borne the fierce light of publicity upon their lives than the simple-minded, sweet-tempered woman, who never dreamt that anyone outside her own family would care to know anything about her, and who courted personal notoriety so little. She would never have realised the charm that her sweet, peaceful, womanly life would one day have for those who, having long worshipped her genius in her writings, would be delighted to learn how completely free she was from all the whims and caprices that sometimes disfigure genius, and how entirely she carried out the saying of her great sister writer, "*D'abord je suis femme, puis je suis artiste.*"

During her whole lifetime "few of her readers," says her nephew, "knew even her name, and none knew more of her than her name"; and though this is perhaps too broad an assertion, it is undoubtedly true that she never made the least attempt to become known to any of her readers; indeed, she rather encouraged concealment than otherwise. There was no affectation of modesty in this, for throughout her life she expressed genuine and eager pleasure when her works were favourably received, but she had the shrinking of a refined nature from personal publicity, and her family, understanding the feeling, helped to screen her from it as much as they could. When *Sense and Sensibility* came out in 1811 her sister Cassandra wrote to

various members of the family to beg they would not mention who was the author, and Jane herself expressed decided satisfaction when she heard it ascribed to a Miss Hamilton, who must have been better known to novel readers of that day than of this. Even in 1813, when Jane's fame was still further established by *Pride and Prejudice*, she wrote of herself as "frightened" when she heard that a strange lady wished to be introduced to her, declaring, "If I *am* a wild beast I cannot help it. It is not my fault"; and her family bear witness how genuine was her dislike to being lionized.

To her it seemed simply absurd that any great fuss should be made about writings which she herself said "cost her so little"; which were carried on as a pleasant pastime in the midst of other occupations, and without even a separate room to work in. To write a novel was to her almost as simple a matter as to write a letter, and why should she be more famous for the one than for the other? She valued the approval and admiration of her own family and friends, but she never wished to *pose* as an authoress before the world at large; and the sort of homage offered to Miss Edgeworth, Miss Burney, Miss Mitford, and others, would have revolted her. Her love of fun, too, made her enjoy the amusing mystifications that sometimes sprang from the preservation of her *incognita*, and although, unlike her great contemporary, she never denied her own writings, she took no pains to claim them, for her name did not appear on the title-page of any of her novels until after her death.

Perhaps it was the natural result of Miss Austen's complete absence of self-assertion that her fame was not widespread during her lifetime. At first sight

it seems strange that her writings should not have become more immediately popular when so many worse ones were read with avidity; but, after all, the reason is not far to seek. Jane Austen's novels were a new departure in fiction; many clever novelists had written before her, but they had relied for their success either, like Fielding, on strong, highly-coloured pictures of life; or, like Richardson and Miss Burney, on endless complications of events; or, like Mrs. Radcliffe, on blood-curdling terrors. None of these great writers had successfully attempted a story in which there should not be one sensational incident, nor one extraordinary individual; which should deal neither with great people, nor with villains, nor with paragons of beauty and virtue, but simply with every-day types of character, leading every-day lives, and speaking and acting like ordinary mortals, but painted to the utmost perfection of finish by a most un-every-day genius. Jane Austen completely realised more than any other writer has ever done, the saying that no human being can be commonplace if you know him well enough. She knew human nature so well that no phase of it was uninteresting to her, and she painted it as thoroughly as she knew it; but her art was carried to the perfection which seems absolute simplicity, and the public could not immediately recognise the genius under the simplicity. A few able men and women instantly saw and proclaimed the merit of her works: Archbishop Whateley, Sir Walter Scott, Sydney Smith, the Countess of Morley, and—curiously enough—the Prince Regent, were among them; but they were in a small minority, and when she died in 1817 I can find no mention of her or of her writings in any newspaper or periodical of the day.

Two of Jane's best novels, *Mansfield Park* and *Persuasion*, appeared after her death, but even these did not awaken public taste; and for many years longer the circle of her admirers continued a small one. Mr. Austen Leigh tells us from his own recollections, that "Sometimes a friend or neighbour who chanced to know of our connection with the author would condescend to speak with moderate approbation of *Sense and Sensibility* or *Pride and Prejudice*; but if they had known that we in our secret thoughts classed her with Mme. D'Arblay or Miss Edgeworth, or even with some other novel writers of the day whose names are now scarcely remembered, they would have considered it an amusing instance of family conceit. To the multitude her works appeared tame and commonplace, poor in colouring, and sadly deficient in incident and interest. It is true that we were sometimes cheered by hearing that a different verdict had been pronounced by more competent judges; we were told how some great statesman or distinguished poet held these works in high estimation; we had the satisfaction of believing that they were most admired by the best judges, and comforted ourselves with Horace's *satis est equitem mihi plaudere.* So much was this the case, that one of the ablest men of my acquaintance said, in that kind of jest which has much earnest in it, that he had established it in his own mind, as a new test of ability, whether people *could* or *could not* appreciate Miss Austen's merits."

It is needless to tell the present generation how completely all this is changed, and how many hundreds of readers are well acquainted with *Emma* and *Pride and Prejudice* who have never struggled through the many-volumed adventures of *Cecilia*, or the somewhat weari-

some doings of *Ennui*; but the tide turned, though slowly, and it is difficult to tell by what steps Jane Austen reached her present secure pinnacle. Southey, Coleridge, Guizot, Lord Macaulay, Lord Holland, Whewell, and Lord Lansdowne, were all among the earlier of her warm admirers, and Sir James Mackintosh fired up in her defence when Mme. de Staël called her novels "vulgar." Lord Macaulay planned a new edition of her works, with a memoir prefixed, the profits of which should go to erecting a monument to her memory in Winchester Cathedral; but his death checked this project, and the memoir remained unwritten. It may seem curious that no biography of her was earlier attempted, but fifty or sixty years ago the popular taste was in favour of stirring incidents in a memoir; the idea of studying the development and cultivation of a rare character throughout its career was little entertained, and the Austen family had no wish to force the biography of one so beloved on an indifferent or uninterested public.

Jane Austen had the happiness of being surrounded by relations who prized all her endowments, mental and moral; who were able to help her with criticism and cheer her with wise praise, while from her earliest childhood she imbibed cultivation from her parents and the elder members of her family. Her father, George Austen, was a man of superior intellect, and of excellent education, which latter he owed partly to the generosity of a relative, but more to his own industry and love of learning. He was of good family—the Austens had been settled in Kent for many generations—but at eight years old he lost both his parents, and was penniless as well as an orphan. Through the liberality of an uncle he was sent to a good school at Tunbridge,

where he proved himself worthy of such kindness by gaining first a scholarship at St. John's, Oxford, and, finally, becoming a Fellow of his College. He took Orders soon after. To purchase a living was at that time the obvious way of helping a poor and deserving young clergyman, and in 1764 George Austen found himself the owner of two livings in Hampshire, both presented to him by relations; Deane, where he first took up his abode, and Steventon, where, in 1775, Jane Austen was born. Of course this was pluralism, but no one then would have thought of objecting to such a thing in moderation, and few could have objected strongly to Deane and Steventon being united, inasmuch as the two parishes were within a mile and a half of each other, and there were not three hundred souls in both of them combined.

Jane's mother, Cassandra Leigh, was the daughter of a clergyman who lived near Henley-upon-Thames, and she was married to George Austen before he went to Deane. The mothers of clever men are proverbially highly gifted; whether the mothers of clever women are equally so may be more doubtful, but Jane Austen's mother was unquestionably a woman of superior intellect, and to that much of her daughter's ability might be traced. All readers of Mrs. Thrale must remember stories of Dr. Theophilus Leigh, who held the Mastership of Balliol College for more than fifty years, and was a noted wit and humorist of his day. Mrs. George Austen was his niece, and would seem to have had all his brilliant powers and epigrammatic play of wit, both in conversation and in letters; in addition to which she had a still greater blessing for a woman, in a temper of imperturbable sweetness, and this several of her family inherited

from her, Jane most completely. Like her husband, she was of good family; a descendant of the Lord Chandos who was English Ambassador at Constantinople in 1686. The handsome young clergyman (George Austen was noted for his good looks even into extreme old age) settled with his bride at Deane in 1765, and they had a child, though not one of their own, before they went there. Warren Hastings, then of course in India, confided to their charge the son of his first marriage, and the child remained with them until his early death of what was then called "putrid sore throat," probably a form of diphtheria. On this child Mrs. Austen had lavished all a mother's care, and throughout her life she declared that she could not have mourned more for her own child than she did for this adopted little one, though when he died her own nursery was filling fast, for five sons were born at Deane in rapid succession, James, Edward, Henry, Francis, and Charles.

In 1771 the Austen family migrated to Steventon Parsonage, only a drive of a mile and a half from Deane Parsonage, but such a mile and a half! Where now-a-days a smooth lane runs from one village to the other there was then only a cart-track, cut up with fearful ruts, and absolutely impassable for an ordinary gentleman's carriage. Mrs. Austen was unable either to walk or ride the distance, and so, when one of the waggons conveying the family goods had been nearly filled, the remaining space was occupied by a feather bed, upon which she was placed; the beds were then wedged between small pieces of furniture to avoid as much as possible all jolting, and in this manner did the clergyman's wife reach her future home. On January the 9th, 1772, her first daughter was

born, and christened Cassandra, and after an interval of nearly four years, on December 16th, 1775, came Jane, and with her the Austen family closed.

The early life of all the young Austens was much the same. Like all her brothers and her sister, Jane was sent to a neighbouring farmer's wife as soon as possible after her birth, and remained there until of a convenient age to return home. This curious custom was then almost universal both in England and in France; most English writers of the day mention it as a matter of course, and both Richardson and Miss Edgeworth strongly uphold it. In France it was so systematized that the parents frequently sent with their infant a blank death certificate for the foster parents to fill up in case the child died while under their care! I do not know if this odd piece of foresight ever existed in England, at all events it was never needed for any of the young Austens, nor were they really banished from their parents, for both the father and mother visited the children almost daily until their return home. As far as health went the plan answered well, for all the children were healthy, and several lived to extreme old age, though Jane, alas! was not among these.

Except for occasional short absences from home, Jane's birthplace was also her dwelling-place for twenty-five years, considerably more than the half of her short life, and some of her best writing was accomplished while there, so that a description of the quiet country parsonage cannot be without some interest for her readers.

Steventon, Stephington, or Stivetune—for the place has borne all these names—is not situated in a strikingly picturesque or beautiful country; in fact, there is a family tradition that Mrs. George Austen

was wofully disappointed with her future home when taken to visit it as a bride-elect. Coming as she did from Henley-on-Thames she may have been hypercritical, but those who know the Hampshire scenery near Basingstoke will understand her feeling, for it is not of the kind to fascinate anyone at first sight. It is not exactly flat, but neither is it very hilly; it has plenty of trees, but no very fine timber, though there are many pretty walks and quiet nooks which make it a pleasant home-like neighbourhood to anyone living in it, and knowing it well. There is a good view of Steventon from the railway between Basingstoke and Popham Beacon, but the parsonage house which we see there now is not the one in which Jane Austen opened her eyes to the world nearly a hundred and fourteen years ago. That one was pulled down more than sixty years ago; it is said to have been a square, comfortable-looking house on the other side of the valley to the present one; it was approached from the road by a shady drive, and was large enough to contain not only all the Austens and their household, but at different times many other people as well. It had a good-sized, old-fashioned garden, which was filled with fruit and flowers in delightfully indiscriminate profusion, and sloped gently upwards to a most attractive turf terrace. Every reader of *Northanger Abbey* will identify this terrace with a smile! From the parsonage garden there was a curious walk to the church; it was what natives of Hampshire call "a hedge," which may be explained to those who are not natives of Hampshire as a footpath, or even sometimes a cart-track, bordered irregularly with copse wood and timber, far prettier than the ordinary type of English hedge, and forming

a distinctive characteristic of the county. Jane Austen betrayed her Hampshire origin when she made Anne Elliot in *Persuasion* overhear Captain Wentworth and Louisa Musgrove "in the hedge-row behind her, as if making their way down the rough, wild sort of channel down the centre."

The "hedge" at Steventon was called "the Church Walk," and another of the same kind began at the corner of the turf terrace, and was formed farther on into a rustic shrubbery with seats here and there, called "the Wood Walk"; just the right place for Mr. Woodhouse to have taken his three turns in, or for Lady Bertram "to get out into in bad weather!" Steventon church, as Jane Austen knew it, was small and plain, with no greater merits than good proportions, early English windows, and seven centuries of age; but since then it has been almost rebuilt, and is now a far more imposing edifice. The Church Walk led also to a fine old Manor House of the time of Henry VIII., to the grounds of which the Austens had always free access: the rest of Steventon was simply a group of cottages with good gardens attached to them.

It is easy to see that scenery and surroundings of this kind would not lend themselves to interesting description in writing; nobody but George Sand could have thrown a poetic halo round Steventon, and, therefore, Jane Austen, with her usual excellent common sense, avoided all direct mention of it. Nevertheless, just as the Brontë writings breathe Yorkshire in every line, so that it is almost like walking over the moors to read *Jane Eyre* or *Wuthering Heights*, so it is unmistakable throughout her works that Steventon, under one form or another, was the background on which Jane Austen painted her "little bits of ivory

two inches wide," as she called her novels, and that the home-life of the parsonage, its duties, its amusements, its visits and its visitors, its joys and its griefs, were the tapestry into which she wove the lives of her heroes and heroines. Her invariable principle in writing was to use the material which lay near to hand, and which, therefore, she knew thoroughly how to manipulate. Both the places and the people must be much altered now from what they were when Jane Austen grew up among them; but the life-like figures painted so long ago by her master-hand gain additional clearness and *vraisemblance* for us when we realise how both they and their surroundings were drawn from what their author actually saw, and how completely it was her genius that transformed such commonplace material into immortal substance.

Nothing could have seemed less likely to inspire a young author with good subjects than the prosaic surroundings and quiet routine of the uneventful Steventon life, with its neighbourhood neither better nor worse than other country neighbourhoods of that day, and its distance from any large town or centre of life; yet Jane Austen found this sufficient for her.

Many great writers have made a splendid use of splendid material; but she truly "created," for she made immortal pictures out of nothing. We have all encountered Miss Bates, Sir Walter Elliot, and General Tilney in real life, but few of us found them amusing until Jane Austen taught us to do so. It must not be supposed, however, that she ever drew absolute portraits in her works; she considered that an unpardonable liberty, and once, when accused of doing so, she indignantly repudiated "such an invasion of the social proprieties;" adding, with a laugh, "I am too proud of

my gentlemen to admit that they were only Mr. A. or Colonel B."

Like all truly great artists, she drew types, not individuals; and her writings, therefore, remain true to life, because types endure when individuals have long passed away. If she had not had "the divine spark" in herself, she would never have written at all, for she was not forced into doing so by Dr. Johnson's great prescription—poverty; and she was too happy and contented in her home to write as a relief from a dull life. She wrote because she could not help it—full of hope that what was such a pleasure to her would some day cause as much pleasure to others; it is only a pity that she did not live to know all the enjoyment she would give to readers in number far beyond what she ever dreamt of.

CHAPTER II.

GIRLHOOD AND FIRST ATTEMPTS AT WRITING.

THE society immediately round Steventon when Jane Austen was growing up was neither above nor below the average of country society seventy miles from London, at a time when Squire Western was by no means an extinct character, nor Mr. B. a very uncommon one.

Even now it is not unusual for a country clergyman to find himself the only educated gentleman within a radius of some miles round his parsonage; but the dense ignorance of country gentlemen a hundred years ago is a thing of the past, and it could scarcely happen to any clergyman now to be asked, as Mr. Austen was once by a wealthy squire, "You know all about these things. Do tell us. Is Paris in France, or France in Paris? for my wife has been disputing with me about it." The Austens were not, however, dependent entirely on neighbours of this class for their social intercourse, and whether, like Mrs. Bennet, they dined with four-and-twenty families or not, they certainly managed to have a good deal of pleasant society. By birth and position the Austens were entitled to mix with the best society of their county, and though not rich, their

means were sufficient to enable them to associate with the best families in the neighbourhood.

Country visits were more of a business then than now; wet weather and bad roads and dark nights made more obstacles to social intercourse than we realise in these days; but a houseful of merry, cultivated young people, presided over by genial parents, is sure to be popular with its neighbours, and Jane Austen had no lack of society when she was growing up. She was one of a most attractive family party, for they were all warmly attached to each other, full of the small jokes and bright sayings that enliven family life, and blessed with plenty of brains and cultivation, besides the sweet sunny temper that makes everyday life so easy.

Steventon Rectory in Jane Austen's girlhood was as cheerful and happy a home as any girl need have desired, and she remembered it affectionately throughout her life, unconscious how much of its sunshine she herself had produced, for in her eyes its brightness was mainly owing to her sister, Cassandra. It was natural that two sisters coming together at the end of a line of brothers should draw much together, and from her earliest childhood Jane's devotion to her elder sister was almost passionate in its intensity. As a little child she pined so miserably when Cassandra began going to school without her, that she was sent also, though too young for school life; but, as Mrs. Austen observed at the time, "If Cassandra were going to have her head cut off, Jane would insist on sharing her fate;" and this childish devotion only increased with riper years.

From beginning to end Jane never wrote a story that was not related first to Cassandra, and discussed with her; she literally shared every thought and feeling with her sister, and the two pleasant volumes of letters

which Lord Brabourne has published show us how the intense attachment between the two sisters never waned throughout their lives. The letters are almost in one way uninteresting to a third person; they are so full of the details of everyday life. Every particular is related, every plan discussed in them; they are the kind that could only pass between two people who knew that nothing which interested the one could fail to interest the other, and to open them is almost like intruding upon a confidential *tête-à-tête*: yet they are full of attraction for those who can read Jane's own character between the lines. All her warmth of heart and devotion to her family shine out in them, as well as her quick perception of character; and they sparkle throughout with quiet fun, and with humour which is never ill-natured, while from first to last there is not a line written for effect, nor an atom of egotism or self-consciousness. It is characteristic both of Jane's self-abnegation and of her complete faith in her sister that, even after she was a successful authoress, she always gave Cassandra's opinion first to anyone consulting her on literary matters, and if it differed from her own she mentioned the fact almost apologetically, and merely as if she felt bound to do so.

If she did not actually pine for her sister's presence after she was grown up, she certainly missed her, even in a short time, far more than most sisters, however affectionate, would do. At twenty she is eager to give up a ball to which she had been looking forward, merely that Cassandra may return from a visit two days earlier than she otherwise could, and writes, "I shall be extremely impatient to hear from you again, that I may know when you are to return." At another time she reproaches her for staying away

longer than she need have done, and entreats her to write oftener while away, declaring, "I am sure nobody can desire your letters as much as I do;" while every letter she receives from Cassandra is commented on with the same lover-like ardour, and received with the same delight, long after both the sisters had passed the romantic stage of girlhood.

"Excellent sweetness of you to send me such a nice long letter," writes Jane, in 1813, when she was eight and thirty years old; and though doubtless letters were greater treasures then than now, it must be remembered that these and similar expressions are from a woman who was usually anything but "gushing" or "sentimental" in her language. Wherever the sisters were they always shared their bed-room, and if Jane's feeling was the clinging devotion of a younger to an elder sister, Cassandra certainly returned it with an intense sympathy and affection that never diminished in life or in death.

The sisters were educated together chiefly at home. Mr. Austen taught his sons in great part himself, and was well fitted to do so, but the higher education for women had not then been discovered, and the Austen girls were not better instructed than other young ladies of their day. Jane's especial gift was skill and dexterity with her fingers; she was a first-rate needlewoman, and delighted in needlework; she excelled also in any game or occupation that required neat-fingeredness; but she was no artist, and not a great musician, though far from a bad one. Like Elizabeth Bennet, "her performance was pleasing, though by no means capital." She was an excellent French scholar, and a fair Italian one; German was in her day quite an exceptional acquirement for ladies;

and as to what was then thought of the dead languages for them, all readers of Hannah More must remember her bashful heroine who put the cream into the tea-pot and the sugar into the milk-jug on it being discovered that she read Latin with her father!

Jane Austen risked no such overwhelming discovery, but she was well acquainted with the standard writers of her time, and had a fair knowledge of miscellaneous literature. Crabbe, Cowper, Johnson, and Scott were her favourite poets, though, rather oddly, she set Crabbe highest; and it was a standing joke in the family that she would have been delighted to become Mrs. Crabbe if she had ever been personally acquainted with the poet.

Old novels were her delight, and the influence of Richardson and Miss Burney may be traced in some of her early writings. I have always thought that her criticism on the *Spectator* in *Northanger Abbey* proves that she could have known very little of Steele and Addison's masterpieces; but tastes differ, and she may have been unlucky in her selections. She always took pleasure in calling herself "ignorant and uninformed," and in declaring that she hated solid reading; but her letters continually make mention of new books which she is reading, and there was a constant stream of literature setting through the rectory at Steventon, in which Jane shared quite as fully as any of the others.

The delight and pursuit of her life, however, from very early days, was writing, and she seems to have been permitted to indulge in this pleasure with very little restraint; all the more, perhaps, that no amount of scribbling ever succeeded in spoiling her excellent handwriting. After she grew up to womanhood she

regretted not having read more and written less before she was sixteen, and urged one of her nieces not to follow her example in that respect; but there must have been many wet or solitary days in the quiet rectory life which would have been very dull for the child without such a resource, and posterity may rejoice that no one hindered Jane Austen's inclination for writing.

How soon she began to produce finished stories is not certain, but from a very early age her writings were a continual amusement and interest to the home circle, where they were criticised and admired with no idea as to what they might lead. Most young authors try their hands at dramatic writing some time or other, and Jane passed through this stage of composition when she was about twelve years old, though she never seems to have attempted it later in life. It was not a style which could have suited her, but at the time she tried it the young Austens had taken a craze for private theatricals, and Jane's plays are thus easily accounted for.

The *corps dramatique* consisted of the brothers and sisters and a cousin, who had become one of them under pathetically romantic circumstances. She was a niece of Mr. Austen's, had been educated in Paris, and married to a French nobleman, the Count de la Feuillade. He was guillotined in the Revolution, and she, with great difficulty, made her way to England, where she found a home in the already well-filled rectory at Steventon. She was clever and accomplished, rather un-English in her ways and tastes, and very ready to help in the theatricals, which, perhaps, would not have existed but for her. There was no theatre but the dining-room or a barn, and both actors and

audience must have been limited in number; but plays were got up in which Mme. de Feuillade was the principal actress; James Austen wrote brilliant prologues and epilogues when they were wanted, and Jane Austen looked on and laid in materials for the immortal theatricals of the Bertram family. Space must have made it impossible for a Mr. Yates, a Mr. Rushworth, or the Crawfords to be among the Steventon actors; but there may have been a very sufficient spice of love-making throughout the business, for Mme. de Feuillade afterwards married Henry Austen, Jane's third brother, and it is probable that there were enough "passages" between them during the theatricals to interest a girl of Jane's age keenly. Meanwhile, something—perhaps the absurdly transparent mysteries in which some old comedies abound—suggested to her a little *jeu d'esprit*, which, slight as it is, shows her keen sense of fun and her close observation, for she has copied the style and manner of an old play very closely, even in the dedication.

THE MYSTERY:

AN UNFINISHED COMEDY.

Dedication to the Rev. George Austen.

Sir,—I humbly solicit your patronage to the following comedy, which, though an unfinished one, is, I flatter myself, as complete a *Mystery* as any of its kind.

I am, Sir,

Your most humble Servant,

THE AUTHOR.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

MEN.	WOMEN.
COL. ELLIOTT,	FANNY ELLIOTT,
OLD HUMBUG,	MRS. HUMBUG, and
YOUNG HUMBUG,	DAPHNE.
SIR EDWARD SPANGLE, and	
CORYDON.	

Act I. Scene I.—A Garden.

Enter CORYDON.

CORYDON. But, hush; I am interrupted. [*Exit* CORYDON.

Enter OLD HUMBUG *and his* SON, *talking.*

OLD HUM. It is for that reason that I wish you to follow my advice Are you convinced of its propriety?

YOUNG HUM. I am, Sir, and will certainly act in the manner you have pointed out to me.

OLD HUM. Then let us return to the house. [*Exeunt.*

Scene II.—A parlour in Humbug's house. Mrs. Humbug and Fanny discovered at work.

MRS. HUM. You understand me, my love?

FANNY. Perfectly, ma'am; pray continue your narration.

MRS. HUM. Alas! it is nearly concluded, for I have nothing more to say on the subject.

FANNY. Ah! here is Daphne.

Enter DAPHNE.

DAPHNE. My dear Mrs. Humbug, how d'ye do? Ah, Fanny, it is all

FANNY. Is it, indeed?

MRS. HUM. I'm very sorry to hear it.

FANNY. Then 'twas to no purpose that I ——

DAPHNE. None upon earth.

MRS. HUM. And what is to become of ——?

DAPHNE. Oh! 'tis all settled. [*Whispers* MRS. HUMBUG.

FANNY. And how is it determined?

DAPHNE. I'll tell you. [*Whispers* FANNY.

MRS. HUM. And is he to ——?

DAPHNE. I'll tell you all I know of the matter.

[*Whispers* MRS. HUMBUG *and* FANNY.

FANNY. Well, now I know everything about it I'll go away.

MRS. HUM. and DAPHNE. And so will I. [*Exeunt.*

Scene III.—The curtain rises and discovers Sir Edward Spangle reclined in an elegant attitude on a sofa fast asleep.

Enter COL. ELLIOTT.

COL. E. My daughter is not here, I see. There lies Sir Edward. Shall I tell him the secret? No, he'll certainly blab it. But he's asleep and won't hear me, so I'll e'en venture.

[*Goes up to* SIR EDWARD, *whispers him, and exit.*

End of the First Act. Finis.

The Steventon theatricals came to an end when Jane was scarcely fifteen, but their influence on her writings existed for some time longer, and on the whole was scarcely a good one. "Instead of presenting faithful copies of nature, these tales were generally burlesques ridiculing the improbable events and exaggerated sentiments which she had met with in sundry silly romances." Caricature is not a high type of art, and we may be glad that Jane Austen got over this stage while young. A trace of it lingers in *Northanger Abbey*, but she soon dropped it, either because it grated upon her own taste, or perhaps from the advice of her brother James. He was a man of much ability, and, being ten years older than his sister Jane, had a considerable share in forming her literary taste and judgment.

About 1792 or thereabouts, she tried her hand at the form of novel in letters which Miss Burney and Richardson had then made very popular. It was natural that a girl deeply versed in *Sir Charles Gran-*

dison and *Evelina* should be attracted by this style, but, in spite of some successes, it is doubtful if it could form a good vehicle for an every-day story, and it certainly was not suited to Jane Austen's manner of writing. She had not then, however, realised her own powers, or perfected her own inimitable style, and she persevered long enough with the letter-writing to compose at least two complete novels in it. One of these, *Elinor and Marianne*, she afterwards re-wrote completely, converting it from the letter form into ordinary narrative, and published it in 1811 as *Sense and Sensibility*. The other story, *Lady Susan*, which was much shorter, she never altered, but apparently did not like it enough to attempt publishing it, and for years after her death it was unknown to the public, as well as to most of her own family.

At some former time she had given the autograph copy of the story to a favourite niece, Fanny Austen (afterwards Lady Knatchbull, mother of the present Lord Brabourne). Another niece, Mrs. Lefroy, had taken a copy of the story for herself, and through these two ladies the existence of *Lady Susan* became known, so that more than sixty years after the author's death it was published for the first time. No one knows its exact date, but it is evidently a juvenile production, and her family believe that it is the earliest specimen of her writings which has yet appeared in print.

It is a short story, dealing, as was the writer's wont, with only two or three families; but except for this, it is scarcely suggestive of her later style, and is curiously deficient in all humour or playfulness, for which, indeed, the dimensions of the story do not give much

scope. Lady Susan Vernon, the heroine, is a beautiful and accomplished coquette of the worst type. She has been left a young widow with one daughter, almost grown-up, who is, of course, very much in her way, and whom she tries to get rid of by marrying her to a booby. Frederica Vernon the daughter, who under a timid exterior conceals a high-principled and resolute disposition, resists the marriage so firmly that her mother sends her back to school in order to weary her into submission, while she herself goes to pay a long visit to a married brother-in-law, Mr. Charles Vernon, who she thinks may be a useful friend to her. By an awkwardly managed complication Frederica is unexpectedly obliged to leave school and appears at Churchhill (Charles Vernon's), while her mother is deep in a flirtation with Mrs. Vernon's brother, Reginald de Courcy; and through a still more clumsy *tour de force* the "booby," Sir James Martin, follows her there, and by his manners and appearance upsets all Lady Susan's carefully-arranged version of her daughter's engagement. Frederica falls in love with Reginald, who is unconscious of her feeling for him, but is shaken in his allegiance to her mother, by observing what passes before him, until Lady Susan contrives to blind his judgment again, and, as he is heir to a large property and an old baronetcy, she allures him into offering his hand, which she accepts.

She departs for London, and her admirer follows, but there a complete *éclaircissement* takes place through Reginald encountering a Mrs. Mainwaring, with whose husband Lady Susan has long carried on a violent flirtation, and who reveals all her wrongs in language not to be misunderstood. He bids farewell to Lady Susan, who makes a contemptuous reply, and returns

to his own home, while her ladyship prepares to enjoy herself in London, determined, however, first to get Frederica married to Sir James without delay, whatever may be the girl's own wishes.

Here the correspondence, which is almost entirely confined to four people—Lady Susan and a friend on the one side, Mrs. Charles Vernon and her mother on the other—ceases, perhaps because Jane Austen found it impossible to wind up the plot satisfactorily by it; so in a concluding chapter—which is rather long and heavy but may have been written at a later period, as it has more of her usual mannerism in it than any other part of the story—she tells us, what we already foresee, that Frederica held out firmly against Sir James, that her mother got heartily sick of her and sent her back to Churchhill, where, of course, in due time, she became Reginald de Courcy's wife, while Lady Susan herself was eventually married to Sir James Martin.

The story cannot be considered up to Jane Austen's standard, and she probably felt this herself, for she never tried to incorporate it in anything else that she wrote. It is curious that so young an author should have selected a heroine of thirty-five years old, and unsatisfactorily to have made the hero fall in love with both mother and daughter. There are greater faults than this, however, in the book; the characters are too slightly sketched to excite much interest, there is little or no dialogue to relieve the monotony of the letters, and the events do not fall out naturally. In short, few even of the author's most devoted admirers would call it a good novel; and it can only interest those who like to trace the steps by which a great writer advances to fame.

Lady Susan is not well written, and between it and

Pride and Prejudice there is almost as great a gulf as between *Scenes of Clerical Life* and *Romola.*

If published in her lifetime, *Lady Susan* might have injured Jane Austen's literary reputation, but by the time her descendants decided to give it to the world her matured fame stood on a pinnacle that no immature work could possibly affect, and, as she evidently did not think highly of it herself, none of her admirers need shrink from avowing the same feeling.

CHAPTER III.

HER LIFE'S ONE ROMANCE.

THE years from 1787 to 1795 which passed over Steventon Parsonage, brought few changes to the quiet life of its inmates, except such as occur in every family of young people growing-up. From boys and girls the Austens became young men and young women: James, Edward, and Henry all made their start in life, and the two elder ones married; Francis and Charles went into the navy and rose rapidly, for those were golden days for steady, ambitious young naval officers; Cassandra duly took her place as the "Miss Austen" of the family, and finally came Jane's turn to be, as she says of a friend in one of her letters, "grown up and have a fine complexion, and wear great square muslin shawls."

In other words, Jane Austen, in 1795, was "tall and twenty," and if she had not, to continue the quotation, "beaux and balls in plenty," it can only have been because the neighbourhood was not rich in these advantages; she had, however, quite as much as she wanted of both.

Those who knew her at this time speak highly of her beauty, and two portraits which still exist of her

quite bear out their praise. "Fair and handsome, slight and elegant," Sir Egerton Brydges calls her at this time, and the first portrait, which shows her in early youth, depicts a tall, slight girl, whose graceful *élancé* figure is not wholly disfigured, even by the ugly, unbecoming dress of the day. She stands with a fan in her hand, in the attitude of one just about to speak; the head, well set and poised, is thrown slightly back, the brilliant beautiful eyes look laughingly out as if enjoying some gay speech, and the full lips are slightly parted, as if ready with a playful rejoinder. The hair is cut short, but waves in thick curls all over her head, and figure and expression alike give the idea of her being, like her own Emma Woodhouse, "the picture of health." The brilliant expression would be attractive in a plainer face, and, looking at the radiant girl, one is tempted to wonder how Jane Austen could have remained Jane Austen all her life, but in truth no one would have found it easy to persuade her into matrimony. Her taste was fastidious, her home a very happy one, and her heart and mind abundantly occupied, so that the admiration she received amused more than it touched her, and she took good care that it should not usually go beyond very reasonable limits.

One admirer, who figures rather conspicuously in some of her earlier letters, subsequently achieved considerable eminence in life; this was Mr. Thomas Lefroy, afterwards Chief Justice of Ireland. He came into Hampshire one Christmas (when Jane was just twenty) on a visit to his aunt, Mrs. Lefroy, whose husband was the Rector of Ashe, the parish adjoining Steventon. This Mrs. Lefroy was a brilliant woman, with much charm of manner; she was greatly attached to Jane, who looked up to her with all a

girl's admiration for an older woman of superior attainments. Jane was constantly at Ashe, and when she met Thomas Lefroy there the two clever young people were mutually attracted. Very possibly Mrs. Lefroy hoped that the attraction might ripen into something warmer, but Jane's own tone on the matter is invariably playful.

"You scold me so much in the nice long letter which I have this moment received from you," she writes to Cassandra in January, 1796, "that I am almost afraid to tell you how my Irish friend and I behaved. Imagine to yourself everything most profligate and shocking in the way of dancing and sitting down together. I *can* expose myself, however, only *once more,* because he leaves the country soon after next Friday, on which day we *are* to have a dance at Ashe after all. He is a very gentleman-like, good-looking, pleasant young man, I assure you. But as to our having ever met, except at the last three balls, I cannot say much; for he is so excessively laughed at about me at Ashe that he is ashamed of coming to Steventon, and ran away when we called on Mrs. Lefroy a few days ago."

Cassandra's sisterly feelings had taken alarm at this "gentleman-like, good-looking, pleasant young" Irishman, and Jane was bent on teasing her, for in the same letter she mischievously tells her sister that she had received a visit from Mr. Lefroy, who "has but *one* fault, which time will, I trust, entirely remove;—it is that his morning coat is a great deal too light." Next she declares that she is looking forward with great impatience to the Ashe ball, "as I rather expect to receive an offer from my friend in the course of the evening. I shall refuse

him, however, unless he promises to give away his white coat," and then announces with mock solemnity that she intends to give up all her other admirers, and "confine myself in future to Mr. Tom Lefroy, for whom I don't care sixpence." Finally, on January 16th, she tells her sister that "at length the day is come on which I am to flirt my last with Tom Lefroy, and when you receive this it will be over. My tears flow as I write at the melancholy idea." And thus ended this little episode "*comme à vingt ans.*" It is impossible to imagine that Jane had any serious feeling for "Tom Lefroy," and, as he was three times married in the course of his life, and lived to be about ninety, his heart cannot have been irretrievably wounded either. Throughout his long and brilliant career, however, he never forgot his fair partner of the Ashe and Basingstoke balls, and to the last would refer to her as a girl much to be admired, and not easily to be forgotten by anyone who had once known her, an opinion which most others who knew her endorse warmly.

Two years later we hear of another "passage" in Jane's life, which seems more serious on the gentleman's side, though it is difficult to say whether she was touched by it or not. Writing in November 1798 (to her sister, as usual) she says that she has had a visit from Mrs. Lefroy, "with whom, in spite of interruptions both from my father and James, I was enough alone to hear all that was interesting, which you will easily credit when I tell you that of her nephew she said nothing at all, and of her friend very little. She showed me a letter which she had received from her friend a few weeks ago (in answer to one written by her to recommend a nephew of Mrs. Russell to his notice at Cambridge), towards the end of which was a

sentence to this effect: 'I am very sorry to hear of Mrs. Austen's illness. It would give me particular pleasure to have an opportunity of improving my acquaintance with that family—with a hope of creating to myself a nearer interest. But at present I cannot indulge any expectation of it.'" After giving this quotation, Jane herself goes on: "This is rational enough; there is less love and more sense in it than sometimes appeared before, and I am very well satisfied. It will all go on exceedingly well, and decline away in a very reasonable manner. There seems no likelihood of his coming into Hampshire this Christmas, and it is therefore most probable that our indifference will soon be mutual, unless his regard, which appeared to spring from knowing nothing of me at first, is best supported by never seeing me. Mrs. Lefroy made no remarks in the letter, nor did she, indeed, say anything about him as relative to me. Perhaps she thinks she has said too much already."

Evidently the unnamed "friend" of Mrs. Lefroy had fallen in love at first sight, the sort of attachment which Jane would least understand, and which she would be most inclined to ridicule. Nevertheless, as to her indifference, "the lady doth protest too much, methinks"; yet it is impossible not to suspect some consciousness in her careful avoidance of his name; it is clear that there were serious obstacles—probably of money—on his side, and that Jane, even if attracted by him, had determined to nip the whole affair in the bud.

From other sources we hear of repeated unsuccessful attempts to win her, especially of one suitor whose addresses she declined, although "he had the recommendations of good character and a good position in life,

of everything, in fact, except the subtle power of touching her heart." It seems wonderful that a woman who could describe love as she could, who could draw Fanny Price and Emma Woodhouse and Anne Elliot all under the spell of that influence, should never have felt its effects herself; yet her nephew declares that he knows "of no definite tale of love to relate" of her, and Lord Brabourne, while confirming the fact that she might more than once have been married had she wished it, confirms also Mr. Austen Leigh's conviction that her heart was never won. There was, however, a sad little romance in her life, which for many years seems to have been known only to her sister. In 1801 Cassandra and Jane, while staying at the seaside in Devonshire, became acquainted with a clergyman who was in all respects so attractive that even Cassandra thought him worthy of her cherished sister, and his admiration for Jane was soon so marked that there was no doubt of his wishes, and, in the elder sister's opinion, not much doubt of his ultimate success. When the seaside visit ended, he impressed strongly on the sisters his intention of soon meeting them again, and Cassandra was preparing to see her constant companion removed to a new home, when tidings came of his sudden death before another interview could take place. What Jane felt at this time was told only to her sister, who so respected her reticence that she never mentioned the story until years after Jane's death, when she spoke of it to some of the family, and gave them to understand that she considered this the one real romance of her sister's life. Nevertheless, considering how short the time was during which the acquaintanceship had existed, even she could scarcely say how far her sister's happiness had been really affected by it.

Through some curious misunderstanding of this little episode has arisen another far more romantic story about Jane Austen, which has only lately been given to the world. Sir Francis Doyle, in his brilliant and amusing *Reminiscences,* says that a friend of his once made acquaintance with a niece of Jane Austen, who gave her many particulars of her aunt's life. According to her, Jane Austen was once actually engaged to a young naval officer, and after the peace of 1802 she went abroad with her father, sister, and *fiancé* to visit Switzerland. They travelled in company for some time till at length the Austens settled to go on to their next stage by *diligence,* while the young man started to walk over the mountains, intending to join them at Chamouni. They arrived there in due time, but waited for him in vain, at first unsuspicious of misfortune, then surprised and uneasy, finally in terrible alarm, until the news of his death came to confirm their worst fears. The story adds that the young officer had overwalked himself, and became so alarmingly ill on his way that he had been carried to a cottage, where he lay for many days between life and death, incapable of communicating with the outer world until just before his death, when he rallied sufficiently to give the Austens' address to those who were nursing him, and thus they heard the news. Sir Francis builds upon this story (which, of course, only came to him third hand) a graceful little theory about *Persuasion,* which was not published until after Jane's death, and which has often been remarked upon as softer and tenderer in tone than her earlier novels. He thinks that this is explained by the tragic romance through which she had passed before writing *Persuasion;* but this theory will hardly hold good in face of

facts, and, indeed, the story practically crumbles to pieces when investigated. First, the whole episode must have been before 1805, for Mr. Austen died in that year, but neither then nor at any other time is there any probability that Jane Austen was ever abroad; her own family believe that she never crossed the sea in her life. A second objection, which Sir Francis himself remarks upon, is that none of Jane's own generation of relatives knew anything of the story, nor any of her nephews or nieces except the unnamed one who told it to Sir Francis's friend. Mr. Austen Leigh and his sisters, Mrs. Lefroy and Miss Austen, all remembered their aunt Jane well; so did Lady Knatchbull, who had been a special companion and chosen confidante of hers; yet none of these had ever heard of Jane Austen being definitely engaged to anyone, and it is certain that the niece who related the story was not one of those who remembered her aunt, so that she can only have had it at second hand herself. Indeed, the Austens were on such intimate terms with each other that it is inconceivable they should not all have known of any declared engagement among themselves; but what above all is utterly and entirely inconceivable is that Cassandra Austen, who must have known all about it, should not only have never mentioned it to anyone, but should have told a different story to account for her sister's never having married. Another explanation of Sir Francis's story is also possible. Though Jane Austen never was engaged to be married, Cassandra Austen was; her *fiancé* died while out of England, after a short and sudden illness. With a resemblance like this between the sisters' stories it is not difficult to see how, years later, when Cassandra and Jane were both gone, the more tragic

romance would be given to the best-known sister with those embellishments and alterations that are sure to occur as a story filters from one generation to another.

Cassandra had been engaged to a young clergyman who could not marry till he obtained preferment, but who had good prospects from a wealthy relative, who was kind to him and had several livings in his gift. While waiting for one of these to fall vacant, the patron, who knew nothing of the engagement, urged the young man to go out with him on a visit to the West Indies; he went there, and died of yellow fever. Cassandra's grief, which was deep and lasting, was, of course, shared by Jane, who, though quite young at the time, already felt every sorrow of her sister's as her own. That these two stories have been confused together, I feel sure; and those readers who regret losing an additional touch of romance for the charming story of *Persuasion* must remember that both *Emma* and *Mansfield Park* were written, and *Northanger Abbey* completely revised for the press, after 1805, so that there is really no reason why one of these should not show traces of Jane's sorrow as well as another.

With the authority of the family for pronouncing the story told by Sir Francis a mistake, we may dismiss it, together with the wild statement once made by Mary Russell Mitford (on the authority of her mother) about Jane Austen in her girlhood. Mrs. Mitford, before her marriage, lived at Ashe, the rectory next to Steventon, and Miss Mitford, in one of her pleasant rambling letters, quotes her mother as remembering Jane Austen well *before her marriage*, and adds: "Mamma says that she was then the prettiest, silliest,

most husband-hunting butterfly she ever remembers." Such a description of Jane Austen carries glaring improbability on the face of it, but fortunately it is needless to begin a defence of her character, for Mrs. Mitford married and left Ashe before Jane was ten years old, and the intercourse between Ashe and Steventon had come to an end about three years before that. Most unintentionally, therefore, Miss Mitford perpetuated some complete misunderstanding of her mother's words, and we may fairly believe that some similar misunderstanding originated the story repeated to Sir Francis Doyle, who, seeing all its improbabilities, suggests himself that in some way or other his informant must have been "most unaccountably mistaken"

CHAPTER IV.

FIRST ATTEMPTS AT PUBLISHING AND CHANGE OF HOME.

From about the age of twenty to five-and-twenty—that is, during the five last years of her life at Steventon—Jane had fairly taken up her pen, and worked really hard with it all the time. At least three of her best-known novels were written during this period, although, from their not having been published till much later, there is difficulty in fixing the exact dates of their composition. *Pride and Prejudice*, however, was begun in October 1796, when she was nearly twenty-one, and finished in August 1797. Three months after it was completed she began upon what we now know as *Sense and Sensibility*, but with which, as has been already said, she incorporated a good deal of an earlier story, *Elinor and Marianne*, originally written in letters. *Northanger Abbey* she wrote in 1798, soon after finishing *Sense and Sensibility*.

Even in the quiet life at Steventon, it is difficult to understand how Jane managed to combine so much literary work with all her household and social occupations, for so little was writing a serious business

to her that she never mentions it in her letters throughout those years. It is provoking to read through the pages of correspondence with the sister to whom she told everything, and to find them full of little every-day details of home life without a single word upon the subject which would be so interesting now to us. It cannot have been from shyness that she avoided the topic, for her own family knew of her stories when completed, and, wonderful to relate, she carried on all her writing in the little parsonage sitting-room, with everyone coming in and out and pursuing occupations there. This, by the way, speaks volumes for the Austen family and their friends; for if even one of them had been a Mrs. Allen, or, worse still, a Miss Bates, all Elizabeth Bennet's and Emma Woodhouse's doings might have been for ever lost to posterity. While perfectly free from shyness or false shame with her own family about her works, Jane was nevertheless careful to keep the knowledge of them from the outer world, and, in spite of her writing being so openly carried on, one intimate friend of her family's wrote afterwards that he "never suspected her of being an authoress." She always used a little mahogany desk—still in existence—which was easily put away if necessary; and she wrote on very small sheets of paper, which could be quickly concealed without attracting any notice.

When we hear of so much steady work between 1795 and 1800, it seems wonderful that she published nothing until 1811; but Jane Austen, like other people, was destined to work her way slowly to success, and her first attempts at getting into print were so disheartening that they deserve to be recorded for the benefit of all despairing young authors.

When *Pride and Prejudice* was finished and given to the family circle, Mr. Austen was much struck by the story, and determined to make an effort to get it published. Accordingly, in November 1797, he wrote to Mr. Cadell, the well-known London publisher, as follows:

SIR,

I have in my possession a manuscript novel, comprising 3 vols., about the length of Miss Burney's *Evelina*. As I am well aware of what consequence it is that a work of this sort sh[d] make its first appearance under a respectable name, I apply to you. I shall be much obliged therefore if you will inform me whether you choose to be concerned in it, what will be the expense of publishing it at the author's risk, and that you will venture to advance for the property of it, if on perusal it is approved of. Should you give any encouragement I will send you the work.

I am, Sir, your humble servant,

GEORGE AUSTEN.

Steventon, near Overton, Hants,
1st Nov., 1797

Was Mr. Cadell already overwhelmed with novels in imitation of *Evelina*, or had he made some unlucky ventures in that line, or was he offended by the epithet "respectable" which Mr. Austen applied to him? It is impossible to tell now; but by return of post, and without having seen a line of the book, he declined to undertake it on any terms, and *Pride and Prejudice* remained unknown to the public till sixteen years later. Probably Mr. Austen made a mistake in not sending the MS. direct to the publisher at first, for if Mr. Cadell had glanced at the first chapter of it, he must have seen it was no ordinary novel.

Nevertheless, this was not the only unsuccessful attempt at publication which befell Jane Austen. Six years later, in 1803, while living at Bath, she offered

Northanger Abbey, which had then undergone careful revision, to a local publisher, who actually accepted it and gave her—ten pounds! On second thoughts the worthy man seems to have repented of his bargain, for he never brought it out, and the MS. remained in oblivion for thirteen years longer. By that time Jane Austen had begun to recognise her position as a successful authoress, and thought with justice that if she could recover the MS. it might be published without detracting from her fame. Henry Austen, her third brother, who often helped her in her intercourse with publishers and printers, undertook the errand, and found no difficulty whatever in regaining the work, copyright and all, by repaying the original ten pounds. On this occasion the publisher learnt his error (which Mr. Cadell probably never did); for as soon as Henry Austen had safely concluded the bargain, and gained possession of the MS., he quietly informed the unlucky man that it was by the author of *Pride and Prejudice*, and left him, we may hope, raging at himself over the opportunity which he had missed of making so good a stroke of business.

In 1801 the state of her father's health brought about the first important change in Jane's life, for the old home was given up, and she was destined never to spend so much of her life in any other. The change was a great sorrow to her, but she was allowed very little time to dwell upon it, for Mr. George Austen was a man of prompt decision and rapid action, and having made up his mind, while Jane was away on a visit, that he would leave Steventon, she found, when she returned, that the preparations for departure were being carried on. Mr. Austen was then upwards of seventy, and felt himself no longer fit for the active

duties of a clergyman. He did not resign his livings, but installed his eldest son in them as a kind of perpetual curate, and this arrangement lasted till Mr. Austen's death in 1805.

At first the idea of a move was a great grief to Jane, but she was always resolute in seeing the bright side of life, and so she repressed her own regrets, and could soon write gaily to her sister: "I am becoming more and more reconciled to the idea of departure. We have lived long enough in this neighbourhood; the Basingstoke balls are certainly on the decline; there is something interesting in the bustle of going away, and the prospect of spending future summers by the sea or in Wales is very delightful. For a time we shall now possess many of the advantages which I have often thought of with envy in the wives of sailors or soldiers. It must not be generally known, however, that I am not sacrificing a great deal in quitting the country, or I can expect to inspire no tenderness, no interest in those we leave behind." It was fortunate that she had a hopeful disposition to bear her up throughout the worries of house-hunting, and the inevitable discomforts of "a move," for Cassandra was away at the time, and, Mrs. Austen being in delicate health, all the burden fell upon Jane. Mr. Austen wished to live at Bath, where Mrs. Austen had a married sister, Mrs. Leigh Perrot; so in May 1801 Jane and her parents moved to Bath, where they were to stay with their relatives till they found a house. Jane's account of the journey brings before us the gap that railroads have made between her days and ours, for "our journey was perfectly free from accident or event; we changed horses at the end of every stage, and paid at almost every turnpike. We had charming

weather, hardly any dust, and were exceedingly agreeable as we did not speak above once in three miles. We had a very neat chaise from Devizes; it looked almost as well as a gentleman's, at least as a very shabby gentleman's. In spite of this advantage, however, we were above three hours coming from thence to the Paragon, and it was half after seven by your clocks before we entered the house. We drank tea as soon as we arrived; and so ends the account of our journey, which my mother bore without any fatigue."

Bath was not new to Jane Austen, as all readers of *Northanger Abbey* must perceive; but its palmy days, as we read of them in *The Virginians, Evelina* and *Northanger Abbey,* were past before she went to live there; and though there was still a fair amount of small gaieties in the town, they can hardly have been very attractive to a girl of her age. With all her cheerfulness she was a good deal bored by them, and it is not wonderful when we read such an account as this, and remember that *ab uno disce omnes.* "I hope you honoured my toilette and ball with a thought. I dressed myself as well as I could, and had all my finery much admired at home. By nine o'clock my uncle, aunt, and I entered the rooms, and linked Miss Winstone on to us. Before tea it was rather a dull affair, but then the before tea did not last long, for there was only one dance, danced by four couple. Think of four couple surrounded by about a hundred people, dancing in the upper rooms at Bath." We may well think of it, and this was the liveliest form of dissipation Jane had, for she records soon after "another stupid party last night; perhaps if larger they might be less intolerable, but here there were only just enough to make one card-table, with six

people to look on and talk nonsense to each other." It is not wonderful that she adds, "I cannot anyhow continue to find people agreeable; I respect Mrs. Chamberlayne for doing her hair well, but cannot feel a more tender sentiment." Soon after this, however, her spirits again rising to their usual playfulness, she gives an absurd little account of a walk undertaken with the very lady who did her hair so well. "The friendship between Mrs. Chamberlayne and myself, which you predicted, has already taken place, for we shake hands whenever we meet. Our grand walk to Weston was again fixed for yesterday, and accomplished in a very striking manner. Everyone of the party declined it under some pretext or other except our two selves, and we had, therefore, a *tête-à-tête*; but *that* we should equally have had after the first two yards, had half the inhabitants of Bath set off with us. It would have amused you to see our progress. We went up by Sion Hill, and returned across the fields. In climbing a hill Mrs. Chamberlayne is very capital; I could with difficulty keep pace with her, yet would not flinch for the world. On plain ground I was quite her equal. And so we posted away under a fine hot sun, *she* without any parasol or shade to her hat, stopping for nothing, and crossing the church-yard at Weston with as much expedition as if we were afraid of being buried alive. After seeing what she is equal to I cannot help feeling a regard for her. As to agreeableness, she is much like other people."

In spite of its dulness Bath suited both Mr. and Mrs. Austen in many ways, and before long they and their daughters were settled at 4 Sydney Terrace. Some time later they moved to Green Park Buildings, and

were there till Mr. Austen's death in the spring of 1805, when, after a short residence in lodgings in Gay Street, his widow and daughters left Bath "for good."

Whether the life there had been too full of small bustles for authorship to be easy, or whether the declining health of her parents occupied her too fully for writing, the fact remains that Jane Austen composed nothing of importance while at Bath; perhaps the failure of *Northanger Abbey* in 1803 disheartened her for a time from further efforts. One story she did begin, but it was never finished, nor even divided into chapters, so that she cannot have thought seriously of publishing it, and it certainly would not have satisfied her in its present state. In 1871 Mr. Austen Leigh, at the earnest request of many friends, published it in the same volume with *Lady Susan*, and called it *The Watsons*, as it had not any title. It is not a production to enhance her fame, and, indeed, the fragment is so slight and unfinished in manner and in matter that it shows how she must have polished and re-polished her writings before she gave them to the public.

The leading idea of *The Watsons* is of a girl of natural refinement early taken away from a vulgar home, and placed among cultivated people. When grown up, unfortunate circumstances compel her to live again with her own family, and their vulgarity becomes painfully obvious to her, especially when they come in contact with the great people of the neighbourhood. These grandees have been accustomed to treat the Watsons with contemptuous familiarity, and now find themselves repelled by the lady-like manners of Emma, whose beauty at the same time attracts universal notice. The first half of the story is chiefly

taken up with the description of a country ball; then follow scenes of family life at the Watsons' home, where a married brother, Robert Watson, is introduced with his wife, in whom we certainly see the germ of Mrs. Elton. There is also a gleam of resemblance between old Mr. Watson and Mr. Woodhouse, but Mr. Watson is a very inferior edition of the delightful old man at Hartfield.

At this point the story, which only fills sixty-seven pages of print, closes abruptly, and it cannot be said that there was promise enough in it to make anyone regret its unfinished state. Probably Jane felt this herself, for at first she designed to continue it, and as she talked it over with her sister Cassandra she told her the intended sequel. "Mr. Watson was soon to die, and Emma to become dependent for a home on her narrow-minded sister-in-law and brother. She was to decline an offer of marriage from Lord Osborne" (one of the grandees who had formerly insulted her family), "and much of the interest of the tale was to arise from Lady Osborne's love for Mr. Howard (Lord Osborne's tutor) and his counter affection for Emma, whom he was finally to marry."

Mr. Howard is an agreeable person, who from the first is evidently destined for Emma, but it is doubtful if even Jane Austen could have made an interesting and pleasant story out of such materials. The Watsons are too vulgar, and their vulgarity is too obtrusive: there is no one, Emma herself and perhaps Mr. Howard excepted, to contrast with it, for the Osbornes are quite as vulgar in their way. Mrs. Robert Watson just escapes being amusing, and is only snappish and ill-tempered. Even in the fragment which we have, there is too much husband-hunting of the lowest kind to

have been tolerable in detail. The probability is that she wrote nothing more for some time; at all events, when she left Bath with her mother and sister in 1805 she had added nothing but this fragment to the valuable stock of writing which she brought with her from Steventon.

Her next home was in Southampton, where her mother took a house with a garden in Castle Square, and there Jane was established for four more years of her fast shortening life. A friend of hers, Martha Lloyd, to whom she constantly refers in her letters, came to live with them, and this was a source of great happiness to Jane, who frequently mentions her in terms of warm affection. Ultimately Miss Lloyd married Frank Austen, Jane's youngest brother; but this connection, which would have given her so much pleasure, did not take place till several years after Jane herself had passed away. The Southampton house was a pleasant one, but the Austens never took root comfortably there, and it is significant of how little Jane felt at home in it, that she wrote absolutely nothing during her four years of Southampton life; not even as much as she had accomplished at Bath. She had come under circumstances of loss and sorrow which would probably have made any place unattractive to her, and her mother and sister evidently shared her feeling, for as soon as an opportunity occurred of changing their home they gladly seized it.

This opportunity came through Jane's second brother, Edward. He owned two estates, both left to him by a distant cousin, and he offered a home at either to his mother and sisters. Godmersham Park, in Kent, was one of his places; Chawton House, in Hampshire, the other; and Mrs. Austen and

her daughters chose the latter. Chawton Cottage, a small house on the Hampshire estate, was altered, improved, aud fitted up for them, and in 1809 the party of four ladies (for Miss Lloyd remained with them) moved from Southampton and established themselves in what was to prove Jane Austen's last home. We may well believe that when she left Southampton she rejoiced in the hope that it would be her last move, but she could scarcely have foreseen for how short a time she would need any earthly home, and those who loved her so dearly would, indeed, have mourned if they had known that she would have been with them for only eight more years. Yet without those eight years how incomplete her life would have been, and how little of her work would have been left for posterity to admire.

For some time she had felt herself only a sojourner in strange towns, not really "at home" anywhere; and though she seldom complained of this feeling, it showed itself in the way she had dropped her favourite home pursuit of writing. Now, after the move to Chawton, she dwelt among her own people, and to such a domestic nature as hers this was a great boon.

Edward Austen—or Edward Knight as he had now become—deserves the warm gratitude of all Jane Austen's readers for the arrangement by which his sister found herself again in a real "home," and felt able to take up once more the writing which she had almost entirely laid aside after leaving Steventon. As one would like to know whether, on leaving her first home, she ever realised that in that quiet parsonage she had laid the foundations of a world-wide fame, so one longs to know whether, on settling at Chawton, she guessed that she should there

attain the zenith of her powers, and see at least some measure of her future success. Probably neither idea ever occurred to her; she was too simple-minded to think much of herself and her works at any time, and her principal feeling would have been a peaceful satisfaction at finding herself once more in a house that she could really call "home," blessed with the continual companionship of her sister, as well as her dearest friend, and enjoying the country life that was associated with her earliest childish recollections.

CHAPTER V.

"SENSE AND SENSIBILITY."

CHAWTON Cottage has long been pulled down, and as no picture of it exists we can only gather from the description that it was a fair-sized house, with a frontage near the road, but so skilfully arranged by Edward Austen that its sitting-rooms looked only upon the garden. He had planted trees and shrubs so as completely to screen the enclosure from the road (which was the highway to Winchester), and had thrown together two or three small fields to make a pleasant rambling unconventional garden, large enough for a very fair amount of ladies' exercise in those days when ladies took only moderate walks, and when Elizabeth Bennet was sneered at for walking six miles across country. The house was large enough to receive several visitors at a time, even when the home party were all there, and there was much coming and going of the brothers and their families, for the Austens were greatly attached to one another, and took pleasure in meeting as often as possible, while all the nephews and nieces regarded a visit to "Aunt Jane" as a delightful privilege. Being the youngest of her family, some of her brothers' children were not far from her own age, and she

always delighted in their companionship. One of them discovered in later years that he must constantly have interrupted her in the midst of her writing by his visits to Chawton Cottage, but she had never allowed him to find it out at the time, either by open mention or by repressed annoyance. Another wrote after her death, "As a very little girl I was always creeping up to Aunt Jane, and following her whenever I could, in the house and out of it. I might not have remembered this but for the recollection of my mother's telling me privately that I must not be troublesome to my aunt. Her first charm to children was great sweetness of manner. She seemed to love you, and you loved her in return. This, as well as I can now recollect, was what I felt in my early days before I was old enough to be amused by her cleverness. But soon came the delight of her playful talk; she could make everything amusing to a child. Then, as I got older, when cousins came to share the entertainment, she would tell us the most delightful stories, chiefly of Fairyland, and her fairies had all characters of their own. The tale was invented, I am sure, at the moment, and was continued for two or three days if occasion served." Thus, beloved by both her own generation and the next, Jane's life at Chawton was a thoroughly peaceful and cheerful one; but much as she treasured the home life, it could not satisfy her so entirely as to make her forget that literary life, which was as a second nature to her.

In the summer of 1811, two years after her move to Chawton Cottage, *Sense and Sensibility* was published by Egerton, and Jane Austen, at the age of thirty-six, was fairly launched on that career of authorship which was to prove so short, yet so much more brilliant

ultimately than her best friends and warmest admirers then expected. Her own expectations were so humble —probably from her two previous disappointments— that it has been said she saved something out of her income to meet any possible loss in the publication, a precaution which, it is needless to say, was quite uncalled for. She made one hundred and fifty pounds by it, and, on receiving the money, remarked that it was a great deal to earn for so little trouble!

Sense and Sensibility was originally called *Elinor and Marianne*, but it might as appropriately have been named *The Dashwood Family*, for it is really the history of one family, of whom two sisters are nominally the chief characters, but by no means the most interesting; and the other personages of the story, as was so usual with Jane Austen, only revolve round the centre characters. The John Dashwoods are unquestionably the most prominent, though not the most attractive, members of the family, and from the first conversation early in the book between John Dashwood and his wife, we feel that we know them thoroughly, and can safely predict their future conduct all through. John Dashwood is the only child of his father's first marriage; he inherits a good fortune from his mother, and has acquired another with his wife, besides which his only child has had a large one unexpectedly left to him by a relation. He has a stepmother and three half-sisters, Elinor, Marianne, and Margaret Dashwood, who, on the premature death of the father, are left very scantily provided for. On his death-bed, Mr. Dashwood earnestly entreats John Dashwood to do something for them, which the latter readily promises, all the more as the fortune which has come to his child had always been destined for the second

family. The John Dashwoods take possession of the house and estate as soon as the funeral is over, and the elder Mrs. Dashwood perceives that she and her daughters must soon find themselves a home elsewhere. Meanwhile John Dashwood debates, first with himself, then with his wife, as to what he is bound to do for them.

"When he gave his promise to his father he meditated within himself to increase the fortunes of his sisters by the present of a thousand pounds apiece. He then really thought himself equal to it. The prospect of four thousand a year in addition to his present income, besides the remaining half of his own mother's fortune, warmed his heart, and made him feel capable of generosity.

"Yes, he would give them three thousand pounds: it would be liberal and handsome! It would be enough to make them completely easy. Three thousand pounds! he could spare so considerable a sum with little inconvenience."

He thought of it all day long and for many days successively, and he did not repent . . .

Mrs. John Dashwood did not at all approve of what her husband intended to do for his sisters. To take three thousand pounds from the fortune of their dear little boy would be impoverishing him to the most dreadful degree. She begged him to think again upon the subject. How could he answer it to himself to rob his child, and his only child too, of so large a sum? It was very well known that no affection was ever known to exist between the children of any man by different marriages, and why was he to ruin himself and their poor little Harry by giving away all his money to his half-sisters?

"'It was my father's last request to me,' replied her husband, 'that I should assist his widow and daughters.'"

"'He did not know what he was talking of, I daresay; ten to one but he was light-headed at the time. Had he been in his right senses he could not have thought of such a thing as begging you to give away half your fortune from your own child.'

"'He did not stipulate for any particular sum, my dear Fanny; he only requested me, in general terms, to assist them and make their situation more comfortable than it was in his power to do. Perhaps it would have been as well if he had left it wholly to myself. He could hardly suppose I should neglect them. But as he required the promise I could not do less than give it: at least, I thought so at the time. The promise, therefore, was given, and must be performed. Something must be done for them whenever they leave Norland and settle in a new home.'

"'Well then, *let* something be done for them; but *that* something need not be three thousand pounds. Consider,' she added, 'that when the money is once parted with, it never can return. Your sisters will marry, and it will be gone for ever. If, indeed, it could ever be restored to our poor little boy——'

"'Why, to be sure,' said her husband very gravely, 'that would make a great difference. The time may come when Harry will regret that so large a sum was parted with. If he should have a numerous family, for instance, it would be a very convenient addition.'

"'To be sure it would.'

"'Perhaps, then, it would be better for all parties if the sum were diminished one half. Five hundred pounds would be a prodigious increase to their fortunes.'

"'Oh! beyond anything great! What brother on earth would do half so much for his sisters, even if *really* his sisters! And as it is—only half blood! But you have such a generous spirit.'

"'I would not wish to do anything mean,' he replied. 'One had rather on such occasions do too much than too little. No one at least can think I have not done enough for them: even themselves, they can hardly expect more.'

"'There is no knowing what *they* may expect,' said the lady, 'but we are not to think of their expectations: the question is, what you can afford to do.'

"'Certainly; and I think I may afford to give them five hundred pounds apiece. As it is, without any addition of mine, they will each have above three thousand pounds on their mother's death—a very comfortable fortune for any young woman.'

"'To be sure it is; and, indeed, it strikes me that they can want no addition at all. They will have ten thousand pounds divided amongst them. If they marry, they will be sure of doing well; and if they do not, they may all live very comfortably together on the interest of ten thousand pounds.'

"'That is very true, and therefore I do not know whether, upon the whole, it would not be more advisable to do something for their mother while she lives rather than for them—something of the annuity kind, I mean. My sisters would feel the good effects of it as well as herself. A hundred a year would make them all perfectly comfortable.'

"His wife hesitated a little, however, in giving her consent to this plan.

"'To be sure,' said she, 'it is better than parting with fifteen hundred pounds at once. But then, if

Mrs. Dashwood should live fifteen years we shall be completely taken in . . . people always live for ever when there is any annuity to be paid them, and she is very stout and healthy and hardly forty. An annuity is a very serious business; it comes over and over every year, and there is no getting rid of it. You are not aware of what you are doing. I have known a great deal of the trouble of annuities, for my mother was clogged with the payment of three to old superannuated servants by my father's will, and it is amazing how disagreeable she found it. . . . My mother was quite sick of it. Her income was not her own, she said, with such perpetual claims upon it; and it was the more unkind in my father, because, otherwise, the money would have been entirely at my mother's disposal, without any restriction whatever. It has given me such an abhorrence of annuities, that I am sure I would not pin myself down to the payment of one for all the world.'

"'It is certainly an unpleasant thing,' replied Mr. Dashwood, 'to have those kind of yearly drains on one's income. One's fortune, as your mother justly says, is *not* one's own. To be tied down to the regular payment of such a sum on every rent-day is by no means desirable: it takes away one's independence.'

"'Undoubtedly; and, after all, you have no thanks for it. They think themselves secure; you do no more than what is expected, and it raises no gratitude at all. If I were you, whatever I did should be done at my own discretion entirely. I would not bind myself to allow them anything yearly. It may be very inconvenient some years to spare a hundred, or even fifty pounds from our own expenses.'

"'I believe you are right, my love; it will be better that there should be no annuity in the case. Whatever I may give them occasionally will be of far greater assistance than a yearly allowance, because they would only enlarge their style of living if they felt sure of a larger income, and would not be sixpence the better for it at the end of the year. It will certainly be much the best way. A present of fifty pounds now and then will prevent their ever being distressed for money, and will, I think, be amply discharging my promise to my father.'

"'To be sure it will. Indeed, to say the truth, I am convinced within myself that your father had no idea of your giving them any money at all. The assistance he thought of, I daresay, was only such as might be reasonably expected of you; for instance, such as looking out for a comfortable small house for them, helping them to move their things, and sending them presents of fish and game and so forth whenever they are in season. I 'll lay my life that he meant nothing further; indeed, it would be very strange and unreasonable if he did. Do but consider, my dear Mr. Dashwood, how excessively comfortable your mother-in-law and her daughters may live on the interest of seven thousand pounds, besides the thousand pounds belonging to each of the girls, which brings them in fifty pounds a year apiece, and of course they will pay their mother for their board out of it. Altogether they will have five hundred a year amongst them, and what on earth can four women want for more than that? They will live so cheap! Their housekeeping will be nothing at all. They will have no carriage, no horses, and hardly any servants; they will keep no company, and can have no expenses of any kind!

Only conceive how comfortable they will be! Five hundred a year! I am sure I cannot imagine how they will spend half of it; and as to your giving them money, it is quite absurd to think of it. They will be much more able to give *you* something.'"

Perhaps Mrs. John Dashwood's bitterness against her husband's family is sharpened by perceiving the very evident attachment of her eldest brother Edward Ferrars for Elinor Dashwood, an attachment which both she and her mother find insupportable, as they are bent on his making a brilliant marriage which shall raise him to eminence. The elder Mrs. Dashwood, on the other hand, is delighted at the prospect, for, while cordially disliking her daughter-in-law, she has a great esteem and affection for Edward Ferrars; and warm-hearted, romantic, and imprudent, she looks to nothing but the future happiness of the young people. Her second daughter, Marianne, is the exact copy of her mother in disposition; both regard all prudence or circumspection as worldly wisdom of the worst type, and while they respect Elinor for her calm judgment and steady good sense, they have no wish whatever to imitate her.

I think the title of the book is misleading to modern ears. Sensibility in Jane Austen's day meant warm, quick feeling, not exaggerated or over-keen, as it really does now; and the object of the book, in my belief, is not to contrast the sensibility of Marianne with the sense of Elinor, but to show how with equally warm tender feelings the one sister could control her sensibility by means of her sense when the other would not attempt it. These qualities come still more prominently forward when Mrs. Dashwood and her daughters have found a home at Barton Cottage, on the estate of a

cousin, Sir John Middleton. He is a good-humoured sportsman, his wife a vapid fine lady, and his mother-in-law, Mrs. Jennings, a vulgar old woman. He is very fond of society, and the kind of society he gathers round him may be easily guessed.

Marianne, who is refined and cultivated, despises them all intensely, and is barely civil to the Middletons and their friends; Elinor, to whom their ways are equally distasteful, nevertheless recognises the kindly intentions of their landlord, and responds to them as far as possible. There is one individual at Barton Park whom she finds agreeable—Colonel Brandon, a friend of Sir John, who is a sensible, cultivated man of about five and thirty, and she is the more interested in him as he is from the first visibly falling in love with Marianne; but that young lady considers his age as an insuperable barrier to any ideas of marriage. "Thirty-five has nothing to do with matrimony," she declares contemptuously.

"'Perhaps,' said Elinor, 'thirty-five and seventeen had better not have anything to do with matrimony together; but if there should by any chance happen to be a woman who is single at seven and twenty, I should not think Colonel Brandon's being thirty-five any objection to his marrying *her*.'

"'A woman of seven and twenty,' said Marianne after pausing a moment, 'can never hope to feel or inspire affection again; and if her home be uncomfortable or her fortune small, I can suppose that she might bring herself to submit to the offices of a nurse for the sake of the provision and security of a wife. In his marrying such a woman, therefore, there would be nothing unsuitable. It would be a compact of convenience, and the world would be satisfied. In my eyes it would be no marriage at all, but that would be

nothing To me it would seem only a commercial exchange, in which each wished to be benefited at the expense of the other.'"

It is obvious that a young lady of seventeen with these views will make a great goose of herself some day, and the occasion is not far off. A new character appears at Barton Park, one John Willoughby, who is young, handsome, and well-born. He is evidently much attracted by Marianne's beauty and animation, and as she finds in him a congenial spirit, holding all her views, and agreeing with all her sentiments, she is soon as thoroughly in love with him as he appears to be with her. Elinor cannot wonder at their attachment, but she does wish they would make it a little less conspicuous. "When he was present she had no eyes for anyone else. Everything he did was right. Everything he said was clever. If their evenings at the Park were concluded with cards, he cheated himself and all the rest of the party to get her a good hand. If dancing formed the amusement of the night, they were partners for half the time; and when obliged to separate for a couple of dances, were careful to stand together, and scarcely spoke a word to anyone else. Such conduct made them, of course, most exceedingly laughed at; but ridicule could not shame, and seemed hardly to provoke them."

This blissful condition of "spooning," to which Elinor objects, and which Mrs. Dashwood thinks quite natural, comes to an end through Willoughby being called to London by a wealthy relation, whose orders he must obey. He departs with every appearance of affliction, but gives no pledge as to his return; and Marianne, though absolutely certain of his constancy, abandons herself to an ecstasy of grief and

despair at his absence, which nothing can moderate. Elinor has troubles of her own quite as severe as her sister's. She has always felt that there was some unacknowledged obstacle between. Edward Ferrars and herself, and has believed it to be the opposition of his mother, on whom he is entirely dependent, as he has never been allowed to have a profession. Now, however, two Miss Steeles, cousins of Sir John Middleton, appear at Barton Park, and Elinor learns for the first time, quite unexpectedly, what it is that lies between Edward and herself. He is engaged to Lucy Steele, an engagement formed in a moment of boyish folly when he was only nineteen and living with her uncle, his tutor; but the young lady, who has a keen eye to her own interests, is quite determined not to release him, and he cannot in honour draw back. Lucy has heard enough of Elinor to be jealous and suspicious; her engagement is a profound secret at present, but she confides it to Elinor under a pledge of secrecy, hoping thereby to make her thoroughly wretched. In this amiable intention she only half succeeds. Elinor knows Edward too well to believe that he really cares for a girl of Lucy's type; but she does feel that he is separated from her, probably for ever, and, being obliged to keep this knowledge a secret from her mother and sisters, and being at the same time very anxious to betray nothing that should give Lucy any triumph over her, her position is a very hard one. All this time nothing is heard of Willoughby, and, Marianne becomes increasingly wretched. Mrs. Jennings is going to her London house for the winter, and as she is fond of young people, and has married both her own daughters, she urges the Miss Dashwoods to accompany her. Elinor at first refuses the invitation.

"Mrs. Jennings received the refusal with some surprise, and repeated her invitation immediately. 'Oh, Lord! I am sure your mother can spare you very well, and I *do* beg you will favour me with your company, for I've quite set my heart upon it. Don't fancy that you will be any inconvenience to me, for I shan't put myself at all out of my way for you. It will only be sending Betty by the coach, and I hope I can afford *that*. We three shall be able to go very well in my chaise; and when we are in town, if you do not like to go wherever I do, well and good, you may always go with one of my daughters. I am sure your mother will not object to it; for I have had such good luck in getting my own children off my hands, that she will think me a very fit person to have the charge of you; and if I don't get one of you, at least, well married before I have done with you, it shall not be my fault. I shall speak a good word for you to all the young men, you may depend upon it . . . I am sure I shall be monstrous glad of Miss Marianne's company, whether Miss Dashwood will go or not; only the more the merrier, say I, and I thought it would be more comfortable for them to be together, because, if they got tired of me, they might talk to one another, and laugh at all my odd ways behind my back; but one or the other, if not both of them, I must have.'"

At any other time an invitation like this would have disgusted Marianne Dashwood beyond power of expression; now, in her eagerness to learn something about Willoughby, she is wild to go; and Elinor makes up her mind to endure the visit for her sake, well aware that poor Mrs. Jennings will get very little society out of her companion if Marianne go with her alone.

In London the plot thickens, and all the love affairs

come to a crisis. Marianne, after sending Willoughby letter after letter, which remain unanswered, meets him at length, only to learn that he is on the eve of marriage to a young lady of large property, and, as her grief and misery are past all restraint, Elinor now ascertains what she had sometimes feared, but thought impossible, that Willoughby had never definitely spoken of love to Marianne, and that the romantically imprudent girl, pursuing her theory of complete confidence in anyone she loved, had given the most outspoken marks of devotion to a man who had never told her he cared for her. The truth must now be known to all their friends, who are by this time gathered in London, and Elinor's chief anxiety is to keep all the comments from reaching her sister.

Lady Middleton expressed her sense of the affair about once every day, or twice, if the subject occurred very often, by saying, "It is very shocking indeed!" and, by means of this continual, though gentle vent, was able, not only to see the Miss Dashwoods from the first without the smallest emotion, but very soon to see them without recollecting a word of the matter; and having thus supported the dignity of her own sex, and spoken her decided censure of what was wrong in the other, she thought herself at liberty to attend to the interest of her own assemblies, and therefore determined, though rather against the opinion of Sir John, as Mrs. Willoughby would at once be a woman of elegance and fortune, to leave her card with her as soon as she married.

"Sir John could not have thought it possible, a man of whom he had always had such reason to think well! such a good-natured fellow! he did not believe there was a bolder rider in England. It was an unaccountable

business. He wished him at the devil, with all his heart. He would not speak another word to him, meet him where he might, for all the world; no, not if it were to be by the side of Barton Covert, and they were kept waiting for two hours together Such a scoundrel of a fellow! such a deceitful dog!" Mrs. Jennings, who, like everyone else that saw them together, had believed Marianne and Willoughby to be formally though secretly engaged, is equally furious with him, and full of pity for her, but can soon console herself with prophecies of better things in store for Marianne. "'Well, my dear, 'tis a true saying about an ill wind, for it will be all the better for Colonel Brandon. I hope he will come to-night. It will be all to one a better match for your sister. Two thousand a year without debt or drawback. . . . Delaford is a nice place, I can tell you; exactly what I call a nice old-fashioned place, full of comforts and conveniences, quite shut in with great garden-walls that are covered with the best fruit-trees in the country, and such a mulberry-tree in the corner. . . . Then there is a dove-cote, some delightful stew-ponds, and a very pretty canal, and everything, in short, that one could wish for; and, moreover, it is close to the church, and only a quarter of a mile from the turnpike road, so 'tis never dull, for if you only go and sit up in an old yew arbour behind the house you may see all the carriages that pass along. Oh, 'tis a nice place!'" In spite of all these attractions Elinor is not hopeful of inducing Marianne to bestow her thoughts upon Colonel Brandon, who, on his part, is deeply grieved at the blow to Marianne, and, putting his own feelings completely aside, is only anxious to be of as much use to both the sisters as he can.

A decidedly dull and almost unnecessary part of the book comes in here, where Colonel Brandon thinks himself bound to give Elinor, at full length, an episode in Willoughby's past life, which, he hopes, may some day show Marianne more plainly how unworthy he was of her. The story is disagreeable; it is difficult to believe that a man like Colonel Brandon would have told it in all its details to a girl of nineteen, and it is obvious that it would do Marianne no good to know it, as Elinor discovers when, with curious want of judgment, she forces it upon her; in short, it is a little piece of sententiousness which betrays the youth of the writer. Poor Elinor's own affairs are sufficiently agitating at this time. The Miss Steeles have come up to London, and Lucy Steele, who is becoming very anxious to secure Edward, worms herself with great address into the good graces of his mother and sister, till she and her sister are invited to stay with Mrs. John Dashwood in London. Edward himself is in town and intensely wretched under Lucy's jealous eyes, while Elinor, in addition to her own distress, is placed in perpetual difficulties by Marianne, who, of course, knows nothing of Edward's unhappy position, and promotes *tête-à-tête* between him and Elinor so openly as to enrage Lucy almost beyond self-control. At last the storm bursts; the indiscretion of the elder Miss Steele reveals her sister's engagement, and the fury of Mrs. Ferrars and Mrs. Dashwood knows no bounds. John Dashwood immediately calls upon his sisters to give them all particulars and some news of his wife.

"'You have heard, I suppose,' said he with great solemnity, as soon as he was seated, 'of the very shocking discovery that took place under our roof yesterday.'

"They all looked their assent; it seemed too awful a moment for speech.

"'Your sister,' he continued, 'has suffered dreadfully; Mrs. Ferrars, too—in short, it has been a scene of such complicated distress—but I will hope that the storm may be weathered without our being any of us quite overcome. Poor Fanny! she was in hysterics all yesterday. But I would not alarm you too much. Donovan says there is nothing materially to be apprehended; her constitution is a good one, and her resolution equal to anything. She has borne it all with the fortitude of an angel! She says she never shall think well of anybody again; and one cannot wonder at it, after being so deceived—meeting with such ingratitude where so much kindness had been shown, so much confidence had been placed! It was quite out of the benevolence of her heart that she had asked these young women to her house, merely because she thought they deserved some attention, were harmless well-behaved girls, and would be pleasant companions; for, otherwise, we both wished very much to have invited you and Marianne to be with us, while your kind friend there was attending her daughter. And now to be so rewarded! "I wish with all my heart," says poor Fanny in her affectionate way, "that we had asked your sisters instead of them."'

"Here he stopped to be thanked, which being done, he went on:

"'What poor Mrs. Ferrars suffered when Fanny first broke it to her is not to be described. While she, with the truest affection, had been planning a most eligible connection for him, was it to be supposed that he could be all the time secretly engaged to another person? Such a suspicion could never have entered

her head . . . "*There*, to be sure," said she, "I might have thought myself safe." She was quite in an agony. We consulted together, however, as to what should be done; and at last she determined to send for Edward. He came . . . his mother explained to him her liberal designs in case of his marrying Miss Morton, told him she would settle on him the Norfolk estate, which, clear of land-tax, brings in a good thousand a year, offered even, when matters grew desperate, to make it twelve hundred, and, in opposition to this, if he still persisted in this low connection, represented to him the certain penury that must attend the match. His own two thousand pounds, she protested, should be his all; she would never see him again, and so far would she be from affording him the smallest assistance that, if he were to enter into any profession with a view of better support, she would do all in her power to prevent his advancing in it.'

"Here Marianne, in an ecstasy of indignation, clapped her hands together, and cried, 'Gracious God! can this be possible?'

"'Well may you wonder, Marianne,' replied her brother, 'at the obstinacy which could resist such arguments as these. Your exclamation is very natural.'

"Marianne was going to retort, but she remembered her promises, and forbore. . . .

"'Well, Sir,' said Mrs. Jennings, 'and how did it end?'

"'I am sorry to say, Ma'am, in a most unhappy rupture. Edward is dismissed for ever from his mother's notice. He left her house yesterday; but where he is gone, or whether he is still in town, I do not know, for *we*, of course, can make no inquiry.

. . . And there is one thing more preparing against him, which must be worse than all—his mother has determined, with a very natural kind of spirit, to settle *that* estate upon Robert immediately, which might have been Edward's on proper conditions. I left her this morning with her lawyer, talking over the business.'

"'Well,' said Mrs. Jennings, 'that is *her* revenge. Everybody has a way of their own. But I don't think mine would be to make one son independent because another had plagued me.'

"Marianne got up, and walked about the room.

"'Can anything be more galling to the spirit of a man,' continued John, 'than to see his younger brother in possession of an estate which might have been his own? Poor Edward! I feel for him sincerely.'

"A few minutes more, spent in the same kind of effusion concluded his visit, and, with repeated assurances to his sisters that he really believed there was no material danger in Fanny's indisposition, and that they need not, therefore, be very uneasy about it, he went away, leaving the three ladies unanimous in their sentiments on the present occasion, as far, at least, as it regarded Mrs. Ferrars's conduct, the Dashwoods' and Edward's. Marianne's indignation burst forth as soon as he quitted the room, and, as her vehemence made reserve impossible in Elinor, and unnecessary in Mrs. Jennings, they all joined in a very spirited critique upon the party."

Marianne's unusual self-control before her brother is due to the "promises" mentioned above, which Elinor had extorted from her. She has, of course, been greatly shocked and grieved at the discovery of Edward Ferrars's

engagement; still more distressed by finding how long Elinor has had to bear the sorrow of it alone, and though at first, following her favourite theories, she declares that Elinor could never have really cared for Edward, or she could not have borne his desertion so calmly, she is gradually brought to a more reasonable frame of mind by her sister's earnest representations.

"'For four months, Marianne, I have had all this hanging on my mind without being at liberty to speak of it to a single creature, knowing that it would make you and my mother most unhappy whenever it was explained to you, yet unable to prepare you for it in the least. It was told me—it was, in a manner, forced on me—by the very person herself whose prior engagement ruined all my prospects, and told me, as I thought, with triumph. This person's suspicions, therefore, I have had to oppose by endeavouring to appear indifferent where I have been most deeply interested; and it has not been only once—I have had her hopes and exultation to listen to again and again. I have known myself to be divided from Edward for ever . . . nothing has proved him unworthy, nor has anything declared him indifferent to me. I have had to contend against the unkindness of his sister and the insolence of his mother, and have suffered the punishment of an attachment without enjoying its advantages. And all this has been going on at a time when, as you too well know, it has not been my only unhappiness. . . . If I had not been bound to silence, perhaps nothing could have kept me entirely—not even what I owed to my dearest friends—from openly showing that I was *very* unhappy.'"

Marianne's warm heart is completely overcome, and her praiseworthy efforts at self-government are the result.

The sisters are anxious now to leave London, but have to pay a visit on their way home to Mrs. Palmer, Mrs. Jennings' other daughter; and the whole of this visit might, I venture to think, have been omitted with advantage to the story. Marianne is taken ill there; Elinor and Mrs. Jennings remain alone to nurse her, as everyone else is afraid of infection. The illness increases so alarmingly that Mrs. Dashwood is sent for; and then Willoughby, who is already married, hears that Marianne is dying. In an agony of remorse at his late conduct to her, and of misery at his own position, he makes his way to Elinor to palliate as far as possible, his conduct, and to implore Marianne's forgiveness. His wretchedness softens Elinor into granting him a hearing; but, as a matter of fact, she had much better not have done so, nor should such a girl as she was have allowed him to tell her all he does about his past life, and about the woman he has married, even though its object is to soothe Marianne by letting her know how sincerely he had loved her. When Marianne recovers—as, of course, she does; nobody of interest ever dies in Jane Austen's novels—and returns to her own home with her sister, she is comforted by knowing that her love was not bestowed without return, and her high principle makes her resolve to occupy her mind so thoroughly as to drive out all remembrance of the past. Her energetic schemes for doing this, and improving herself, are told with all Jane Austen's gentle finished satire. "'I know we shall be happy. I know the summer will pass happily away. I mean never to be later in rising than six, and from that time till dinner I shall divide every moment between music and reading. I have formed my plan, and am determined to enter on a course of serious study. Our own

library is too well known to me to be resorted to for anything beyond mere amusement; but there are many works well worth reading at the Park, and there are others of more modern production, which I know I can borrow of Colonel Brandon. By reading only six hours a day I shall gain in the course of a twelvemonth a great deal of instruction, which I now feel myself to want.'"

In the same gently satirical tone we are told how Mrs. Dashwood receives the information of Colonel Brandon's attachment for Marianne, when—perhaps rather too soon—he ventures to tell her of it, and to entreat her to countenance and further it. He is well aware that Marianne has never cared for him, but he hopes with time and perseverance to succeed in his suit, and Mrs. Dashwood, who has never, until then, contemplated him as a lover for Marianne, relates to Elinor what has passed.

"'At last we are alone. My Elinor, you do not yet know all my happiness. Colonel Brandon loves Marianne; he has told me so himself.'

"Her daughter, feeling by turns both pleased and pained, surprised and not surprised, was all silent attention.

"'You are never like me, dear Elinor, or I should wonder at your composure now. Had I sat down to wish for any possible good to my family I should have fixed on Colonel Brandon's marrying one of you as the object most desirable, and I believe Marianne will be the most happy with him of the two.'

"Elinor was half inclined to ask her reason for thinking so, because, satisfied that none founded on an impartial consideration of their age, characters, or feelings could be given. . . .

"'His age is only so much beyond hers as to be an advantage, as to make his character and principles fixed, and his disposition, I am well convinced, is exactly the very one to make your sister happy. And his person, his manners, too, are all in his favour. My partiality does not blind me: he certainly is not so handsome as Willoughby, but, at the same time, there is something much more pleasing in his countenance. There was always a something, if you remember, in Willoughby's eyes at times which I did not like.'

"Elinor could not remember it; but her mother, without waiting for her assent, continued:

"'And his manners; the Colonel's manners are not only more pleasing to me than Willoughby's ever were, but they are of a kind I well know to be more solidly attaching to Marianne. Their gentleness, their genuine attention to other people, and their manly unstudied simplicity, is much more accordant with her real disposition than the liveliness, often artificial and often ill-timed, of the other. I am very sure, myself, that had Willoughby turned out as really amiable as he has proved himself the contrary, Marianne would yet never have been so happy with *him* as she will be with Colonel Brandon.'

"She paused. Her daughter could not quite agree with her; but her dissent was not heard, and, therefore, gave no offence."

It is clear that Colonel Brandon will succeed in time, but Elinor's own affairs are not in so blissful a state. Edward Ferrars, remaining faithful to Lucy, and, having determined upon taking Holy Orders, has been presented by Colonel Brandon to a small living in his gift (a severe blow to Mrs. John Dashwood, whose husband begs that the matter may not be mentioned

before her!) and his marriage now appears imminent. But Lucy Steele has no taste for love in a cottage, and seeing Mrs. Ferrars really obdurate against her, and having an opportunity of making acquaintance with Robert Ferrars—the fortunate younger brother for whom Edward has been disinherited—she directs her energies to securing him. As she is pretty and clever, the gentleman weak and a coxcomb, she soon succeeds; a clandestine marriage puts all possible interference out of the question, and, as Mrs. Ferrars is too proud and too obstinate to reinstate her elder son in his proper place, Robert enjoys a comfortable income with the wife on whose account Edward had been turned out of his mother's house. Edward comes to Elinor for her forgiveness which, of course, he obtains and then, as she insists on his being again received by his mother before she will marry him, he reluctantly consents to call on his sister in London and ask her to make up matters between him and Mrs. Ferrars.

"'And if they really *do* interest themselves,' said Marianne in her new character of candour, 'in bringing about a reconciliation, I shall think that even John and Fanny are not entirely without merit.'"

The reconciliation is brought about, and Edward and Elinor start upon their career of happiness together. Marianne gradually wakes up to the discovery that Colonel Brandon loves her, and the still more startling discovery that she can love him. "Instead of falling a sacrifice to an irresistible passion as once she had fondly flattered herself with expecting, instead of remaining even for ever with her mother, and finding her only pleasures in retirement and study, . . . she found herself at nineteen submitting to new attachments, entering on new duties, placed in a new

home, a wife, the mistress of a family, and the patroness of a village."

There can be little doubt that in *Sense and Sensibility* we have the first of Jane Austen's revised and finished works, and in several respects it reveals an inexperienced author. The action is too rapid, and there is a want of dexterity in getting the characters out of their difficulties. Mrs. Jennings is too vulgar, and in her, as in several of the minor characters, we see that Jane Austen had not quite shaken off the turn for caricature, which in early youth she had possessed strongly. The disagreeable story of Willoughby's earlier life is unnecessary to the plot, Colonel Brandon is too shadowy to be interesting, and Margaret Dashwood, the third sister, is an absolute nonentity. Nevertheless, there is much in it that is good. The John Dashwoods; Elinor and Marianne, and their mother; the Middletons, and Mrs. Palmer are all excellent, and, remembering it as the work of a girl of twenty-one, its promise for her future success was very great. It can never be put aside by anyone as wholly unworthy of her powers; all that the most severe critic could say is that it is not quite up to the mark of her later, more matured writing, and this is, indeed, a faint condemnation which would be praise for almost any other author.

CHAPTER VI.

"PRIDE AND PREJUDICE."

"I WOULD not let Martha read *First Impressions* again, upon any account," wrote Jane Austen to her sister from Bath, in 1799, "and am very glad that I did not leave it in your power. She is very cunning, but I saw through her design; she means to publish it from memory, and one more perusal would enable her to do it." This is the first mention we have by Jane herself of the work afterwards known as *Pride and Prejudice*, which, evidently, Martha Lloyd had the good taste to admire greatly, though it had been scornfully rejected by Mr. Cadell two years earlier. In spite of her friend's admiration, Jane had not the courage to try its fate again till after *Sense and Sensibility* had made its successful appearance in 1811. In 1813, however, it appeared under its new and certainly better title, and Jane's letters at the time are full of the unaffected interest which she always displayed in her own writings, mixed with her usual keen criticism. "I feel that I must write to you to-day," she tells Cassandra in a letter written from Chawton on January 29th, 1813; "I want to tell you that I have got my own darling child from London. On Wednesday I received one copy sent down by Falkener, with three lines from Henry to say that he had given another to Charles, and sent a third by the coach to Godmersham.

The advertisement is in our paper to-day for the first time: 18s. He shall ask £1 1s. for my two next, and £1 8s. for my stupidest of all." Then she relates a little piece of mystification, from which she had, not unnaturally, derived some amusement. "Miss B—— dined with us on the very day of the book's coming, and in the evening we fairly set at it, and read half the first vol. to her, prefacing that, having intelligence from Henry that such a work would soon appear, we had desired him to send it whenever it came out, and I believe it passed with her unsuspected. She was amused, poor soul! *That* she could not help, you know, with two such people to lead the way, but she really does seem to admire Elizabeth." Jane's own opinion of her heroine, and of the first edition of the book, follows: "I must confess," she writes, "that I think her (Elizabeth) as delightful a creature as ever appeared in print, and how I shall be able to tolerate those who do not like *her* at least, I do not know. There are a few typical errors, and a 'said he' or a 'said she' would sometimes make the dialogue more immediately clear; but 'I do not write for such dull elves' as have not a great deal of ingenuity themselves. The second volume is shorter than I could wish, but the difference is not so much in reality as in look, there being a larger proportion of narrative in that part. I have lop't and crop't so successfully, however, that I imagine it must be rather shorter than *Sense and Sensibility* altogether. Now I will try and write of something else."

Cassandra Austen received the book with almost as much eagerness and pleasure as Jane herself, and she wrote her delight and admiration in terms which were very comforting to the authoress, who had been suffering from a little depression, as her answer shows:

"Chawton,
"Thursday, February, 4th (1813).

"My dear Cassandra,

"Your letter was truly welcome, and I am much obliged to you for all your praise; it came at a right time, for I had had some fits of disgust. Our second evening's reading to Miss B—— had not pleased me so well; but I believe something must be attributed to my mother's too rapid way of getting on. Though she perfectly understands the characters herself, she cannot speak as they ought. Upon the whole, however, I am quite vain enough, and well satisfied enough. The work is rather too light and bright and sparkling; it wants shade; it wants to be stretched out here and there with a long chapter of sense, if it could be had; if not, of solemn specious nonsense about something unconnected with the story; an essay on writing, a critique on Walter Scott, or the history of Buonaparte, or something that would form a contrast, and bring the reader with increased delight to the playfulness and epigrammatism of the general style. . . . There might as well be no suppers at Longbourn, but I suppose it was the remains of Mrs. Bennet's old Meryton habits."

We may all rejoice that Jane Austen did not improve *Pride and Prejudice* in the way she half ironically suggests; but it is wonderful that she avoided doing so, for in her day a novel was invariably thought to require some such "padding," and it was one of her boldest strokes to depart from this established rule. None of the great trio of her sister writers—Miss Burney, Miss Edgeworth, or Miss Ferrier—ventured to omit the moralising which our ancestors considered necessary to counteract the baleful effects of being amused, and their works, in consequence, are little read

by a generation which prefers drawing its own moral to finding it ready made.

Cassandra Austen continued to admire *Pride and Prejudice* warmly, and her niece, Fanny Knight, joined in the praise. With her usual child-like pleasure in the praise of those she loved, Jane answered, "I am exceedingly pleased that you can say what you do, after going through the whole work, and Fanny's praise is very gratifying. My hopes were tolerably strong of *her*, but nothing like a certainty. Her liking Darcy and Elizabeth is enough; she might hate all the others if she would. I have her opinion under her own hand this morning, but your transcript of it, which I read first, was not and is not the less acceptable. To *me* it is, of course, all praise, but the more exact truth which she sends *you* is good enough."

Further admiration filtered slowly in from various quarters, and Jane received and recorded it all with the same unaffected pleasure, though she would still have liked to preserve her incognita. "Lady Robert is delighted with *P. and P.*, and really *was* so, as I understand, before she knew who wrote it, for, of course, she knows now. He (Henry Austen) told her with as much satisfaction as if it were my wish. He did not tell *me* this, but he told Fanny. And Mr. Hastings! I am quite delighted with what such a man writes about it." For some reason or other she specially valued Mr. Hasting's criticism, for she adds further on, "I long to have you hear Mr. H.'s opinion of *P. and P.* His admiring my Elizabeth so much is particularly welcome to me." Then she relates of another friend, "Poor Dr. Isham is obliged to admire *P. and P.*, and to send me word that he is sure he shall not like Madame D'Arblay's new novel half so well." Evidently Jane could imagine no greater

praise than to have one of her novels considered equal to anything of Madame D'Arblay's, but, as the new novel in question was the *Wanderer*, we may fairly believe that Dr. Isham really did prefer Elizabeth Bennet to the rather dreary adventures of Miss Ellis. Finally, Jane Austen heard that she was "read and admired in Ireland, too," and adds, in her usual tone of *persiflage*, 'I do not despair of having my portrait in the Exhibition at last —all white and red, with my head on one side; or, perhaps, I may marry young Mr. D'Arblay. I suppose in the meantime I shall owe dear Henry a great deal of money for printing, &c."

One cannot help regretting that Jane Austen, who accepted all praise so gratefully, should not have known what would be the opinions of more eminent people on *Pride and Prejudice*, especially the often-quoted entry in Sir Walter Scott's journal: "Read again, for the third time at least, Miss Austen's finely-written novel of *Pride and Prejudice*. That young lady had a talent for describing the involvements and feelings and characters of ordinary life, which is, to me, the most wonderful I ever met with. The big Bow-Wow strain I can do myself like any now going; but the exquisite touch which renders ordinary commonplace things and characters interesting from the truth of the description, and the sentiment, is denied to me. What a pity such a gifted creature died so early."

There are various comments of Jane Austen at this time on her own writings, which are amusing, and show how life-like her own creations were to her; they would not otherwise have been so life-like to her readers. In May, 1813, while she was on a visit in London, she writes: "Henry and I went to the exhibition in Spring Gardens. It is not thought a good collection, but I was

very well pleased, particularly (pray, tell Fanny) with a small portrait of Mrs. Bingley, excessively like her. I went in hopes of seeing one of her sisters, but there was no Mrs. Darcy. Perhaps, however, I may find her in the great exhibition, which we shall go to if we have time. I have no chance of her in the collection of Sir Joshua Reynolds's paintings, which is now showing in Pall Mall, and which we are also to visit. Mrs. Bingley's is exactly herself—size, shaped face, features, and sweetness; there never was a greater likeness. She is dressed in a white gown with green ornaments, which convinces me of what I had always supposed, that green was a favourite colour with her. I dare say Mrs. D. will be in yellow." A little later comes a message to her favourite niece, Fanny Knight, who had written to her as to Miss Darcy, and wanted an answer in character, but this request Jane Austen was obliged to decline. "It made me laugh heartily, but I cannot pretend to answer it. Even had I more time, I should not feel at all sure of the sort of letter that Miss D. would write," and most readers of *Pride and Prejudice* will feel that they cannot realise Georgiana Darcy as a letter-writer. Finally, "we have been both to the exhibition (the Royal Academy), and Sir J. Reynolds's, and I am disappointed, for there was nothing like Mrs. D. at either. I can only imagine that Mr. D. prizes any picture of her too much to like it should be exposed to the public eye. I can imagine he would have that sort of feeling—that mixture of love, pride, and delicacy."

No admirer of Elizabeth Bennet will wonder that her delineator could not find a satisfactory portrait of her, for she is a very rare type of character; indeed, it is a distinguishing characteristic of *Pride and*

Prejudice that both the hero and heroine are uncommon in every respect, and yet thoroughly life-like. A shade more of gaiety would have made Elizabeth a flippant, amusing, common-place girl, just as a degree less intellect would have made Darcy as intolerable as Mrs. Bennet thought him. But Jane Austen had shaken off all tendency to exaggeration by the time she brought out *Pride and Prejudice*, and henceforth her characters are kept well within bounds.

We see in Darcy the man who has had everything to spoil him, yet is really superior to being spoilt. He is handsome, wealthy, well-born, and of powerful intellect, and the adulation and submission he has always had from everyone about him wearies him into receiving such homage with cold indifference and apparent haughtiness, yet under this repellent exterior is a warm, generous, and tender heart, which is capable of great sacrifices for anyone he really loves. Elizabeth Bennet is exactly the right wife for him, for, with a nature as capable of tenderness and constancy as his, she has all the simplicity, brightness, and playfulness which are wanting in him; yet from the day that she and Mr. Darcy first meet they take a mutual aversion to each other, and long after he has succumbed, and fallen in love with her, she is unconscious of his feelings, and continues to dislike him. Elizabeth lives in Hertfordshire with a clever satirical father (whose pet she is), an intensely vulgar silly mother, and four sisters, of whom only one is her equal and companion: Jane and Elizabeth Bennet are as Cassandra and Jane Austen were to one another. The Bennets, though well off, are not rich, and the daughters will be very poor, as their father's estate is entailed on male heirs, and, at his death, goes to a dis-

tant cousin. This arrangement is a perpetual grievance to Mrs. Bennet, who cannot be made to understand the nature of an entail, and makes thereupon the remark which is so much truer than appears at first sight, that "there is no knowing how estates will go when once they come to be entailed!"

The Bingleys, consisting of Mr. Bingley, a married and an unmarried sister, and the former's husband, come to reside on an estate near the Bennets, and Mr. Darcy comes with them; he is Mr. Bingley's great friend, and Miss Bingley has formed the intention of becoming his wife. The Bingleys and Bennets meet at a ball, where Bingley falls in love at first sight with Jane Bennet, while Darcy is much bored by the whole thing, and, being urged to dance with Elizabeth Bennet, answers hastily and coldly that "she is not handsome enough to tempt me, and I am in no humour to give consequence to young ladies who are slighted by other men." Elizabeth overhears him, and registers a vow of eternal dislike to him. From this time, though neither the gentleman nor the lady have any wish to meet again, circumstances, which neither of them can control, force them into an intimacy, in the course of which Darcy, who has begun by despising Elizabeth as a mere country-town belle, and believes himself perfectly safe from her attacks, falls hopelessly in love with her, although she has no idea of it. When at last he is impelled to throw himself at her feet, she rejects him indignantly, not only, it should be said, on account of the original insult, but also because she believes him to have acted treacherously and basely in some occurrences of his past life. She has, however, been deceived in the stories she has heard, which her original dislike to him made her accept too readily,

and Darcy, feeling bound to clear himself, writes her an explanation which opens her eyes to see that she has cruelly misjudged and needlessly insulted him. Upon a generous nature like Elizabeth's this knowledge can have but one result—she is gradually drawn over, first to admire, then to esteem him, and so reaches the brink of love, though he has no suspicion of her change of feeling, and is determined never again to try his fate. Circumstances, which seem likely to separate him and Elizabeth for ever, prove to be the chain which draws them together at last.

Lydia, the youngest of the five Bennet sisters, a foolish, spoilt, flirting girl, makes a disreputable elopement with a young officer, named Wickham, of whom Elizabeth had seen a good deal. He is the son of a former steward of Mr. Darcy, handsome, plausible, and unprincipled, and, having been thwarted by his employer in a disgraceful attempt to take Holy Orders, had revenged himself first by attempting an elopement with Miss Darcy, a girl of fifteen, to whom her brother is guardian, and afterwards by spreading abroad scandalous stories of Darcy, all absolutely false, although concocted with skill. Elizabeth, at the time when her feelings against Mr. Darcy were most hostile, had heard and believed these stories, and it is to these she made allusion when rejecting him. To clear himself he is obliged to tell her of his sister's narrow escape, which, he entreats, she will tell to no one but her sister Jane, and she obeys the injunction. Now, in the first agony at Lydia's shameful elopement, she reproaches herself bitterly for not having warned her own family against Wickham. Darcy, generously taking the blame upon himself, sets off in pursuit of

the fugitives, whom he traces, and reinstates in comparative comfort and decency, after spending much time, trouble, and money in the undertaking, and (having done all this without the knowledge of the Bennet family) only requires that none of them shall ever be made acquainted with all that they owe him. Of course, the secret leaks out, and Elizabeth is overwhelmed by the magnanimity of the man she has disliked and insulted, so that when he again ventures to plead his cause she grants it. She is all the more willing to do so as Jane is on the eve of a happy marriage with Bingley, and one of her bitterest prejudices against Darcy had been engendered by his opposition to their engagement.

Everything is now rose-colour, but, unfortunately, Elizabeth had been at first so very outspoken against Mr. Darcy, and afterwards (partly from necessity) so very reticent about his rise in her good opinion that none of her relations, except an uncle and aunt, who have lately seen them together, can believe in her changed feelings, and even her own beloved sister is hard to convince.

"At night she opened her heart to Jane. Though suspicion was very far from Miss Bennet's general habits, she was absolutely incredulous here.

"'You are joking, Lizzy. This cannot be! engaged to Mr. Darcy! No, no; you shall not deceive me; I know it to be impossible.'

"'This is a wretched beginning, indeed! My sole dependence was on you, and I am sure nobody else will believe me if you do not. Yet, indeed, I am in earnest; I speak nothing but the truth. He still loves me, and we are engaged.'

"Jane looked at her doubtingly.

"'Oh, Lizzy! it cannot be. I know how much you dislike him.'

"'You know nothing of the matter. That is all to be forgotten. Perhaps I did not always love him so well as I do now. But, in such cases as these, a good memory is unpardonable. This is the last time I shall ever remember it myself.'"

Miss Bennet still looked all amazement; Elizabeth again, and more seriously assured her of its truth.

"'Good Heaven! can it be really so? Yet now I must believe you,' cried Jane. 'My dear, dear Lizzy, I would—I do congratulate you; but, are you certain—forgive the question—are you quite certain that you can be happy with him?'

"'There can be no doubt of that; it is settled between us already that we are to be the happiest couple in the world. But are you pleased, Jane? Shall you like to have such a brother?'

"'Very, very much. Nothing could give either Bingley or myself more delight. But we considered it, we talked of it, as quite impossible. And do you really love him quite well enough? Oh, Lizzy! do anything rather than marry without affection. Are you quite sure that you feel what you ought to do?'

"'Oh, yes! you will only think I feel *more* than I ought to do when I tell you all.'

"'What do you mean?'

"'Why, I must confess that I love him better than I do Bingley. I am afraid you will be angry.'

"'My dearest sister, now do be serious. I want to talk very seriously. Let me know everything that I am to know without delay. Will you tell me how long you have loved him?'

"'It has been coming on so gradually that I hardly

know when it began. But I believe I must date it from my first seeing his beautiful grounds at Pemberley.'

"Another entreaty that she would be serious, however, produced the desired effect, and she soon satisfied Jane by her solemn assurances of attachment. When convinced on that article, Miss Bennet had nothing further to wish.

"'Now I am quite happy,' said she, 'for you will be as happy as myself. I always had a value for him. Were it for nothing but his love for you, I must always have esteemed him; but now, as Bingley's friend and your husband, there can be only Bingley and yourself more dear to me.'"

This has ended satisfactorily, but the father and mother have still to hear of it, and Elizabeth goes through a good deal when Darcy has spoken to Mr. Bennet, and she is summoned to him.

"Her father was walking about the room, looking grave and anxious. 'Lizzy,' said he, 'what are you doing? Are you out of your senses to be accepting this man? Have you not always hated him?'

"How earnestly did she then wish that her former opinions had been more reasonable, her expressions more moderate! It would have spared her from explanations and professions which it was exceedingly awkward to give, but they were now necessary, and she assured him, with some confusion, of her attachment to Mr. Darcy.

"'Or, in other words, you are determined to have him. He is rich, to be sure, and you may have more fine clothes and fine carriages than Jane, but will they make you happy?'

"'Have you any other objection,' said Elizabeth, 'than your belief of my indifference?'

"'None at all; we all know him to be a proud unpleasant sort of man, but this would be nothing if you really liked him.'

"'I do, I do like him,' she replied, with tears in her eyes,. 'I love him. Indeed, he has no improper pride. He is perfectly amiable. You do not know what he really is: then pray do not pain me by speaking of him in such terms.'

"'Lizzy,' said her father, 'I have given him my consent. He is the kind of man, indeed, to whom I should never dare refuse anything which he condescended to ask. I now give it to you, if you are resolved on having him; but let me advise you to think better of it. I know your disposition, Lizzy. I know that you could be neither happy nor respectable unless you truly esteemed your husband—unless you looked up to him as to a superior. Your lively talents would place you in the greatest danger in an unequal marriage. You could scarcely escape discredit and misery. My child, let me not have the grief of seeing you unable to respect your partner in life. You know not what you are about.'"

Elizabeth, still more affected, was earnest and solemn in her reply, and at length, by repeated assurances that Mr. Darcy was really the object of her choice, by explaining the gradual change which her estimation of him had undergone, relating her absolute certainty that his affection was not the work of a day, but had stood the test of many months' suspense, and enumerating with energy all his good qualities, she did conquer her father's incredulity, and reconcile him to the match.

"'Well, my dear,' said he, when she ceased speaking, 'I have no more to say. If this be the case

he deserves you. I could not have parted with you, my Lizzy, to anyone less worthy.' "

Perhaps Miss Austen enjoyed making Elizabeth undergo a *mauvais quart d'heure* in hearing her own unfounded prejudices retorted upon her by her father, but both he and her sister are so warmly and tenderly anxious for her happiness that her pain would soon be forgotten. It is very different when she has to break the news to her mother, whose behaviour throughout the story gives additional force to her husband's remarks about respecting one's partner in life.

" When her mother went up to her dressing-room at night she followed her, and made the important communication. Its effect was most extraordinary, for, on first hearing it, Mrs. Bennet sat quite still, and unable to utter a syllable. Nor was it under many minutes that she could comprehend what she heard, though not in general backward to credit what was for the advantage of her family, or that came in the shape of a lover to any of them. She began at length to recover, to fidget about in her chair, get up, sit down again, wonder, and bless herself.

" ' Good gracious ! Lord bless me ! only think ! Dear me ! Mr. Darcy ! who would have thought it ! And is it really true ? Oh, my sweetest Lizzy ! how rich and how great you will be ! What pin-money, what jewels, what carriages you will have ! Jane's is nothing to it—nothing at all. I am so pleased—so happy. Such a charming man !—so handsome !—so tall ! Oh, my dear Lizzy ! pray apologise for my having disliked him so much before. I hope he will overlook it. Dear dear Lizzy ! A house in town. Everything that is charming ! Three daughters married ! Ten thousand

a year! Oh Lord! what will become of me? I shall go distracted!'

"This was enough to prove that her approbation need not be doubted, and Elizabeth, rejoicing that such an effusion was heard only by herself, soon went away; but before she had been three minutes in her own room her mother followed her.

"'My dearest child,' she cried, 'I can think of nothing else. Ten thousand a year, and very likely more! 'tis as good as a lord! And a special license; you must and shall be married by a special license. But, my dearest love, tell me what dish Mr. Darcy is particularly fond of, that I may have it to-morrow.'

"This was a sad omen of what her mother's behaviour to the gentleman himself might be; and Elizabeth found that though in certain possession of his warmest affection, and secure of her relations' consent, there was still something to be wished for. But the morrow passed off much better than she expected; for Mrs. Bennet luckily stood in such awe of her intended son-in-law that she ventured not to speak to him, unless it was in her power to offer him any attention, or to mark her deference for his opinion."

In following the career of the hero and heroine, the secondary characters of *Pride and Prejudice* have been somewhat passed over, but there is not one that could be suppressed without injury to the book, and each and all are excellent in their way. Take, for instance, Mr. Collins, the prim, self-satisfied, under-bred young clergyman. He is cousin to Mr. Bennet, and (to Mrs. Bennet's never-ending wrath) heir to the Longbourn estate.

Mr. Collins, being in search of a wife, hopes to find one among his cousins, and, for that purpose,

invites himself to stay with them. He is kindly received, and after dinner the conversation turns upon his good fortune in having been presented to his living by Lady Catherine de Bourgh. "Mr. Collins was eloquent in her praise. . . . She had been graciously pleased to approve of both the discourses which he had already had the honour of preaching before her. She had also asked him twice to dine at Rosings, and had sent for him only the Saturday before to make up her pool of quadrille for the evening. Lady Catherine was reckoned proud by many people he knew, but *he* had never seen anything but affability in her. She had always spoken to him as she would to any other gentleman; she made not the smallest objection to his joining in the society of the neighbourhood, nor to his leaving his parish occasionally for a week or two to visit his relations. She had even condescended to advise him to marry as soon as he could, provided he chose with discretion; and had once paid him a visit in his humble parsonage, where she had perfectly approved all the alterations he was making, and had even vouchsafed to suggest some herself—some shelves in the closet upstairs.

"'That is all very proper and civil, I am sure,' said Mrs. Bennet, 'and I daresay she is a very agreeable woman. It is a pity that great ladies in general are not more like her. Does she live near you, sir?'

"'The garden, in which stands my humble abode, is separated only by a lane from Rosings Park, her ladyship's residence.'

"'I think you said she was a widow, sir? Has she any family?'

"'She has one only daughter, the heiress of Rosings, and of very extensive property.'

"'Ah,' cried Mrs. Bennet, shaking her head, "then she is better off than many girls. And what sort of young lady is she? Is she handsome?'

"'She is a most charming young lady, indeed: Lady Catherine herself says that, in point of true beauty, Miss de Bourgh is far superior to the handsomest of her sex, because there is that in her features which marks the young woman of distinguished birth. She is unfortunately of a sickly constitution, which has prevented her making that progress in many accomplishments which she could not otherwise have failed of, as I am informed by the lady who superintended her education, and who still resides with them. But she is perfectly amiable, and often condescends to drive by my humble abode in her little phaeton and ponies.'

"'Has she been presented? I do not remember her name among the ladies at court.'

"'Her indifferent state of health, unhappily, prevents her being in town, and by that means, as I told Lady Catherine myself one day, has deprived the British court of its brightest ornament. Her ladyship seemed pleased with the idea; and you may imagine that I am happy on every occasion to offer those little delicate compliments which are always acceptable to ladies. I have more than once observed to Lady Catherine that her charming daughter seemed born to be a duchess, and that the most elevated rank, instead of giving her consequence, would be adorned by her.—These are the kind of little things which please her ladyship, and it is a sort of attention which I consider myself peculiarly bound to pay.'

"'You judge very properly,' said Mr. Bennet, 'and it is happy for you that you possess the art of flattering with delicacy. May I ask whether these pleasing

attentions proceed from the impulse of the moment, or are the result of previous study ?'

"'They arise chiefly from what is passing at the time, and though I sometimes amuse myself with suggesting and arranging such little elegant compliments as may be adapted to ordinary occasions, I always wish to give them as unstudied an air as possible.'"

We feel, after this dialogue, that we know something of Lady Catherine as well as of Mr. Collins, and our acquaintance with both is allowed to increase. Mr. Collins fixes his intentions on Elizabeth, who, of course, refuses him; but she has an intimate friend, Charlotte Lucas, whose ideas about marriage are by no means as lofty as her own, and who is quite willing to accept a comfortable house and good income with Mr. Collins attached. She becomes Mrs. Collins, and Elizabeth, though shocked and grieved at the marriage, cannot refuse her friend's earnest entreaty to pay her a visit in her new home. During this visit she unexpectedly meets Mr. Darcy, who is Lady Catherine's nephew, and receives the offer from him which she refuses with such indignant surprise. She has travelled with Sir William and Maria Lucas—Charlotte's father and sister—and two days after their arrival the whole party are invited to dine with Lady Catherine, Darcy and his friend not having then arrived.

"Scarcely anything was talked of the whole day or next morning but their visit to Rosings. Mr. Collins was carefully instructing them what they were to expect, that the sight of such rooms, so many servants, and so splendid a dinner might not wholly overpower them. When the ladies were separating for the toilet, he said to Elizabeth—

"'Do not make yourself uneasy, my dear cousin, about your apparel: Lady Catherine is far from requiring that elegance of dress in us which becomes herself and daughter. I would advise you merely to put on whatever of your clothes is superior to the rest—there is no occasion for anything more. Lady Catherine will not think the worse of you for being simply dressed: she likes to have the distinction of rank preserved. . . .'

"The dinner was exceedingly handsome, and there were all the servants and all the articles of plate which Mr. Collins had promised, and, as he had likewise foretold, he took his seat at the bottom of the table, by her ladyship's desire, and looked as if he felt that life could furnish nothing greater. . . . When the ladies returned to the drawing-room there was little to be done but to hear Lady Catherine talk, which she did without any intermission till coffee came in. . . . She inquired into Charlotte's domestic concerns familiarly and minutely, and gave her a great deal of advice as to the management of them all; told her how everything ought to be regulated in so small a family as hers, and instructed her as to the care of her cows and her poultry. . . . In the intervals of her discourse with Mrs. Collins she addressed a variety of questions to Maria and Elizabeth, but especially to the latter, of whose connections she knew the least, and who, she observed to Mrs. Collins, was a very genteel, pretty kind of girl. She asked her at different times how many sisters she had, whether they were older or younger than herself, whether any of them were likely to be married, whether they were handsome, where they had been educated, what carriage her father kept, and what had been her mother's maiden name? Elizabeth

felt all the impertinence of her questions, but answered them very composedly. Lady Catherine then observed—

"'Your father's estate is entailed upon Mr. Collins, I think. For your sake,' turning to Charlotte, 'I am glad of it, but otherwise I see no occasion for entailing estates from the female line. It was not thought necessary in Sir Lewis de Bourgh's family. Do you play and sing, Miss Bennet?'

"'A little.'

"'Oh! then—some time or other we shall be happy to hear you. Our instrument is a capital one, probably superior to —— You shall try it some day. Do your sisters play and sing?'

"'One of them does.'

"'Why did not you all learn?—you ought all to have learned. The Miss Webbs all play, and their father has not as good an income as yours. Do you draw?'

"'No, not at all.'

"'What, none of you?'

"'Not one.'

"'That is very strange; but I suppose you had no opportunity. Your mother should have taken you to town every year for the benefit of masters.'

"'My mother would have had no objection, but my father hates London.'

"'Has your governess left you?'

"'We never had any governess.'

"'No governess! How was that possible? Five daughters brought up at home without a governess! I never heard of such a thing. Your mother must have been quite a slave to your education.'

"Elizabeth could hardly help smiling as she assured her that had not been the case.

"'Then who taught you, who attended to you? Without a governess you must have been neglected.'

"'Compared with some families, I believe we were; but such of us as wished to learn never wanted the means. We were always encouraged to read, and had all the masters that were necessary. Those who chose to be idle certainly might.'

"'Ay, no doubt; but that is what a governess will prevent; and if I had known your mother, I should have advised her most strenuously to engage one. I always say that nothing is to be done in education without steady and regular instruction, and nobody but a governess can give it. It is wonderful how many families I have been the means of supplying in that way. I am always glad to get a young person well placed out. Four nieces of Mrs. Jenkinson's are most delightfully situated through my means; and it was but the other day that I recommended a young person who was merely accidentally mentioned to me, and the family are quite delighted with her. Mrs. Collins, did I tell you of Lady Metcalfe's calling yesterday to thank me? She finds Miss Pope a treasure. "Lady Catherine," said she, "you have given me a treasure." Are any of your younger sisters out, Miss Bennet?'

"'Yes, Ma'am—all.'

"'All! What, all five out at once? Very odd! and you only the second—the younger ones out before the elder ones are married! Your youngest sister must be very young.'

"'Yes; my youngest is not sixteen. Perhaps she is full young to be much in company. But, really, Ma'am, I think it would be very hard upon younger sisters that they should not have their share of society and

amusement because the elder may not have the means or inclination to marry early. And to be kept back on such a motive! I think it would not be very likely to promote sisterly affection or delicacy of mind.'

"'Upon my word,' said her ladyship, 'you give your opinion very decidedly for so young a person. Pray, what is your age?'

"'With three younger sisters grown up,' replied Elizabeth, smiling, 'your ladyship can hardly expect me to own it.'

"Lady Catherine seemed quite astonished at not receiving a direct answer, and Elizabeth suspected herself to be the first creature who had ever ventured to trifle with so much dignified impertinence . . . When the gentlemen had joined them, and tea was over, the card-tables were placed. Lady Catherine, Sir William, and Mr. and Mrs. Collins sat down to quadrille, and, as Miss de Bourgh chose to play at cassino, the two girls had the honour of assisting Mrs. Jenkinson to make up her party. . . . When Lady Catherine and her daughter had played as long as they chose, the tables were broke up, the carriage was offered to Mrs. Collins, gratefully accepted, and immediately ordered. The party then gathered round the fire to hear Lady Catherine determine what weather they were to have on the morrow. From these instructions they were summoned by the arrival of the coach, and, with many speeches of thankfulness on Mr. Collins's side, and many bows on Sir William's, they departed."

There could not be a better picture of a second-rate great lady's behaviour towards people whom she considers as her inferiors, and it may be supposed from this how angry she is when her cherished nephew, whom she also

intended should be her son-in-law, falls in love with Elizabeth. She hears of it from outside sources, at about the time of Jane's engagement to Bingley, and at once sets off for Longbourn to load Elizabeth with reproaches, and insist upon her giving up all idea of marrying Darcy. Of course Elizabeth absolutely refuses to do this, and her ladyship departs in great wrath; but as she has wrung from Elizabeth an admission that she is not actually engaged to Darcy, she calls on him in the hopes that he may be deterred from proposing again. Her anger has, however, just the contrary effect; her account of what she calls Elizabeth's "perverseness and assurance" fills him with hope, and urges him on to the final proposal, in which he is successful.

"'It taught me to hope,' said he, 'as I had scarcely ever allowed myself to hope before. I knew enough of your disposition to be certain that had you been absolutely, irrevocably decided against me, you would have acknowledged it to Lady Catherine, frankly and openly.'

As Elizabeth observes, "Lady Catherine has been of infinite use, which ought to make her happy, for she loves to be of use;" and though her ladyship's fury knows no bounds when she hears that Darcy is actually married to Elizabeth, she condescends in time to make overtures to them, which they care too little about her to refuse.

One more extract must be made in the hope, though perhaps a vain one, of giving some idea of the mixture of playfulness, sweetness, and refinement in Elizabeth Bennet, which made Jane Austen rightly call her "as delightful a creature as ever appeared in print." Her charm is one that pervades the book, and is not easily condensed into any isolated passage; but her first

connected conversation with Mr. Darcy after their engagement is fairly characteristic of both of them.

"Elizabeth's spirits soon rising to playfulness again, she wanted Mr. Darcy to account for his having ever fallen in love with her. 'How could you begin?' said she. 'I can comprehend your going on charmingly when you had once made a beginning; but what could set you off in the first place?'

"'I cannot fix on the hour, or the spot, or the look, or the words, which laid the foundation. It is too long ago. I was in the middle before I knew that I had begun.'

"'My beauty you had early withstood, and as for my manners—my behaviour to you was at least always bordering on the uncivil, and I never spoke to you without rather wishing to give you pain than not. Now, be sincere; did you admire me for my impertinence?'

"'For the liveliness of your mind, I did.'

"'You may as well call it impertinence at once. It was very little less. The fact is that you were sick of civility, of deference, of officious attention. You were disgusted with the women who were always speaking, and looking, and thinking, for your approbation alone. I roused and interested you because I was so unlike them. Had you not been really amiable, you would have hated me for it; but, in spite of the pains you took to disguise yourself, your feelings were always noble and just; and in your heart you thoroughly despised the persons who so assiduously courted you. There, I have saved you the trouble of accounting for it; and really, all things considered, I begin to think it perfectly reasonable. To be sure, you know no actual good of me—but nobody thinks of that when they fall in love.'

"'Was there no good in your affectionate behaviour to Jane, while she was ill at Netherfield?'

"'Dearest Jane! who could have done less for her? But make a virtue of it by all means. My good qualities are under your protection, and you are to exaggerate them as much as possible; and in return it belongs to me to find occasions for teasing and quarrelling with you as often as may be; and I shall begin directly, by asking you what made you so unwilling to come to the point at last? What made you so shy of me when you first called, and afterwards dined here? Why, especially when you called, did you look as if you did not care about me?'

"'Because you were grave and silent, and gave me no encouragement.'

"'But I was embarrassed.'

"'And so was I.'

"'You might have talked to me more when you came to dinner.'

"'A man who had felt less might.'

"'How unlucky that you should have a reasonable answer to give, and that I should be so reasonable as to admit it! But I wonder how long you would have gone on if you had been left to yourself. I wonder when you would have spoken if I had not asked you! My resolution of thanking you for your kindness to Lydia had certainly great effect—too much, I am afraid; for what becomes of the moral if our comfort springs from a breach of promise? for I ought not to have mentioned the subject. This will never do.'

"'You need not distress yourself. The moral will be perfectly fair . . . . I am not indebted for my present happiness to your eager desire of expressing your gratitude. I was not in a humour to wait for any open-

ing of yours. My aunt's intelligence had given me hope, and I was determined at once to know everything. . . .'

"'Shall you ever have courage to announce to Lady Catherine what is to befall her?'

"'I am more likely to want time than courage, Elizabeth. But it ought to be done, and, if you will give me a sheet of paper, it shall be done directly.'

"'And, if I had not a letter to write myself, I might sit by you, and admire the evenness of your writing, as another young lady once did. But I have an aunt, too, who must not be longer neglected.'"

Darcy is quite as well drawn a character as Elizabeth, for though his pride and self-will are, in the early part of the story, almost overpowering, we always see the really fine nature behind them, and we can feel that when he meets with a woman who will respect him, but never stoop to flatter his faults, and whom he can love enough to bear with her laughing at him, he will be a most devoted and excellent husband. If the book can be said to have any defects, they are—first, that it is impossible to see how such a woman as Mrs. Bennet could have had two daughters like Jane and Elizabeth; secondly, that Lydia's elopement is a disagreeable incident, told too much in detail, and made needlessly prominent. It is intended to bring Wickham's baseness into greater relief, and to show how Darcy's love could even triumph over such a connection; but it is revolting to depict a girl of sixteen so utterly lost to all sense of decency as Lydia is, and the plot would have worked out quite well without it. Still, at the time Jane Austen wrote, she might have pointed to many episodes in great writers that were far more strangely chosen, and Lydia's story does not really occupy much

of the book, though, for a time, it is prominent. The other flaw is, I venture to think, the mistake of a young writer, and Mrs. Bennet is so excellently drawn and is so amusing, that we cannot wish her refined into anything different. It may be said, also, that Lady Catherine is too vulgar for a woman who was really of high birth; but it must be remembered that she is introduced among people whom she considers her inferiors, and vulgarity in high life is not so rare but that even Jane Austen, in her quiet country home, may have come across it. There is not a character nor a conversation in *Pride and Prejudice* that could be omitted without loss, and we may, therefore, very well give over criticising small defects, and yield ourselves to the full enjoyment of its genius as a whole.

CHAPTER VII.

MANSFIELD PARK.

WHEN *Pride and Prejudice* came out in 1813, it completed the series of Jane Austen's earlier writings, excepting only *Northanger Abbey*, which was not then in her hands for publication. The two novels that had already appeared were finished before she was four-and-twenty; those that followed were not begun till she was well over thirty, and I think that, even without the authority of dates, no one could doubt that *Mansfield Park*, *Emma*, and *Persuasion* belong to a later stage of authorship than *Sense and Sensibility*, or *Pride and Prejudice*. They are no less brilliant, but they are more matured; the motives and actions of the *dramatis personæ* are more complex; there is less rapidity in the working out (rapidity is usually a sure sign of youth), and the satire is a little softened; the feelings expressed, too, are more womanly and less girlish. In both the earlier novels the really predominant passion is the love of the sisters for each other; the love-making is gracefully worked out and properly adjusted, but on the lady's side it is left very much to our imagination, and it is scrupulously kept under till the gentleman has revealed his devotion. In each of her three last and greatest

novels, Jane Austen has painted for us a woman loving sincerely, and with good cause, but uncertain if her love is returned; in Anne Elliot, the most beautiful of all her creations, it is an old love which has never died out, in the other two it is the first attachment of their youth, worthily bestowed, ripening in the intimacy of years, and moulding their whole natures. Both Fanny Price and Emma Woodhouse are, for a long while, unconscious of their own feelings, the former from shrinking modesty, the latter from her joyous self-confidence; to each the truth is revealed by believing that the man she loves prefers someone else, and both with them and Anne Elliot the anguish of apparently hopeless love is carried to its height by knowing that their rivals are wholly unworthy of the places they seem to have won. At the same time the circumstances are so skilfully arranged that the unfortunate complication is a perfectly natural one, and each of the three heroines suffers in silence till equally natural but unforeseen events bring matters right in the end. In Anne Elliot's case the suffering is increased by her having been induced, long before the story opens, to refuse the man she loved; and she feels, therefore, that she cannot repine if he has, in the course of years, transferred his affections elsewhere; while Emma Woodhouse has the pang of realising that it is through her alone that Mr. Knightley ever met Harriet Smith.

Another difference between these novels and the earlier ones is the complete absence of anything like coquetry of any kind in the three heroines, and also their womanly reticence upon their own love affairs. Elinor and Marianne Dashwood speak freely to one another as such young sisters might do,

and Jane and Elizabeth Bennet do the same. Elizabeth, we feel, might have been quite capable of amusing herself in moderation with some of her admirers, but the heroines of *Mansfield Park; Emma,* and *Persuasion* are allowed no confidantes, and indulge in no "mere pastime." Emma might be quoted as an exception to this rule; but the exception is only apparent, not real. Anne Elliot and Fanny Price are assailed by unwelcome suitors after they have learnt the state of their own feelings, and it is a subtle touch of nature that the matter is one of unmixed pain to them. All this is unmistakably the finished work of the ripened matured woman writing of what she knows and has seen, not that of the brilliant girl, whose genius enables her to guess with marvellous accuracy at the feelings she knows little of. Another sure mark of maturity is the importance given to the older personages in these stories. There is, indeed, no incompleteness in the delicate touches which portray Mr. Bennet or Mrs. John Dashwood, but they are intended as subordinate to the chief characters; whereas Lady Bertram, Sir Walter Elliot, and Mr. Woodhouse are quite as important to us as their sons and daughters, if not more so, for Sir Thomas and Lady Bertram are more necessary to our enjoyment than Tom or Julia, and we doubt if anyone could make up to us for losing Mrs. Norris or Miss Bates.

Mansfield Park is the ancestral home of the Bertram family, and Sir Thomas Bertram is the worthy, aristocratic, and high-bred, albeit somewhat pompous and formal, owner of the property, which is a very good one. He has two sons, Tom and Edmund, and two daughters, Maria and Julia. Lady Bertram is "a woman of very tranquil feelings, and a temper remark-

ably easy and indolent." She has two married sisters, Mrs. Norris and Mrs. Price. Mrs. Norris has married a clergyman, to whom Sir Thomas has given the family living of Mansfield, and, as she has a decided "spirit of activity," no children, and nothing particular to do, she finds ample occupation in presiding over other people's affairs, especially in the Bertram family. Mrs. Price's marriage has been unfortunate; she "married, in the common phrase, to disoblige her family, and, by fixing on a lieutenant of marines without education, fortune, or connections, did it very thoroughly." A breach takes place between her and her sisters in consequence; her home is many miles distant from theirs, and no intercourse is kept up, until, after struggling on for eleven years in poverty and difficulty, with a fast-increasing family, and an unemployed husband, she is compelled to apply to her sisters for help.

"The letter was not unproductive; it re-established peace and kindness. Sir Thomas sent friendly advice and professions; Lady Bertram despatched money and baby linen, and Mrs. Norris wrote the letters. Such were its immediate effects, and within a twelvemonth a more important advantage to Mrs. Price resulted from it. Mrs. Norris was often observing to the others that she could not get her poor sister and her family out of her head, and that, much as they had all done for her, she seemed to be wanting to do more." Upon this she brings forward the proposition on which the story hinges.

"'What if they were among them to undertake the care of the eldest daughter, a girl now nine years old, of an age to require more attention than her poor mother could possibly give? The trouble and expense

of it to them would be nothing compared with the benevolence of the action.'

"Lady Bertram agreed with her instantly. 'I think we cannot do better,' said she; 'let us send for the child.'

"Sir Thomas could not give so instantaneous and unqualified a consent; he debated and hesitated: it was a serious charge; a girl so brought up must be adequately provided for, or there would be cruelty instead of kindness in taking her from her family. He thought of his own four children, of his two sons, of cousins in love, &c.; but no sooner had he deliberately begun to state his objections than Mrs. Norris interrupted him with a reply to them all, whether stated or not.

"'My dear Sir Thomas, I perfectly comprehend you, and do justice to the generosity and delicacy of your notions, which, indeed, are quite of a piece with your general conduct; and I entirely agree with you in the main as to the propriety of doing everything one could by way of providing for a child one had, in a manner, taken into one's own hands; and I am sure I should be the last person in the world to withhold my mite upon such an occasion. Having no children of my own, who should I look to in any little matter I may ever have to bestow but the children of my sisters? and I am sure Mr. Norris is too just—but you know I am a woman of few words and professions. Do not let us be frightened from a good deed by a trifle. Give a girl an education, and introduce her properly into the world, and ten to one but she has the means of settling well without further expense to anybody. A niece of ours, Sir Thomas, I may say, or at least of *yours*, would not grow up in this neighbourhood

without many advantages. I don't say she would be so handsome as her cousins. I dare say she would not; but she would be introduced into the society of this county under such very favourable circumstances as in all human probability would get her a creditable establishment. You are thinking of your sons; but do you not know that of all things upon earth that is the least likely to happen, brought up as they would be, always together like brothers and sisters? It is morally impossible. I never knew an instance of it. It is, in fact, the only sure way of providing against the connection. Suppose her a pretty girl, and seen by Tom or Edmund for the first time seven years hence, and I daresay there would be mischief . . . But breed her up with them from this time, and suppose her even to have the beauty of an angel, and she will never be more to either than a sister.'

"'There is a great deal of truth in what you say,' replied Sir Thomas; 'and far be it from me to throw any fanciful impediment in the way of a plan which would be so consistent with the relative situations of each. I only meant to observe that it ought not to be lightly engaged in, and that, to make it really serviceable to Mrs. Price, and creditable to ourselves, we must secure to the child, or consider ourselves engaged to secure to her hereafter, as circumstances may arise, the provision of a gentlewoman, if no such establishment should offer as you are so sanguine in expecting.'

"'I thoroughly understand you,' cried Mrs. Norris; 'you are everything that is generous and considerate, and I am sure we shall never disagree on this point. Whatever I can do, as you well know, I am always ready enough to do for the good of those I love; and

though I could never feel for this little girl the hundredth part of the regard I bear your own dear children, nor consider her, in any respect, so much my own, I should hate myself if I were capable of neglecting her. Is not she a sister's child? and could I bear to see her want while I had a bit of bread to give her? My dear Sir Thomas, with all my faults I have a warm heart; and, poor as I am, would rather deny myself the necessaries of life than do an ungenerous thing. So, if you are not against it, I will write to my poor sister to-morrow, and make the proposal; and, as soon as matters are settled, I will engage to get the child to Mansfield; you shall have no trouble about it. My own trouble, you know, I never regard.'"

It is easy to guess after this what Mrs. Norris's share of the undertaking will amount to; but Sir Thomas has not yet learnt to see through his sister-in-law, and the arrangement is carried out as she has planned it, and in the full belief that she will take her fair share in it.

"When the subject was brought forward again, her views were more fully explained, and, in reply to Lady Bertram's calm inquiry of, 'Where shall the child come to first, sister; to you or to us?' Sir Thomas heard with some surprise that it would be totally out of Mrs. Norris's power to take any share in the personal charge of her. He had been considering her as a particularly welcome addition at the Parsonage, as a desirable companion to an aunt who had no children of her own; but he found himself wholly mistaken. Mrs. Norris was sorry to say that the little girl's staying with them, at least as things then were, was out of the question. Poor Mr. Norris's indifferent state of health made it an impossibility: he

could no more bear the noise of a child than he could fly. If, indeed, he should ever get well of his gouty complaints it would be a different matter; she should then be glad to take her turn, and think nothing of the inconvenience; but just now poor Mr. Norris took up every moment of her time, and the very mention of such a thing she was sure would distract him.

"'Then she had better come to us,' said Lady Bertram, with the utmost composure.

"After a short pause, Sir Thomas added with dignity, 'Yes, let her home be in this house. We will endeavour to do our duty by her; and she will at least have the advantage of companions of her own age and of a regular instructress.'"

Fanny Price is accordingly sent for; and Miss Austen has painted nothing more truly than the sufferings of a sensitive, timid child suddenly removed from home, and plunged into a thoroughly uncongenial atmosphere. No one is unkind to her, but no one understands or shares her feelings; she has no companion among her cousins, and the elders, seeing her quiet and obedient, have no idea of all that she silently suffers. Tom and Edmund Bertram, at sixteen and seventeen, are quite out of their little cousin's reach, and Maria and Julia Bertram, having always been well taught, and accustomed to think much of their own attainments, are full of contempt for a cousin only two years younger than themselves, but far less well-informed. "'Dear mamma, only think, my cousin cannot put the map of Europe together—or my cousin cannot tell the principal rivers in Russia—or she never heard of Asia Minor—or she does not know the difference between water-colours and crayons. How strange! Did you ever hear anything so stupid?'

"'My dear,' their aunt would reply, 'it is very bad, but you must not expect everyone to be as quick at learning as yourself.'

"'But, aunt, she is really so very ignorant . . . I cannot remember the time when I did not know a great deal that she has not the least notion of yet. How long ago is it, aunt, since we used to repeat the chronological order of the kings of England, with the dates of their accession, and most of the principal events of their reigns?'

"'Yes,' added the other, 'and of the Roman emperors as low as Severus; besides a great deal of the heathen mythology, and all the metals, semi-metals, planets, and distinguished philosophers.'

"'Very true, indeed, my dears; but you are blessed with wonderful memories, and your poor cousin has probably none at all. There is a vast deal of difference in memories as well as in everything else, and, therefore, you must make allowance for your cousin, and pity her deficiency. And remember that, if you are ever so forward and clever yourselves, you should always be modest; for, much as you know already, there is a great deal more for you to learn.'

"'Yes, I know there is, till I am seventeen But I must tell you another thing of Fanny, so odd and so stupid. Do you know she says she does not want to learn either music or drawing?'

"'To be sure, my dear, that is very stupid indeed, and shows a great want of genius and emulation. But, all things considered, I do not know whether it is not as well that it should be so; for though you know (owing to me) your papa and mamma are so good as to bring her up with you, it is not at all necessary that she should be as accomplished as you are; on the

contrary, it is much more desirable that there should be a difference.' "

Edmund Bertram is the only one of his family in whom Fanny finds a really kind friend. He has all his father's sterling qualities, with much more gentleness and tenderness than Sir Thomas ever shows, and, having surprised Fanny in tears one day, he finds out by degrees how readily she responds to any kindness, and how easily she can be made happy by it. He devotes his leisure time to comforting her under the painful sense of her own deficiencies, and bringing her forward as much as possible, for he has discovered that she is very timid and retiring, but has plenty of ability, and is far more really intellectual in her tastes than his accomplished sisters. He interests himself in her pursuits, devises little pleasures for her, directs her taste in reading, and, as a reward for the affection and care he bestows upon her through the next five or six years, he makes her by degrees a very lovable and charming compaion—far more like a sister to him than the highly accomplished Maria or Julia ever can be.

Edmund Bertram himself is an excellent specimen of a cultivated, thoughtful, right-minded young Englishman, not brilliant, but with plenty of sense, thoroughly good and trustworthy. Jane Austen once said of him that he was very far from being what she knew an English gentleman often was; but it is difficult for us to take this view of him, and, indeed, the only weak point in him is his clerical position, which, we must remember, was looked upon very differently then from now.

When Fanny is fifteen, Mr. Norris dies; and Sir Thomas naturally supposes that Mrs. Norris will

now take the opportunity of installing Fanny in her home.

But "Mrs. Norris had not the smallest intention of taking her. . . . To prevent its being expected, she had fixed on the smallest habitation which could rank as genteel among the buildings of Mansfield parish, the White House being only just large enough to receive herself and her servants, and allow a spare room for a friend, of which she made a very particular point. The spare rooms at the Parsonage had never been wanted, but the absolute necessity of a spare room for a friend was now never forgotten. Not all her precautions, however, could save her from being suspected of something better; or, perhaps, her very display of the importance of a spare room might have misled Sir Thomas to suppose it really intended for Fanny. Lady Bertram soon brought the matter to a certainty by carelessly observing, to Mrs. Norris, 'I think, sister, we need not keep Miss Lee any longer when Fanny goes to live with you.'

"Mrs. Norris almost started. 'Live with me, dear Lady Bertram! What do you mean?'

"'Is she not to live with you? I thought you had settled it with Sir Thomas.'

"'Me? Never! I never spoke a word about it to Sir Thomas, nor he to me. Fanny live with me! the last thing in the world for me to think of, or for anybody to wish that really knows us both. Good Heaven! what could I do with Fanny? Me! a poor, helpless, forlorn widow, unfit for anything, my spirits quite broken down; what could I do with a girl at her time of life? A girl of fifteen! the very age of all others to need most attention and care, and put the cheerfullest spirits to the test. Sure, Sir Thomas

could not seriously expect such a thing. Sir Thomas is too much my friend. Nobody that wishes me well, I am sure, would propose it. How came Sir Thomas to speak to you about it?'

"'Indeed, I do not know. I suppose he thought it best.'

"'But what did he say? He could not say he wished me to take Fanny. I am sure in his heart he could not wish me to do it.'

"'No; he only said he thought it very likely; and I thought so too. We both thought it would be a comfort to you. But if you do not like it, there is no more to be said. She is no incumbrance here.'

"'Dear sister, if you consider my unhappy state, how can she be any comfort to me? Here am I, a poor desolate widow, deprived of the best of husbands, my health gone in attending and nursing him, my spirits still worse, all my peace in this world destroyed, with barely enough to support me in the rank of a gentlewoman, and enable me to live so as not to disgrace the memory of the dear departed; what possible comfort could I have in taking such a charge upon me as Fanny? . . .'

"'Then you will not mind living by yourself quite alone?'

"'Dear Lady Bertram, what am I fit for but solitude? Now and then I shall hope to have a friend in my little cottage (I shall always have a bed for a friend), but the most part of my future days will be spent in utter seclusion. If I can but make both ends meet, that 's all I ask for.'

"'I hope, sister, things are not so very bad with you neither, considering Sir Thomas says you will have six hundred a year.'

"'Lady Bertram, I do not complain. I know I cannot live as I have done, but I must retrench where I can, and learn to be a better manager. I *have been* a liberal housekeeper enough, but I shall not be ashamed to practise economy now. A great many things were due from poor Mr. Norris as clergyman of the parish that cannot be expected from me. It is unknown how much was consumed in our kitchen by odd comers and goers. At the White House matters must be better looked after. I must live within my income, or I shall be miserable; and I own it would give me great satisfaction to be able to do rather more, to lay by a little at the end of the year.'

"'I daresay you will. You always do, don't you?'

"'My object, Lady Bertram, is to be of use to those that come after me. It is for your children's good that I wish to be richer. I have nobody else to care for; but I should be very glad to think I could leave a little trifle among them worth their having.'

"'You are very good, but do not trouble yourself about them; they are sure of being well provided for. Sir Thomas will take care of that.'

"'Why, you know Sir Thomas's means will be rather straitened if the Antigua estate is to make such poor returns.'

"'Oh, that will soon be settled. Sir Thomas has been writing about it, I know.'

"'Well, Lady Bertram,' said Mrs. Norris, moving to go, 'I can only say that my sole desire is to be of use to your family; and so if Sir Thomas should ever speak again about my taking Fanny, you will be able to say that my health and spirits put it quite out of

the question; besides that I really should not have a spare room to give her, for I must keep a spare room for a friend.'"

Fanny is therefore left at Mansfield Park, much to her own thankfulness, as well as Mrs. Norris's; and her position there as constant companion to her aunt becomes pretty well defined. Lady Bertram cannot do without someone at hand to help and advise her continually. The Miss Bertrams do not care for the society of their mother, who has never interested herself in any of their pursuits; and, therefore, while they enter into all the society of the county under Mrs. Norris's chaperonage, Fanny spends her hours quietly at home, delighted to be unnoticed and of use.

Just as his children are all grown up, Sir Thomas Bertram is obliged to go to the West Indies to see about some of his property there; a voyage which, of course, entails an absence of several months, and he is sincerely grieved at having to go, but, unfortunately, his absence is rather a relief than otherwise to his children. With all his warm affection for them, he has never been able to win any of their hearts, except, perhaps, Edmund's. The others feel real relief at his departure, all the more as some new acquaintances have lately appeared, with whom they can now be on terms of unrestrained intimacy.

Henry and Mary Crawford are excellent pictures of the brilliant, worldly, amusing, and *quasi* clever young people, who are such well-known features of London society, but to the Bertrams they are a novelty; and, as Mary Crawford has twenty thousand pounds, and is quite ready to be fallen in love with by Sir Thomas's eldest son, and Julia Bertram is equally

ready to make a conquest of Henry Crawford, matters seem likely to go on very comfortably. Unluckily everything does not quite fit in as it should. Maria Bertram, the eldest daughter, is already engaged to Mr. Rushworth, wealthy, well-born, and very dull, for whom she does not care in the least; and, as she is the handsomer of the two sisters, it amuses Henry Crawford to carry on a flirtation with both, so that neither can say which is preferred; and Mr. Rushworth is kept in a continual state of irritation, while nothing is said or done that could give tangible grounds for jealousy.

Meanwhile Tom Bertram, who is a mere man of pleasure, does not seem specially bewitched by Mary Crawford, and she, on her side, is unaccountably attracted by Edmund Bertram. She has done her best to get rid of whatever heart she had to start with, but she has not wholly succeeded, and now, in spite of his being a younger son, and destined for Holy Orders, and of his not being nearly so polished or complimentary as the men she is accustomed to, his straightforwardness, high principle, and simple admiration for her, fascinate the hardened coquette, and she is on the verge of caring for him as much as she is capable of caring for anyone. The attraction is quite as great on Edmund's side, and this is less wonderful, as Mary Crawford is beautiful, clever, and amusing; his taste cannot always approve of her, but he sets down much that pains him to the account of the society in which she has lived, and the sincere affection between her and her brother makes him believe her capable of real feeling He makes Fanny his confidante in this—as in everything else—and talks to her constantly about the Crawfords; while

Fanny, at first agreeing entirely in his estimate of them, by degrees begins to differ from him, and slowly wakes up to the pain—not yet of suspecting her own feelings for Edmund, but of seeing that she is no longer his first object, and of being unable to agree in his estimate of the Crawfords. She sees more heartlessness in Miss Crawford than Edmund suspects; she perceives more or less of the double game which Edmund is too honourable to dream of, but which Mr. Crawford is playing between the Bertram sisters, and, with increased suffering, she begins to fear that Edmund's hitherto high unswerving standard of right and wrong is becoming lowered by his admiration for Mary Crawford. It is not the least wonderful that he should be fascinated, for there is an amount of good feeling at times in Mary Crawford that is irresistibly attractive. It has been said that Miss Austen has always more affection for her female characters than her male ones, and I think this is true of the Crawfords; both are worldly, selfish, and untrustworthy, but Henry Crawford has no redeeming points, except his affection for his sister, while we are allowed to feel that Mary has more depth of feeling and that, if earlier in life she had fallen into better hands, she might have been a good and noble woman; Edmund, indeed, believes that she might still become so; Fanny's clearer sight sees that the attempt would be hopeless. The complications thicken when some private theatricals are started at Mansfield Park, ostensibly to while away the time till Sir Thomas returns, but really to amuse Tom Bertram and his friends; and the description of them from first to last is excellent, but too long to quote at length, though the opening difficulties will

appeal to all who have ever belonged to an amateur theatrical company.

"There were, in fact, so many things to be attended to, so many people to be pleased, so many best characters required, and, above all, such a need that the play should be at once both tragedy and comedy, that there did seem as little chance of a decision as anything pursued by youth and zeal could hold out.

"On the tragic side were the Miss Bertrams, Henry Crawford, and Mr. Yates; on the comic, Tom Bertram, not *quite* alone, because it was evident that Mary Crawford's wishes, though politely kept back, inclined the same way; but his determinateness and his power seemed to make allies unnecessary; and, independent of this great irreconcilable difference, they wanted a piece containing very few characters in the whole, but every character first-rate, and three principal women. All the best plays were run over in vain. Neither *Hamlet*, nor *Macbeth*, nor *Othello*, nor *Douglas*, nor *The Gamester* presented anything that could satisfy even the tragedians; and *The Rivals*, *The School for Scandal*, *Wheel of Fortune*, *Heir-at-law*, and a long *et cætera* were successively dismissed with yet warmer objections. No piece could be proposed that did not supply somebody with a difficulty; and on one side or the other it was a continual repetition of, 'Oh, no! *that* will never do. Let us have no ranting tragedies. Too many characters. Not a tolerable woman's part in the play. Anything but *that*, my dear Tom. It would be impossible to fill it up. One could not expect anybody to take such a part. Nothing but buffoonery from beginning to end. *That* might do, perhaps, but for the low parts. If I *must* give my opinion, I have always thought it the most insipid

play in the English language. I do not wish to make objections; I shall be happy to be of any use, but I think we could not choose worse.'"

A play is, however, found at last, and matters would go smoothly, but that the opportunities for love-making in the rehearsals are so many, Henry Crawford and Maria Bertram are so unguarded, and Mr. Rushworth and Julia Bertram both so jealous from their different stand-points, that Fanny, who sees it all, is much grieved. "Fanny being always a very courteous listener, and often the only listener at hand, came in for the complaints and distresses of most of them. *She* knew that Mr. Yates was in general thought to rant dreadfully; that Mr. Yates was disappointed in Henry Crawford; that Tom Bertram spoke so quickly that he would be unintelligible; that Mrs. Grant spoiled everything by laughing; that Edmund was behind-hand with his part; and that it was misery to have anything to do with Mr. Rushworth, who was wanting a prompter through every speech. She knew, also, that poor Mr. Rushworth could seldom get anybody to rehearse with him: *his* complaint came before her as well as the rest, and so decided, to her eye, was her cousin Maria's avoidance of him, and so needlessly often the rehearsal of the first scene between her and Mr. Crawford, that she had soon all the terror of other complaints from *him*." The climax of Fanny's distress is attained by seeing Edmund, who, knowing how greatly his father would disapprove of them, had hitherto opposed the theatricals, drawn in to take a part. The reason, he alleges to Fanny and to his own conscience, is that, unless he does so, Tom will invite a complete stranger in to fill the part, which would be highly undesirable;

but everyone sees that it is Mary Crawford's influence which has induced him to act contrary to his principles, and everyone, except Fanny, triumphs in secret.

The play, *Lover's Vows*, is in itself objectionable for such a party as theirs, but everyone seems blind to this; and only Fanny, and, perhaps, Mr. Rushworth, of all the Mansfield Park party is rejoiced when Sir Thomas's unexpected return puts a stop to the theatricals, and makes Tom Bertram and his friends seek amusement elsewhere. Henry Crawford, having amused himself sufficiently with the Bertram sisters, departs also on some visits; and preparations go on for Maria's wedding, though Sir Thomas, who has not met Mr. Rushworth before, is much disappointed in him. . . . He had expected a very different son-in-law, and, beginning to feel grave on Maria's account, tried to understand *her* feelings. Little observation was necessary to tell him that indifference was the most favourable state they could be in. Her behaviour to Mr. Rushworth was careless and cold. She could not—did not like him. Sir Thomas resolved to speak seriously to her. . . . Mr. Rushworth had, perhaps, been accepted on too short an acquaintance, and, on knowing him better, she was repenting. With solemn kindness Sir Thomas addressed her; told her his fears, inquired into her wishes, entreated her to be open and sincere, and assured her that every inconvenience should be braved, and the connection entirely given up if she felt herself unhappy in the prospect of it; he would act for her, and release her.

"Maria had a moment's struggle as she listened, and only a moment's; when her father ceased, she was able to give her answer immediately, decidedly, and with no apparent agitation. She thanked him for his

great attention, his paternal kindness; but he was quite mistaken in supposing she had the smallest desire of breaking through her engagement, or was sensible of any change of opinion or inclination since her forming it. She had the highest esteem for Mr. Rushworth's character and disposition, and could not have a doubt of her happiness with him. . . .

"Had Sir Thomas applied to his daughter within the first three or four days after Henry Crawford's leaving Mansfield, before her feelings were at all tranquillised, before she had given up every hope of him, or absolutely resolved on enduring his rival, her answer might have been different; but after another three or four days, when there was no return, no letter, no message, no symptom of a softened heart, no hope of advantage from separation, her mind became cool enough to seek all the comfort that pride and self-revenge could give. Henry Crawford had destroyed her happiness, but he should not know that he had done it; he should not destroy her credit, her appearance, her prosperity too. He should not have to think of her as pining in the retirement of Mansfield for *him*, rejecting Sotherton and London, independence and splendour, for *his* sake. . . . To such feelings delay, even the delay of much preparation, would have been an evil, and Mr. Rushworth could hardly be more impatient for the marriage than herself. In all the important preparations of the mind she was complete, being prepared for matrimony by a hatred of home, restraint and tranquillity; by the misery of disappointed affection, and contempt of the man she was to marry. The rest might wait. The preparations of new carriages and furniture might wait for London and spring, when her own taste could have fairer play."

With the departure of Maria, and Julia, who accompanies her sister, Fanny becomes more than ever the daughter of the house, and, treated with real kindness by everyone but Mrs. Norris, who never can bear to see her established there as an equal. She is very happy in her present life, and when her favourite brother, William, returns from sea, and is invited to stay at the Park, her happiness would be absolutely perfect, but for two circumstances. One is the terms of increasing attachment on which Edmund and Miss Crawford stand; the other is that Mr. Crawford, having returned to the Grants for a fortnight's visit, has, to everyone's amazement, his own included, remained on there as Fanny's declared suitor; he is, in fact, caught in his own trap. To while away dull hours in the country, he had begun what he merely intended as a flirtation with her, but, quite unintentionally, his heartless sport has turned into earnest, and he is now seriously bent upon marrying her. Neither he nor his sister have any doubt of his success, and when, through private influence, he procures William Price's promotion, he feels sure enough of his ground to venture on a proposal which fills Fanny with horror and dismay. Her refusal, though decided, is useless. He applies to Sir Thomas, who, knowing only that he is well-born, rich, clever, and very much in love, warmly takes his side, and a long siege sets in, in which the lover has everyone's influence exerted for him, and Fanny stands alone in her determined rejection. Edmund, Miss Crawford, Sir Thomas, all believe that her refusal is merely from timidity; they are not conscious of the objections to his character, and Fanny keeps her secret so well, though with difficulty, that no one suspects her of

having already given her heart elsewhere. Crawford's pursuit is resolute; he even follows her to Portsmouth, where she has gone for a visit to her own family, and puts up with vulgarity and discomfort there for the sake of showing her how much he is in earnest; but after that he is obliged to go to London for a time, and his visit there effects Fanny's deliverance from a most unwelcome suitor.

It is easy to see from what has been already quoted that any intercourse between Maria Rushworth and Henry Crawford would be very dangerous for both, and it is almost impossible for them not to come across each other in London society. When they first meet, Mrs. Rushworth treats her former admirer with repellent coldness, and this instantly wakens his vanity. He determines to soften her into greater kindness, and succeeds only too well, for he has never had any idea how strong her feeling for him had been; and when once it is roused again, she is quite incapable of controlling it. Matters are so evident, that an old friend writes to warn Sir Thomas, who sets off at once for London, but arrives too late; Maria has already left her husband's house with Mr. Crawford, and Julia puts the climax to her father's distress by eloping at the same time with an acquaintance of Tom Bertram, the Mr. Yates who figured so conspicuously in the theatricals.

The first impulse of the whole Bertram family is to turn to Fanny, who is still at Portsmouth, for comfort and sympathy; and she hurries back to Mansfield Park to help and support them through all the days of misery that follow, while Sir Thomas and Edmund are vainly endeavouring to trace and bring back Maria. Tom Bertram is dangerously ill, and there

is much anxiety for him; but, deeply as Fanny feels for the whole family, her thoughts turn most constantly to Edmund, with intense longing to know how all this will affect his prospects with Mary Crawford. Sir Thomas is equally anxious on his younger son's account, with the difference that he, seeing Edmund's attachment, and knowing of no objections to Miss Crawford herself, is earnestly desirous for Edmund's success. Fanny's feelings are more mixed.

The relations between Edmund Bertram and Mary Crawford are among the best passages in *Mansfield Park*, but they are given by such a multiplicity of fine touches that no extracts could do them justice. On her side there is as much attachment as worldliness and vanity have left her capacity for, held in check by a resolution never to become a clergyman's wife, but tempered by a secret conviction that her influence can prevent him from taking orders. This state of feeling produces a cat-and-mouse kind of conduct, to which Edmund submits; first, because he is in love; secondly, because he cannot understand that the sentiments she sometimes expresses are really earnest; and, finally, because he hopes in the power of her better nature to conquer the hardness and levity which he believes are only skin deep.

Miss Crawford, who is in London at the time of the elopement, has lately seemed far more encouraging than before, and asks him now to call upon her. He goes, his thoughts divided between his own hopes and his sympathy for what she must be feeling about her brother; and when he returns to Mansfield Park after the interview, Fanny hears it all. "She had met him, he said, with a serious—certainly a serious—even an agitated air; but, before he had been able to speak

one intelligible sentence, she had introduced the subject in a manner which he owned had shocked him.

"'I heard you were in town,' said she; 'I wanted to see you. Let us talk over this sad business. What can equal the folly of our two relations?'

"I could not answer, but I believe my looks spoke. She felt reproved. Sometimes how quick to feel! With a graver look and voice she then added,

"'I do not mean to defend Henry at your sister's expense.'

"So she began. . . . I cannot recall all her words. I would not dwell upon them if I could. Their substance was great anger at the *folly* of each. She reprobated her brother's folly in being drawn on by a woman whom he had never cared for, to do what must lose him the woman he adored; but still more the folly of poor Maria in sacrificing such a situation, plunging into such difficulties, under the idea of being really loved by a man who had long ago made his indifference clear. . . . I will tell you everything, and then have done for ever. She saw it only as folly, and that folly stamped only by exposure. The want of common discretion, of caution; his going down to Richmond for the whole time of her being at Twickenham; her putting herself in the power of a servant; it was the detection, in short—oh, Fanny! it was the detection, not the offence, which she reprobated. It was the imprudence which had brought things to extremity, and obliged her brother to give up every dearer plan in order to fly with her. . . . She went on to say that what remained now to be done was to bring about a marriage between them. She spoke of it, Fanny, with a steadier voice than I

can. . . : 'We must persuade Henry to marry her,' said she, 'and, what with honour and the certainty of having shut himself out for ever from Fanny, I do not despair of it. Fanny he must give up. I do not think that even *he* could now hope to succeed with one of her stamp, and, therefore, I hope we may find no insuperable difficulty. My influence, which is not small, shall all go that way; and, properly supported by her own family, people of respectability as they are, she may recover her footing in society to a certain degree. In some circles we know she would never be admitted, but, with good dinners, and large parties, there will always be those who will be glad of her acquaintance; and there is, undoubtedly, more liberality and candour on those points now than formerly. What I advise is that your father be quiet. Do not let him injure his own cause by interference. Persuade him to let things take their course. If, by any officious exertions of his, she is induced to leave Henry's protection, there will be much less chance of his marrying her than if she remain with him. I know how he is likely to be influenced. Let Sir Thomas trust to his honour and compassion, and it may all end well; but, if he gets his daughter away, it will be destroying the chief hold.'"

The answer that Edmund makes to all this may be imagined, but cannot be given at length; suffice it that his eyes are at length opened, and he bids Mary Crawford farewell in a harangue, which is, perhaps, a shade too sententious, but so genuine in its pain and disgust that all intercourse between the Bertram and Crawford families is ended for ever. He returns to Mansfield Park to recover slowly from the wound he has received, with the help of Fanny's

affectionate sympathy; nor is he wholly unavenged, for though Mary Crawford laughed at his "sermon," her heart had been touched by his devotion, and "she was long in finding among the dashing representatives, or idle heirs-apparent, who were at the command of her beauty and her twenty thousand pounds, anyone who could satisfy the better taste she had acquired at Mansfield, whose character and manners could authorise a hope of the domestic happiness she had there learned to estimate, or put Edmund Bertram sufficiently out of her head."

Henry Crawford will not marry Maria Rushworth; and, as Sir Thomas refuses to let her live again at Mansfield Park, Mrs. Norris, to everyone's extreme relief, departs to make a home for Maria elsewhere, which is as unhappy as might be expected. In every other respect matters, by degrees, brighten for the Bertrams. Julia's marriage turns out better than it had any right to do; Tom Bertram recovers and reforms, and Edmund's marriage to Fanny, some years later, completes everyone's happiness.

"With so much true merit and true love, and no want of fortune or friends, the happiness of the married cousins must appear as secure as earthly happiness can be. Equally formed for domestic life, and attached to country pleasures, their home was the home of affection and comfort; and, to complete the picture of good, the acquisition of Mansfield living, by the death of Dr. Grant, occurred just after they had been married long enough to begin to want an increase of income, and feel their distance from the paternal abode an inconvenience. On that event they removed to Mansfield; and the Parsonage there, which, under each of its two former owners, Fanny had never been

able to approach but with some painful sensation of restraint or alarm, soon grew as dear to her heart, and as thoroughly perfect in her eyes, as everything else within the view and patronage of Mansfield Park had long been."

Mansfield Park is lengthy, but this can hardly be considered a blemish, as it was the deliberate intention of the author, and, after all, it is "readable from cover to cover." The only part that could appear to anyone unnecessary is Fanny's visit to her relations at Portsmouth, and no one would wish to lose so good a picture of the home mismanaged by the incapable wife and mother. Henry Crawford's love-making to Fanny is longer than I suspect that gentleman would ever have endured, but it is necessary to allow time for the renewal of his intimacy with Mrs. Rushworth; and it may be intended as a marked proof of Fanny's power over him that he submits to so long a suspense. From first to last Fanny Price is charming, and, seeing how admirably her character is worked out, *Mansfield Park* cannot be considered too long for art, as it certainly is not too long for enjoyment.

CHAPTER VIII.

"EMMA."

Most readers of Jane Austen will agree in thinking that in *Emma* she reached the summit of her literary powers. She has given us quite as charming individual characters both in earlier and later writings, but it is impossible to name a flaw in *Emma*; there is not a page that could with advantage be omitted, nor could any additions improve it. It has all the brilliancy of *Pride and Prejudice*, without any immaturity of style, and it is as carefully finished as *Mansfield Park*, without the least suspicion of prolixity. In *Emma*, too, as has been already noticed, she worked into perfection some characters which she had attempted earlier with less success, and she gave us two or three, such as Mr. Weston, Mrs. Elton, and Miss Bates, which we find nowhere else in her writings. Moreover, in *Emma*, above all her other works, she achieved a task in which many a great writer has failed; for she gives us there the portrait of a thorough English gentleman, drawn to the life. Edmund Bertram, indeed, is, in the best sense of the word, a gentleman, but he is a very young one; Mr. Darcy and Henry Tilney at times are on the verge of not being quite

thorough-bred; but Mr. Knightley is from head to foot a gentleman, and we feel that he never could have said or done a thing unworthy of one. Jane Austen herself classed him with Edmund Bertram in her speech already given, as "far from being what I know English gentlemen often are." I think she was unjust to both her heroes, but, above all, to Mr. Knightley, for it is difficult to see how he could be surpassed. The man, who, in the full vigour of health and strength, was always patient and forbearing towards a fussy, fidgety invalid; who would not propose to the woman he loved because he believed that another younger and more attractive man was on the verge of doing so; then was ready to help and comfort her without any *arrière pensée* of advantage to himself, when she was deserted by her supposed lover; who took with indifference any annoyance or impertinence to himself, but whose righteous indignation was instantly roused by any slight to those whose position made them defenceless; who was refined in thought and language, sincere to friends and foes, and uncompromisingly straightforward in every transaction; surely this is a very real type of English gentleman, and few writers have drawn it so successfully. Emma Woodhouse, too, is very good. Her faults, follies, and mistakes are completely those of a warm-hearted, rather spoilt girl, accustomed to believe in herself, and to be queen of her own circle. She deserves the amount of punishment she gets, but we are glad it is no worse; and, with Mr. Knightley to look after her, she will do very well. Her position would be a spoiling one for any girl. "Emma Woodhouse, handsome, clever, and rich, with a comfortable home and happy disposition, seemed to unite some

of the best blessings of existence; and had lived nearly twenty-one years in the world with very little to distress or vex her. She was the youngest of the two daughters of a most affectionate indulgent father, and had, in consequence of her sister's marriage, been mistress of his house from a very early period. Her mother had died too long ago for her to have more than an indistinct remembrance of her caresses, and her place had been supplied by an excellent woman as governess, who had fallen little short of a mother in affection."

The story, as usual with Jane Austen, is a mere thread of the most every-day kind: the loves, hopes, fears, and rivalries of a dozen people, with all their home lives and surroundings. But every one of the characters stands out clearly from the canvas, and all are life-like and delightful. What can be quoted, when all would repay quotation? It is difficult to know where to begin, yet impossible not to give as much as space will permit.

Emma Woodhouse is, of course, the most prominent character, and a considerable part of the plot turns upon the strenuous attempts at match-making for a friend, which she takes up to amuse and occupy herself when the marriage of her beloved governess has left her alone in her father's house. This friend, Harriet Smith, is pretty, silly, and second-rate, of unknown parentage, and educated at a neighbouring boarding-school; but Emma, fascinated by her beauty and simplicity, ignores her worst defects, and resolves upon marrying her to the vicar of the parish, Mr. Elton, who is young, handsome, and a good imitation of a gentleman. Her eagerness for the marriage is quickened by finding that Harriet has a pronounced

admirer in a neighbouring young farmer, whom Emma considers quite beneath her; and she directs much of her energy to quell this rising attachment on Harriet's part, honestly believing it to be a very bad connection for her. Harriet herself has never aspired higher than Mr. Robert Martin, and, but for Emma's interference, his course of true love would have run exceedingly smooth. An unexpected meeting with him out walking gives Emma an opportunity for lowering him in Harriet's eyes. "They remained but a few minutes together, as Miss Woodhouse must not be kept waiting; and Harriet then came running to her with a smiling face, and in a flutter of spirits, which Miss Woodhouse hoped very soon to compose.

"'Only think of our happening to meet him! how very odd! It was quite a chance, he said, that he had not gone round by Randalls; he did not think we ever walked this road. He thought we walked towards Randalls most days. He has not been able to get *The Romance of the Forest* yet. He was so busy the last time he was at Kingston that he quite forgot it, but he goes again to-morrow. So very odd we should happen to meet! Well, Miss Woodhouse, is he like what you expected? What do you think of him? Do you think him so very plain?'

"'He is very plain, undoubtedly, remarkably plain; but that is nothing compared with his entire want of gentility. I had no right to expect much, and I did not expect much; but I had no idea that he could be so very clownish, so totally without air. I had imagined, him, I confess, a degree or two nearer gentility.'

"'To be sure,' said Harriet, in a mortified voice, 'he is not so genteel as real gentlemen.'

"'I think, Harriet, since your acquaintance with us, you have been repeatedly in the company of some such very real gentlemen, that you must yourself be struck with the difference in Mr. Martin. At Hartfield you have had very good specimens of well-educated, well-bred men. I should be surprised if, after seeing them, you could be in company with Mr. Martin again without perceiving him to be a very inferior creature —and rather wondering at yourself for having ever thought him at all agreeable before. Do not you begin to feel that now? Were not you struck? I am sure you must have been struck by his awkward look and abrupt manner, and the uncouthness of a voice which I heard to be wholly unmodulated as I stood here.'

"'Certainly he is not like Mr. Knightley. He has not such a fine air and way of walking as Mr. Knightley. I see the difference plain enough. But Mr. Knightley is so very fine a man.'

"'Mr. Knightley's air is so remarkably good, that it is not fair to compare Mr. Martin with *him*. You might not see one in a hundred with *gentleman* so plainly written as in Mr Knightley. But he is not the only gentleman you have been lately used to. What say you to Mr. Weston and Mr. Elton? . . . Compare their manner of carrying themselves, of walking, of speaking, of being silent. You must see the difference.'

"'Oh, yes, there is a great difference. But Mr. Weston is almost an old man. Mr. Weston must be between forty and fifty.'

"'Which makes his good manners the more valuable. The older a person grows, Harriet, the more important it is that their manners should not be bad; the more glaring and disgusting any loudness, or coarse-

ness, or awkwardness becomes. What is passable in youth is detestable in later age. Mr. Martin is now awkward and abrupt; what will he be at Mr. Weston's time of life?'

"'There is no saying, indeed,' replied Harriet rather solemnly.

"'But there may be pretty good guessing. He will be a completely gross vulgar farmer, totally inattentive to appearances, and thinking of nothing but profit and loss.'

"'Will he, indeed? That will be very bad.'

"'How much his business engrosses him already is very plain from the circumstance of his forgetting to inquire for the book you recommended. He was a great deal too full of the market to think of anything else—which is just as it should be for a thriving man. What has he to do with books? And I have no doubt that he *will* thrive, and be a very rich man in time; and his being illiterate and coarse need not disturb *us*.'

"'I wonder he did not remember the book,' was all Harriet's answer, and spoken with a degree of grave displeasure which Emma thought might be safely left to itself. She therefore said no more for some time. Her next beginning was—

"'In one respect, perhaps, Mr. Elton's manners are superior to Mr. Knightley's or Mr. Weston's. They have more gentleness. They might be more safely held up as a pattern. There is an openness, a quickness, almost a bluntness in Mr. Weston, which everybody likes in *him* because there is so much good humour with it—but that would not do to be copied. Neither would Mr. Knightley's downright, decided, commanding sort of manner, though it suits *him* very well: his

figure, look, and situation in life seem to allow it, but if any young man were to set about copying him he would not be sufferable. On the contrary, I think a young man might be very safely recommended to take Mr. Elton as a model. Mr Elton is good-humoured, cheerful, obliging, and gentle. He seems to me to be grown particularly gentle of late. I do not know whether he has any design of ingratiating himself with either of us, Harriet, by additional softness, but it strikes me that his manners are softer than they used to be. If he means anything, it must be to please you. Did not I tell you what he said of you the other day?'

"She then repeated some warm personal praise which she had drawn from Mr. Elton, and now did full justice to; and Harriet blushed and smiled, and said she had always thought Mr. Elton very agreeable."

Emma is persuaded that a very little encouragement will bring Mr. Elton forward as Harriet's declared suitor, and, under this belief, she throws the two together in every possible way at Hartfield. Having further convinced herself that Mr. Elton's pretty speeches, which would suit every woman equally well, are solely intended for Harriet through her, she receives them all with the utmost graciousness, quite unconscious of the presumptuous hopes for himself which he builds upon her manner to him. She begins a portrait of Harriet, which, she trusts, may some day be a wedding present to Mr. Elton, and her eyes are not opened to his real views even by his remarks upon the picture when finished.

"'Miss Woodhouse has given her friend the only beauty she wanted,' observed Mrs. Weston to him

not in the least suspecting that she was addressing a lover. 'The expression of the eye is most correct, but Miss Smith has not those eye-brows and eye-lashes; it is the fault of her face that she has them not.'

"'Do you think so?' replied he. 'I cannot agree with you. It appears to me a most perfect resemblance in every feature. I never saw such a likeness in my life. We must allow for the effects of shade, you know.'

"'You have made her too tall, Emma,' said Mr. Knightley.

"Emma knew that she had, but would not own it; and Mr. Elton warmly added—

"'Oh, no; certainly not too tall—not in the least too tall. Consider she is sitting down, which naturally presents a different—which, in short, gives exactly the idea—and the proportions must be preserved, you know. Proportions, fore-shortening—oh, no; it gives one exactly the idea of such a height as Miss Smith's —exactly so, indeed.'

"'It is very pretty,' said Mr. Woodhouse. 'So prettily done. Just as your drawings always are, my dear. I do not know anybody who draws so well as you do. The only thing I do not thoroughly like is that she seems to be sitting out of doors with only a little shawl over her shoulders; and it makes one think she must catch cold.'

"'But, my dear papa, it is supposed to be summer; a warm day in summer. Look at the tree.'

"'But it is never safe to sit out of doors, my dear.'

"'You, sir, may say anything,' cried Mr. Elton, 'but I must confess that I regard it as a most happy thought, the placing Miss Smith out of doors; and the tree is touched with such inimitable spirit. Any

other situation would have been much less in character. The *naïveté* of Miss Smith's manners, and, altogether —oh, it is most admirable; I cannot keep my eyes from it. I never saw such a likeness.'

"The next thing wanted was to get the picture framed; and here were a few difficulties. . . . But no sooner was the distress known to Mr. Elton than it was removed. His gallantry was always on the alert. Might he be trusted with the commission, what infinite pleasure should he have in executing it! He could ride to London at any time. It was impossible to say how much he should be gratified by being employed on such an errand.

"'He was too good!—she could not endure the thought!—she would not give him such a troublesome office for the world,' brought on the desired repetition of entreaties and assurances, and a very few minutes settled the business. Mr. Elton was to take the drawing to London, choose the frame, and give the directions; and Emma thought she could so pack it as to ensure its safety without much incommoding him, while he seemed mostly fearful of not being incommoded enough.

"'What a precious deposit!' said he with a tender sigh as he received it.

"'This man is almost too gallant to be in love,' thought Emma; 'I should say so, but that I suppose there may be a hundred different ways of being in love. He is an excellent young man, and will suit Harriet exactly; it will be an "exactly so," as he says himself; but he does sigh and languish and study for compliments rather more than I could endure as a principal. I come in for a pretty good share as a second. But it is his gratitude on Harriet's account.'"

Perhaps Mr. Robert Martin hears enough of what is passing at Hartfield to alarm him; at all events, he determines to put his fate to the touch; and the very day of Mr. Elton's going to London Harriet comes to Emma "with an agitated hurried look, announcing something extraordinary to have happened which she was longing to tell. Half a minute brought it all out. She had heard, as soon as she had got back to Mrs. Goddard's, that Mr. Martin had been there an hour before . . . had left a little parcel for her from one of his sisters, and gone away; and, on opening this parcel, she had actually found, besides the two songs which she had lent Elizabeth to copy, a letter to herself, and this letter was from him—from Mr. Martin—and contained a direct proposal of marriage. 'Who could have thought it? She was so surprised, she did not know what to do. Yes, quite a proposal of marriage; and a very good letter, at least, she thought so. And he wrote as if he really loved her very much—but she did not know—and so she had come as fast as she could to ask Miss Woodhouse what she should do.'

It is clear enough what she wants to do; but Emma, still bent upon saving her friend from a supposed *mésalliance*, is indignant with Mr. Martin's presumption, and only wishes Harriet to lose no time in giving him his dismissal.

"'You think I ought to refuse him then?' said Harriet looking down.

"'Ought to refuse him! My dear Harriet, what do you mean? Are you in any doubt as to that? I thought—but I beg your pardon, perhaps I have been under a mistake. I certainly have been misunderstanding you if you feel in doubt as to the *purport*

of your answer. I had imagined you were consulting me only as to the wording of it.'

"Harriet was silent. With a little reserve of manner, Emma continued:

"'You mean to return a favourable answer, I collect.'

"'No; I do not, that is, I do not mean—what shall I do? What would you advise me to do? Pray, dear Miss Woodhouse, tell me what I ought to do.'

"'I shall not give you any advice, Harriet. I will have nothing to do with it. This is a point which you must settle with your own feelings.'

"'I had no notion that he liked me so very much,' said Harriet, contemplating the letter. For a little while Emma persevered in her silence, but, beginning to apprehend the bewitching flattery of that letter might be too powerful, she thought it best to say—

"'I lay it down as a general rule, Harriet, that if a woman *doubts* as to whether she should accept a man or not, she certainly ought to refuse him. If she can hesitate as to "Yes," she ought to say "No" directly. It is not a state to be safely entered into with doubtful feelings, with half a heart. I thought it my duty as a friend, and older than yourself, to say thus much to you. But do not imagine that I want to influence you.'

"'Oh, no; I am sure you are a great deal too kind to—but if you would just advise me what I had best do—no, no, I do not mean that—as you say, one's mind ought to be quite made up—one should not be hesitating—it is a very serious thing. It will be safer to say "No," perhaps. Do you think I had better say "No"?'

"'Not for the world,' said Emma, smiling graciously, 'would I advise you either way. You must be the best judge of your own happiness. If you prefer Mr. Martin to every other person, if you think him the most agreeable man you have ever been in company with, why should you hesitate? You blush, Harriet. Does anybody else occur to you at this moment under such a definition? Harriet, Harriet, do not deceive yourself; do not be run away with by gratitude and compassion. At this moment whom are you thinking of?'

"The symptoms were favourable. Instead of answering, Harriet turned away confused, and stood thoughtfully by the fire; and, though the letter was still in her hand, it was now mechanically twisted about without regard. Emma waited the result with impatience, but not without strong hopes. At last, with some hesitation Harriet said—

"'Miss Woodhouse, as you will not give me your opinion, I must do as well as I can by myself; and I have now quite determined, and really almost made up my mind to refuse Mr. Martin. Do you think I am right?'

"'Perfectly, perfectly right, my dearest Harriet; you are doing just what you ought. While you were at all in suspense, I kept my feelings to myself; but now that you are so completely decided, I have no hesitation in approving. Dear Harriet, I give myself joy of this. It would have grieved me to lose your acquaintance, which must have been the consequence of your marrying Mr. Martin. While you were in the smallest degree wavering, I said nothing about it, because I would not influence, but it would have been the loss of a friend to me. I could not have visited

Mrs. Robert Martin of Abbey Mill Farm. Now I am secure of you for ever.' "

There can be no better picture of a strong, decided nature bearing down a weak, vacillating one, yet entirely unconscious of its own tyranny. But Emma's triumph is of short duration. She has first to endure a sharp lecture from Mr. Knightley, who, from his position in the family as brother to her sister's husband, is on terms of full intimacy with her and her father, and is, moreover, "one of the few people who could see faults in Emma Woodhouse, and the only one who ever told her of them." Robert Martin has confided his hopes to him, and, when they are crushed, Mr. Knightley is much grieved for him, and, guessing the part which Emma has had in the business, is much annoyed with her for dissuading Harriet from a safe and respectable connection. Emma has hardly tranquilized him, when, to her intense vexation, Mr. Elton declares himself her lover, and she then perceives the truth, to which she has been so blind, and sees how all her efforts for Harriet have been set down by him to dawning attachment on her own part. Of course Harriet has to be comforted and talked out of love—a far harder task than talking her into it; and even Mr. Elton's very speedy engagement to "a Miss Hawkins of Bath" has not all the success Emma has hoped for.

In the interval before his marriage, we are introduced to Jane Fairfax and Frank Churchill, who may be considered the secondary hero and heroine of the story. She is the grand-daughter of a Mr. Bates, a former clergyman of Highbury.

Frank Churchill and Jane Fairfax have met at the house of a friend, and he having fallen violently in

love, and being a young man with little regard for anyone's feelings but his own, has persuaded her, against her better judgment, into a secret engagement. The plea for it is that his family might disinherit him if they knew of the engagement too soon, and, for a time, the secret is easy enough to keep; but when Jane comes for her usual visit to her grandmother and aunt at Highbury, Frank Churchill immediately finds the opportunity for a visit to his father there, and the connection between him and his *fiancée* necessitates an amount of double-dealing which is very painful to her though it greatly amuses him. Emma narrowly escapes being a sufferer by this.

"In spite of Emma's resolution of never marrying, there was something in the name, in the idea, of Mr. Frank Churchill which always interested her. She had frequently thought—especially since his father's marriage with Miss Taylor—that if she *were* to marry, he was the very person to suit her in age, character, and condition. He seemed, by this connection between the families, quite to belong to her. She could not but suppose it to be a match that everybody who knew them must think of. That Mr. and Mrs. Weston did think of it, she was very strongly persuaded; and though not meaning to be induced by him or by anybody else to give up a situation which she believed more replete with good than any she could change it for, she had a great curiosity to see him, a decided intention of finding him pleasant, of being liked by him, to a certain degree, and a sort of pleasure in the idea of their being coupled in their friends' imaginations."

When Mr. Frank Churchill appears, he is pleasant, lively, and well-bred, quite willing to carry on a grace-

ful flirtation with Emma in order to cover his real attraction at Highbury; and both the Westons and Emma believe him to be seriously falling in love with the latter. Emma, having much time on her hands, and a lively imagination, tries to convince herself that she is falling in love with him; and her attempt at this is an excellent passage in the book. She is quite unsuspicious of his secret engagement, in spite of the sharp-sightedness on which she prides herself, but the real superiority of her own nature enables her to see a certain shallowness in his. Quite unconsciously to herself, she is always comparing him with Mr. Knightley, and the comparison is not favourable to Frank; but, having made up her mind that she will not marry at present, and that Frank is in love with her, she magnanimously decides not to give him any further encouragement, and begins to consider if he could be induced to fall in love with Harriet Smith. On her own side she honestly believes that she has fallen in love with him—which she has never done for a moment—and considers herself heroic for determining not to leave her father. Meanwhile Mr. Elton has returned to Highbury with his bride, and Emma feels bound to call upon her. Mrs. Elton duly returns the visit, and Emma tries to be civil.

"'I do not ask whether you are musical, Mrs. Elton; upon these occasions a lady's character generally precedes her, and Highbury has long known that you are a superior performer.'

"'Oh, no, indeed; I must protest against any such idea. A superior performer!—very far from it, I assure you; consider from how partial a quarter your information came. I am doatingly fond of music—passionately fond; and my friends say I am not entirely

devoid of taste; but as to anything else, upon my honour, my performance is *médiocre* to the last degree. You, Miss Woodhouse, I well know, play delightfully. I assure you, it has been the greatest satisfaction comfort, and delight to me to hear what a musical society I am got into. I absolutely cannot do without music; it is a necessary of life to me; and, having always been used to a very musical society, both at Maple Grove and in Bath, it would have been a most serious sacrifice. I honestly said as much to Mr. E. when he was speaking of my future home, and expressing his fears lest the retirement of it should be disagreeable; and the inferiority of the house, too—knowing what I had been accustomed to—of course he was not wholly without apprehension. When he was speaking of it in that way, I honestly said that *the world* I could give up—parties, balls, plays—for I had no fear of retirement. Blessed with so many resources within myself, the world was not necessary to *me*. I could do very well without it. To those who had no resources it was a different thing, but my resources made me quite independent. And as to smaller-sized rooms than I had been used to, I really could not give it a thought. I hoped I was perfectly equal to any sacrifice of that description. Certainly I had been accustomed to every luxury at Maple Grove, but I did assure him that two carriages were not necessary to my happiness, nor were spacious apartments. "But," said I, "to be quite honest, I do not think I can live without something of a musical society. I condition for nothing else; but without music, life would be a blank to me."'

"'We cannot suppose,' said Emma, smiling, 'that Mr. Elton would hesitate to assure you of there being

a *very* musical society in Highbury; and I hope you will not find he has outstepped the truth more than may be pardoned, in consideration of the motive.'

"'No, indeed, I have no doubts at all on that head. I am delighted to find myself in such a circle: I hope we shall have many sweet little concerts together. I think, Miss Woodhouse, you and I must establish a musical club, and have regular weekly meetings at your house, or ours. Will it not be a good plan? If we exert ourselves, I think we shall not be long in want of allies. Something of that nature would be particularly desirable for *me* as an inducement to keep me in practice; for married women, you know—there is a sad story against them in general. They are but too apt to give up music. . . . I used to be quite angry with Selina; but really I begin now to comprehend that a married woman has many things to call her attention. I believe I was half an hour this morning shut up with my house-keeper.'

"'But everything of that kind,' said Emma, 'will soon be in so regular a train——'

"'Well,' said Mrs. Elton, laughing, 'we shall see.'

"Emma, finding her so determined upon neglecting her music, had nothing more to say; and, after a moment's pause, Mrs. Elton chose another subject.

"'We have been calling at Randalls,' said she, 'and found them both at home; and very pleasant people they seem to be. I like them extremely. Mr. Weston seems an excellent creature, quite a first-rate favourite with me already, I assure you. And *she* appears so truly good; there is something so motherly and kind-hearted about her that it wins upon one directly. She was your governess, I think?'

"Emma was almost too much astonished to answer; but Mrs. Elton hardly waited for the affirmative before she went on.

"'Having understood as much, I was rather astonished to find her so very lady-like. But she is really quite the gentlewoman.'

"'Mrs. Weston's manners,' said Emma, 'were always particularly good; their propriety, simplicity, and elegance would make them the safest model for any young woman.'

"'And who do you think came in while we were there?'

"Emma was quite at a loss. The tone implied some old acquaintance, and how could she possibly guess?

"'Knightley,' continued Mrs. Elton; 'Knightley himself. Was it not lucky? For not being within when he called the other day, I had never seen him before; and, of course, as so particular a friend of Mr. E.'s, I had a great curiosity. "My friend Knightley" had been so often mentioned that I was really impatient to see him; and I must do my *caro sposo* the justice to say that he need not be ashamed of his friend. Knightley is quite the gentleman; I like him very much. Decidedly, I think, a very gentleman-like man.'

"Happily it was now time to be gone. They were off, and Emma could breathe."

Mrs. Elton and Miss Bates are well contrasted; both are great talkers, but the conversation of the one is all vulgar egotism, while the other merely talks from inability to hold her tongue, and her chatter is always simple-minded and kind-hearted.

A ball is given by the Westons, to which, of course, everyone is invited, and Miss Bates is there to chaperon

her niece. As the door opened, she was heard—"'So very obliging of you!—No rain at all. Nothing to signify. I do not care for myself. Quite thick shoes. And Jane declares. Well!' (as soon as she was within the door) 'well! This is brillant, indeed! This is admirable! Excellently contrived, upon my word. Nothing wanting. Could not have imagined it. So well lighted up! Jane, Jane, look! Did you ever see anything——? Oh, Mr. Weston, you must really have had Aladdin's lamp. Good Mrs. Stokes would not know her own room again. I saw her as I came in; she was standing in the entrance. "Oh, Mrs. Stokes," said I—but I had not time for more.'" She was now met by Mrs. Weston. "'Very well, I thank you, Ma'am; I hope you are quite well. Very happy to hear it. So afraid you might have a headache, seeing you pass by so often, and knowing how much trouble you must have. Delighted to hear it, indeed.—Ah, dear Mrs. Elton, so obliged to you for the carriage; excellent time; Jane and I quite ready. Did not keep the horses a moment. Most comfortable carriage. Oh! and I am sure our thanks are due to you, Mrs. Weston, on that score. Mrs. Elton had most kindly sent Jane a note or we should have been——. But two such offers in one day! Never were such neighbours. I said to my mother, 'Upon my word, Ma'am'—Thank you, my mother is remarkably well; gone to Mr. Woodhouse's. I made her take her shawl—for the evenings are not warm—her large new shawl, Mrs. Dixon's wedding present. So kind of her to think of my mother. Bought at Weymouth, you know; Mr. Dixon's choice. There were three others, Jane says, which they hesitated about some time. Colonel Campbell rather preferred an olive.—My dear Jane, are you sure you

did not wet your feet? It was but a drop or two, but I am so afraid; but Mr. Frank Churchill was so extremely—and there was a mat to step on. I shall never forget his extreme politeness. Oh! Mr. Frank Churchill, I must tell you my mother's spectacles have never been in fault since: the rivet never came out again. My mother often talks of your good nature; does not she, Jane? Do not we often talk of Mr. Frank Churchill? Ah! here's Miss Woodhouse. Dear Miss Woodhouse, how do you do? Very well, I thank you, quite well. This is meeting quite in fairy-land: such a transformation! Must not compliment, I know (eyeing Emma most complacently), but upon my word, Miss Woodhouse, you do look—how do you like Jane's hair? You are a judge. She did it all herself. Quite wonderful how she does her hair! No hair-dresser from London I think could—Ah! Dr. Hughes, I declare, and Mrs. Hughes. Must go and speak to Dr. and Mrs. Hughes for a moment. How do you do? How do you do? Very well, I thank you. This is delightful, is not it? Where's dear Mr. Richard? Oh, there he is. Don't disturb him. Much better employed talking to the young ladies. How do you do, Mr. Richard? I saw you the other day as you rode through the town. Mrs. Otway, I protest, and good Mr. Otway, and Miss Caroline. Such a host of friends! and Mr. George and Mr. Arthur. How do you do? How do you all do? Quite well, I am much obliged to you. Never better. Don't I hear another carriage? Who can this be?—very likely the worthy Coles. Upon my word, this is charming, to be standing about among such friends! And such a noble fire! I am quite roasted. No coffee, I thank you, for me; never take coffee. A little tea, if you please, sir,

by-and-bye; no hurry. Oh, here it comes. Everything is so good.'"

The secret of Frank Churchill's engagement at last comes out unexpectedly, and is a very startling revelation to a good many people, even to Emma, though not in the way she might have expected. In his effort to conceal his real attachment, Frank Churchill has flirted with Emma to an extent that has exasperated Jane Fairfax, whose nerves are over-wrought and irritable beyond measure, and she at length hastily decides on taking a situation as a governess which has been offered to her by friends of Mrs. Elton. She has carefully concealed this step from her lover up to the last moment; but when he learns it, all his better feelings are roused, and he announces the engagement to his family, determined to brave all possible consequences. Emma, in addition to being much displeased at this secrecy, which is so repugnant to her whole nature, is sincerely grieved for Harriet Smith, who, she believes, is as much attached to Frank Churchill as she can be to any one. For some time past it has been clear that there is a successor to Mr. Elton in Harriet's somewhat unstable affections; and though Emma, taught by experience, has resolutely held her tongue on the subject, she has been delighted at a prospect which promised so much happiness to her friend. Now, when the truth is known, she is preparing to pity and sympathise with Harriet over Frank Churchill's unjustifiable concealment, when, to her amazement, she finds herself again completely mistaken, and learns with dismay that Mr. Knightley is the man on whom Harriet's present ideas are fixed.

"A mind like hers, once opening to suspicion, made rapid progress; she touched, she admitted, she

acknowledged the whole truth. Why was it so much worse that Harriet should be in love with Mr. Knightley than with Frank Churchill? Why was the evil so dreadfully increased by Harriet's having some hope of a return? It darted through her with the speed of an arrow that Mr. Knightley must marry no one but herself! . . .

"The rest of the day, the following night, were hardly enough for her thoughts. She was bewildered amidst the confusion of all that had rushed on her within the last few hours. Every moment had brought a fresh surprise: and every surprise must be matter of humiliation to her. How to understand it all! how to understand the deceptions she had been thus practising on herself and living under! The blunders, the blindness of her own head and heart. She sat still, she walked about, she tried her own room, she tried the shrubbery—in every place, every posture, she perceived that she had acted most weakly, that she had been imposed on by others in a most mortifying degree, that she had been imposing on herself in a degree yet more mortifying, that she was wretched, and should probably find this day but the beginning of wretchedness. . . . With insufferable vanity had she believed herself in the secret of everybody's feelings; with unpardonable arrogance proposed to arrange everybody's destiny. She was proved to have been universally mistaken, and she had not quite done nothing—for she had done mischief. She had brought evil on Harriet, on herself, and, as she too much feared, on Mr. Knightley. Were this most unequal of all connections to take place, on her must rest all the reproach of having given it a beginning; for his attachment she must believe to be produced only by a

consciousness of Harriet's;—and even were this not the case, he would never have known Harriet at all but for her folly. . . . Could it be? No, it was impossible. And yet it was far, very far from impossible. Was it a new circumstance for a man of first-rate abilities to be captivated by very inferior powers? Was it new for one, perhaps too busy to seek, to be the prize of a girl who would seek him? . . . Oh! had she never brought Harriet forward! Had she left her where she ought, and where he had told her she ought! Had she not, with a folly which no tongue could express, prevented her marrying the unexceptionable young man who would have made her happy and respectable in the line of life to which she ought to belong, all would have been safe; none of this dreadful sequel would have been. How Harriet could ever have had the presumption to raise her thoughts to Mr. Knightley! How she could dare to fancy herself the chosen of such a man till actually assured of it! But Harriet was less humble, had fewer scruples than formerly. Her inferiority, whether of mind or situation, seemed little felt. She had seemed more sensible of Mr. Elton's being to stoop in marrying her than she now seemed of Mr. Knightley's. Alas! was not that her own doing too? Who had been at pains to give Harriet notions of self-consequence but herself? Who but herself had taught her that she was to elevate herself if possible, and that her claims were great to a high worldly establishment? If Harriet, from being humble, were grown vain, it was her doing too."

Poor Emma! It is impossible not to feel for her in her agony of self-revelation and self-reproach, and to hope that her sufferings may not last long, as,

indeed, they do not. Mr. Knightley, who is away in London at his brother's, hears, while there, of Frank Churchill's engagement. He has always had some suspicion of the real state of affairs between Mr. Churchill and Miss Fairfax, and has even tried to warn Emma, who had repelled the suggestion with scorn; but he has feared that Emma's own affections were ensnared, and he has suffered much from the belief that his own cause was hopeless. Now all other feelings are swallowed up in his distress for what he supposes Emma is suffering; and when he makes his way to Hartfield, and sees her melancholy and depressed, his belief in her heart-broken state is confirmed. Nevertheless, during a walk in the garden, he is undeceived as to her supposed attachment for Frank Churchill, and, in the rush of delight that follows upon such a discovery, he cannot resist speaking for himself, with what rapturous results for both may be imagined.

"This one half-hour had given to each the same precious certainty of being beloved, had cleared from each the same degree of ignorance, jealousy, or distrust. On his side there had been a long-standing jealousy, old as the arrival, or even the expectation, of Frank Churchill. He had been in love with Emma and jealous of Frank Churchill from about the same period, one sentiment having probably enlightened him as to the other. It was his jealousy of Frank Churchill that had taken him from the country. . . . He had gone to learn to be indifferent, but he had gone to a wrong place. . . . He had stayed on, however, vigorously, day after day,—till this very morning's post had conveyed the history of Jane Fairfax. Then, with the gladness which must be felt—nay, which he did

not scruple to feel, having never believed Frank Churchill to be at all deserving Emma—was there so much fond solicitude, so much keen anxiety for her that he could stay no longer. He had ridden home through the rain; and had walked up directly after dinner to see how this sweetest and best of all creatures, faultless in spite of all her faults, bore the discovery. He had found her agitated and low. Frank Churchill was a villain. He heard her declare that she had never loved him. Frank Churchill's character was not desperate. She was his own Emma by hand and word when they returned into the house; and if he could have thought of Frank Churchill then, he might have deemed him a very good sort of fellow."

Emma's one remaining piece of compunction must be for her unlucky little *protégée*, Harriet Smith; but even this difficulty is surprisingly soon smoothed out of her way. Harriet, while on a visit to Emma's sister, Mrs. John Knightley, in London, again comes across Robert Martin, and, as he has always been faithful to her, the result is easily guessed; although Emma, true to her mistaken estimates of character, is greatly amazed when the engagement is announced. She is pacified, however, and accepts Mr. Knightley's quiet opinion of the story. "You ought to know your friend best, but I should say she was a good-tempered, soft-hearted girl, not likely to be very determined against any young man who told her he loved her"; which is, of course, the precise truth.

The three marriages of the story take place within a very short time of each other, Harriet Smith's being the first; "and Mr. Elton was called on within a month from the marriage of Mr. and Mrs. Robert Martin to

join the hands of Mr. Knightley and Miss Woodhouse. The wedding was very much like other weddings where the parties have no taste for finery or parade; and Mrs. Elton, from the particulars detailed by her husband, thought it all extremely shabby, and very inferior to her own. 'Very little white satin, very few lace veils; a most pitiful business! Selina would stare when she heard of it.' But, in spite of these deficiencies, the wishes, the hopes, the confidence, the predictions of the small band of true friends who witnessed the ceremony were fully answered in the perfect happiness of the union."

For some reason or other—perhaps the beginning of ill health, which may have made her despondent—Jane Austen was convinced that *Emma* would not be popular, her remark being, "I am going to take a heroine whom no one but myself will much like." Nevertheless, it was *apropos* of *Emma* that she received the only compliment ever paid her in her life-time by any distinguished person, and it must have been to her a very unexpected source for compliments. She had gone to stay with her brother Henry in London to superintend the bringing out of *Emma*, when he fell dangerously ill; and she remained to nurse him. The doctor in attendance was the Prince Regent's physician, and knew the Prince to be an enthusiastic admirer of Jane Austen's works, even to the extent of keeping duplicate copies of them at his various houses. He told the Regent of her being in London, whereupon the Prince's librarian was sent next day to call upon Miss Austen, and invite her to pay a visit to Carlton House if she would like to view the apartments, &c. Accordingly she went. It does not seem to have occurred to the Prince to be there

in person; perhaps this could hardly have been expected; but she was received with great cordiality by the librarian, Mr. Clarke, and during the visit he told her that, if she cared to do so, the Prince would be happy to accept the dedication of any future novel of hers. The idea of such a dedication strikes us now as half pathetic, half ludicrous. Perhaps it so struck Jane, for she wrote shortly after to make sure that the Regent really wished it. The answer she got fully confirmed the fact; and Mr. Clarke, who would seem to have been an amiable and well-read man, but deficient in a sense of humour, seized the opportunity of making her a very curious suggestion.

"Carlton House,

"DEAR MADAM, (Nov. 16, 1815.)

"It is certainly not *incumbent* on you to dedicate your work now in the press to His Royal Highness; but if you wish to do the Regent that honour, either now or at any future period, I am happy to send you that permission which need not require any more trouble or solicitation on your part.

"Your late works, Madam, and, in particular, *Mansfield Park*, reflect the highest honour on your genius and your principles. In every new work your mind seems to increase its energy and power of discrimination. The Regent has read and admired all your publications.

"Accept my best thanks for the pleasure your volumes have given me. In the perusal of them I felt a great inclination to write and say so. And I also, dear Madam, wished to be allowed to ask you to delineate in some future work the habits of life, and character, and enthusiasm of a clergyman, who should

pass his time between the metropolis and the country, who should be something like Beattie's *Minstrel*—

> "'Silent when glad, affectionate tho' shy,
> And in his looks was most demurely sad;
> And now he laughed aloud, yet none knew why.'

"Neither Goldsmith nor La Fontaine in his *Tableau de Famille* have, in my mind, quite delineated an English clergyman, at least of the present day, fond of and entirely engaged in literature, no man's enemy but his own. Pray, dear Madam, think of these things.

"Believe me at all times, with sincerity and respect,

"Your faithful and obliged servant.

"J. S. CLARKE, Librarian."

Jane Austen must have received this proposal with great amazement and some amusement, but, with her usual simple-mindedness, she answered him as follows:—

"DEAR SIR,

"My *Emma* is now so near publication that I feel it right to assure you of my not having forgotten your kind recommendation of an early copy for Carlton House, and that I have Mr. Murray's promise of its being sent to His Royal Highness under cover to you, three days previous to the work being really out. I must make use of this opportunity to thank you, dear Sir, for the very high praise you bestow on my other novels. I am too vain to wish to convince you that you have praised them beyond their merits. My greatest anxiety at present is that this fourth work should not disgrace what was good in the others. But on this point I will do

myself the justice to declare that, whatever may be my wishes for its success, I am strongly haunted with the idea that to those readers who have preferred *Pride and Prejudice,* it will appear inferior in wit, and to those who have preferred *Mansfield Park,* inferior in good sense. Such as it is, however, I hope you will do me the favour of accepting a copy. Mr. Murray will have directions for sending one. I am quite honoured by your thinking me capable of drawing such a clergyman as you gave the sketch of in your note of Nov. 16. But I assure you I am *not.* The comic part of the character I might be equal to, but not the good, the enthusiastic, the literary. Such a man's conversation must at times be on subjects of science and philosophy, of which I know nothing; or at least be occasionally abundant in quotations and allusions which a woman who, like me, knows only her own mother tongue, and has read little in that, would be totally without the power of giving. A classical education, or, at any rate, a very extensive acquaintance with English literature, ancient and modern, appears to me quite indispensable for the person who would do any justice to your clergyman, and I think I may boast myself to be, with all possible vanity, the most unlearned and uninformed female who ever dared to be an authoress.

"Believe me, dear Sir,

"Your obliged and faithful humbl servt.,

"JANE AUSTEN."

Possibly the tone of the letter led Mr. Clarke to believe seriously that Jane Austen was only prevented by diffidence from carrying out his suggestion, or perhaps it was only from a wish of pleasing his royal

master that he rather later on offered her another idea. Prince Leopold, who was on the eve of his marriage to Princess Charlotte, had appointed Mr. Clarke his private secretary and librarian, and the well-meaning man then wrote to suggest to Jane Austen that "an historical romance, illustrative of the august house of Cobourg, would just now be very interesting," and that she might dedicate it to the royal bridegroom. It must have taxed all Jane's powers of politeness to reply with such grave courtesy as she did in the following letter:—

"My Dear Sir,

"I am honoured by the Prince's thanks and very much obliged to yourself for the kind manner in which you mention the work. I have also to acknowledge a former letter forwarded to me from Hans Place. I assure you I felt very grateful for the friendly tenor of it, and hope my silence will have been considered, as it was truly meant, to proceed only from an unwillingness to tax your time with idle thanks. Under every interesting circumstance which your own talents and literary labours have placed you in, or the favour of the Regent bestowed, you have my best wishes. Your recent appointments, I hope, are a step to something still better. In my opinion, the service of a Court can hardly be too well paid, for immense must be the sacrifice of time and feeling required by it. You are very kind in your hints as to the sort of composition which might recommend me at present, and I am fully sensible that an historical romance founded on the House of Saxe Cobourg, might be much more to the purpose of profit and popularity than such pictures of domestic life in country villages

as I deal in. But I could no more write a romance than an epic poem. I could not sit seriously down to write a serious romance under any other motive than to save my life; and if it were indispensable for me to keep it up and never relax into laughing at myself or at other people, I am sure I should be hung before I had finished the first chapter. No, I must keep to my own style, and go on in my own way; and though I may never succeed again in that, I am convinced that I should totally fail in any other.

"I remain, my dear Sir,

"Your very much obliged and sincere friend,

"J. AUSTEN.

"Chawton, near Alton,

"April 1, 1816."

CHAPTER IX.

"NORTHANGER ABBEY."

ALTHOUGH not published until after her death, *Northanger Abbey* was one of Jane Austen's earliest works; and the scheme of it is so unlike her other novels that it may be said to occupy a place by itself. Except for the trifling drama of *The Mystery,* this work is the only remaining proof of her youthful taste for burlesque, albeit softened and improved by her maturer judgment when she prepared the work for the press in 1803. It is, indeed, so complete and so clever a parody of many of the novels of her day, that it can hardly be appreciated by those who do not recognise the originals of its situations and characters, or understand the kind of sensational writing in which Richardson and Fielding were leaders, followed at a considerable distance by a host of inferior writers. After a prolonged study of these writers, especially of Mrs. Radcliffe, one can only marvel at the ingenuity with which the heroes and heroines are forced into harrowing and extraordinary circumstances, such as even a hundred years ago can hardly have been possible. Mrs. Radcliffe seems to have had some perception of this absurdity, and her stories, therefore, consist of continual shocks to the imagination, which she feels bound to explain away in the

most uninteresting manner at the end, so that even "Laurentina's skeleton" becomes at last a tame and common-place subject. Jane Austen burlesqued this style by introducing her heroine with obvious mock solemnity as one destined to go through many distressing and fearful adventures; then magnifying absurdly the ordinary events of a young lady's life in Bath, and finally representing her as being (from constant study of Mrs. Radcliffe, and her copyists) so much on the look-out for alarming adventures that she involves herself in a series of ridiculous terrors and misfortunes, very much in the style of the *Female Quixote*, a work she may have had in her mind. If any writer but Jane Austen had attempted this, the story might not have been better worth reading than many which are now forgotten; but, in the first place, the heroine, Catherine Morland, is herself a very lovable, simple-minded girl, whom we like in spite of her folly; and the other characters, such as the Allens, Thorpes, and Tilneys are quite good enough in themselves to make any book famous.

The Allens are the friends with whom Catherine, at seventeen years old, goes to Bath, having lived till then in a secluded country parsonage, ten miles from any town.

"Mrs. Allen was one of that numerous class of females whose society can raise no other emotion than surprise at there being any man in the world who could like them well enough to marry them. She had neither beauty, genius, accomplishment, nor manner. The air of a gentlewoman, a great deal of quiet inactive good temper, and a trifling turn of mind were all that could account for her being the choice of a sensible, intelligent man like Mr. Allen.

In one respect she was admirably fitted to introduce a young lady into public, being as fond of going everywhere and seeing everything herself as any young lady could be. Dress was her passion. She had a most harmless delight in being fine; and our heroine's *entrée* into life could not take place till after three or four days had been spent in learning what was mostly worn, and her chaperon was provided with a dress of the newest fashion. Catherine, too, made some purchases herself; and when all these matters were arranged, the important evening came which was to usher her into the Upper Rooms. . . .

"It was a splendid sight; and she began for the first time that evening to feel herself at a ball. She longed to dance, but she had not an acquaintance in the room. Mrs. Allen did all that she could do in such a case by saying very placidly every now and then, 'I wish you could dance, my dear; I wish you could get a partner.' For some time her young friend felt obliged to her for these wishes, but they were repeated so often, and proved so wholly ineffectual, that Catherine grew tired at last, and would thank her no more. . . .

"'How uncomfortable it is,' whispered Catherine, 'not to have a single acquaintance here.'

"'Yes, my dear,' replied Mrs. Allen, with perfect serenity, 'it is very uncomfortable indeed. . . . I wish we had a large acquaintance here.'

"'I wish we had *any*; it would be somebody to go to.'

"'Very true, my dear; and if we knew anybody, we would join them directly. The Skinners were here last year. I wish they were here now. . . .'

"'But, dear Mrs. Allen, are you sure there is

nobody you know in all this multitude of people? I think you *must* know somebody.'

"'I don't, upon my word. I wish I did. I wish I had a large acquaintance here, with all my heart, and then I should get you a partner. I should be so glad to have you dance.'"

Catherine's *début* is intentionally made unsuccessful to contrast with the outbursts of admiration that greeted Evelina and Cecilia and Harriet Byron when *they* first appeared in public; but she soon meets her fate in the person of Henry Tilney, to whom she is introduced at a ball, and who is just the sort of brilliant, clever, cultivated young man to attract a girl of her age. As is natural under the circumstances, she is much struck with him, and very ready to improve the acquaintance, but she sees nothing more of Henry for some time. Meanwhile the Thorpes appear upon the scene. Mrs. Thorpe and Mrs. Allen were former school-friends, and Mrs. Thorpe's eldest daughter, Isabella, professes a violent affection at first sight for Catherine, chiefly in hopes of renewing an old flirtation with Catherine's brother James, who may come to Bath. Catherine, quite unsuspicious of any double motive, is much flattered by Isabella's warmth, and, being dazzled by her showy beauty, does not perceive her shallowness, vulgarity, and insincerity. A hot school-girl friendship is set up between them, in which Catherine's simplicity and straightforwardness contrast much to her advantage with Isabella's insufferably bad taste.

"'My dearest Catherine, have you settled what to wear on your head to-night? I am determined at all events to be dressed exactly like you. The men take notice of *that*, sometimes, you know.'

"'But it does not signify if they do,' said Catherine very innocently.

"'Signify? Oh, heavens! I make it a rule never to mind what they say. They are very often amazingly impertinent if you do not treat them with spirit and make them keep their distance.'

"'Are they? Well, I never observed *that*. They always behave very well to me'

"'Oh! they give themselves such airs. They are the most conceited creatures in the world, and think themselves of so much importance. By-the-bye, though I have thought of it a hundred times, I have always forgot to ask you what is your favourite complexion in a man. Do you like them best dark or fair?'

"'I hardly know; I never much thought about it. Something between both, I think: brown, not fair, and not very dark.'

"'Very well, Catherine. That is exactly he. I have not forgot your description of Mr. Tilney—"a brown skin, with dark eyes and rather dark hair." Well, my taste is different. I prefer light eyes; and, as to complexion, do you know I like a sallow better than any other. You must not betray me if you should ever meet with one of your acquaintances answering that description.'

"'Betray you! What do you mean?'

"'Nay, do not distress me. I believe I have said too much. Let us drop the subject.'

"Catherine, in some amazement, complied."

The acquaintance with Isabella Thorpe proves important for Catherine in more ways than one. James Morland comes to Bath, and—having, of course, light eyes and a sallow complexion—is very soon Isabella's declared and accepted lover. John Thorpe

comes too, and having fallen in love—or supposing he has—with Catherine, she receives her first offer from him, though being quite unconscious of his admiration for her, which is not very intelligibly expressed, she does not know, until later in the story, that he has offered himself. Last, but not least, Isabella introduces Catherine to the class of novels which are to influence her mind so powerfully.

"'My dearest Catherine, what have you been doing with yourself all this morning? Have you gone on with *Udolpho*?'

"'Yes; I have been reading it ever since I woke; and I am got to the black veil.'

"'Are you, indeed? How delightful! Oh, I would not tell you what is behind the black veil for the world. Are you not wild to know?'

"'Oh, yes, quite; what can it be? But do not tell me; I would not be told upon any account. I know it must be a skeleton; I am sure it is Laurentina's skeleton. Oh! I am delighted with the book; I should like to spend my whole life in reading it, I assure you; if it had not been to meet you, I would not have come away from it for all the world.'

"'Dear creature! how much I am obliged to you; and when you have finished *Udolpho* we will read *The Italian* together; and I have made out a list of ten or twelve more of the same kind for you.'

"'Have you, indeed? How glad I am! What are they all?'

"'I will read you their names directly. Here they are in my pocket-book: *Castle of Wolfenbach, Clermont, Mysterious Warnings, Necromancer of the Black Forest, Midnight Bell, Orphan of the Rhine,* and *Horrid Mysteries.* Those will last us some time.'

"'Yes, pretty well; but are they all horrid? Are you sure they are all horrid?'

"'Yes, quite sure, for a particular friend of mine, a Miss Andrews, a sweet girl, one of the sweetest creatures in the world, has read every one of them.'"

Between "horrid" novels and the society of Isabella Thorpe, Catherine is in danger of deterioration, but she is fortunately saved from any permanent ill effects.

Henry Tilney is in Bath with his father and sister; and General Tilney, under a mistaken impression of the amount of Catherine's fortune, is quite willing to encourage his son's dawning attachment for her. Elinor Tilney is charming, and Catherine has good taste enough to take greatly to her, and to be pleased and flattered by her notice. Finally, to her unutterable delight, the Tilneys invite her to accompany them when they leave Bath. Their home is called Northanger Abbey; and Catherine, who has never seen an old house in her life, believes herself to be on the verge of similar adventures to those that befell her favourite heroines. Henry Tilney discovers her expectations, and amuses himself with heightening them, having no idea that she will take his nonsense so seriously.

"'You have formed a very favourable idea of the Abbey?'

"'To be sure I have. Is not it a fine old place, just like what one reads about?'

"'And are you prepared to encounter all the horrors that a building such as "what one reads about" may produce? Have you a stout heart? Nerves fit for sliding panels and tapestry?'

"'Oh, yes, I do not think I should be easily frightened, because there would be so many people

in the house; and, besides, it has never been uninhabited and left deserted for years, and then the family come back to it unawares, without giving any notice, as generally happens.'

"'No, certainly. We shall not have to explore our way into a hall dimly lighted by the expiring embers of a wood fire, nor be obliged to spread our beds on the floor of a room without windows, doors, or furniture. But you must be aware that whenever a young lady is (by whatever means) introduced into a dwelling of this kind, she is always lodged apart from the rest of the family. While they snugly repair to their own end of the house, she is formally conducted by Dorothy, the ancient housekeeper, up a different stair-case, and along many gloomy passages, into an apartment, never used since some cousin or kin died in it about twenty years before. Can you stand such a ceremony as this? . . .

"'Oh, but this will not happen to me, I am sure.'

"'How fearfully will you examine the furniture of your apartment! And what will you discern? Not tables, toilettes, wardrobes, or drawers, but on one side perhaps the remains of a broken lute, on the other a ponderous chest which no efforts can open, and over the fire-place the portrait of some handsome warrior, whose features will so incomprehensibly strike you that you will not be able to withdraw your eyes from it. Dorothy meanwhile, no less struck by your appearance, gazes on you with great agitation, and drops a few unintelligible hints. To raise your spirits, moreover, she gives you reason to suppose that the part of the Abbey you inhabit is undoubtedly haunted, and informs you that you will not have a single domestic within call. With this

parting cordial, she courtesies off: you listen to the sound of her receding footsteps as long as the last echo can reach you: and when, with fainting spirits, you attempt to fasten your door, you discover, with increased alarm, that it has no lock.'

"'Oh, Mr. Tilney, how frightful! This is just like a book. But it cannot really happen to me. I am sure your housekeeper is not really Dorothy. Well, what then?'

"'Nothing further to alarm, perhaps, may occur the first night. After surmounting your *unconquerable* horror of the bed, you will retire to rest, and get a few hours unquiet slumber. But on the second, or at farthest the *third* night after your arrival you will probably have a violent storm. Peals of thunder, so loud as to shake the edifice to its foundation, will roll round the neighbouring mountains; and during the frightful gusts of wind which accompany it you will probably think you discern (for your lamp is not extinguished) one part of the hanging more violently agitated than the rest. Unable, of course, to repress your curiosity in so favourable a moment for indulging it, you will instantly arise, and, throwing your dressing-gown around you, proceed to examine this mystery. After a very short search, you will discover a division in the tapestry, so artfully constructed as to defy the minutest inspection, and, on opening it, a door will immediately appear, which door, being only secured by massy bars and a padlock, you will, after a few efforts, succeed in opening, and, with your lamp in your hand, will pass through it into a small vaulted room.'

"'No, indeed; I should be too much frightened to do any such thing.'

"'What! not when Dorothy has given you to

understand that there is a secret subterraneous communication between your apartment and the chapel of St. Anthony, scarcely two miles off? Could you shrink from so simple an adventure? No, no; you will proceed into this small vaulted room, and through this into several others, without perceiving anything very remarkable in either. In one, perhaps, there may be a dagger, in another a few drops of blood, and in a third the remains of some instrument of torture; but there being nothing in all this out of the common way, and your lamp being nearly exhausted, you will return towards your own apartment. In repassing through the small vaulted room, however, your eyes will be attracted towards a large old-fashioned cabinet of ebony and gold, which, though narrowly examining the furniture before, you had passed unnoticed. Impelled by an irresistible presentiment, you will eagerly advance to it, unlock its folding doors, and search into every drawer, but for some time without discovering anything of importance, perhaps nothing but a considerable hoard of diamonds. At last, however, by touching a secret spring, an inner apartment will open, a roll of paper appears, you seize it—it contains many sheets of manuscript; you hasten with the precious treasure into your own chamber, but scarcely have you been able to decipher, "Oh, thou, whomsoever thou mayest be, into whose hands these memoirs of the wretched Matilda may fall," when your lamp suddenly expires in the socket, and leaves you in total darkness.'

"'Oh, no, no; do not say so. Well, go on!'

"But Henry was too much amused by the interest he had raised to be able to carry it farther: he could no longer command solemnity either of subject or voice,

and was obliged to entreat her to use her own fancy in the perusal of Matilda's woes. Catherine, recollecting herself, grew ashamed of her eagerness, and began earnestly to assure him that her attention had been fixed without the smallest apprehension of really meeting with what he related. 'Miss Tilney,' she was sure, 'would never put her into such a chamber as he had described. She was not at all afraid.'"

In spite of her disclaimer, Catherine's nerves had been sufficiently excited by a prolonged course of such reading as Henry Tilney had so well parodied as to be quite capable of any foolish imaginations.

Of course the first sight of Northanger Abbey is disappointing to her, as it is modernized out of all picturesqueness or romance, and even her own room she finds very unlike the one by the description of which Henry had endeavoured to alarm her. Nevertheless, she has not been long in it, and is still occupied in dressing for the five o'clock dinner, when "her eye suddenly fell on a large high chest, standing back in a deep recess on one side of the fire-place. The sight of it made her start; and, forgetting everything else, she stood gazing on it in motionless wonder while these thoughts crossed her: 'This is strange, indeed! I did not expect such a sight as this. An immense heavy chest! What can it hold? Why should it be placed here? Pushed back, too, as if meant to be out of sight! I will look into it; cost me what it may, I will look into it; and directly, too—by daylight. If I stay till evening, my candle may go out.' She advanced, and examined it closely; it was of cedar, curiously inlaid with some darker wood, and raised about a foot from the ground on a carved stand of the same. The lock was silver, though

tarnished from age; at each end were the imperfect remains of handles, also of silver, broken, perhaps prematurely, by some strange violence; and on the centre of the lid was a mysterious cipher in the same metal. Catherine bent over it intently, but without being able to distinguish anything with certainty. She could not, in whatever direction she took it, believe the last letter to be a T; and yet that it should be anything else in that house was a circumstance to raise no common degree of astonishment. If not originally theirs, by what strange events could it have fallen into the Tilney family?

"Her fearful curiosity was every moment growing greater; and seizing with trembling hands the hasp of the lock, she resolved, at all hazards, to satisfy herself at least as to its contents. . . . One moment, surely, might be spared; and so desperate should be the exertion of her strength, that, unless secured by supernatural means, the lid in one moment should be thrown back. With this spirit she sprang forward, and her confidence did not deceive her. Her resolute effort threw back the lid, and gave to her astonished eyes the view of a white cotton counterpane, properly folded, reposing at one end of the chest in undisputed possession."

Catherine has sense enough to be abashed at the perception of her own folly, but not quite enough to get immediately over the effects of being really in an abbey like one of Mrs. Radcliffe's heroines; and that night her courage is again put to the test. It is a very stormy night, quite "like what one reads about," but Catherine, determined now to be brave, undresses very leisurely, and even resolves not to make up her fire. "That would seem cowardly, as if she wished

for the protection of light after she were in bed. The fire, therefore, died away; and Catherine, having spent the best part of an hour in her arrangements, was beginning to think of stepping into bed, when, on giving a parting glance round the room, she was struck by the appearance of a high old-fashioned black cabinet, which, though in a situation conspicuous enough, had never caught her notice before. Henry's words, his description of the ebony cabinet which was to escape her notice at first, immediately rushed across her; and though there could be nothing really in it, there was something whimsical; it was certainly a very remarkable coincidence. She took her candle and looked closely at the cabinet. It was not absolutely ebony and gold, but it was japan, black and yellow japan of the handsomest kind; and as she held her candle, the yellow had very much the effect of gold. The key was in the door, and she had a strange fancy to look into it, not, however, with the smallest expectation of finding anything, but it was so very odd after what Henry had said. In short, she could not sleep till she had examined it. So, placing the candle with great caution on a chair, she seized the key with a very tremulous hand, and tried to turn it; but it resisted her utmost strength. Alarmed, but not discouraged, she tried it another way. A bolt flew, and she believed herself successful; but how strangely mysterious! the door was still immovable. She paused a moment in breathless wonder. The wind roared down the chimney, the rain beat in torrents against the windows, and everything seemed to speak the awfulness of her situation. To retire to bed, however, unsatisfied on such a point, would be vain, since sleep must be impossible with the conscious-

ness of a cabinet so mysteriously closed in her immediate vicinity. Again, therefore, she applied herself to the key, and, after moving it in every way for some instants with the determined celerity of hope's last effort, the door suddenly yielded to her hand. . . . A double range of small drawers appeared in view, with some larger drawers above and below them, and in the centre a small door, closed also with lock and key, secured, in all probability, a cavity of importance. Catherine's heart beat quickly, but her courage did not fail her. With a cheek flushed by hope, and an eye straining with curiosity, her fingers grasped the handle of a drawer, and drew it forth. It was entirely empty. With less alarm and greater eagerness, she seized a second, a third, a fourth—each was equally empty. Not one was left unsearched, and in not one was anything found. Well read in the art of concealing a treasure, the possibility of false linings to the drawers did not escape her, and she felt round each, with anxious acuteness, in vain. The place in the middle alone remained now unexplored; and 'though she had never from the first had the smallest idea of finding anything in any part of the cabinet, and was not in the least disappointed at her ill success thus far, it would be foolish not to examine it thoroughly while she was about it. It was some time, however, before she could unfasten the door, the same difficulty occurring in the management of this inner lock as of the outer; but at length it did open; and not vain, as hitherto, was her search: her quick eyes directly fell on a roll of paper pushed back into the farther part of the cavity, apparently for concealment; and her feelings at that moment were indescribable; her heart fluttered, her

knees trembled, and her cheeks grew pale. She seized with an unsteady hand the precious manuscript—for half a glance sufficed to ascertain written characters—and, while she acknowledged with awful sensations this striking exemplification of what Henry had foretold, resolved instantly to peruse every line before she attempted to rest.

"The dimness of the light her candle emitted made her turn to it with alarm; but there was no danger of its sudden extinction; it had yet some hours to burn, and, that she might not have any greater difficulty in distinguishing the writing than what its ancient date might occasion, she hastily snuffed it. Alas! it was snuffed and extinguished in one. A lamp could not have expired with more awful effect. Catherine for a few moments was motionless with horror. . . . In the pause which succeeded, a sound like receding footsteps and the closing of a distant door struck on her affrighted ear. A cold sweat stood on her forehead, the manuscript fell from her hand, and groping her way to the bed she jumped hastily in, and sought some suspension of agony by creeping far underneath the clothes. Hour after hour passed away, and the wearied Catherine had heard three proclaimed by all the clocks in the house before the tempest subsided, or she unknowingly fell asleep."

When daylight brought returning courage and cheerfulness, her first thought was for the manuscript, "and springing from her bed in the very moment of the maid's going away, she eagerly collected every scattered sheet which had burst from the roll on its falling to the ground, and flew back to enjoy the luxury of their perusal on her pillow. She now plainly saw that she must not expect a manuscript of equal

length with the generality of what she had shuddered over in books; for the roll, seeming to consist entirely of small disjointed sheets, was altogether but of trifling size, and much less than she had supposed it to be at first. Her greedy eye glanced rapidly over a page. She started at its import. Could it be possible, or did not her senses play her false? An inventory of linen, in coarse and modern characters, seemed all that was before her! If the evidence of sight might be trusted, she held a washing-bill in her hand. She seized another sheet, and saw the same articles with little variation; a third, a fourth, and a fifth presented nothing new: shirts, stockings, cravats, and waistcoats faced her in each. Two others, penned by the same hand, marked an expenditure, scarcely more interesting, in letters, hair-powder, shoe-string, and breeches-ball; and the larger sheet, which had enclosed the rest, seemed, by its first cramp line, 'To poultice chestnut mare,' a farrier's bill. Such was the collection of papers (left, perhaps, as she could then suppose, by the negligence of a servant, in the place whence she had taken them) which had filled her with expectation and alarm, and had robbed her of half her night's rest. . . . Why the locks should have been so difficult to open, however, was still something remarkable, for she could now manage them with perfect ease. In this there was surely something mysterious; and she indulged in the flattering suggestion for half a minute, till the possibility of the door's having been at first unlocked, and of being herself its fastener, darted into her head, and cost her another blush."

Of course her great anxiety now is to conceal her folly from Henry Tilney's satirical observation, and for some time she succeeds; but her lively imagination

leads her into another hallucination, from which she does not escape so easily.

She gathers from Miss Tilney that her mother had not been so fully valued by the General as she might have been, and thereupon jumps to three conclusions, first, that he had been unkind to his wife in her lifetime, secondly, that he had been in some way instrumental in causing her death, and finally, as her fancy continues to run riot, that perhaps Mrs. Tilney was not really dead at all, but kept somewhere in close confinement by a cruel and tyrannical husband. The successive stages by which this crowning point of absurd delusion is reached are very well worked out, and they culminate in intense anxiety on Catherine's part to see Mrs. Tilney's room, which, she hears, has been left exactly as it was at her death, and from which she thinks she may discover something; she scarcely knows what. Miss Tilney is puzzled by her extreme desire to visit the room, but is very willing to show it to her. The inopportune presence of the General, however, more than once prevents them; and Catherine, convinced that his interference is not accidental, determines to visit the important room by herself, and see what revelations it will make to her. "Of the way to the apartment she was now perfectly mistress, and, as she wished to get it over before Henry's return, who was expected on the morrow, there was no time to be lost. The day was bright, her courage high; at four o'clock the sun was now two hours above the horizon, and it would be only her retiring to dress half an hour earlier than usual.

"It was done; and Catherine found herself alone in the gallery before the clocks had ceased to strike. It was no time for thought; she hurried

on, slipped with the least possible noise through the folding doors, and, without stopping to look or breathe, rushed forward to the one in question. The lock yielded to her hand, and luckily with no sullen sound that could alarm a human being. On tip-toe she entered; the room was before her; but it was some minutes before she could advance another step. She beheld what fixed her to the spot, and agitated every feature. She saw a large well-proportioned apartment, a handsome dimity bed, unoccupied, arranged with a housemaid's care, a bright Bath stove, mahogany wardrobes, and neatly painted chairs, on which the warm beams of a western sun gaily poured through two sash-windows. Catherine had expected to have her feelings worked, and worked they were. Astonishment and doubt first seized them, and a shortly succeeding ray of common sense added some bitter emotions of shame. . . . She was sick of exploring, and desired but to be safe in her own room with her own heart only privy to its folly; and she was on the point of retreating as softly as she had entered, when the sound of footsteps, she could hardly tell where, made her pause and tremble." Thereupon Henry Tilney presents himself, having returned a day before he is expected, and is much amazed at finding Catherine there by herself. She is unable wholly to conceal from him what her delusions had been, and she gets from him, in consequence, a half lover-like, half brotherly lecture, which makes her thoroughly ashamed of herself, and as she is—*au fond*—a really nice girl, does her a world of good. "It was not only with herself that she was sunk, but with Henry. Her folly, which now seemed even criminal, was exposed to him, and he must despise her for ever. The absur-

dity of her curiosity and her fears—could they ever be forgotten? . . . In short, she made herself as miserable as possible for about half an hour, went down with a broken heart when the clock struck five, and could scarcely give an intelligible answer to Eleanor's inquiry if she were well. The formidable Henry soon followed her into the room, and the only difference in his behaviour to her was that he paid her rather more attention than usual. Catherine had never needed comfort more, and he looked as if he were aware of it."

Now that her mind is cleared of all its strange delusions, she has time and opportunity to consider their origin, and her conclusions are given us with some delightful touches. "Charming as were all Mrs. Radcliffe's works, and charming even as were the works of all her imitators, it was not in them, perhaps, that human nature—at least, in the midland counties of England—was to be looked for. Of the Alps and Pyrenees, with their pine-forests and their vices, they might give a faithful delineation; and Italy, Switzerland, and the south of France might be as fruitful in horrors as they were there represented. Catherine dared not doubt beyond her own country, and even of that, if hard pressed, would have yielded the northern and western extremities. But in the central part of England there was surely some security for the existence even of a wife not beloved, in the laws of the land, and the manners of the age. Murder was not tolerated, servants were not slaves, and neither poison nor sleeping-potions to be procured like rhubarb from every druggist. Among the Alps and Pyrenees, perhaps, there were no mixed characters. There, such as were not as spotless as an angel, might

have the disposition of a fiend. But in England it was not so; among the English, she believed, in their hearts and habits, there was a general, though unequal, mixture of good and bad. Upon this conviction she would not be surprised if even in Henry and Eleanor Tilney some slight imperfection might hereafter appear; and upon this conviction she need not fear to acknowledge some actual specks in the character of their father, who, though cleared from the grossly injurious suspicions which she must ever blush to have entertained, she did believe, upon serious consideration, to be not perfectly amiable."

Catherine's imaginary troubles are at an end, but there are some very real ones in store for her. Her brother's engagement with Isabella Thorpe is broken off through Isabella's hoping to secure a better match for herself; and Catherine, who receives the news in a letter from James, feels his sorrow as if it were her own. The affectionate sympathy of Henry and Eleanor has just restored her to some comfort, when a far greater blow falls. The young Tilneys have never been able to understand their father's marked partiality for Catherine, being quite unaware that when in Bath he had received from John Thorpe a glowing account of her parents' position and her future expectations. Thorpe had at that time intended to marry her himself, and, as his sister was also on the eve of an engagement to her brother, his vanity had led him into telling the General a series of untruths, all tending to the glorification of the Morland family.

While Catherine is at Northanger Abbey General Tilney goes to London for a week, and there again encounters Thorpe, who being by this time greatly angered at the failure of all the projected marriages

between his family and the Morlands, not only retracts all he had before said in their favour, but casts imputations upon them and represents them as not only poor but far from respectable. The General is a man of ungovernable temper, and his rage at the mistake he has been led into is past all control. He returns instantly to Northanger Abbey, and actually forces Catherine out of the house alone, at a few hours' notice, under the obviously flimsy pretext of an engagement for himself and his daughter. He gives no explanation, even to Eleanor, of his motives; her grief and shame at the whole transaction are great, but she is powerless, and Henry is away. Catherine leaves Northanger Abbey under the full conviction that she shall never see it or any of its inmates again, and her wretchedness may be imagined. She is not, however, left long uncomforted, for Henry, on learning what has happened, follows her as soon as possible, and makes her an offer of his heart and hand, which are, of course, accepted. His conduct is in direct defiance of his father's last directions; but he is independent as regards income; confident of obtaining the General's consent when his rage has cooled down and he is able to understand the real position of the Morlands, which is far from despicable. These explanations take place in about a year's time; and the story winds up with the happy marriages of both Henry and Eleanor Tilney; Catherine being, as may be supposed, at the seventh heaven of felicity.

I think that Catherine Morland, though in many respects attractive, is the most uninteresting of Jane Austen's heroines, and betrays the writer's youth. Emma Woodhouse, Fanny Price, and Elizabeth Bennet are all women we should like to have known, while for

Anne Elliot what words of praise are high enough? But Catherine Morland is an obvious copy of *Evelina*: a good-hearted, simple-minded little goose, who will never develop into much. She is distinctly inferior to Eleanor Tilney, and it is impossible not to have a lurking suspicion that Henry, after trying—as he would do for some years—to form his wife's mind, will discover, like David Copperfield, that it is already formed, and that his life at Woodston Parsonage may some day be just a little dull. Probably Jane Austen felt this herself, for she closes the story with a playful account of their marriage, and makes no attempt to picture their future life together. It is the only one of her stories in which the heroine is decidedly inferior to the hero, and that was so often the case with the standard novels of her day that it is impossible not to see in this the unconscious plagiarism of a young author, and to feel that *Northanger Abbey*, in plan and construction if not in all its details, must have been one of her earliest attempts at novel-writing.

CHAPTER X.

"PERSUASION."

In approaching *Persuasion*, we have to deal with the last, and, in my opinion, the greatest of Jane Austen's works, for though *Emma* usually holds the first place in her writings, and although there are unquestionably one or two weak points in *Persuasion* from which *Emma* is free, I cannot but heartily concur with Dr. Whewell that "*Persuasion* is the most beautiful of all Jane Austen's stories." It is, I think, the only one of those stories to which the epithet "beautiful" can appropriately be given; not that it differs in style from her earlier works, or contains any intentional sentiment beyond what all her stories have, but it possesses throughout a sort of tender, pathetic grace that appears nowhere else. A reviewer, who criticised *Mansfield Park* in 1821, asserted that the details of Fanny Price's attachment could scarcely have come from any writer but a woman who had herself lived through such an attachment. It is unnecessary and, as has been seen, would probably be incorrect, to say that Jane

Austen ever described love from any experience except what her genius gave her, but I think *Persuasion* would be far stronger testimony to her having once loved than *Mansfield Park* is. Fanny Price's apparently hopeless attachment is followed through its course with the affectionate but critical interest of one who regards a touching phase of human nature. *Persuasion* is in the tone of a woman who looks back upon her own early romance with sorrowful tenderness, and permits to her imaginary story the happy finale which she had not experienced herself. The heroine has a sort of subdued charm about her; she makes no brilliant speeches, and exhibits no special gifts, but from first to last we feel that with Anne Elliot we are in the presence of a high-bred, gracious, charming woman, and nothing better could be said of Captain Wentworth than that he is worthy of her. Jane Austen was herself conscious of having evolved a superior heroine in her last novel, for in 1816 she wrote to her niece, Fanny Knight: "I have a something ready for publication which may, perhaps, appear about a twelvemonth hence. . . . You may, *perhaps*, like the heroine, as she is almost too good for me." From first to last the story may be said to strike a minor key, for it is no longer the bright picture of young love which Jane Austen gave us in her other novels; it is the coming together of sundered lovers after the difficulties and hindrances of eight years of separation, in which neither has ever been able to forget the other.

Anne Elliot is the second of the three daughters of Sir Walter Elliot, of Kellynch Hall, Somersetshire. She has lost her mother early, and has never had congenial society in her father or sisters. Sir Walter

is an intensely conceited man, of an ancient family, very handsome, even in middle life, and inordinately vain both of his birth and his looks. His eldest daughter, Elizabeth, is himself over again; and the youngest daughter, Mary, is a common-place, self-engrossed woman. There is no son, and the title and estate will, at Sir Walter's death, devolve upon a cousin whom Elizabeth always intended to marry, but who, having chosen to make a *mésalliance* for the sake of money, has been ignored by the Kellynch Hall family ever since, although he has lately become a widower. From such a father and such sisters it is clear that Anne Elliot, cultivated, thoughtful, and refined, can gain no pleasant companionship, and, in fact, the only real companion she has is a very intimate friend of her mother who has settled near them. Lady Russell is sensible, right-minded, and a little prosaic; she is not Anne's equal intellectually, but she loves her for her mother's sake and for her own; and Anne is thankful to be loved at all.

Frederick Wentworth makes the acquaintance of this attractive and neglected girl when she is nineteen, and in the full bloom of her beauty. He is a few years older, a young naval officer, full of spirit, energy, and brightness. The natural consequences ensue, and for a short time the young people are rapturously happy; but both Sir Walter Elliot and Lady Russell regard the engagement with strong disfavour. He considers any untitled marriage as beneath his daughter's acceptance, whilst Lady Russell objects to a long engagement, dislikes the uncertainty of the naval profession, and does not believe that Captain Wentworth will ever make a fortune.

"Such opposition as these feelings produced was

more than Anne could combat. Young and gentle as she was, it might yet have been possible to combat her father's ill-will, though unsoftened by one kind word or look on the part of her sister; but Lady Russell, whom she had always loved and relied on, could not, with such steadfastness of opinion and such tenderness of manner, be continually advising her in vain. She was persuaded to believe the engagement a wrong thing: indiscreet, improper, hardly capable of success, and not deserving it. But it was not a merely selfish caution under which she acted in putting an end to it. Had she not imagined herself consulting his good even more than her own, she could hardly have given him up. The belief of being prudent and self-denying, principally for his advantage, was her chief consolation under the misery of a parting, a final parting; and every consolation was required, for she had to encounter all the additional pain of opinions on his side, totally unconvinced and unbending, and of his feeling himself ill-used by so forced a relinquishment. He had left the country in consequence of it. A few months had seen the beginning and the end of their acquaintance; but not with a few months ended Anne's share of suffering from it. Her attachment and regrets had, for a long time, clouded every enjoyment of youth, and an early loss of bloom and spirits had been their lasting effect." The words which follow are almost like a sigh breathed from Jane Austen's own heart—

"How eloquent could Anne Elliot have been, how eloquent, at least, were her wishes on the side of early warm attachment and a cheerful confidence in futurity against that over-anxious caution which seems

to insult exertion and distrust Providence. She had been forced into prudence in her youth, she learned romance as she grew older—the natural sequel of an unnatural beginning."

A somewhat unexpected, yet—as in all Jane Austen's books—apparently natural chain of circumstances brings about a meeting between the two former lovers after eight years of separation. Sir Walter Elliot, after his wife's death, gets gradually deeper and deeper into debt. "It had not been possible for him to spend less: he had done nothing but what Sir Walter Elliot was imperiously called on to do; but, blameless as he was, he was not only growing dreadfully in debt, but was hearing of it so often that it became vain to attempt concealing it, even partially, from his daughter."

Mr. Shepherd, Sir Walter's confidential attorney, and Lady Russell are called upon to advise in the dilemma; and as neither Sir Walter nor Elizabeth will hear of any retrenchment which will affect their luxuries in any way, there is nothing for it but to let Kellynch Hall.

A tenant soon offers for it, Admiral Croft, and Anne remembers with a thrill at her heart that Mrs. Croft is Frederick Wentworth's sister. Still there is no particular likelihood of her seeing him, as Sir Walter and Elizabeth intend to go to Bath, and Anne is earnestly desirous of avoiding a meeting with her former lover. But fate is too strong for her. Her youngest sister Mary is married to Charles Musgrove, the eldest son of a man of property living at Uppercross, about three miles from Kellynch, and "Mary, often a little unwell, and always thinking a great deal of her own complaints, and always in the habit of claiming Anne when anything was the matter, was indis-

posed; and, foreseeing that she should not have a day's health all the autumn, entreated, or rather required her, for it was hardly entreaty, to come to Uppercross Cottage and bear her company as long as she should want her, instead of going to Bath." Elizabeth is delighted to get rid of Anne, for she has lately struck up a violent friendship with a widowed daughter of Mr. Shepherd, a young Mrs. Clay, who is enchanted to act as hanger-on to Miss Elliot at Bath. Anne is glad to avoid Bath, which she dislikes, and to be of use to anyone. Her father, sister, and Mrs. Clay depart for Bath, and Anne is installed at the Musgroves for the summer.

A capital picture follows, in Jane Austen's most characteristic style, of the relations between Charles Musgrove and his family, who live about a quarter of a mile from them.

"'I wish you could persuade Mary not to be always fancying herself ill,' was Charles's language; and, in an unhappy mood, thus spoke Mary: 'I do believe if Charles were to see me dying he would not think there was anything the matter with me. I am sure, Anne, if you would, you might persuade him that I really am very ill—a great deal worse than I ever own.' Mary's declaration was, 'I hate sending the children to the Great House, though their grandmamma is always wanting to see them; for she humours and indulges them to such a degree, and gives them so much trash and sweet things that they are sure to come back sick and cross for the rest of the day.' And Mrs. Musgrove took the first opportunity of being alone with Anne to say, 'Oh, Miss Anne, I cannot help wishing Mrs. Charles had a little of your method with those children; they are quite different creatures with you. But, to be sure,

in general they are so spoiled. It is a pity you cannot put your sister in the way of managing them. They are as fine healthy children as ever were seen, poor little dears, without partiality; but Mrs. Charles knows no more how they should be treated—bless me! how troublesome they are sometimes. I assure you, Miss Anne, it prevents my wishing to see them at our house as often as I otherwise should. I believe Mrs. Charles is not quite pleased with my not inviting them oftener; but you know it is very bad to have children with one that one is obliged to be checking every moment: "don't do this," or "don't do that"; or that one can only keep in tolerable order by more cake than is good for them.' She had this communication, moreover, from Mary: 'Mrs. Musgrove thinks all her servants so steady that it would be high treason to call it in question; but I am sure, without exaggeration, that her upper house-maid and laundry-maid, instead of being in their business, are gadding about the village all day long. I meet them wherever I go; and, I declare, I never go twice into my nursery without seeing something of them. If Jemima were not the trustiest steadiest creature in the world, it would be enough to spoil her; for she tells me they are always tempting her to take a walk with them." And on Mrs. Musgrove's side it was, "I make a rule of never interfering in any of my daughter-in-law's concerns, for I know it would not do; but I shall tell *you*, Miss Anne, because you may be able to set things to rights, that I have no very good opinion of Mrs. Charles's nursery-maid. I hear strange stories of her; she is always upon the gad; and, from my own knowledge, she is such a fine-dressing lady that she is enough to ruin any servants she

comes near. Mrs. Charles quite swears by her, I know; but I just give you this hint that you may be upon the watch, because, if you see anything amiss, you need not be afraid of mentioning it.' . . .

"How was Anne to set all these matters to rights? She could do little more than listen patiently, soften every grievance, and excuse each to the other; give them all hints of the forbearance necessary between such near neighbours, and make those hints broadest which were meant for her sister's benefit."

The Crofts take possession of Kellynch Hall; and Captain Wentworth comes there to visit his sister. Mr. Musgrove calls upon him at Kellynch; he is invited to dine at Uppercross, and Anne can no longer avoid meeting him. None of the Musgroves know anything of the former passages between her and Captain Wentworth, so no one thinks of screening her, and Anne can only struggle to keep her feelings to herself. Whether Captain Wentworth remembers the past as she does, she has no means of discovering, but she has soon reason to believe that he is in no way anxious to recall it.

She keeps herself in the background, prepared to hear at any moment of her former lover being now engaged to a Miss Musgrove; and the struggle in her mind is all the more severe because, in the first place, Frederick Wentworth has deteriorated neither in mind nor person since the days of their early attachment, and, in the second place, she cannot help continually feeling throughout their intercourse how much better she can understand and appreciate him than either Henrietta or Louisa Musgrove can. He, on his side, is not at all anxious to renew the feeling which he believes he has completely conquered. He

has not forgiven Anne for her desertion of him years ago; and though he intends to marry as soon as he can find a wife to his liking, he has no idea that that wife will be Anne Elliot. Nothing in the story is better than his attempt to persuade himself into caring for one of the young ladies with whom he is thrown into contact; and the gradual way in which he finds himself turning, as of old, to Anne for the companionship and appreciation with which she only can supply him, while he is quite unconscious of the feeling slowly working in him.

Eventually Anne departs for Bath, and, as her absence leaves an insupportable blank for him, Captain Wentworth sets off too. Anne has been there with her father and sister for some time before his arrival, and has found an ardent admirer in the cousin, William Elliot, who is the heir to her father's baronetcy. Of course the marriage would be an extremely suitable one for both parties, and Lady Russell, who is also at Bath, is delighted at the possibility of it and cannot resist speaking of it to Anne.

"Anne heard her, and made no violent exclamations; she only smiled, blushed, and gently shook her head.

"'I am no match-maker, as you well know,' said Lady Russell, 'being much too well aware of the uncertainty of all human events and calculations. I only mean that if Mr. Elliot should some time hence pay his addresses to you, and if you should be disposed to accept him, I think there would be every possibility of your being happy together. A most suitable connection everybody must consider it, but I think it might be a very happy one.'

"'Mr. Elliot is an exceedingly agreeable man, and,

in many respects, I think highly of him,' said Anne, 'but we should not suit.'

"Lady Russell let this pass, and only said in rejoinder, 'I own that to be able to regard you as the future mistress of Kellynch, the future Lady Elliot, to look forward and see you occupying your dear mother's place, succeeding to all her rights and all her popularity, as well as to all her virtues, would be the highest possible gratification to me. You are your mother's self in countenance and disposition; and, if I might be allowed to fancy you such as she was, in situation and name and home, presiding and blessing in the same spot, and only superior to her in being more highly valued, my dearest Anne, it would give me more delight than is often felt at my time of life.'

"Anne was obliged to turn away, to rise, to walk to a distant table, and, leaning there in pretended employment, try to subdue the feelings this picture excited. For a few moments her imagination and her heart were bewitched. The idea of becoming what her mother had been, of having the precious name of 'Lady Elliot' revived in herself, of being restored to Kellynch, calling it her home again, her home for ever, was a charm which she could not immediately resist. Lady Russell said not another word, willing to leave the matter to its own operation, and believing that could Mr. Elliot at that moment with propriety have spoken for himself—she believed, in short, what Anne did not believe. The same image of Mr. Elliot speaking for himself brought Anne to composure again. The charm of Kellynch and of 'Lady Elliot' all faded away. She never could accept him."

Anne herself cannot help believing, after Captain

Wentworth has been in Bath for a short time, that she is his object there; but she is afraid to trust to this idea, and is almost maddened by the quiet but unmistakable way in which Mr. Elliot monopolises her. The moment of explanation comes at last, and is one of the best and most touching scenes in all Jane Austen's works.

Anne, going one day to call on Mrs. Musgrove, finds Captains Wentworth and Harville both in the room. The former goes to a writing-table to write letters, and the latter begins a conversation with Anne which drifts into a debate on the strength of feeling in men as against that of women. Captain Harville defends his own sex warmly.

"'Ah,' cried Captain Harville, in a tone of strong feeling, 'if I could but make you comprehend what a man suffers when he takes a last look at his wife and children, and watches the boat that he has sent them off in, as long as it is in sight, and then turns away and says, "God knows whether we shall ever meet again!" And then, if I could convey to you the glow of his soul when he does see them again; when, coming back after a twelvemonth's absence, perhaps, and obliged to put into another port, he calculates how soon it may be possible to get them there, pretending to deceive himself, and saying, "They cannot be here till such a day," but all the while hoping for them twelve hours sooner, and seeing them arrive at last, as if Heaven had given them wings, by many hours sooner still! If I could explain to you all this, and all that a man can bear and do, and glories to do, for the sake of these treasures of his existence! I speak, you know, only of such men as have hearts.'

"'Oh,' cried Anne, eagerly, 'I hope I do justice to all that is felt by you, and by those who resemble you. God forbid that I should undervalue the warm and faithful feelings of any of my fellow-creatures! I should deserve utter contempt if I dared to suppose that true attachment and constancy were known only by women. No, I believe you capable of everything great and good in your married lives. I believe you equal to every important exertion and to every domestic forbearance so long as—if I may be allowed the expression—so long as you have an object. I mean while the woman you love lives, and lives for you. All the privilege I claim for my own sex (it is not a very enviable one: you need not covet it) is that of loving longest when existence or when hope is gone.'

"She could not immediately have uttered another sentence: her heart was too full, her breath too much oppressed. . . . Their attention was called towards the others.

"Mrs. Croft left them, and Captain Wentworth, having sealed his letter with great rapidity, was indeed ready, and had even a hurried, agitated air, which showed impatience to be gone. Anne knew not how to understand it. She had the kindest 'Good morning; God bless you' from Captain Harville, but from him not a word or a look! He had passed out of the room without a look! She had only time, however, to move closer to the table where he had been writing, when footsteps were heard returning. The door opened; it was himself. He begged their pardon, but he had forgotten his gloves; and instantly crossing the room to the writing-table, and standing with his back towards Mrs. Musgrove, he drew out a letter from under the scattered paper, placed it before

Anne with eyes of glowing entreaty fixed on her, and, hastily collecting his gloves, was again out of the room, almost before Mrs. Musgrove was aware of his being in it: the work of an instant."

Anne manages to read the letter in the next five minutes, but the result is to upset her so much that the Musgroves all fancy her ill, and, instead of letting her go home quietly by herself to realise her own "overpowering happiness," as Jane Austen calls it, Charles Musgrove insists on accompanying her. Fortunately, when half way home, they encounter Captain Wentworth; and Charles, being anxious to keep an engagement elsewhere, puts Anne under his escort.

"In half a minute Charles was at the bottom of Union Street again, and the other two proceeding together; and soon words enough had passed between them to decide their direction towards the comparatively quiet and retired gravel walk, where the power of conversation would make the present hour a blessing indeed, and prepare it for all the immortality which the happiest recollections of their own future lives could bestow. There they exchanged again those feelings and those promises which had once before seemed to secure everything, but which had been followed by so many many years of division and estrangement; and there, as they slowly paced the gradual ascent, heedless of every group around them, seeing neither sauntering politicians, bustling housekeepers, flirting girls, nor nursery-maids and children, they could indulge in those retrospections and acknowledgments, and especially in those explanations of what had directly preceded the present moment, which were so poignant and so ceaseless in interest. All the little variations of the last week were gone

through; and of yesterday and to-day there could scarcely be an end. . . .

"The evening came, the drawing-rooms were lighted up, the company assembled. It was but a card-party, it was but a mixture of those who had never met before and those who met too often: a commonplace business, too numerous for intimacy, too small for variety; but Anne had never found an evening shorter. Glowing and lovely in sensibility and happiness, and more generally admired than she thought about or cared for, she had cheerful or forbearing feelings for every creature around her.

"With the Musgroves there was the happy chat of perfect ease; with Captain Harville, the kind-hearted intercourse of brother and sister; with Lady Russell, attempts at conversation which a delicious consciousness cut short; with Admiral and Mrs. Croft, everything of peculiar cordiality and fervent interest, which the same consciousness sought to conceal; and with Captain Wentworth, some moments of communication continually occurring, and always the hope of more, and always the knowledge of his being there."

Dear, charming Anne Elliot! We rejoice to feel that we are leaving her in the midst of such a tender, radiant Indian summer of happiness; and we safely predict a married life of blessedness for her and her husband; but even in this crowning hour of their felicity, there is the same tinge of pathos visible as throughout the book. It does not seem intentional; it is rather as though the writer could no longer treat her subject with the bright gaiety of former days, and it is not wonderful that a dying woman could not.

Persuasion is the swan-song of Jane Austen's author-

ship, and, true to its character, the saddest and sweetest of her works. When she finished it, only a few months before her death, she had in fact laid down the pen for ever; and doubtless it was the consciousness of this which shaded the story to a more autumnal tone than anything she had yet written. We could not wish it otherwise, for the group of novels would have been incomplete without some such story of comparatively late happiness. In *Northanger Abbey* and *Sense and Sensibility* we have the brilliant, rather thoughtless happiness of early youth; in *Mansfield Park, Emma,* and *Pride and Prejudice* the love-story goes on in the usual way, though somewhat slowly, through the usual period of life; in *Persuasion* the attachment of early youth is abruptly checked, and only comes to its full perfection after eight years of separation. The cycle is complete, and it seems as though Jane Austen would have been compelled to take some fresh departure, had she lived to write more. We regret that she did not, but we rejoice that her life was spared long enough to give us the immortal group we now possess, and we must all echo the already quoted lament of Sir Walter Scott, "What a pity such a gifted creature died so early."

CHAPTER XI.

ILLNESS AND DEATH.

Emma was the last of her works which Jane Austen lived to see published; and, in spite of the compliments she received upon it, and the pleasure they gave her, its publication had sad associations for her. Henry Austen's illness, already mentioned, had begun while his sister was busy bringing out the novel, and it had been a very sudden and serious one. At first Jane was alone with him, but, as the danger increased with alarming rapidity, she sent for the other members of the family. They all arrived as quickly as was possible in those days when locomotion was so difficult; but Henry Austen was at death's door before they could get to him, and for many days he lay between life and death, although he recovered eventually. The strain and anxiety told much upon Jane, and she was still in a very low nervous state when fresh trouble came upon her family. Henry who had tried several professions, and had been unable to establish himself in any, had for some time past been partner in a bank, which now broke: many of the Austen family besides himself were involved in the loss. Any family trouble was always deeply felt by Jane,

and this came upon her when she was quite unfit for any fresh trial. Her health and spirits, which were already much weakened, sank perceptibly, and though she was anything but nervous about herself, and seldom mentioned her own health in her letters, she was evidently very far from well. In 1816 one of her nieces had written to her with earnest inquiries after her health, in answer to which Jane replies, "Many thanks for your kind care of my health. I certainly have not been well for many weeks, and about a week ago I was very poorly. I have had a good deal of fever at times and indifferent nights; but I am considerably better now, and am recovering my looks a little, which have been bad enough—black and white and every wrong colour. I must not depend upon being ever very blooming again. Sickness is a dangerous indulgence at my time of life." In the same making-the-best-of-it spirit, she wrote about this time to her brother Charles: "I live upstairs for the present, and am coddled. I am the only one of the party who has been so silly, but a weak body must excuse weak nerves"

Increasing discomfort soon convinced her that she was not as near recovery as she had hoped, and though she was so cheerful before her family that they could not tell whether she were alarmed or not, before others she sometimes allowed herself to relax in this watchful self-control. While staying with some old friends in scenes that were very familiar to her, they were struck by the way in which she spoke and acted as though she never expected to be there again, and the visible failure in her health greatly alarmed them. Her letters, too, became sadder in tone, and in one of them the depression was so evident that she pulls

herself up with the remark, "But I am getting too near complaint; it has been the appointment of God, however secondary causes may have operated."

In the summer of 1816 she was able to pay a visit —which she must have known would be her last—to the old home at Steventon; and when she returned to Chawton, she continued to work at *Persuasion*, though under great difficulty from bodily weakness. It was, we feel, the consciousness of approaching death that touched that exquisite novel—the last she ever completed—with the wonderful pathetic sweetness and grace in which it stands alone among her works; even the happy termination having a sort of subdued radiance about it quite unlike the endings of her other stories. Considering her state of health, it is wonderful that she could write at all. She had been obliged to give up all walking and almost all driving, while inside the house she could seldom find comfort or rest, except by lying down. The little drawing-room of Chawton Cottage contained only one sofa, which was appropriated to Mrs. Austen, then more than seventy years old, but if she had seen that her daughter needed it, she would, probably, have refused to use it herself. Jane, who carried on all her work, literary or otherwise, in the midst of her family, made herself a sort of couch with some chairs, and declared that she preferred this to the real sofa—a "pious fraud" which the grown-up members of the family respected in silence. One of her little nieces, however, with the *candeur brutale de l'enfance*, expressed so much astonishment at her aunt's taste, that Jane was obliged to explain the truth privately to her, and so silence her indiscreet remarks. It was another proof of the loving un-

selfishness which, even in illness, could not enjoy a comfort if anyone else were deprived of it.

In spite of weakness and suffering, she finished *Persuasion* in July, 1816; but when she attempted the most difficult part of the story—the re-engagement of Anne and Captain Wentworth—her brain had, for the moment, lost its full power, and she produced a chapter which was certainly not up to her usual standard. Her clear judgment was not dimmed: she saw the deficiencies in what she had written, but, for the first time in her life, she felt incapable of correcting them, and a great wave of despondency swept over her as she realised her own weakness of mind and body, and felt that the pen which she had enjoyed the use of for so many years was at length slipping from her grasp. Her despondency was, however, premature; she went to bed in very low spirits, but next morning her brain was in full vigour again, and she resumed her pen with all the old energy. She now wrote two chapters in place of the one she had already composed; and as these give us the visit of the Musgroves to Bath; all the scenes immediately following that visit; and the reconciliation of Anne and Captain Wentworth, her readers must feel that she has left us nothing worthier of her genius. She herself was quite contented with her second attempt, and, indeed, it is difficult to see how she could have been otherwise.

For some time after this she attempted no further writing, but in January 1817 she either was, or fancied herself, better, for she wrote to a friend, "I have certainly gained strength through the winter, and am not far from being well; and I think I understand my own case now so much better than I did as to be

able to keep off any serious return of illness." And about the same time she wrote to a niece, "I feel myself so much stronger than I was, and can so perfectly walk *to* Alton *or* back again without fatigue, that I hope to be able to do *both* when summer comes." Her hopes were never to be realised; but she took advantage of her comparative vigour to begin a fresh novel on January 27th, 1817, and was able to go on with it, with tolerable rapidity, till March 17th. This last unfinished attempt, which had not even received a title, has never been published *in extenso*, but extracts from it have been given, and a sketch of the plot as far as it was worked out. It is difficult to judge of any work in this way, but as far as it had gone there was no very attractive character in it. It is possible that, if health had been granted her, Jane Austen would have polished and improved upon the materials until the characters had become as real to us as the Bertrams and the Bennets; but by this time her alarming state had become evident to every member of the family, and when two of James Austen's daughters went to see her in April, the younger one records, "She was then keeping her room, but said she would see us; and we went up to her. She was in her dressing-gown, and was sitting quite like an invalid in an arm-chair, but she got up and kindly greeted us, and then, pointing to seats which had been arranged for us by the fire, she said, 'There is a chair for the married lady and a little stool for you, Caroline.' It is strange, but those trifling words were the last of hers that I can remember, for I retain no recollection of what was said by anyone in the conversation that ensued. I was struck by the alteration in herself. She was

very pale, her voice was weak and low, and there was about her a general appearance of debility and suffering, but I have been told that she never had much acute pain. She was not equal to the exertion of talking to us, and our visit to the sick-room was a very short one, Aunt Cassandra soon taking us away. I do not suppose we stayed a quarter of an hour; and I never saw Aunt Jane again."

Still she continued cheerful, though she can have had by this time little hope of recovery; and in April her brother James writes to his daughter that, "I was happy to have a good account of herself written by her own hand in a letter from your Aunt Jane, but all who love, and that is all who know her, must be anxious on her account." By this time she had given up her novel-writing, so that she must have felt herself weak indeed.

In May she and her sister moved into lodgings in Winchester that she might be within reach of an eminent medical man living there; but he had little hope of saving her, though, after going there, she seemed for a time rather stronger, and wrote to one of her nephews, "There is no better way, my dearest E——, of thanking you for your affectionate concern for me during my illness than by telling you myself as soon as possible that I continue to get better. I will not boast of my hand-writing; neither that nor my face have yet recovered their proper beauty, but in other respects I gain strength very fast. I am now out of bed from nine in the morning to ten at night; upon the sofa, it is true, but I eat my meals with aunt Cassandra in a rational way, and can employ myself and walk from one room to another. Mr. Lyford says he will cure me; and, if he fails, I shall draw up a

memorial and lay it before the Dean and Chapter, and have no doubt of redress from that pious, learned, and disinterested body." She then gives a cheerful account of their lodgings, and winds up with a touching expression of grateful humility: "God bless you, my dear E——. If ever you are ill, may you be as tenderly nursed as I have been. May the same blessed alleviations of anxious sympathising friends be yours: and may you possess, as I daresay you will, the greatest blessing of all in the consciousness of not being unworthy of their love. *I* could not feel this." Soon afterwards she writes even more touchingly: "I will only say further that my dearest sister, my tender, watchful, indefatigable nurse, has not been made ill by her exertions. As to what I owe her, and the anxious affection of all my beloved family on this occasion, I can only cry over it, and pray God to bless them more and more."

She was now fully aware of her state and in no way alarmed by it, though—might she have chosen—she would gladly have lived longer. Every year was bringing her fresh fame and giving her new assurances of success; she was surrounded by loving relations and friends; and she had scarcely reached middle age. Her brothers were scattered in their own various homes, but their children were a constant interest and pleasure to her, and she had the unceasing companionship of the sister who was more than anyone else to her, and from whom she had been so little separated. There was much to make life sweet to Jane Austen at the age of forty-two; nothing that should make her wish to leave it, and yet, with her usual contentedness, she quietly acquiesced

in the summons for her, and endeavoured, as far as possible, to cheer those around her.

Her sister-in-law, Mrs. James Austen, came to Winchester to help Cassandra with the nursing; and soon after she arrived, a sudden prostration in the patient made everyone believe that the end had come. Jane was aware of it, and, calm and serene as ever, said words of farewell to all who were with her. Finally she turned to her sister-in-law with warm expressions of gratitude for all her care and help, adding, "You have always been a kind sister to me, Mary." The end was not as near as the watchers thought, for she lingered until past the middle of July, but when it came, it seemed al-sudden, as is often the case after a lingering illness. On the 18th of July, 1817, Jane Austen breathed her last; and those who had watched her throughout her illness were thankful that the months of weariness and suffering were over, even though they felt how irreparable was their own loss. Their feelings are best described in the letter which Cassandra wrote to her niece, Fanny Knight, two days after Jane had passed away; and this letter gives, also, the most complete account of her last hours:

"Winchester,

"My Dearest Fanny, Sunday.

"Doubly dear to me now for her dear sake whom we have lost. She did love you most sincerely; and never shall I forget the proofs of love you gave her during her illness, in writing those kind amusing letters at a time when I know your feelings would have dictated so different a style. Take the only reward I can give you in the assurance that your

benevolent purpose *was* answered: you *did* contribute to her enjoyment.

"Even your last letter afforded pleasure. I merely cut the seal and gave it to her; she opened it and read it herself. Afterwards she gave it me to read, and then talked to me a little, and not uncheerfully, of its contents, but there was then a langour about her which prevented her taking the same interest in anything she had been used to do.

"Since Tuesday evening, when her complaint returned, there was a visible change, she slept more and much more comfortably; indeed, during the last eight and forty hours she was more asleep than awake. Her looks altered, and she fell away, but I perceived no material diminution of strength, and though I was then hopeless of a recovery, I had no suspicion how rapidly my loss was approaching.

"I *have* lost a treasure, such a sister, such a friend as never can have been surpassed. She was the sun of my life, the gilder of every pleasure, the soother of every sorrow; I had not a thought concealed from her, and feel as if I had lost a part of myself. I loved her only too well—not better than she deserved, but I am conscious that my affection for her made me sometimes unjust to and negligent of others; and I can acknowledge, more than as a general principle, the justice of the Hand which has struck this blow. . . . I thank God that I was enabled to attend her to the last; and amongst my many causes of self-reproach I have not to add any wilful neglect of her comfort.

"She felt herself to be dying about half an hour before she became tranquil and apparently unconscious. During that half hour was her struggle, poor soul! She said she could not tell us what she suffered, though

she complained of little fixed pain. When I asked her if there was anything she wanted, her answer was she wanted nothing but death, and some of her words were, 'God grant me patience; pray for me, oh, pray for me.' Her voice was affected; but as long as she spoke she was intelligible.

"I hope I do not break your heart, my dearest Fanny, by these particulars; I mean to afford you gratification whilst I am relieving my own feelings. I could not write so to anybody else; indeed, you are the only person I have written to at all, excepting your grandmamma—it was to her, not your Uncle Charles, I wrote on Friday.

"Immediately after dinner on Thursday, I went into the town to do an errand which your dear aunt was anxious about. I returned about a quarter before six, and found her recovering from faintness and oppression; she got so well as to be able to give me a minute account of her seizure, and when the clock struck six she was talking quietly to me.

"I cannot say how soon afterwards she was seized again with the same faintness which was followed by the sufferings she could not describe; but Mr. Liford had been sent for, had applied something to give her ease, and she was in a state of quiet insensibility by seven o'clock at the latest. From that time till half past four, when she ceased to breathe, she scarcely moved a limb, so that we have reason to think, with gratitude to the Almighty, that her sufferings were over. A slight motion of the head with every breath remained till almost the last. I sat close to her with a pillow in my lap to assist in supporting her head, which was almost off the bed, for six hours; fatigue made me then resign my place to Mrs. J. A. for two

hours and a half, when I took it again, and in about an hour more she breathed her last. I was able to close her eyes myself, and it was a great gratification to me to be able to render her those last services. There was nothing convulsed which gave the idea of pain in her look; on the contrary, but for the continual motion of her head, she gave one the idea of a beautiful statue, and even now, in her coffin, there is such a sweet serene air over her countenance as is quite pleasant to contemplate. . . .

"The last sad ceremony is to take place on Thursday morning; her dear remains are to be deposited in the Cathedral. It is a satisfaction to me to think they are to lie in a building she admired so much."

Nine days later, when she had returned home again, Cassandra wrote to the same niece—

"Chawton,
"Tuesday (July 29, 1817).

"My Dearest Fanny,

"I have just read your letter for the third time, and thank you most sincerely for every kind expression to myself, and still more warmly for your praises of her who, I believe, was better known to you than to any human being besides myself. Nothing of the sort could have been more gratifying to me than the manner in which you write of her, and if the dear angel is conscious of what passes here, and is not above all earthly feelings, she may, perhaps, receive pleasure in being so mourned. . . .

"Thursday was not so dreadful a day to me as you imagined. There was so much necessary to be done that there was no time for additional misery. Everything was conducted with the greatest tranquillity, and,

but that I was determined I would see the last, and, therefore, was upon the listen, I should not have known when they left the house. I watched the little mournful procession the length of the street, and when it turned from my sight, and I had lost her for ever, even then I was not overpowered, nor so much agitated as I am now in writing of it. Never was human being more sincerely mourned by those who attended her remains than was this dear creature. May the sorrow with which she is parted with on earth be a prognostic of the joy with which she is hailed in heaven."

In these last sentences Cassandra Austen expresses what were her feelings through life, and hardly more hers than those of the rest of the family. Although she was Jane's special companion, the brothers had all loved and treasured the bright unselfish sister, who was always ready to mourn in their sorrows and rejoice with their happiness; whose talents were winning the admiration of the world, while her heart remained simple as that of a child. In the feeling words of her nephew, "They were very fond and very proud of her. They were attached to her by her talents, her virtues, and her engaging manners; and each loved afterwards to fancy a resemblance in some niece or daughter of his own to the dear sister Jane, whose perfect equal they yet never expected to see."

Jane Austen's remains were laid near the middle of the north aisle of Winchester Cathedral, almost opposite the well-known tomb of William of Wykeham. The taste of the day was for full and somewhat minute epitaphs, and on a large slab of black marble which marks the spot was placed the following inscription:—

"In memory of *Jane Austen,* youngest daughter of the late Revd. George Austen, formerly rector of Steventon in this County. She departed this life on July 18, 1817, aged 41, after a long illness, supported with the patience and hope of a Christian. The benevolence of her heart, the sweetness of her temper, and the extraordinary endowments of her mind obtained the regard of all who knew her, and the warmest love of her immediate connections. Their grief is in proportion to their affection; they know their loss to be irreparable, but in their deepest affliction they are consoled by a firm, though humble, hope that her charity, devotion, faith, and purity have rendered her soul acceptable in the sight of her Redeemer."

It is quite possible that when this inscription first appeared, few strangers who read it had any idea *how* extraordinary the endowments of Jane Austen's mind had been, and they probably considered the expression as an illustration of family partiality; but in years to come the public woke to the perception that there was, in good truth, something "particular about that lady," and it was then found desirable to mark her resting-place differently. Her nephew, Mr. Austen Leigh, inserted a brass in the wall near her grave to—

"*Jane Austen,* known to many by her writings, endeared to her family by the varied charms of her character, and ennobled by Christian faith and piety.

"She openeth her mouth with wisdom, and in her tongue is the law of kindness."

Her family were quite satisfied with these notices of her whom they had so dearly loved; and though we may feel as if some more national tribute to her genius would have been fitting, still her fame is of the

kind that needs no "storied urn or animated bust" to keep it alive. In a very different sense, but as truly as of the great architect, it may be said, "*Si monumentum requiris, circumspice!*" for it is in looking round us at the every-day men and women whom we meet in our every-day life that we learn to appreciate truly the genius which could read those characters so perfectly and paint them so unerringly.

As we look back on the scanty records of Jane Austen's career, or turn from these to criticise the writings which were, in fact, her life, we cannot but feel that it was a life prematurely ended as regarded her fame, and that in the future she might have even surpassed the works we already have from her. Yet, much as we must regret that she lived to write nothing more, we cannot attach the idea of incompleteness or immaturity to anything she did write. Everything is finished to the highest point of finish; no labour has been spared, and yet nothing is laboured. George Eliot has named her "The greatest artist that has ever written . . . the most perfect master over the means to her end." Could higher praise be bestowed upon any style of writing? It is in this completeness, this absoluteness of dainty finish, joined, as it is, to a keen, delicate satire and a humour which is never coarse, that lies Jane Austen's gift; and it is one in which she has never had a rival.

It is nearly eighty years since she died, and there has been no writer since whose style, to those who know Jane Austen's well, can really challenge comparison with it for a moment. It is impossible to urge her merits on any who do not see them from her writings, "next to Shakespeare," as Lord Tennyson called

them. Those who do appreciate her novels will think no praise too high for them, while those who do not, will marvel at the infatuation of her admirers; for no one ever cares moderately for Jane Austen's works: her readers either award them unbounded praise or find them insufferably dull. In her own day, the latter class were the larger, and reasons for this have been suggested; now, and for many years past, the tide of popular opinion has set strongly the other way, and we may believe it will continue to do so as long as novel-readers can appreciate life-like pictures of human beings who are immortal in their truth to nature, though their setting belongs to a bygone day.

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