

JANE AUSTEN'S WORKS.

	2
Sense and Sensibility	vol
	s.
	2
Pride and Prejudice	vol
	s.
	2
Mansfield Park	vol
	s.
	2
Emma	vol
	s.
	1
Northanger Abbey	vol.
	1
Persuasion	vol.
	1
Lady Susan—The Watsons With a Memoir	vol.
	1
Letters	vol.

From a Painting in the possession of the Rev. Morland Rice, of Bramber.

THE LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

*Selected from the Compilation of her
Great Nephew*

EDWARD, LORD BRADBOURNE

By SARAH CHAUNCEY WOOLSEY

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[**Transcriber's Note:** While the title page gives credit to Lord Bradbourne, the actual title of Edward was Lord Brabourne.]

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PREFACE.

The recent cult for Miss Austen, which has resulted in no less than ten new editions of her novels within a decade and three memoirs by different hands within as many years, have made the facts of her life familiar to most readers. It was a short life, and an uneventful one as viewed from the standpoint of our modern times, when steam and electricity have linked together the ends of the earth, and the very air seems teeming with news, agitations, discussions. We have barely time to recover our breath between post and post; and the morning paper with its statements of disaster and its hints of still greater evils to be, is scarcely out-lived, when, lo! in comes the evening issue, contradicting the news of the morning, to be sure, but full of omens and auguries of its own to strew our pillows with the seed of wakefulness.

To us, publications come hot and hot from the press. Telegraphic wires like the intricate and incalculable zigzags of the lightning ramify above our heads; and who can tell at what moment their

[iv]

darts may strike? In Miss Austen's day the tranquil, drowsy, decorous English day of a century since, all was different. News travelled then from hand to hand, carried in creaking post-wagons, or in cases of extreme urgency by men on horseback. When a gentleman journeying in his own "chaise" took three days in going from Exeter to London, a distance now covered in three hours of railroad, there was little chance of frequent surprises. Love, sorrow, and death were in the world then as now, and worked their will upon the sons of men; but people did not expect happenings every day or even every year. No doubt they lived the longer for this exemption from excitement, and kept their nerves in a state of wholesome repair; but it goes without saying that the events of

which they knew so little did not stir them deeply.

Miss Austen's life coincided with two of the momentous epochs of history,—the American struggle for independence, and the French Revolution; but there is scarcely an allusion to either in her letters. She was interested in the fleet and its victories because two of her brothers were in the navy and had promotion and prize-money to look forward to. In this connection she mentions Trafalgar and the Egyptian expedition, and generously remarks that she would read Southey's "Life of Nelson" if there was anything in it about her brother Frank! She honors Sir John Moore by

[v]

remarking after his death that his mother would perhaps have preferred to have him less distinguished and still alive; further than that, the making of the gooseberry jam and a good recipe for orange wine interests her more than all the marchings and countermarchings, the man[oe]uvres and diplomacies, going on the world over. In the midst of the universal vortex of fear and hope, triumph and defeat, while the fate of Britain and British liberty hung trembling in the balance, she sits writing her letters, trimming her caps, and discussing small beer with her sister in a lively and unruffled fashion wonderful to contemplate. "The society of rural England in those days," as Mr. Goldwin Smith happily puts it, "enjoyed a calm of its own in the midst of the European tempest like the windless centre of a circular storm."

The point of view of a woman with such an environment must naturally be circumscribed and narrow; and in this Miss Austen's charm consists. Seeing little, she painted what she saw with absolute fidelity and a dexterity and perfection unequalled. "On her was bestowed, though in a humble form, the gift which had been bestowed on Homer, Shakespeare, Cervantes, Scott, and a few others,—the gift of creative power." Endowed with the keenest and

most delicate insight and a vivid sense of humor, she depicted with exactitude what she observed and what she understood, giving

[vi]

to each fact and emotion its precise shade and value. The things she did not see she did not attempt. Affectation was impossible to her,—most of all, affectation of knowledge or feeling not justly her own. "She held the mirror up to her time" with an exquisite sincerity and fidelity; and the closeness of her study brought her intimately near to those hidden springs which underlie all human nature. This is the reason why, for all their skimp skirts, leg-of-mutton sleeves, and bygone impossible bonnets, her characters do not seem to us old-fashioned. Minds and hearts are made pretty much after the same pattern from century to century; and given a modern dress and speech, Emma or Elizabeth or dear Anne Eliot could enter a drawing-room to-day, and excite no surprise except by so closely resembling the people whom they would find there.

"Miss Austen's novels are dateless things," Mr. Augustine Birrell tells us. "Nobody in his senses would speak of them as 'old novels.' 'John Inglesant' is an old novel, so is 'Ginx's Baby.' But Emma is quite new, and, like a wise woman, affords few clues to her age."

We allude with a special touch of affection to Anne Eliot. "Persuasion," which was written during the last two years of Miss Austen's life, when the refining touch of Eternity was already upon her, has always seemed to us the most perfect of her novels; and Anne, with her exquisite

[vii]

breeding and unselfish straightforwardness, just touched with the tender reserve of memory and regret, one of her best portraitures. But this is a matter of individual taste. Doubtless Elizabeth Bennet is "better fun" as the modern girl would say. Miss

Austen herself preferred her. She had a droll and pretty way of talking about her characters which showed how real they were to her own mind, and made them equally real to other people. In 1813 she had the good luck to light upon a portrait of Jane Bennet at an exhibition.

"I was very well pleased (pray tell Fanny) with a small portrait of Mrs. Bingley, excessively like her. I went in hopes of seeing one of her sister, but there was no Mrs. Darcy. Perhaps I may find her in the great exhibition, which we shall go to if we have time. Mrs. Bingley's is exactly like 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 favorite color with her. I dare say Mrs. D. will be in yellow."

And later:—

"We have been both to the exhibition and Sir J. Reynolds'; 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."

[viii]

The letters included in this series comprise about three quarters of the collection in two volumes published in 1884 by her great-nephew Lord Brabourne. The lightness, almost friskiness, of their tone cannot fail to strike the reader. Modern letters written by women are filled more or less with hints and queries; questionings as to the why and the wherefore occur; allusions to the various "fads" of the day, literary or artistic,—Ibsen, Tolstoi, Browning, Esoteric Buddhism, Wagner's Music, the Mind Cure, Social Science, Causes and Reforms. But Cowper and Crabbe were the poetical sensations in Miss Austen's time, Scott and Byron its

phenomenal novelties; it took months to get most books printed, and years to persuade anybody to read them. Furthermore the letters, in all probability, are carefully chosen to reveal only the more superficial side of their writer. There are wide gaps of omission, covering important events such as Mr. Austen's death, the long illness through which Jane nursed her brother Henry, and the anxieties and worries which his failure in business caused to the whole family. What is vouchsafed us is a glimpse of the girlish and untroubled moments of Miss Austen's life; and the glimpse is a sweet and friendly one. We are glad to have it, in spite of our suspicion that another and even more interesting part of her personality is withheld from us.

[ix]

A good daughter, a delightful sister, the most perfect of aunts, what better record could there be of a single woman? Her literary work never stood in the way of her home duties, any more than her "quiet, limpid, unimpassioned style" stood between her thought and her readers.

Her fame may justly be said to be almost entirely posthumous. She was read and praised to a moderate degree during her lifetime, but all her novels together brought her no more than seven hundred pounds; and her reputation, as it were, was in its close-sheathed bud when, at the early age of forty-one, she died. It would have excited in her an amused incredulity, no doubt, had any one predicted that two generations after her death the real recognition of her powers was to come. Time, which like desert sands has effaced the footprints of so many promising authors, has, with her, served as the desert wind, to blow aside those dusts of the commonplace which for a while concealed her true proportions. She is loved more than she ever hoped to be, and far more widely known. Mrs. Ritchie tells somewhere an anecdote of a party of seven assembled at a dinner-table, where the question arose of the locality of one of Miss Austen's places,—Maple Grove, the residence of Mr. Suckling, if we are not mistaken,—and six of the

persons present at once recognized the allusion, and had a formed opinion

[x]

on the subject. The seventh was a Frenchman who did not read English!

Scott, Macaulay, Sir James Mackintosh, Miss Martineau, Mrs. Ritchie, Miss Mitford, and a host of others have vied in their generous tributes of admiration. But most striking of all, to our thinking, is that paid to Miss Austen by Lord Tennyson when, in some visit to Lyme not many years since, those with him pointed out this and the other feature of the place only to be interrupted with—"Never mind all that. Show me the exact spot where Louisa Musgrove fell!" Could non-historical verisimilitude go farther or mean more?

S. C. W.

Newport, June, 1892.

[11]

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN.

I.

Steventon, Thursday (January 16, 1796).

HAVE just received yours and Mary's letter, and I thank you both, though their contents might have been more agreeable. I do not at all expect to see you on Tuesday, since matters have fallen out so unpleasantly; and if you are not able to return till after that day, it will hardly be possible for us to send for you before

Saturday, though for my own part I care so little about the ball that it would be no sacrifice to me to give it up for the sake of seeing you two days earlier. We are extremely sorry for poor Eliza's illness. I trust, however, that she has continued to recover since you wrote, and that you will none of you be the worse for your attendance on her. What a good-for-nothing fellow Charles is to bespeak the stockings! I hope he will be too hot all the rest of his life for it!

[12]

I sent you a letter yesterday to Ibthorp, which I suppose you will not receive at Kintbury. It was not very long or very witty, and therefore if you never receive it, it does not much signify. I wrote principally to tell you that the Coopers were arrived and in good health. The little boy is very like Dr. Cooper, and the little girl is to resemble Jane, they say.

Our party to Ashe to-morrow night will consist of Edward Cooper, James (for a ball is nothing without him), Buller, who is now staying with us, and I. I look forward with great impatience to it, 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.

I am very much flattered by your commendation of my last letter, for I write only for fame, and without any view to pecuniary emolument.

Edward is gone to spend the day with his friend, John Lyford, and does not return till to-morrow. Anna is now here; she came up in her chaise to spend the day with her young cousins, but she does not much take to them or to anything about them, except Caroline's spinning-wheel. I am very glad to find from Mary that Mr. and Mrs. Fowle are pleased with you. I hope you will continue to give satisfaction.

How impertinent you are to write to me about

[13]

Tom, as if I had not opportunities of hearing from him myself! The last letter that I received from him was dated on Friday, 8th, and he told me that if the wind should be favorable on Sunday, which it proved to be, they were to sail from Falmouth on that day. By this time, therefore, they are at Barbadoes, I suppose. The Rivers are still at Manydown, and are to be at Ashe to-morrow. I intended to call on the Miss Biggs yesterday had the weather been tolerable. Caroline, Anna, and I have just been devouring some cold souse, and it would be difficult to say which enjoyed it most.

Tell Mary that I make over Mr. Heartley and all his estate to her for her sole use and benefit in future, and not only him, but all my other admirers into the bargain wherever she can find them, even the kiss which C. Powlett wanted to give me, as I mean to confine myself in future to Mr. Tom Lefroy, for whom I don't care sixpence. Assure her also, as a last and indubitable proof of Warren's indifference to me, that he actually drew that gentleman's picture for me, and delivered it to me without a sigh.

Friday.—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. Wm. Chute called here yesterday. I wonder what he means by being so civil. There is a report that Tom is

[14]

going to be married to a Lichfield lass. John Lyford and his sister bring Edward home to-day, dine with us, and we shall all go together to Ashe. I understand that we are to draw for partners. I shall be extremely impatient to hear from you again, that I may know how Eliza is, and when you are to return.

With best love, etc., I am affectionately yours,

J. Austen.

Miss Austen,
The Rev. Mr. Fowle's, Kintbury, Newbury

II.

Cork Street, Tuesday morn (August, 1796).

My dear Cassandra,—Here I am once more in this scene of dissipation and vice, and I begin already to find my morals corrupted. We reached Staines yesterday, I do not (know) when, without suffering so much from the heat as I had hoped to do. We set off again this morning at seven o'clock, and had a very pleasant drive, as the morning was cloudy and perfectly cool. I came all the way in the chaise from Hertford Bridge.

Edward^[1] and Frank^[2] are both gone out to seek their fortunes; the latter is to return soon and

[15]

help us seek ours. The former we shall never see again. We are to be at Astley's to-night, which I am glad of. Edward has heard from Henry this morning. He has not been at the races at all, unless his driving Miss Pearson over to Rowling one day can be so called. We shall find him there on Thursday.

I hope you are all alive after our melancholy parting yesterday, and that you pursued your intended avocation with success. God bless you! I must leave off, for we are going out.

Yours very affectionately,
J. Austen.

Everybody's love.

FOOTNOTES:

[1] Miss Austen's second brother.

[2] Francis, afterward Sir Francis Austen, Senior Admiral of the Fleet, and K. C. B.

III.

Rowling, Monday (September 5).

My dear Cassandra,—I shall be extremely anxious to hear the event of your ball, and shall hope to receive so long and minute an account of every particular that I shall be tired of reading it. Let me know how many, besides their fourteen selves and Mr. and Mrs. Wright, Michael will contrive to place about their coach, and how many of the gentlemen, musicians, and waiters he will have persuaded to come in their shooting-jackets. I hope John Lovett's accident will not prevent his attending the ball, as you will otherwise be

[16]

obliged to dance with Mr. Tincton the whole evening. Let me know how J. Harwood deports himself without the Miss Biggs, and which of the Marys will carry the day with my brother James.

We were at a ball on Saturday, I assure you. We dined at Goodnestone, and in the evening danced two country-dances and the Boulangeries. I opened the ball with Edward Bridges; the other couples were Lewis Cage and Harriet, Frank and Louisa, Fanny and George. Elizabeth played one country-dance, Lady Bridges the other, which she made Henry dance with her, and Miss Finch played the Boulangeries.

In reading over the last three or four lines, I am aware of my having expressed myself in so doubtful a manner that if I did not tell you to the contrary, you might imagine it was Lady Bridges who made Henry dance with her at the same time that she was playing, which, if not impossible, must appear a very improbable event to you. But it was Elizabeth who danced. We supped there, and walked home at night under the shade of two umbrellas.

To-day the Goodnestone party begins to disperse and spread

itself abroad. Mr. and Mrs. Cage and George repair to Hythe. Lady Waltham, Miss Bridges, and Miss Mary Finch to Dover, for the health of the two former. I have never seen

[17]

Marianne at all. On Thursday Mr. and Mrs. Bridges return to Danbury; Miss Harriet Hales accompanies them to London on her way to Dorsetshire.

Farmer Claringbould died this morning, and I fancy Edward means to get some of his farm, if he can cheat Sir Brook enough in the agreement.

We have just got some venison from Godmersham, which the two Mr. Harveys are to dine on to-morrow, and on Friday or Saturday the Goodnestone people are to finish their scraps. Henry went away on Friday, as he purposed, *without fayl*. You will hear from him soon, I imagine, as he talked of writing to Steventon shortly. Mr. Richard Harvey is going to be married; but as it is a great secret, and only known to half the neighborhood, you must not mention it. The lady's name is Musgrave.

I am in great distress. I cannot determine whether I shall give Richis half a guinea or only five shillings when I go away. Counsel me, amiable Miss Austen, and tell me which will be the most.

We walked Frank last night to Crixhall Ruff, and he appeared much edified. Little Edward was breeched yesterday for good and all, and was whipped into the bargain.

Pray remember me to everybody who does not inquire after me; those who do, remember me

[18]

without bidding. Give my love to Mary Harrison, and tell her I wish, whenever she is attached to a young man, some respectable

Dr. Marchmont may keep them apart for five volumes....

IV.

Rowling, Thursday (September 15).

My dear Cassandra,—We have been very gay since I wrote last; dining at Nackington, returning by moonlight, and everything quite in style, not to mention Mr. Claringbould's funeral which we saw go by on Sunday. I believe I told you in a former letter that Edward had some idea of taking the name of Claringbould; but that scheme is over, though it would be a very eligible as well as a very pleasant plan, would any one advance him money enough to begin on. We rather expected Mr. Milles to have done so on Tuesday; but to our great surprise nothing was said on the subject, and unless it is in your power to assist your brother with five or six hundred pounds, he must entirely give up the idea.

At Nackington we met Lady Sondes' picture over the mantelpiece in the dining-room, and the pictures of her three children in an ante-room, besides Mr. Scott, Miss Fletcher, Mr. Toke, Mr. J. Toke, and the archdeacon Lynch. Miss Fletcher and I were very thick, but I am the thinnest of

[19]

the two. She wore her purple muslin, which is pretty enough, though it does not become her complexion. There are two traits in her character which are pleasing,—namely, she admires Camilla, and drinks no cream in her tea. If you should ever see Lucy, you may tell her that I scolded Miss Fletcher for her negligence in writing, as she desired me to do, but without being able to bring her to any proper sense of shame,—that Miss Fletcher says, in her defence, that as everybody whom Lucy knew when she was in Canterbury has now left it, she has nothing at all to write to her about. By *everybody*, I suppose Miss Fletcher means that a new set of officers have arrived there. But this is a note of my own.

Mrs. Milles, Mr. John Toke, and in short everybody of any sensibility inquired in tender strains after you, and I took an opportunity of assuring Mr. J. T. that neither he nor his father need longer keep themselves single for you.

We went in our two carriages to Nackington; but how we divided I shall leave you to surmise, merely observing that as Elizabeth and I were without either hat or bonnet, it would not have been very convenient for us to go in the chaise. We went by Bifrons, and I contemplated with a melancholy pleasure the abode of him on whom I once fondly doated. We dine to-day at Goodnestone,

[20]

to meet my aunt Fielding from Margate and a Mr. Clayton, her professed admirer—at least, so I imagine. Lady Bridges has received very good accounts of Marianne, who is already certainly the better for her bathing.

So His Royal Highness Sir Thomas Williams has at length sailed; the papers say "on a cruise." But I hope they are gone to Cork, or I shall have written in vain. Give my love to Jane, as she arrived at Steventon yesterday, I dare say.

I sent a message to Mr. Digweed from Edward in a letter to Mary Lloyd which she ought to receive to-day; but as I know that the Harwoods are not very exact as to their letters, I may as well repeat it to you. Mr. Digweed is to be informed that illness has prevented Seward's coming over to look at the repairs intended at the farm, but that he will come as soon as he can. Mr. Digweed may also be informed, if you think proper, that Mr. and Mrs. Milles are to dine here to-morrow, and that Mrs. Joan Knatchbull is to be asked to meet them. Mr. Richard Harvey's match is put off till he has got a better Christian name, of which he has great hopes.

Mr. Children's two sons are both going to be married, John and

George. They are to have one wife between them, a Miss Holwell, who belongs to the Black Hole at Calcutta. I depend on hearing from James very soon; he promised me an

[21]

account of the ball, and by this time he must have collected his ideas enough after the fatigue of dancing to give me one.

Edward and Fly went out yesterday very early in a couple of shooting jackets, and came home like a couple of bad shots, for they killed nothing at all. They are out again to-day, and are not yet returned. Delightful sport! They are just come home, Edward with his two brace, Frank with his two and a half. What amiable young men!

Friday.—Your letter and one from Henry are just come, and the contents of both accord with my scheme more than I had dared expect. In one particular I could wish it otherwise, for Henry is very indifferent indeed. You must not expect us quite so early, however, as Wednesday, the 20th,—on that day se'nnight, according to our present plan, we may be with you. Frank had never any idea of going away before Monday, the 26th. I shall write to Miss Mason immediately, and press her returning with us, which Henry thinks very likely, and particularly eligible.

Buy Mary Harrison's gown by all means. You shall have mine for ever so much money, though, if I am tolerably rich when I get home, I shall like it very much myself.

As to the mode of our travelling to town, *I* want to go in a stage-coach, but Frank will not let

[22]

me. As you are likely to have the Williams and Lloyds with you next week, you would hardly find room for us then. If any one wants anything in town, they must send their commissions to

Frank, as *I* shall merely pass through it. The tallow-chandler is Penlington, at the Crown and Beehive, Charles Street, Covent Garden.

Miss Austen, Steventon, Overton, Hants.

V.

Rowling, Sunday (September 18).

My dear Cassandra,—This morning has been spent in doubt and deliberation, in forming plans and removing difficulties, for it ushered in the day with an event which I had not intended should take place so soon by a week. Frank has received his appointment on board the "Captain John Gore," commanded by the "Triton," and will therefore be obliged to be in town on Wednesday; and though I have every disposition in the world to accompany him on that day, I cannot go on the uncertainty of the Pearsons being at home, as I should not have a place to go to in case they were from home.

I wrote to Miss P. on Friday, and hoped to receive an answer from her this morning, which would have rendered everything smooth and easy, and would have enabled us to leave this place to-morrow,

[23]

as Frank, on first receiving his appointment, intended to do. He remains till Wednesday merely to accommodate me. I have written to her again to-day, and desired her to answer it by return of post. On Tuesday, therefore, I shall positively know whether they can receive me on Wednesday. If they cannot, Edward has been so good as to promise to take me to Greenwich on the Monday following, which was the day before fixed on, if that suits them better. If I have no answer at all on Tuesday, I must suppose Mary is not at home, and must wait till I do hear, as after having invited her to go to Steventon with me, it will not quite do to go home and

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