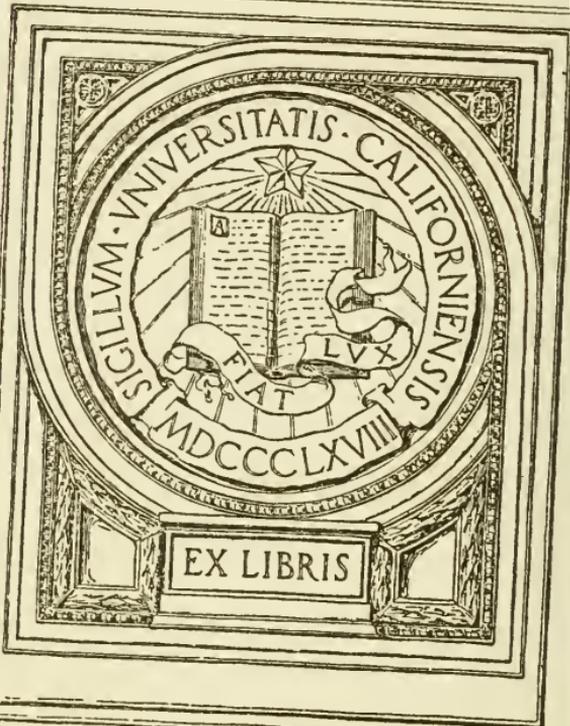
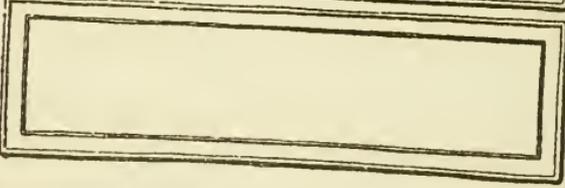


UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
AT LOS ANGELES



EX LIBRIS



UNIVERSITY of CALIFORNIA
LOS ANGELES
LIBRARY

THE NOVELS AND LETTERS OF
JANE AUSTEN

Edited by
REGINALD BRIMLEY JOHNSON

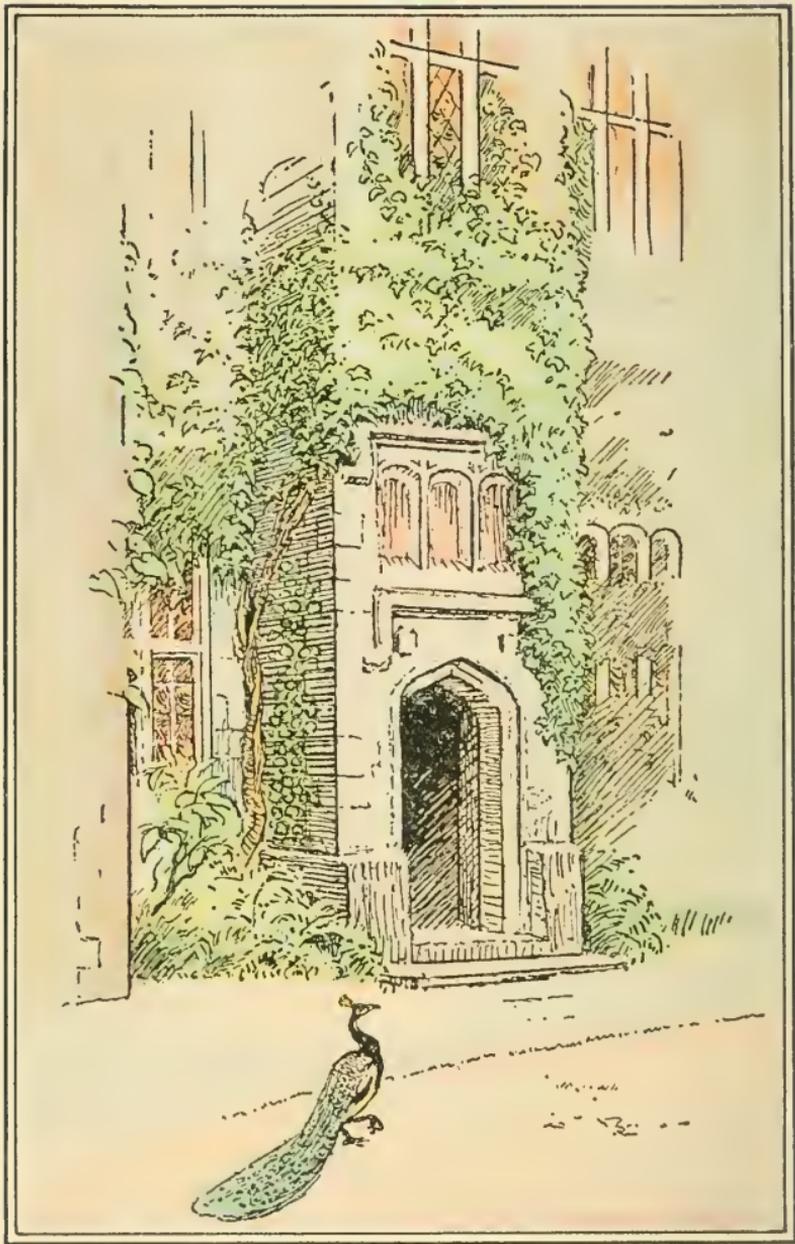
with an Introduction by
WILLIAM LYON PHELPS, Ph.D.

Complete in Twelve Volumes

STONELEIGH EDITION

*This Edition of the Novels and Letters of Jane Austen
is limited to twelve hundred and fifty numbered and
registered copies of which this is*

Copy No. **1092**



THE NOVELS AND LETTERS OF
JANE AUSTEN

Edited by
R. HENRY JOHNSON
with an Introduction by
PROF. WILLIAM LYON JONES, Ph. D.
*London Professor of English Literature
and Language*

1813
**LADY SUSAN
THE WATSONS
LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN**

VOLUME I

With Colored Illustrations by
C. E. and J. M. BROWN



The Home of Great Miss Austen

FRANK S. HOLBY
NEW YORK PHILADELPHIA

100 N. 3rd St. Philadelphia, Pa.



The Old Manor House Steventon Hants

THE NOVELS AND LETTERS OF
JANE AUSTEN

Edited by
R. BRIMLEY JOHNSON
with an Introduction by
PROF. WILLIAM LYON PHELPS, Ph. D.
*Lampson Professor of English Literature,
Yale University.*

212.30
**LADY SUSAN
THE WATSONS
LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN**

Part I

With Colored Illustrations by
C. E. and H. M. BROCK



The House in Hans Place, London.

FRANK S. HOLBY

NEW YORK

PHILADELPHIA

MCMVI

Prefaces
to
Lady Susan and the Watsons
Copyrighted 1906
by
FRANK S. HOLBY

FR
4531
J 83
1906
V. 11

ILLUSTRATIONS

The Old Manor House Steventon Hants . . .	<i>Frontispiece</i>
	PAGE
Jane Austen, after an original family portrait . . .	viii
Home in Winchester where Jane Austen died, from a photograph by Mrs. Wm. Lyon Philps, September, 1900	108
North Aisle of Winchester Cathedral; Burial Place of Jane Austen	196



PREFACE

JANE AUSTEN left two incomplete novels, "Lady Susan" and "The Watsons." Miss Austen did not give "Lady Susan" to the world and would have earnestly deprecated its publication. Before her death she removed from Chawton to Winchester for medical advice, leaving her papers in Chawton, so that she could hardly have had an opportunity in her last moments of destroying those papers she did not intend should see the light.

"Lady Susan" is a novelette in the form of letters. The date of its having been written is not known, but it is believed to have been a very early production. It is a mere exercise, which, when her taste had improved, was laid aside. It is complete after a fashion. The story, which it briefly and not very clearly tells, is that of a worthless, though clever and fascinating, woman who carries on two love intrigues at once, one with a married man, while in the case of the other she is eventually supplanted in her lover's affections by her own daughter. All this time she is cruelly ill-treating her daughter and trying to force upon her a husband whom she hates. In

PREFACE

the end her two intrigues clash and are wrecked in the collision. "Lady Susan" ultimately takes herself up by marrying the man she intended her daughter to marry. Her daughter marries the man her mother hoped to secure for herself. The plot is worthy of a French novel. Although the theme is to a degree repulsive, the reader feels that the writer has a moral reason in showing deceit captured in its own snare. The coldness of the narrative precludes any imputation against the extreme respectability of the author. Being merely an exercise, the characters are little better than lay figures, but are described with that minute observation, shrewd sagacity and insight that the author devotes to all of her sternly practical heroes and heroines.

"Sense and Sensibility," like "Lady Susan," was at first composed in the form of letters. Jane Austen was doubtless following the example of Richardson, whom she regarded with unbounded admiration. One of the defects of this method, in addition to its awkwardness for narration, is illustrated by "Lady Susan," in which the wicked woman is made to write letters revealing her own character and designs with an openness which, under a paternal government, might get her into trouble.

LADY SUSAN

Lady Susan

8

I

pt. I

21230

Lady Susan Vernon to Mr. Vernon

LANGFORD, Dec.

MY DEAR BROTHER,—I can no longer refuse myself the pleasure of profiting by your kind invitation when we last parted of spending some weeks with you at Churchhill, and therefore, if quite convenient to you and Mrs. Vernon to receive me at present, I shall hope within a few days to be introduced to a sister whom I have so long desired to be acquainted with. My kind friends here are most affectionately urgent with me to prolong my stay, but their hospitable and cheerful dispositions lead them too much into society for my present situation and state of mind; and I impatiently look forward to the hour when I shall be admitted into your delightful retirement.

I long to be made known to your dear little children, in whose hearts I shall be very eager to secure an interest. I shall soon have need for

5.3-19/2

LADY SUSAN

all my fortitude, as I am on the point of separation from my own daughter. The long illness of her dear father prevented my paying her that attention which duty and affection equally dictated, and I have too much reason to fear that the governess to whose care I consigned her was unequal to the charge. I have therefore resolved on placing her at one of the best private schools in town, where I shall have an opportunity of leaving her myself in my way to you. I am determined, you see, not to be denied admittance at Churchhill. It would indeed give me most painful sensations to know that it were not in your power to receive me.

Your most obliged and affectionate sister,
S. VERNON.

II

Lady Susan Vernon to Mrs. Johnson

LANGFORD

You were mistaken, my dear Alicia, in supposing me fixed at this place for the rest of the winter: it grieves me to say how greatly you were mistaken, for I have seldom spent three months more agreeably than those which have just flown away. At present, nothing goes smoothly; the females of the family are united against me. You foretold how it would be when

LADY SUSAN

I first came to Langford, and Mainwaring is so uncommonly pleasing that I was not without apprehensions for myself. I remember saying to myself, as I drove to the house, "I like this man, pray Heaven no harm come of it!" But I was determined to be discreet, to bear in mind my being only four months a widow, and to be as quiet as possible: and I have been so, my dear creature; I have admitted no one's attentions but Mainwaring's. I have avoided all general flirtation whatever; I have distinguished no creature besides, of all the numbers resorting hither, except Sir James Martin, on whom I bestowed a little notice, in order to detach him from Miss Mainwaring; but if the world could know my motive there they would honour me. I have been called an unkind mother, but it was the sacred impulse of maternal affection, it was the advantage of my daughter that led me on; and if that daughter were not the greatest simpleton on earth, I might have been rewarded for my exertions as I ought.

Sir James did make proposals to me for Frederica; but Frederica, who was born to be the torment of my life, chose to set herself so violently against the match that I thought it better to lay aside the scheme for the present. I have more than once repented that I did not marry him myself; and were he but one degree less contempti-

LADY SUSAN

bly weak, I certainly should: but I must own myself rather romantic in that respect, and that riches only will not satisfy me. The event of all this is very provoking: Sir James is gone, Maria highly incensed, and Mrs. Mainwaring insupportably jealous; so jealous, in short, and so enraged against me, that, in the fury of her temper, I should not be surprised at her appealing to her guardian, if she had the liberty of addressing him: but there your husband stands my friend; and the kindest, most amiable action of his life was his throwing her off forever on her marriage. Keep up his resentment, therefore, I charge you. We are now in a sad state; no house was ever more altered: the whole party are at war, and Mainwaring scarcely dares speak to me. It is time for me to be gone: I have therefore determined on leaving them, and shall spend, I hope, a comfortable day with you in town within this week. If I am as little in favour with Mr. Johnson as ever, you must come to me at 10 Wigmore Street; but I hope this may not be the case, for as Mr. Johnson, with all his faults, is a man to whom that great word "respectable" is always given, and I am known to be so intimate with his wife, his slighting me has an awkward look.

I take London in my way to that insupportable spot, a country village; for I am really go-

LADY SUSAN

ing to Churchhill. Forgive me, my dear friend, it is my last resource. Were there another place in England open to me, I would prefer it. Charles Vernon is my aversion, and I am afraid of his wife. At Churchhill, however, I must remain till I have something better in view. My young lady accompanies me to town, where I shall deposit her under the care of Miss Summers, in Wigmore Street, till she becomes a little more reasonable. She will make good connections there, as the girls are all of the best families. The price is immense, and much beyond what I can ever attempt to pay.

Adieu, I will send you a line as soon as I arrive in town.

Yours ever,

S. VERNON.

III

Mrs. Vernon to Lady De Courcy

CHURCHHILL.

MY DEAR MOTHER,—I am very sorry to tell you that it will not be in our power to keep our promise of spending our Christmas with you; and we were prevented that happiness by a circumstance which is not likely to make us any amends. Lady Susan, in a letter to her brother-in-law, has declared her intention of visiting us

LADY SUSAN

almost immediately; and as such a visit is in all probability merely an affair of convenience, it is impossible to conjecture its length. I was by no means prepared for such an event, nor can I now account for her ladyship's conduct; Langford appeared so exactly the place for her in every respect, as well from the elegant and expensive style of living there, as from her particular attachment to Mr. Mainwaring, that I was very far from expecting so speedy a distinction, though I always imagined from her increasing friendship for us since her husband's death that we should, at some future period, be obliged to receive her. Mr. Vernon, I think, was a great deal too kind to her when he was in Staffordshire; her behaviour to him, independent of her general character, has been so inexcusably artful and ungenerous since our marriage was first in agitation that no one less amiable and mild than himself could have overlooked it all; and though, as his brother's widow, and in narrow circumstances, it was proper to render her pecuniary assistance, I cannot help thinking his pressing invitation to her to visit us at Churchhill perfectly unnecessary. Disposed, however, as he always is to think the best of every one, her display of grief, and professions of regret, and general resolutions of prudence were sufficient to soften his heart, and make him really confide in her

LADY SUSAN

sincerity; but as for myself, I am still unconvinced, and plausibly as her ladyship has now written, I cannot make up my mind till I better understand her real meaning in coming to us. You may guess, therefore, my dear madam, with what feelings I look forward to her arrival. She will have occasion for all those attractive powers for which she is celebrated to gain any share of my regard; and I shall certainly endeavour to guard myself against their influence, if not accompanied by something more substantial. She expresses a most eager desire of being acquainted with me, and makes very gracious mention of my children, but I am not quite weak enough to suppose a woman who has behaved with inattention, if not with unkindness to her own child, should be attached to any of mine. Miss Vernon is to be placed at a school in London before her mother comes to us, which I am glad of, for her sake and my own. It must be to her advantage to be separated from her mother, and a girl of sixteen who has received so wretched an education could not be a very desirable companion here. Reginald has long wished, I know, to see the captivating Lady Susan, and we shall depend on his joining our party soon. I am glad to hear that my father continues so well; and am, with best love, etc.,

CATHERINE VERNON.

LADY SUSAN

IV

Mr. De Courcy to Mrs. Vernon

PARKLANDS.

MY DEAR SISTER,—I congratulate you and Mr. Vernon on being about to receive into your family the most accomplished coquette in England. As a very distinguished flirt I have always been taught to consider her, but it has lately fallen in my way to hear some particulars of her conduct at Langford, which prove that she does not confine herself to that sort of honest flirtation which satisfies most people, but aspires to the more delicious gratification of making a whole family miserable. By her behaviour to Mr. Mainwaring she gave jealousy and wretchedness to his wife, and by her attentions to a young man previously attached to Mr. Mainwaring's sister deprived an amiable girl of her lover.

I learnt all this from Mr. Smith, now in this neighbourhood (I have dined with him, at Hurst and Wilford), who is just come from Langford, where he was a fortnight with her ladyship, and who is therefore well qualified to make the communication.

What a woman she must be! I long to see her, and shall certainly accept your kind invita-

LADY SUSAN

tion, that I may form some idea of those bewitching powers which can do so much—engaging at the same time, and in the same house, the affections of two men, who were neither of them at liberty to bestow them—and all this without the charm of youth! I am glad to find Miss Vernon does not accompany her mother to Churchhill, as she has not even manners to recommend her; and according to Mr. Smith's account, is equally dull and proud. Where pride and stupidity unite there can be no dissimulation worthy notice, and Miss Vernon shall be consigned to unrelenting contempt; but by all that I can gather Lady Susan possesses a degree of captivating deceit which it must be pleasing to witness and detect. I shall be with you very soon, and am ever

Your affectionate brother,

R. DE COURCY.

V

Lady Susan Vernon to Mrs. Johnson

CHURCHHILL.

I RECEIVED your note, my dear Alicia, just before I left town, and rejoice to be assured that Mr. Johnson suspected nothing of your engagement the evening before. It is undoubtedly better to deceive him entirely, and since he will be

LADY SUSAN

stubborn he must be tricked. I arrived here in safety, and have no reason to complain of my reception from Mr. Vernon; but I confess myself not equally satisfied with the behaviour of his lady. She is perfectly well-bred, indeed, and has the air of a woman of fashion, but her manners are not such as can persuade me of her being prepossessed in my favour. I wanted her to be delighted at seeing me. I was as amiable as possible on the occasion, but all in vain. She does not like me. To be sure, when we consider that I did take some pains to prevent my brother-in-law's marrying her, this want of cordiality is not very surprising, and yet it shows an illiberal and vindictive spirit to resent a project which influenced me six years ago, and which never succeeded at last.

I am sometimes disposed to repent that I did not let Charles buy Vernon Castle, when we were obliged to sell it; but it was a trying circumstance, especially as the sale took place exactly at the time of his marriage; and everybody ought to respect the delicacy of those feelings which could not endure that my husband's dignity should be lessened by his younger brother's having possession of the family estate. Could matters have been so arranged as to prevent the necessity of our leaving the castle, could we have lived with Charles and kept him single, I should

LADY SUSAN

have been very far from persuading my husband to dispose of it elsewhere; but Charles was on the point of marrying Miss De Courcy, and the event has justified me. Here are children in abundance, and what benefit could have accrued to me from his purchasing Vernon? My having prevented it may perhaps have given his wife an unfavourable impression; but where there is a disposition to dislike, a motive will never be wanting; and as to money matters it has not withheld him from being very useful to me. I really have a regard for him, he is so easily imposed upon! The house is a good one, the furniture fashionable, and everything announces plenty and elegance. Charles is very rich, I am sure; when a man has once got his name in a banking-house, he rolls in money; but they do not know what to do with it, keep very little company, and never go to London but on business. We shall be as stupid as possible. I mean to win my sister-in-law's heart through the children; I know all their names already, and am going to attach myself with the greatest sensibility to one in particular, a young Frederic, whom I take on my lap and sigh over for his dear uncle's sake.

Poor Mainwaring! I need not tell you how much I miss him, how perpetually he is in my thoughts. I found a dismal letter from him on

LADY SUSAN

my arrival here, full of complaints of his wife and sister, and lamentations on the cruelty of his fate. I passed off the letter as his wife's, to the Vernons, and when I write to him it must be under cover to you.

Ever yours, S. VERNON.

VI

Mrs. Vernon to Mr. De Courcy

CHURCHHILL.

WELL, my dear Reginald, I have seen this dangerous creature, and must give you some description of her, though I hope you will soon be able to form your own judgment. She is really excessively pretty; however you may chuse to question the allurements of a lady no longer young, I must, for my own part, declare that I have seldom seen so lovely a woman as Lady Susan. She is delicately fair, with fine grey eyes and dark eyelashes; and from her appearance one would not suppose her more than five and twenty, though she must in fact be ten years older. I was certainly not disposed to admire her, though always hearing she was beautiful; but I cannot help feeling that she possesses an uncommon union of symmetry, brilliancy, and grace. Her address to me was so gentle, frank,

LADY SUSAN

and even affectionate, that, if I had not known how much she has always disliked me for marrying Mr. Vernon, and that we had never met before, I should have imagined her an attached friend. One is apt, I believe, to connect assurance of manner with coquetry, and to expect that an impudent address will naturally attend an impudent mind; at least I was myself prepared for an improper degree of confidence in Lady Susan; but her countenance is absolutely sweet, and her voice and manner winningly mild. I am sorry it is so, for what is this but deceit? Unfortunately, one knows her too well. She is clever and agreeable, has all that knowledge of the world which makes conversation easy, and talks very well with a happy command of language, which is too often used, I believe, to make black appear white. She has already almost persuaded me of her being warmly attached to her daughter, though I have been so long convinced to the contrary. She speaks of her with so much tenderness and anxiety, lamenting so bitterly the neglect of her education, which she represents however as wholly unavoidable, that I am forced to recollect how many successive springs her ladyship spent in town, while her daughter was left in Staffordshire to the care of servants, or a governess very little better, to prevent my believing what she says.

LADY SUSAN

If her manners have so great an influence on my resentful heart, you may judge how much more strongly they operate on Mr. Vernon's generous temper. I wish I could be as well satisfied as he is, that it was really her choice to leave Langford for Churchhill; and if she had not stayed there for months before she discovered that her friend's manner of living did not suit her situation or feelings, I might have believed that concern for the loss of such a husband as Mr. Vernon, to whom her own behaviour was far from unexceptionable, might for a time make her wish for retirement. But I cannot forget the length of her visit to the Mainwarings; and when I reflect on the different mode of life which she led with them from that to which she must now submit, I can only suppose that the wish of establishing her reputation by following though late the path of propriety, occasioned her removal from a family where she must in reality have been particularly happy. Your friend Mr. Smith's story, however, cannot be quite correct, as she corresponds regularly with Mrs. Mainwaring. At any rate it must be exaggerated. It is scarcely possible that two men should be so grossly deceived by her at once.

Yours, etc.,

CATHERINE VERNON.

LADY SUSAN

VII

Lady Susan Vernon to Mrs. Johnson

CHURCHHILL.

MY DEAR ALICIA,—You are very good in taking notice of Frederica, and I am grateful for it as a mark of your friendship; but as I cannot have any doubt of the warmth of your affection, I am far from exacting so heavy a sacrifice. She is a stupid girl, and has nothing to recommend her. I would not, therefore, on my account have you encumber one moment of your precious time by sending for her to Edward Street, especially as every visit is so much deducted from the grand affair of education, which I really wish to have attended to while she remains at Miss Summers'. I want her to play and sing with some portion of taste and a good deal of assurance, as she has my hand and arm and a tolerable voice. I was so much indulged in my infant years that I was never obliged to attend to anything, and consequently am without the accomplishments which are now necessary to finish a pretty woman. Not that I am an advocate for the prevailing fashion of acquiring a perfect knowledge of all languages, arts, and sciences. It is throwing time away to be mistress of French, Italian, and German: music, singing,

LADY SUSAN

and drawing, etc., will gain a woman some applause, but will not add one lover to her list—grace and manner, after all, are of the greatest importance. I do not mean, therefore, that Frederica's acquirements should be more than superficial, and I flatter myself that she will not remain long enough at school to understand anything thoroughly. I hope to see her the wife of Sir James within a twelvemonth. You know on what I ground my hope, and it is certainly a good foundation, for school must be very humiliating to a girl of Frederica's age. And by the by, you had better not invite her any more on that account, as I wish her to find her situation as unpleasant as possible. I am sure of Sir James at any time, and could make him renew his application by a line. I shall trouble you meanwhile to prevent his forming any other attachment when he comes to town. Ask him to your house occasionally, and talk to him of Frederica, that he may not forget her. Upon the whole, I commend my own conduct in this affair extremely, and regard it as a very happy instance of circumspection and tenderness. Some mothers would have insisted on their daughter's accepting so good an offer on the first overture; but I could not reconcile it to myself to force Frederica into a marriage from which her heart revolted, and instead of adopting so harsh a

LADY SUSAN

measure merely propose to make it her own choice, by rendering her thoroughly uncomfortable till she does accept him—But enough of this tiresome girl. You may well wonder how I contrive to pass my time here, and for the first week it was insufferably dull. Now, however, we begin to mend; our party is enlarged by Mrs. Vernon's brother, a handsome young man, who promises me some amusement. There is something about him which rather interests me, a sort of sauciness and familiarity which I shall teach him to correct. He is lively, and seems clever; and when I have inspired him with greater respect for me than his sister's kind offices have implanted, he may be an agreeable flirt. There is exquisite pleasure in subduing an insolent spirit, in making a person predetermined to dislike, acknowledge one's superiority. I have disconcerted him already by my calm reserve, and it shall be my endeavour to humble the pride of these self-important De Courcys still lower, to convince Mrs. Vernon that her sisterly cautions have been bestowed in vain, and to persuade Reginald that she has scandalously belied me. This project will serve at least to amuse me, and prevent my feeling so acutely this dreadful separation from you and all whom I love.

Yours ever,

S. VERNON.

LADY SUSAN

VIII

Mrs. Vernon to Lady De Courcy.

CHURCHHILL.

MY DEAR MOTHER,—You must not expect Reginald back again for some time. He desires me to tell you that the present open weather induced him to accept Mr. Vernon's invitation to prolong his stay in Sussex, that they may have some hunting together. He means to send for his horses immediately, and it is impossible to say when you may see him in Kent. I will not disguise my sentiments on this change from you, my dear mother, though I think you had better not communicate them to my father, whose excessive anxiety about Reginald would subject him to an alarm which might seriously affect his health and spirits. Lady Susan has certainly contrived, in the space of a fortnight, to make my brother like her. In short I am persuaded that his continuing here beyond the time originally fixed for his return is occasioned as much by a degree of fascination towards her, as by the wish of hunting with Mr. Vernon, and of course I cannot receive that pleasure from the length of his visit which my brother's company would otherwise give me. I am, indeed, provoked at the artifice of this unprincipled woman;

LADY SUSAN

what stronger proof of her dangerous abilities can be given than this perversion of Reginald's judgment, which when he entered the house was so decidedly against her? In his last letter he actually gave me some particulars of her behaviour at Langford, such as he received from a gentleman who knew her perfectly well, which, if true, must raise abhorrence against her, and which Reginald himself was entirely disposed to credit. His opinion of her, I am sure, was as low as of any woman in England; and when he first came it was evident that he considered her as one entitled neither to delicacy nor respect, and that he felt she would be delighted with the attentions of any man inclined to flirt with her. Her behaviour, I confess, has been calculated to do away with such an idea; I have not detected the smallest impropriety in it—nothing of vanity, of pretension, of levity; and she is altogether so attractive that I should not wonder at his being delighted with her, had he known nothing of her previous to this personal acquaintance; but against reason, against conviction, to be so well pleased with her, as I am sure he is, does really astonish me. His admiration was at first very strong, but no more than was natural, and I did not wonder at his being much struck by the gentleness and delicacy of her manners; but when he has mentioned her of late

LADY SUSAN

it has been in terms of more extraordinary praise; and yesterday he actually said that he could not be surprised at any effect produced on the heart of man by such loveliness and such abilities; and when I lamented, in reply, the badness of her disposition, he observed that whatever might have been her errors they were to be imputed to her neglected education and early marriage, and that she was altogether a wonderful woman. This tendency to excuse her conduct, or to forget it, in the warmth of admiration, vexes me; and if I did not know that Reginald is too much at home at Churchhill to need an invitation for lengthening his visit, I should regret Mr. Vernon's giving him any. Lady Susan's intentions are of course those of absolute coquetry, or a desire of universal admiration; I cannot for a moment imagine that she has anything more serious in view; but it mortifies me to see a young man of Reginald's sense duped by her at all. I am, etc.,

CATHERINE VERNON.

IX

Mrs. Johnson to Lady S. Vernon

EDWARD STREET.

MY DEAREST FRIEND,—I congratulate you on Mr. De Courcy's arrival, and I advise you by all

LADY SUSAN

means to marry him; his father's estate is, we know, considerable, and I believe certainly entailed. Sir Reginald is very infirm, and not likely to stand in your way long. I hear the young man well spoken of; and though no one can really deserve you, my dearest Susan, Mr. De Courcy may be worth having. Mainwaring will storm of course, but you may easily pacify him; besides, the most scrupulous point of honour could not require you to wait for *his* emancipation. I have seen Sir James; he came to town for a few days last week, and called several times in Edward Street. I talked to him about you and your daughter, and he is so far from having forgotten you that I am sure he would marry either of you with pleasure. I gave him hopes of Frederica's relenting, and told him a great deal of her improvements. I scolded him for making love to Maria Mainwaring; he protested that he had been only in joke, and we both laughed heartily at her disappointment; and, in short, were very agreeable. He is as silly as ever.

Yours faithfully, ALICIA.

LADY SUSAN

X

Lady Susan Vernon to Mrs. Johnson

CHURCHHILL.

I AM much obliged to you, my dear friend, for your advice respecting Mr. De Courcy, which I know was given with the full conviction of its expediency, though I am not quite determined on following it. I cannot easily resolve on anything so serious as marriage; especially as I am not at present in want of money, and might perhaps, till the old gentleman's death, be very little benefited by the match. It is true that I am vain enough to believe it within my reach. I have made him sensible of my power, and can now enjoy the pleasure of triumphing over a mind prepared to dislike me, and prejudiced against all my past actions. His sister, too, is, I hope, convinced how little the ungenerous representations of any one to the disadvantage of another will avail when opposed by the immediate influence of intellect and manner. I see plainly that she is uneasy at my progress in the good opinion of her brother, and conclude that nothing will be wanting on her part to counteract me; but having once made him doubt the justice of her opinion of me, I think I may defy her. It has been delightful to me to watch his ad-

LADY SUSAN

vances towards intimacy, especially to observe his altered manner in consequence of my repressing by the cool dignity of my deportment his insolent approach to direct familiarity. My conduct has been equally guarded from the first, and I never behaved less like a coquette in the whole course of my life, though perhaps my desire of dominion was never more decided. I have subdued him entirely by sentiment and serious conversation, and made him, I may venture to say, at least half in love with me, without the semblance of the most commonplace flirtation. Mrs. Vernon's consciousness of deserving every sort of revenge that it can be in my power to inflict for her ill-offices could alone enable her to perceive that I am actuated by any design in behaviour so gentle and unpretending: Let her think and act as she chooses, however. I have never yet found that the advice of a sister could prevent a young man's being in love if he chose. We are advancing now to some kind of confidence, and in short are likely to be engaged in a sort of platonic friendship. On my side you may be sure of its never being more, for if I were not attached to another person as much as I can be to any one, I should make a point of not bestowing my affection on a man who had dared to think so meanly of me. Reginald has a good figure, and is not unworthy the praise you

LADY SUSAN

have heard given him, but is still greatly inferior to our friend at Langford. He is less polished, less insinuating than Mainwaring, and is comparatively deficient in the power of saying those delightful things which put one in good humour with oneself and all the world. He is quite agreeable enough, however, to afford me amusement, and to make many of those hours pass very pleasantly which would otherwise be spent in endeavouring to overcome my sister-in-law's reserve, and listening to the insipid talk of her husband. Your account of Sir James is most satisfactory, and I mean to give Miss Frederica a hint of my intentions very soon.

Yours, etc.,

S. VERNON.

XI

Mrs. Vernon to Lady De Courcy

CHURCHHILL.

I REALLY grow quite uneasy, my dearest mother, about Reginald, from witnessing the very rapid increase of Lady Susan's influence. They are now on terms of the most particular friendship, frequently engaged in long conversations together; and she has contrived by the most artful coquetry to subdue his judgment to her own purposes. It is impossible to see the in-

LADY SUSAN

timacy between them so very soon established without some alarm, though I can hardly suppose that Lady Susan's plans extend to marriage. I wish you could get Reginald home again on any plausible pretence; he is not at all disposed to leave us, and I have given him as many hints of my father's precarious state of health as common decency will allow me to do in my own house. Her power over him must now be boundless, as she has entirely effaced all his former ill-opinion, and persuaded him not merely to forget but to justify her conduct. Mr. Smith's account of her proceedings at Langford, where he accused her of having made Mr. Mainwaring and a young man engaged to Miss Mainwaring distractedly in love with her, which Reginald firmly believed when he came here, is now, he is persuaded, only a scandalous invention. He has told me so with a warmth of manner which spoke his regret at having believed the contrary himself. How sincerely do I grieve that she ever entered this house! I always looked forward to her coming with uneasiness; but very far was it from originating in anxiety for Reginald. I expected a most disagreeable companion for myself, but could not imagine that my brother would be in the smallest danger of being captivated by a woman with whose principles he was so well acquainted, and whose

LADY SUSAN

character he so heartily despised. If you can get him away, it will be a good thing.

Yours, etc.,

CATHERINE VERNON.

XII

Sir Reginald de Courcy to his Son

PARKLANDS.

I KNOW that young men in general do not admit of any inquiry even from their nearest relations into affairs of the heart, but I hope, my dear Reginald, that you will be superior to such as allow nothing for a father's anxiety, and think themselves privileged to refuse him their confidence and slight his advice. You must be sensible that as an only son, and the representative of an ancient family, your conduct in life is most interesting to your connections; and in the very important concern of marriage especially, there is everything at stake—your own happiness, that of your parents, and the credit of your name. I do not suppose that you would deliberately form an absolute engagement of that nature without acquainting your mother and myself, or at least without being convinced that we should approve of your choice; but I cannot help fearing that you may be drawn in, by the

LADY SUSAN

lady who has lately attached you, to a marriage which the whole of your family, far and near, must highly reprobate. Lady Susan's age is itself a material objection, but her want of character is one so much more serious that the difference of even twelve years becomes in comparison of small amount. Were you not blinded by a sort of fascination, it would be ridiculous in me to repeat the instances of great misconduct on her side so very generally known.

Her neglect of her husband, her encouragement of other men, her extravagance and dissipation, were so gross and notorious that no one could be ignorant of them at the time, nor can now have forgotten them. To our family she has always been represented in softened colours by the benevolence of Mr. Charles Vernon, and yet, in spite of his generous endeavours to excuse her, we know that she did, from the most selfish motives, take all possible pains to prevent his marriage with Catherine.

My years and increasing infirmities make me very desirous of seeing you settled in the world. To the fortune of a wife, the goodness of my own will make me indifferent, but her family and character must be equally unexceptionable. When your choice is fixed so that no objection can be made to it, then I can promise you a ready and cheerful consent; but it is my duty to oppose

LADY SUSAN

a match which deep art only could render possible, and must in the end make wretched. It is possible her behaviour may arise only from vanity, or the wish of gaining the admiration of a man whom she must imagine to be particularly prejudiced against her; but it is more likely that she should aim at something further. She is poor, and may naturally seek an alliance which must be advantageous to herself; you know your own rights, and that it is out of my power to prevent your inheriting the family estate. My ability of distressing you during my life would be a species of revenge to which I could hardly stoop under any circumstances.

I honestly tell you my sentiments and intentions: I do not wish to work on your fears, but on your sense and affection. It would destroy every comfort of my life to know that you were married to Lady Susan Vernon: it would be the death of that honest pride with which I have hitherto considered my son; I should blush to see him, to hear of him, to think of him. I may perhaps do no good but that of relieving my own mind by this letter, but I felt it my duty to tell you that your partiality for Lady Susan is no secret to your friends, and to warn you against her. I should be glad to hear your reasons for disbelieving Mr. Smith's intelligence; you had no doubt of its authenticity a month

LADY SUSAN

ago. If you can give me your assurance of having no design beyond enjoying the conversation of a clever woman for a short period, and of yielding admiration only to her beauty and abilities, without being blinded by them to her faults, you will restore me to happiness; but if you cannot do this, explain to me, at least, what has occasioned so great an alteration in your opinion of her.

I am, etc., etc.,

REGINALD DE COURCY.

XIII

Lady De Courcy to Mrs. Vernon

PARKLANDS.

MY DEAR CATHERINE,—Unluckily I was confined to my room when your last letter came, by a cold which affected my eyes so much as to prevent my reading it myself, so I could not refuse your father when he offered to read it to me, by which means he became acquainted, to my great vexation, with all your fears about your brother. I had intended to write to Reginald myself as soon as my eyes would let me, to point out as well as I could the danger of an intimate acquaintance with so artful a woman as Lady Susan, to a young man of his age and high

LADY SUSAN

expectations. I meant, moreover, to have reminded him of our being quite alone now, and very much in need of him to keep up our spirits these long winter evenings. Whether it would have done any good can never be settled now, but I am excessively vexed that Sir Reginald should know anything of the matter which we foresaw would make him so uneasy. He caught all your fears the moment he had read your letter, and I am sure he has not had the business out of his head since. He wrote by the same post to Reginald a long letter full of it all, and particularly asking an explanation of what he may have heard from Lady Susan to contradict the late shocking reports. His answer came this morning, which I shall enclose to you, as I think you will like to see it. I wish it was more satisfactory; but it seems written with such a determination to think well of Lady Susan, that his assurances as to marriage, etc., do not set my heart at ease. I say all I can, however, to satisfy your father, and he is certainly less uneasy since Reginald's letter. How provoking it is, my dear Catherine, that this unwelcome guest of yours should not only prevent our meeting this Christmas, but be the occasion of so much vexation and trouble! Kiss the dear children for me.

Your affectionate mother,

C. DE COURCY.

LADY SUSAN

XIV

Mr. De Courcy to Sir Reginald

CHURCHILL.

MY DEAR SIR,—I have this moment received your letter, which has given me more astonishment than I ever felt before. I am to thank my sister, I suppose, for having represented me in such a light as to injure me in your opinion, and give you all this alarm. I know not why she should choose to make herself and her family uneasy by apprehending an event which no one but herself, I can affirm, would ever have thought possible. To impute such a design to Lady Susan would be taking from her every claim to that excellent understanding which her bitterest enemies have never denied her; and equally low must sink my pretensions to common sense if I am suspected of matrimonial views in my behaviour to her. Our difference of age must be an insuperable objection, and I entreat you, my dear father, to quiet your mind, and no longer harbour a suspicion which cannot be more injurious to your own peace than to our understandings. I can have no other view in remaining with Lady Susan, than to enjoy for a short time (as you have yourself expressed it) the conversation of a woman of high intellectual

LADY SUSAN

powers. If Mrs. Vernon would allow something to my affection for herself and her husband in the length of my visit, she would do more justice to us all; but my sister is unhappily prejudiced beyond the hope of conviction against Lady Susan. From an attachment to her husband, which in itself does honour to both, she cannot forgive the endeavours at preventing their union, which have been attributed to selfishness in Lady Susan; but in this case, as well as in many others, the world has most grossly injured that lady, by supposing the worst where the motives of her conduct have been doubtful. Lady Susan had heard something so materially to the disadvantage of my sister as to persuade her that the happiness of Mr. Vernon, to whom she was always much attached, would be wholly destroyed by the marriage. And this circumstance, while it explains the true motives of Lady Susan's conduct, and removes all the blame which has been so lavished on her, may also convince us how little the general report of any one ought to be credited; since no character, however upright, can escape the malevolence of slander. If my sister, in the security of retirement, with as little opportunity as inclination to do evil, could not avoid censure, we must not rashly condemn those who, living in the world and surrounded with temptations, should be accused of errors

LADY SUSAN

which they are known to have the power of committing.

I blame myself severely for having so easily believed the slanderous tales invented by Charles Smith to the prejudice of Lady Susan, as I am now convinced how greatly they have traduced her. As to Mrs. Mainwaring's jealousy it was totally his own invention, and his account of her attaching Miss Mainwaring's lover was scarcely better founded. Sir James Martin had been drawn in by that young lady to pay her some attention; and as he is a man of fortune, it was easy to see her views extended to marriage. It is well known that Miss M. is absolutely on the catch for a husband, and no one therefore can pity her for losing, by the superior attractions of another woman, the chance of being able to make a worthy man completely wretched. Lady Susan was far from intending such a conquest, and on finding how warmly Miss Mainwaring resented her lover's defection, determined, in spite of Mr. and Mrs. Mainwaring's most urgent entreaties, to leave the family. I have reason to imagine she did receive serious proposals from Sir James, but her removing to Langford immediately on the discovery of his attachment, must acquit her on that article with any mind of common candour. You will, I am sure, my dear Sir, feel the truth of this, and will

LADY SUSAN

hereby learn to do justice to the character of a very injured woman. I know that Lady Susan in coming to Churchhill was governed only by the most honourable and amiable intentions; her prudence and economy are exemplary, her regard for Mr. Vernon equal even to *his* deserts; and her wish of obtaining my sister's good opinion merits a better return than it has received. As a mother she is unexceptionable; her solid affection for her child is shown by placing her in hands where her education will be properly attended to; but because she has not the blind and weak partiality of most mothers, she is accused of wanting maternal tenderness. Every person of sense, however, will know how to value and commend her well-directed affection, and will join me in wishing that Frederica Vernon may prove more worthy than she has yet done of her mother's tender care. I have now, my dear father, written my real sentiments of Lady Susan; you will know from this letter how highly I admire her abilities, and esteem her character; but if you are not equally convinced by my full and solemn assurance that your fears have been most idly created, you will deeply mortify and distress me.

I am, etc., etc.,

R. DE COURCY.

LADY SUSAN

XV.

Mrs. Vernon to Lady De Courcy

CHURCHHILL.

MY DEAR MOTHER,—I return you Reginald's letter, and rejoice with all my heart that my father is made easy by it: tell him so, with my congratulations; but between ourselves, I must own it has only convinced me of my brother's having no present intention of marrying Lady Susan, not that he is in no danger of doing so three months hence. He gives a very plausible account of her behaviour at Langford; I wish it may be true, but his intelligence must come from herself, and I am less disposed to believe it than to lament the degree of intimacy subsisting between them implied by the discussion of such a subject. I am sorry to have incurred his displeasure, but can expect nothing better while he is so very eager in Lady Susan's justification. He is very severe against me indeed, and yet I hope I have not been hasty in my judgment of her. Poor woman! though I have reasons enough for my dislike, I cannot help pitying her at present, as she is in real distress, and with too much cause. She had this morning a letter from the lady with whom she has placed her daughter, to request that Miss Vernon might be

LADY SUSAN

immediately removed, as she had been detected in an attempt to run away. Why, or whither she intended to go, does not appear; but as her situation seems to have been unexceptionable, it is a sad thing, and of course highly distressing to Lady Susan. Frederica must be as much as sixteen, and ought to know better; but from what her mother insinuates, I am afraid she is a perverse girl. She has been sadly neglected, however, and her mother ought to remember it. Mr. Vernon set off for London as soon as she had determined what should be done. He is, if possible, to prevail on Miss Summers to let Frederica continue with her; and if he cannot succeed, to bring her to Churchhill for the present, till some other situation can be found for her. Her ladyship is comforting herself meanwhile by strolling along the shrubbery with Reginald, calling forth all his tender feelings, I suppose, on this distressing occasion. She has been talking a great deal about it to me. She talks vastly well; I am afraid of being ungenerous, or I should say too well to feel so very deeply; but I will not look for faults; she may be Reginald's wife! Heaven forbid it! but why should I be quicker-sighted than any one else? Mr. Vernon declares that he never saw deeper distress than hers, on the receipt of the letter; and is his judgment inferior to mine? She was

LADY SUSAN

very unwilling that Frederica should be allowed to come to Churchhill, and justly enough, as it seems a sort of reward to behaviour deserving very differently; but it was impossible to take her anywhere else, and she is not to remain here long. "It will be absolutely necessary," said she, "as you, my dear sister, must be sensible, to treat my daughter with some severity while she is here; a most painful necessity, but I will endeavour to submit to it. I am afraid I have often been too indulgent, but my poor Frederica's temper could never bear opposition well: you must support and encourage me; you must urge the necessity of reproof if you see me too lenient." All this sounds very reasonably. Reginald is so incensed against the poor silly girl! Surely it is not to Lady Susan's credit that he should be so bitter against her daughter; his idea of her must be drawn from the mother's description. Well, whatever may be his fate, we have the comfort of knowing that we have done our utmost to save him. We must commit the event to a higher power.

Yours ever, etc.

CATHERINE VERNON.

LADY SUSAN

XVI

Lady Susan to Mrs. Johnson

CHURCHHILL.

NEVER, my dearest Alicia, was I so provoked in my life as by a letter this morning from Miss Summers. That horrid girl of mine has been trying to run away. I had not a notion of her being such a little devil before, she seemed to have all the Vernon milkiness; but on receiving the letter in which I declared my intention about Sir James, she actually attempted to elope; at least, I cannot otherwise account for her doing it. She meant, I suppose, to go to the Clarkes in Staffordshire, for she has no other acquaintances. But she shall be punished, she *shall* have him. I have sent Charles to town to make matters up if he can, for I do not by any means want her here. If Miss Summers will not keep her, you must find me out another school, unless we can get her married immediately. Miss S. writes word that she could not get the young lady to assign any cause for her extraordinary conduct, which confirms me in my own previous explanation of it. Frederica is too shy, I think, and too much in awe of me to tell tales; but if the mildness of her uncle should get anything out of her, I am not afraid. I trust I shall be

LADY SUSAN

able to make my story as good as hers. If I am vain of anything, it is of my eloquence. Consideration and esteem as surely follow command of language as admiration waits on beauty, and here I have opportunity enough for the exercise of my talent, as the chief of my time is spent in conversation.

Reginald is never easy unless we are by ourselves, and when the weather is tolerable, we pace the shrubbery for hours together. I like him on the whole very well; he is clever and has a good deal to say, but he is sometimes impertinent and troublesome. There is a sort of ridiculous delicacy about him which requires the fullest explanation of whatever he may have heard to my disadvantage, and is never satisfied till he thinks he has ascertained the beginning and end of everything. This is one sort of love, but I confess it does not particularly recommend itself to me. I infinitely prefer the tender and liberal spirit of Mainwaring, which, impressed with the deepest conviction of my merit, is satisfied that whatever I do must be right; and look with a degree of contempt on the inquisitive and doubtful fancies of that heart which seems always debating on the reasonableness of its emotions. Mainwaring is indeed, beyond all compare, superior to Reginald—superior in everything but the power of being with me! Poor fellow! he

LADY SUSAN

is much distracted by jealousy, which I am not sorry for, as I know no better support of love. He has been teasing me to allow of his coming into this country, and lodging somewhere near *incog.*; but I forbade everything of the kind. Those women are inexcusable who forget what is due to themselves, and the opinion of the world.

Yours ever,

S. VERNON.

XVII

Mrs. Vernon to Lady De Courcy

CHURCHHILL.

MY DEAR MOTHER,—Mr. Vernon returned on Thursday night, bringing his niece with him. Lady Susan had received a line from him by that day's post, informing her that Miss Summers had absolutely refused to allow of Miss Vernon's continuance in her academy; we were therefore prepared for her arrival, and expected them impatiently the whole evening. They came while we were at tea, and I never saw any creature look so frightened as Frederica when she entered the room. Lady Susan, who had been shedding tears before, and showing great agitation at the idea of the meeting, received her with perfect self-command, and without be-

LADY SUSAN

traying the least tenderness of spirit. She hardly spoke to her, and on Frederica's bursting into tears as soon as we were seated, took her out of the room, and did not return for some time. When she did, her eyes looked very red, and she was as much agitated as before. We saw no more of her daughter. Poor Reginald was beyond measure concerned to see his fair friend in such distress, and watched her with so much tender solicitude, that I, who occasionally caught her observing his countenance with exultation, was quite out of patience. This pathetic representation lasted the whole evening, and so ostentatious and artful a display has entirely convinced me that she did in fact feel nothing. I am more angry with her than ever since I have seen her daughter; the poor girl looks so unhappy that my heart aches for her. Lady Susan is surely too severe, for Frederica does not seem to have the sort of temper to make severity necessary. She looks perfectly timid, dejected, and penitent. She is very pretty, though not so handsome as her mother, nor at all like her. Her complexion is delicate, but neither so fair nor so blooming as Lady Susan's, and she has quite the Vernon cast of countenance, the oval face and mild dark eyes, and there is peculiar sweetness in her look when she speaks either to her uncle or me, for as we behave

LADY SUSAN

kindly to her we have of course engaged her gratitude.

Her mother has insinuated that her temper is intractable, but I never saw a face less indicative of any evil disposition than hers; and from what I can see of the behaviour of each to the other, the invariable severity of Lady Susan and the silent dejection of Frederica, I am led to believe as heretofore that the former has no real love for her daughter, and has never done her justice or treated her affectionately. I have not been able to have any conversation with my niece; she is shy, and I think I can see that some pains are taken to prevent her being much with me. Nothing satisfactory transpires as to her reason for running away. Her kind-hearted uncle, you may be sure, was too fearful of distressing her to ask many questions as they travelled. I wish it had been possible for me to fetch her instead of him. I think I should have discovered the truth in the course of a thirty-mile journey. The small pianoforte has been removed within these few days, at Lady Susan's request, into her dressing-room, and Frederica spends great part of the day there, practising, as it is called; but I seldom hear any noise when I pass that way; what she does with herself there I do not know. There are plenty of books, but it is not every girl who has been running wild

LADY SUSAN

the first fifteen years of her life, that can or will read. Poor creature! the prospect from her window is not very instructive, for that room overlooks the lawn, you know, with the shrubbery on one side, where she may see her mother walking for an hour together in earnest conversation with Reginald. A girl of Frederica's age must be childish indeed, if such things do not strike her. Is it not inexcusable to give such an example to a daughter? Yet Reginald still thinks Lady Susan the best of mothers, and still condemns Frederica as a worthless girl! He is convinced that her attempt to run away proceeded from no justifiable cause, and had no provocation. I am sure I cannot say that it had, but while Miss Summers declares that Miss Vernon showed no signs of obstinacy or perverseness during her whole stay in Wigmore Street, till she was detected in this scheme, I cannot so readily credit what Lady Susan has made him, and wants to make me believe, that it was merely an impatience of restraint and a desire of escaping from the tuition of masters which brought on the plan of an elopement. O Reginald, how is your judgment enslaved! He scarcely dares even allow her to be handsome, and when I speak of her beauty, replies only that her eyes have no brilliancy! Sometimes he is sure she is deficient in understanding, and at others that her temper

LADY SUSAN

only is in fault. In short, when a person is always to deceive, it is impossible to be consistent. Lady Susan finds it necessary that Frederica should be to blame, and probably has sometimes judged it expedient to excuse her of ill-nature and sometimes to lament her want of sense. Reginald is only repeating after her ladyship.

I remain, etc., etc.,

CATHERINE VERNON.

XVIII

. From the same to the same

CHURCHHILL.

MY DEAR MOTHER,—I am very glad to find that my description of Frederica Vernon has interested you, for I do believe her truly deserving of your regard; and when I have communicated a notion which has recently struck me, your kind impressions in her favour will, I am sure, be heightened. I cannot help fancying that she is growing partial to my brother. I so very often see her eyes fixed on his face with a remarkable expression of pensive admiration. He is certainly very handsome; and yet more, there is an openness in his manner that must be highly prepossessing, and I am sure she feels it so. Thoughtful and pensive in general, her counte-

LADY SUSAN

nance always brightens into a smile when Reginald says anything amusing; and, let the subject be ever so serious that he may be conversing on, I am much mistaken if a syllable of his uttering escapes her. I want to make him sensible of all this, for we know the power of gratitude on such a heart as his; and could Frederica's artless affection detach him from her mother, we might bless the day which brought her to Churchhill. I think, my dear mother, you would not disapprove of her as a daughter. She is extremely young, to be sure, has had a wretched education, and a dreadful example of levity in her mother; but yet I can pronounce her disposition to be excellent, and her natural abilities very good. Though totally without accomplishments, she is by no means so ignorant as one might expect to find her, being fond of books and spending the chief of her time in reading. Her mother leaves her more to herself than she did, and I have her with me as much as possible, and have taken great pains to overcome her timidity. We are very good friends, and though she never opens her lips before her mother, she talks enough when alone with me to make it clear that, if properly treated by Lady Susan, she would always appear to much greater advantage. There cannot be a more gentle, affectionate heart; or more obliging manners. when acting without re-

LADY SUSAN

straint; and her little cousins are all very fond of her.

Your affectionate daughter,
C. VERNON.

XIX

Lady Susan to Mrs. Johnson

CHURCHILL.

YOU will be eager, I know, to hear something further of Frederica, and perhaps may think me negligent for not writing before. She arrived with her uncle last Thursday fortnight, when, of course, I lost no time in demanding the cause of her behaviour; and soon found myself to have been perfectly right in attributing it to my own letter. The prospect of it frightened her so thoroughly that, with a mixture of true girlish perverseness and folly, she resolved on getting out of the house and proceeding directly by the stage to her friends, the Clarkes; and had really got as far as the length of two streets in her journey when she was fortunately missed, pursued, and overtaken. Such was the first distinguished exploit of Miss Frederica Vernon; and if we consider that it was achieved at the tender age of sixteen, we shall have room for the most flattering prognostics of her future renown. I am excessively provoked, however, at the parade

LADY SUSAN

of propriety which prevented Miss Summers from keeping the girl; and it seems so extraordinary a piece of nicety, considering my daughter's family connections, that I can only suppose the lady to be governed by the fear of never getting her money. Be that as it may, however, Frederica is returned on my hands; and having nothing else to employ her, is busy in pursuing the plan of romance begun at Langford. She is actually falling in love with Reginald de Courcy! To disobey her mother by refusing an unexceptionable offer is not enough; her affections must also be given without her mother's approbation. I never saw a girl of her age bid fairer to be the sport of mankind. Her feelings are tolerably acute, and she is so charmingly artless in their display as to afford the most reasonable hope of her being ridiculous, and despised by every man who sees her.

Artlessness will never do in love matters; and that girl is born a simpleton who has it either by nature or affectation. I am not yet certain that Reginald sees what she is about, nor is it of much consequence. She is now an object of indifference to him, and she would be one of contempt were he to understand her emotions. Her beauty is much admired by the Vernons, but it has no effect on him. She is in high favour with her aunt altogether, because she is so little like

LADY SUSAN

myself, of course. She is exactly the companion for Mrs. Vernon, who dearly loves to be first, and to have all the sense and all the wit of the conversation to herself: Frederica will never eclipse her. When she first came I was at some pains to prevent her seeing much of her aunt; but I have relaxed, as I believe I may depend on her observing the rules I have laid down for their discourse. But do not imagine that with all this lenity I have for a moment given up my plan of her marriage. No; I am unalterably fixed on this point, though I have not yet quite decided on the manner of bringing it about. I should not choose to have the business brought on here, and canvassed by the wise heads of Mr. and Mrs. Vernon; and I cannot just now afford to go to town. Miss Frederica must therefore wait a little.

Yours ever, S. VERNON.

XX

Mrs. Vernon to Lady De Courcy

CHURCHHILL.

We have a very unexpected guest with us at present, my dear mother: he arrived yesterday. I heard a carriage at the door, as I was sitting with my children while they dined; and suppos-

LADY SUSAN

ing I should be wanted, left the nursery soon afterwards, and was half-way downstairs, when Frederica, as pale as ashes, came running up, and rushed by me into her own room. I instantly followed, and asked her what was the matter. "Oh!" said she, "he is come—Sir James is come, and what shall I do!" This was no explanation; I begged her to tell me what she meant. At that moment we were interrupted by a knock at the door: it was Reginald, who came, by Lady Susan's direction, to call Frederica down. "It is Mr. De Courcy!" said she, colouring violently. "Mamma has sent for me; I must go." We all three went down together; and I saw my brother examining the terrified face of Frederica with surprise. In the breakfast-room we found Lady Susan, and a young man of gentlemanlike appearance, whom she introduced by the name of Sir James Martin—the very person, as you may remember, whom it was said she had been at pains to detach from Miss Mainwaring; but the conquest, it seems, was not designed for herself, or she has since transferred it to her daughter; for Sir James is now desperately in love with Frederica, and with full encouragement from mamma. The poor girl, however, I am sure, dislikes him; and though his person and address are very well, he appears, both to Mr. Vernon and me, a very

LADY SUSAN

weak young man. Frederica looked so shy, so confused, when we entered the room, that I felt for her exceedingly. Lady Susan behaved with great attention to her visitor; and yet I thought I could perceive that she had no particular pleasure in seeing him. Sir James talked a great deal, and made many civil excuses to me for the liberty he had taken in coming to Churchhill—mixing more frequent laughter with his discourse than the subject required—said many things over and over again, and told Lady Susan three times that he had seen Mrs. Johnson a few evenings before. He now and then addressed Frederica, but more frequently her mother. The poor girl sat all this time without opening her lips—her eyes cast down, and her colour varying every instant; while Reginald observed all that passed in perfect silence. At length Lady Susan, weary, I believe, of her situation, proposed walking; and we left the two gentlemen together, to put on our pelisses. As we went upstairs Lady Susan begged permission to attend me for a few moments in my dressing-room, as she was anxious to speak with me in private. I led her thither accordingly, and as soon as the door was closed, she said: “I was never more surprised in my life than by Sir James’s arrival, and the suddenness of it requires some apology to you, my dear sister; though to

LADY SUSAN

me, as a mother, it is highly flattering. He is so extremely attached to my daughter that he could not exist longer without seeing her. Sir James is a young man of an amiable disposition and excellent character; a little too much of the rattle, perhaps, but a year or two will rectify that: and he is in other respects so very eligible a match for Frederica, that I have always observed his attachment with the greatest pleasure; and am persuaded that you and my brother will give the alliance your hearty approbation. I have never before mentioned the likelihood of its taking place to any one, because I thought that whilst Frederica continued at school it had better not be known to exist; but now, as I am convinced that Frederica is too old ever to submit to school confinement, and have therefore begun to consider her union with Sir James as not very distant, I had intended within a few days to acquaint yourself and Mr. Vernon with the whole business. I am sure, my dear sister, you will excuse my remaining silent so long, and agree with me that such circumstances, while they continue from any cause in suspense, cannot be too cautiously concealed. When you have the happiness of bestowing your sweet little Catherine, some years hence, on a man who in connection and character is alike unexceptionable, you will know what I feel

LADY SUSAN

now; though, thank Heaven, you cannot have all my reasons for rejoicing in such an event. Catherine will be amply provided for, and not, like my Frederica, indebted to a fortunate establishment for the comforts of life." She concluded by demanding my congratulations. I gave them somewhat awkwardly, I believe; for, in fact, the sudden disclosure of so important a matter took from me the power of speaking with any clearness. She thanked me, however, most affectionately, for my kind concern in the welfare of herself and daughter; and then said: "I am not apt to deal in professions, my dear Mrs. Vernon, and I never had the convenient talent of affecting sensations foreign to my heart; and therefore I trust you will believe me when I declare that much as I had heard in your praise before I knew you, I had no idea that I should ever love you as I now do; and I must further say that your friendship towards me is more particularly gratifying because I have reason to believe that some attempts were made to prejudice you against me. I only wish that they, whoever they are to whom I am indebted for such kind intentions, could see the terms on which we now are together, and understand the real affection we feel for each other; but I will not detain you any longer. God bless you for your goodness to me and my girl, and

LADY SUSAN

continue to you all your present happiness." What can one say of such a woman, my dear mother? Such earnestness, such solemnity of expression! and yet I cannot help suspecting the truth of everything she says. As for Reginald, I believe he does not know what to make of the matter. When Sir James came, he appeared all astonishment and perplexity; the folly of the young man and the confusion of Frederica entirely engrossed him; and though a little private discourse with Lady Susan has since had its effect, he is still hurt, I am sure, at her allowing of such a man's attentions to her daughter. Sir James invited himself with great composure to remain here a few days—hoped we would not think it odd, was aware of its being very impertinent, but he took the liberty of a relation; and concluded by wishing, with a laugh, that he might be really one very soon. Even Lady Susan seemed a little disconcerted by this forwardness; in her heart I am persuaded she sincerely wished him gone. But something must be done for this poor girl, if her feelings are such as both I and her uncle believe them to be. She must not be sacrificed to policy or ambition, and she must not be left to suffer from the dread of it. The girl whose heart can distinguish Reginald de Courcy deserves, however he may slight her, a better fate than to be Sir

LADY SUSAN

James Martin's wife. As soon as I can get her alone, I will discover the real truth; but she seems to wish to avoid me. I hope this does not proceed from anything wrong, and that I shall not find out I have thought too well of her. Her behaviour to Sir James certainly speaks the greatest consciousness and embarrassment, but I see nothing in it more like encouragement. Adieu, my dear mother.

Yours, etc.

C. VERNON.

XXI

Miss Vernon to Mr. De Courcy

SIR,—I hope you will excuse this liberty; I am forced upon it by the greatest distress, or I should be ashamed to trouble you. I am very miserable about Sir James Martin, and have no other way in the world of helping myself but by writing to you, for I am forbidden even speaking to my uncle and aunt on the subject; and this being the case, I am afraid my applying to you will appear no better than equivocation, and as if I attended to the letter and not the spirit of mamma's commands. But if you do not take my part and persuade her to break it off, I shall be half distracted, for I cannot

LADY SUSAN

bear him. No human being but you could have any chance of prevailing with her. If you will, therefore, have the unspeakably great kindness of taking my part with her, and persuading her to send Sir James away, I shall be more obliged to you than it is possible for me to express. I always disliked him from the first: it is not a sudden fancy, I assure you, sir; I always thought him silly and impertinent and disagreeable, and now he is grown worse than ever. I would rather work for my bread than marry him. I do not know how to apologize enough for this letter; I know it is taking so great a liberty. I am aware how dreadfully angry it will make mamma, but I remember the risk.

I am, Sir, your most humble servant,
F. S. V.

XXII

Lady Susan to Mrs. Johnson

CHURCHHILL.

THIS is insufferable! My dearest friend, I was never so enraged before, and must relieve myself by writing to you, who I know will enter into all my feelings. Who should come on Tuesday but Sir James Martin! Guess my astonishment and vexation—for, as you well know, I never wished him to be seen at Churchhill.

LADY SUSAN

What a pity that you should not have known his intentions! Not content with coming, he actually invited himself to remain here a few days. I could have poisoned him! I made the best of it, however, and told my story with great success to Mrs. Vernon, who, whatever might be her real sentiments, said nothing in opposition to mine. I made a point also of Frederica's behaving civilly to Sir James, and gave her to understand that I was absolutely determined on her marrying him. She said something of her misery, but that was all. I have for some time been more particularly resolved on the match from seeing the rapid increase of her affection for Reginald, and from not feeling secure that a knowledge of such affection might not in the end awaken a return. Contemptible as a regard founded only on compassion must make them both in my eyes, I felt by no means assured that such might not be the consequence. It is true that Reginald had not in any degree grown cool towards me; but yet he has lately mentioned Frederica spontaneously and unnecessarily, and once said something in praise of her person. He was all astonishment at the appearance of my visitor, and at first observed Sir James with an attention which I was pleased to see not unmixed with jealousy; but unluckily it was impossible for me really to torment him, as Sir James, though

LADY SUSAN

extremely gallant to me, very soon made the whole party understand that his heart was devoted to my daughter. I had no great difficulty in convincing De Courcy, when we were alone, that I was perfectly justified, all things considered, in desiring the match; and the whole business seemed most comfortably arranged. They could none of them help perceiving that Sir James was no Solomon; but I had positively forbidden Frederica complaining to Charles Vernon or his wife, and they had therefore no pretence for interference; though my impertinent sister, I believe, wanted only opportunity for doing so. Everything, however, was going on calmly and quietly; and though I counted the hours of Sir James's stay, my mind was entirely satisfied with the posture of affairs. Guess, then, what I must feel at the sudden disturbance of all my schemes; and that, too, from a quarter where I had least reason to expect it. Reginald came this morning into my dressing-room with a very unusual solemnity of countenance, and after some preface informed me in so many words that he wished to reason with me on the impropriety and unkindness of allowing Sir James Martin to address my daughter contrary to her inclinations. I was all amazement. When I found that he was not to be laughed out of his design, I calmly begged

LADY SUSAN

an explanation, and desired to know by what he was impelled, and by whom commissioned to reprimand me. He then told me, mixing in his speech a few insolent compliments and ill-timed expressions of tenderness, to which I listened with perfect indifference, that my daughter had acquainted him with some circumstances concerning herself, Sir James, and me which had given him great uneasiness. In short, I found that she had in the first place actually written to him to request his interference, and that, on receiving her letter, he had conversed with her on the subject of it, in order to understand the particulars, and to assure himself of her real wishes. I have not a doubt but that the girl took this opportunity of making downright love to him. I am convinced of it by the manner in which he spoke of her. Much good may such love do him! I shall ever despise the man who can be gratified by the passion which he never wished to inspire, nor solicited the avowal of. I shall always detest them both. He can have no true regard for me, or he would not have listened to her; and she, with her little rebellious heart and indelicate feelings, to throw herself into the protection of a young man with whom she has scarcely ever exchanged two words before! I am equally confounded at her impudence and his credulity. How dared he believe

LADY SUSAN

what she told him in my disfavour! Ought he not to have felt assured that I must have unanswerable motives for all that I had done? Where was his reliance on my sense and goodness then? Where the resentment which true love would have dictated against the person defaming me, —that person, too, a chit, a child, without talent or education, whom he had been always taught to despise? I was calm for some time; but the greatest degree of forbearance may be overcome, and I hope I was afterwards sufficiently keen. He endeavoured, long endeavoured, to soften my resentment; but that woman is a fool indeed who, while insulted by accusation, can be worked on by compliments. At length he left me, as deeply provoked as myself; and he showed his anger more. I was quite cool, but he gave way to the most violent indignation; I may therefore expect it will the sooner subside, and perhaps his may be vanished forever, while mine will be found still fresh and implacable. He is now shut up in his apartment, whither I heard him go on leaving mine. How unpleasant, one would think, must be his reflections! but some people's feelings are incomprehensible. I have not yet tranquillised myself enough to see Frederica. She shall not soon forget the occurrences of this day; she shall find that she has poured forth her tender tale of love in vain, and

LADY SUSAN

exposed herself forever to the contempt of the whole world, and the severest resentment of her injured mother.

Your affectionate S. VERNON.

XXIII

Mrs. Vernon to Lady De Courcy

CHURCHILL.

LET me congratulate you, my dearest mother! The affair which has given us so much anxiety is drawing to a happy conclusion. Our prospect is most delightful; and since matters have now taken so favourable a turn, I am quite sorry that I ever imparted my apprehensions to you; for the pleasure of learning that the danger is over is perhaps dearly purchased by all that you have previously suffered. I am so much agitated by delight that I can scarcely hold a pen; but am determined to send you a few short lines by James, that you may have some explanation of what must so greatly astonish you as that Reginald should be returning to Parklands. I was sitting about half an hour ago with Sir James in the breakfast-parlour, when my brother called me out of the room. I instantly saw that something was the matter; his complexion was raised, and he spoke with great emotion; you know his eager manner, my dear mother, when his mind

LADY SUSAN

is interested. "Catherine," said he, "I am going home to-day; I am sorry to leave you, but I must go: it is a great while since I have seen my father and mother. I am going to send James forward with my hunters immediately; if you have any letter, therefore, he can take it. I shall not be at home myself till Wednesday or Thursday, as I shall go through London, where I have business; but before I leave you," he continued, speaking in a lower tone, and with still greater energy, "I must warn you of one thing,—do not let Frederica Vernon be made unhappy by that Martin. He wants to marry her; her mother promotes the match, but she cannot endure the idea of it. Be assured that I speak from the fullest conviction of the truth of what I say; I know that Frederica is made wretched by Sir James' continuing here. She is a sweet girl, and deserves a better fate. Send him away immediately; he is only a fool: but what her mother can mean, Heaven only knows! Good-bye," he added, shaking my hand with earnestness, "I do not know when you will see me again; but remember what I tell you of Frederica; you must make it your business to see justice done her. She is an amiable girl, and has a very superior mind to what we have given her credit for." He then left me, and ran upstairs. I would not try to stop him, for I know what his

LADY SUSAN

feelings must be. The nature of mine, as I listened to him, I need not attempt to describe; for a minute or two I remained in the same spot, overpowered by wonder of a most agreeable sort indeed; yet it required some consideration to be tranquilly happy. In about ten minutes after my return to the parlour Lady Susan entered the room. I concluded, of course, that she and Reginald had been quarrelling, and looked with anxious curiosity for a confirmation of my belief in her face. Mistress of deceit, however, she appeared perfectly unconcerned, and after chatting on indifferent subjects for a short time, said to me, "I find from Wilson that we are going to lose Mr. De Courcy,—is it true that he leaves Churchhill this morning?" I replied that it was. "He told us nothing of all this last night," said she, laughing, "or even this morning at breakfast; but perhaps he did not know it himself. Young men are often hasty in their resolutions, and not more sudden in forming than unsteady in keeping them. I should not be surprised if he were to change his mind at last, and not go." She soon afterwards left the room. I trust, however, my dear mother, that we have no reason to fear an alteration of his present plan; things have gone too far. They must have quarrelled, and about Frederica too. Her calmness astonishes me. What delight will

LADY SUSAN

be yours in seeing him again, in seeing him still worthy of your esteem, still capable of forming your happiness! When I next write I shall be able to tell you that Sir James is gone, Lady Susan vanquished, and Frederica at peace. We have much to do, but it shall be done. I am all impatience to hear how this astonishing change was effected. I finish as I began with the warmest congratulations.

Yours ever, etc.,

CATH. VERNON.

XXIV

From the same to the same

CHURCHILL.

LITTLE did I imagine, my dear mother, when I sent off my last letter, that the delightful perturbation of spirits I was then in would undergo so speedy, so melancholy a reverse. I never can sufficiently regret that I wrote to you at all. Yet who could have foreseen what has happened? My dear mother, every hope which made me so happy only two hours ago has vanished. The quarrel between Lady Susan and Reginald is made up, and we are all as we were before. One point only is gained. Sir James Martin is dismissed. What are we now to look forward to? I am indeed disappointed; Regi-

LADY SUSAN

nald was all but gone, his horse was ordered and all but brought to the door; who would not have felt safe? For half an hour I was in momentary expectation of his departure. After I had sent off my letter to you, I went to Mr. Vernon, and sat with him in his room talking over the whole matter, and then determined to look for Frederica, whom I had not seen since breakfast. I met her on the stairs, and saw that she was crying. "My dear aunt," said she, "he is going—Mr. De Courcy is going, and it is all my fault. I am afraid you will be very angry with me, but indeed I had no idea it would end so." "My love," I replied, "do not think it necessary to apologize to me on that account. I shall feel myself under an obligation to any one who is the means of sending my brother home, because," recollecting myself, "I know my father wants very much to see him. But what is it you have done to occasion all this?" She blushed deeply as she answered: "I was so unhappy about Sir James that I could not help—I have done something very wrong, I know; but you have not an idea of the misery I have been in: and mamma has ordered me never to speak to you or my uncle about it, and—" "You therefore spoke to my brother to engage his interference," said I, to save her the explanation. "No; but I wrote to him,—I did indeed, I got up this

LADY SUSAN

morning before it was light, and was two hours about it; and when my letter was done I thought I never should have courage to give it. After breakfast, however, as I was going to my room, I met him in the passage, and then, as I knew that everything must depend on that moment, I forced myself to give it. He was so good as to take it immediately. I dared not look at him, and ran away directly. I was in such a fright I could hardly breathe. My dear aunt, you do not know how miserable I have been." "Frederica," said I, "you ought to have told me all your distresses. You would have found in me a friend always ready to assist you. Do you think that your uncle or I should not have espoused your cause as warmly as my brother?" "Indeed, I did not doubt your kindness," said she, colouring again, "but I thought Mr. De Courey could do anything with my mother; but I was mistaken: they have had a dreadful quarrel about it, and he is going away. Mamma will never forgive me, and I shall be worse off than ever." "No, you shall not," I replied: "in such a point as this your mother's prohibition ought not to have prevented your speaking to me on the subject. She has no right to make you unhappy, and she shall not do it. Your applying, however, to Reginald can be productive only of good to all parties. I believe it is best

LADY SUSAN

as it is. Depend upon it that you shall not be made unhappy any longer." At that moment how great was my astonishment at seeing Reginald come out of Lady Susan's dressing-room. My heart misgave me instantly. His confusion at seeing me was very evident. Frederica immediately disappeared. "Are you going?" I said; "you will find Mr. Vernon in his own room." "No, Catherine," he replied, "I am not going. Will you let me speak to you a moment?" We went into my room. "I find," he continued, his confusion increasing as he spoke, "that I have been acting with my usual foolish impetuosity. I have entirely misunderstood Lady Susan, and was on the point of leaving the house under a false impression of her conduct. There has been some very great mistake: we have been all mistaken, I fancy. Frederica does not know her mother. Lady Susan means nothing but her good, but she will not make a friend of her. Lady Susan does not always know, therefore, what will make her daughter happy. Besides, I could have no right to interfere. Miss Vernon was mistaken in applying to me. In short, Catherine, everything has gone wrong, but it is now all happily settled. Lady Susan, I believe, wishes to speak to you about it, if you are at leisure." "Certainly," I replied, deeply sighing at the recital of so lame a story. I made

LADY SUSAN

no comments, however, for words would have been vain.

Reginald was glad to get away; and I went to Lady Susan, curious, indeed, to hear her account of it. "Did I not tell you," said she, with a smile, "that your brother would not leave us after all?" "You did, indeed," replied I, very gravely; "but I flattered myself you would be mistaken." "I should not have hazarded such an opinion," returned she, "if it had not at that moment occurred to me that his resolution of going might be occasioned by a conversation in which we had been this morning engaged, and which had ended very much to his dissatisfaction, from our not rightly understanding each other's meaning. This idea struck me at the moment, and I instantly determined that an accidental dispute, in which I might probably be as much to blame as himself, should not deprive you of your brother. If you remember, I left the room almost immediately. I was resolved to lose no time in clearing up those mistakes as far as I could. The case was this—Frederica had set herself violently against marrying Sir James." "And can your ladyship wonder that she should?" cried I, with some warmth; "Frederica has an excellent understanding, and Sir James has none." "I am at least very far from regretting it, my dear sister," said she; "on the

LADY SUSAN

contrary, I am grateful for so favourable a sign of my daughter's sense. Sir James is certainly below par (his boyish manners make him appear worse); and had Frederica possessed the penetration and the abilities which I could have wished in my daughter, or had I even known her to possess as much as she does, I should not have been anxious for the match." "It is odd that you should alone be ignorant of your daughter's sense!" "Frederica never does justice to herself; her manners are shy and childish, and besides she is afraid of me. During her poor father's life she was a spoilt child; the severity which it has since been necessary for me to show has alienated her affection; neither has she any of that brilliancy of intellect, that genius or vigour of mind which will force itself forward." "Say rather that she has been unfortunate in her education!" "Heaven knows, my dearest Mrs. Vernon, how fully I am aware of that; but I would wish to forget every circumstance that might throw blame on the memory of one whose name is sacred with me." Here she pretended to cry; I was out of patience with her. "But what," said I, "was your ladyship going to tell me about your disagreement with my brother?" "It originated in an action of my daughter's which equally marks her want of judgment and the unfortunate dread of me I have been men-

LADY SUSAN

tioning,—she wrote to Mr. De Courcy.” “I know she did; you had forbidden her speaking to Mr. Vernon or to me on the cause of her distress; what could she do, therefore, but apply to my brother?” “Good God!” she exclaimed, “what an opinion you must have of me! Can you possibly suppose that I was aware of her unhappiness, that it was my object to make my own child miserable, and that I had forbidden her speaking to you on the subject from fear of your interrupting the diabolical scheme? Do you think me destitute of every honest, every natural feeling? Am I capable of consigning her to everlasting misery whose welfare it is my first earthly duty to promote? The idea is horrible!” “What, then, was your intention when you insisted on her silence?” “Of what use, my dear sister, could be any application to you, however the affair might stand? Why should I subject you to entreaties which I refused to attend to myself? Neither for your sake nor for hers nor for my own, could such a thing be desirable. When my own resolution was taken, I could not wish for the interference, however friendly, of another person. I was mistaken, it is true, but I believed myself right.” “But what was this mistake to which your ladyship so often alludes? from whence arose so astonishing a misconception of your daughter’s feelings? Did

LADY SUSAN

you not know that she disliked Sir James?" "I knew that he was not absolutely the man she would have chosen, but I was persuaded that her objections to him did not arise from any perception of his deficiency. You must not question me, however, my dear sister, too minutely on this point," continued she, taking me affectionately by the hand; "I honestly own that there is something to conceal. Frederica makes me very unhappy! Her applying to Mr. De Courcy hurt me particularly." "What is it you mean to infer," said I, "by this appearance of mystery? If you think your daughter at all attached to Reginald, her objecting to Sir James could not less deserve to be attended to than if the cause of her objecting had been a consciousness of his folly; and why should your ladyship, at any rate, quarrel with my brother for an interference which you must know it is not in his nature to refuse when urged in such a manner?"

"His disposition, you know, is warm, and he came to expostulate with me; his compassion all alive for this ill-used girl, this heroine in distress! We misunderstood each other: he believed me more to blame than I really was; I considered his interference less excusable than I now find it. I have a real regard for him, and was beyond expression mortified to find it, as

LADY SUSAN

I thought, so ill bestowed. We were both warm, and of course both to blame. His resolution of leaving Churchhill is consistent with his general eagerness. When I understood his intention, however, and at the same time began to think that we had been perhaps equally mistaken in each other's meaning, I resolved to have an explanation before it was too late. For any member of your family I must always feel a degree of affection, and I own it would have sensibly hurt me if my acquaintance with Mr. De Courcy had ended so gloomily. I have now only to say, further, that as I am convinced of Frederica's having a reasonable dislike to Sir James, I shall instantly inform him that he must give up all hope of her. I reproach myself for having even, though innocently, made her unhappy on that score. She shall have all the retribution in my power to make; if she value her own happiness as much as I do, if she judge wisely, and command herself as she ought, she may now be easy. Excuse me, my dearest sister, for thus trespassing on your time, but I owe it to my own character; and after this explanation I trust I am in no danger of sinking in your opinion." I could have said, "Not much, indeed!" but I left her almost in silence. It was the greatest stretch of forbearance I could practise. I could not have stopped myself had I begun. Her assur-

LADY SUSAN

ance! her deceit! but I will not allow myself to dwell on them; they will strike you sufficiently. My heart sickens within me. As soon as I was tolerably composed I returned to the parlour. Sir James's carriage was at the door, and he, merry as usual, soon afterwards took his leave. How easily does her ladyship encourage or dismiss a lover! In spite of this release, Frederica still looks unhappy: still fearful, perhaps, of her mother's anger; and though dreading my brother's departure, jealous, it may be, of his staying. I see how closely she observes him and Lady Susan, poor girl! I have now no hope for her. There is not a chance of her affection being returned. He thinks very differently of her from what he used to do; he does her some justice, but his reconciliation with her mother precludes every dearer hope. Prepare, my dear mother, for the worst! The probability of their marrying is surely heightened! He is more securely hers than ever. When that wretched event takes place, Frederica must belong wholly to us. I am thankful that my last letter will precede this by so little, as every moment that you can be saved from feeling a joy which leads only to disappointment is of consequence.

Yours ever, etc.,

CATHERINE VERNON.

LADY SUSAN

XXV

Lady Susan to Mrs. Johnson

CHURCHHILL.

I CALL on you, dear Alicia, for congratulations: I am my own self, gay and triumphant! When I wrote to you the other day I was, in truth, in high irritation, and with ample cause. Nay, I know not whether I ought to be quite tranquil now, for I have had more trouble in restoring peace than I ever intended to submit to,—a spirit, too, resulting from a fancied sense of superior integrity, which is peculiarly insolent! I shall not easily forgive him, I assure you. He was actually on the point of leaving Churchhill! I had scarcely concluded my last, when Wilson brought me word of it. I found, therefore, that something must be done; for I did not choose to leave my character at the mercy of a man whose passions are so violent and so revengeful. It would have been trifling with my reputation to allow of his departing with such an impression in my disfavour; in this light, condescension was necessary. I sent Wilson to say that I desired to speak with him before he went; he came immediately. The angry emotions which had marked every feature when we last parted were partially subdued. He

LADY SUSAN

seemed astonished at the summons, and looked as if half wishing and half fearing to be softened by what I might say. If my countenance expressed what I aimed at, it was composed and dignified, and yet with a degree of pensiveness which might convince him that I was not quite happy. "I beg your pardon, sir, for the liberty I have taken in sending for you," said I; "but as I have just learnt your intention of leaving this place to-day, I feel it my duty to entreat that you will not on my account shorten your visit here even an hour. I am perfectly aware that after what has passed between us it would ill suit the feelings of either to remain longer in the same house: so very great, so total a change from the intimacy of friendship must render any future intercourse the severest punishment; and your resolution of quitting Churchhill is undoubtedly in unison with our situation, and with those lively feelings which I know you to possess. But at the same time it is not for me to suffer such a sacrifice as it must be to leave relations to whom you are so much attached and are so dear. My remaining here cannot give that pleasure to Mr. and Mrs. Vernon which your society must; and my visit has already perhaps been too long. My removal, therefore, which must at any rate take place soon, may with perfect convenience be hastened; and I make it my

LADY SUSAN

particular request that I may not in any way be instrumental in separating a family so affectionately attached to each other. Where I go is of no consequence to any one; of very little to myself; but you are of importance to all your connections." Here I concluded, and I hope you will be satisfied with my speech. Its effect on Reginald justifies some portion of vanity, for it was no less favourable than instantaneous. Oh, how delightful it was to watch the variations of his countenance while I spoke,—to see the struggle between returning tenderness and the remains of displeasure! There is something agreeable in feelings so easily worked on; not that I envy him their possession, nor would, for the world, have such myself; but they are very convenient when one wishes to influence the passions of another. And yet this Reginald, whom a very few words from me softened at once into the utmost submission, and rendered more tractable, more attached, more devoted than ever, would have left me in the first angry swelling of his proud heart without deigning to seek an explanation. Humbled as he now is, I cannot forgive him such an instance of pride, and am doubtful whether I ought not to punish him by dismissing him at once after this reconciliation, or by marrying and teasing him forever. But these measures are each too violent to be

LADY SUSAN

adopted without some deliberation; at present my thoughts are fluctuating between various schemes. I have many things to compass: I must punish Frederica, and pretty severely too, for her application to Reginald; I must punish him for receiving it so favourably, and for the rest of his conduct. I must torment my sister-in-law for the insolent triumph of her look and manner since Sir James has been dismissed; for in reconciling Reginald to me, I was not able to save that ill-fated young man; and I must make myself amends for the humiliation to which I have stooped within these few days. To effect all this I have various plans. I have also an idea of being soon in town; and whatever may be my determination as to the rest, I shall probably put that project in execution; for London will always be the fairest field of action, however my views may be directed; and at any rate I shall there be rewarded by your society, and a little dissipation, for a ten weeks' penance at Churchhill. I believe I owe it to my character to complete the match between my daughter and Sir James after having so long intended it. Let me know your opinion on this point. Flexibility of mind, a disposition easily biassed by others, is an attribute which you know I am not very desirous of obtaining; nor has Frederica any claim to the indulgence of her notions at the expense

LADY SUSAN

of her mother's inclinations. Her idle love for Reginald, too! It is surely my duty to discourage such romantic nonsense. All things considered, therefore, it seems incumbent on me to take her to town and marry her immediately to Sir James. When my own will is effected contrary to his, I shall have some credit in being on good terms with Reginald, which at present, in fact, I have not; for though he is still in my power, I have given up the very article by which our quarrel was produced, and at best the honour of victory is doubtful. Send me your opinion on all these matters, my dear Alicia, and let me know whether you can get lodgings to suit me within a short distance of you.

Your most attached

S. VERNON.

XXVI

Mrs. Johnson to Lady Susan

EDWARD STREET.

I AM gratified by your reference, and this is my advice: that you come to town yourself, without loss of time, but that you leave Frederica behind. It would surely be much more to the purpose to get yourself well established by marrying Mr. De Courcy, than to irritate him and the rest of his family by making her marry

LADY SUSAN

Sir James. You should think more of yourself and less of your daughter. She is not of a disposition to do you credit in the world, and seems precisely in her proper place at Churchhill, with the Vernons. But you are fitted for society, and it is shameful to have you exiled from it. Leave Frederica, therefore, to punish herself for the plague she has given you, by indulging that romantic tender-heartedness which will always insure her misery enough, and come to London as soon as you can. I have another reason for urging this: Mainwaring came to town last week, and has contrived, in spite of Mr. Johnson, to make opportunities of seeing me. He is absolutely miserable about you, and jealous to such a degree of De Courcy that it would be highly unadvisable for them to meet at present. And yet, if you do not allow him to see you here, I cannot answer for his not committing some great imprudence,—such as going to Churchhill, for instance, which would be dreadful! Besides, if you take my advice, and resolve to marry De Courcy, it will be indispensably necessary to you to get Mainwaring out of the way; and you only can have influence enough to send him back to his wife. I have still another motive for your coming: Mr. Johnson leaves London next Tuesday; he is going for his health to Bath, where, if the waters are favourable to

LADY SUSAN

his constitution and my wishes, he will be laid up with the gout many weeks. During his absence we shall be able to choose our own society, and to have true enjoyment. I would ask you to Edward Street, but that once he forced from me a kind of promise never to invite you to my house; nothing but my being in the utmost distress for money should have extorted it from me. I can get you, however, a nice drawing-room apartment in Upper Seymour Street, and we may be always together there or here; for I consider my promise to Mr. Johnson as comprehending only (at least in his absence) your not sleeping in the house. Poor Mainwaring gives me such histories of his wife's jealousy. Silly woman to expect constancy from so charming a man! but she always was silly—intolerably so in marrying him at all, she the heiress of a large fortune and he without a shilling: one title, I know, she might have had, besides baronets. Her folly in forming the connection was so great that though Mr. Johnson was her guardian, and I do not in general share his feelings, I never can forgive her.

Adieu. Yours ever,

ALICIA.

LADY SUSAN

XXVII

Mrs. Vernon to Lady De Courcy

CHURCHILL.

THIS letter, my dear mother, will be brought you by Reginald. His long visit is about to be concluded at last, but I fear the separation takes place too late to do us any good. She is going to London to see her particular friend, Mrs. Johnson. It was at first her intention that Frederica should accompany her, for the benefit of masters, but we overruled her there. Frederica was wretched in the idea of going, and I could not bear to have her at the mercy of her mother; not all the masters in London could compensate for the ruin of her comfort. I should have feared, too, for her health, and for everything but her principles,—there I believe she is not to be injured by her mother, or her mother's friends; but with those friends she must have mixed (a very bad set, I doubt not), or have been left in total solitude, and I can hardly tell which would have been worse for her. If she is with her mother, moreover, she must, alas! in all probability be with Reginald, and that would be the greatest evil of all. Here we shall in time be in peace; and our regular employments, our books and conversations, with

LADY SUSAN

exercise, the children, and every domestic pleasure in my power to procure her, will, I trust, gradually overcome this youthful attachment. I should not have a doubt of it were she slighted for any other woman in the world than her own mother. How long Lady Susan will be in town, or whether she returns here again, I know not. I could not be cordial in my invitation; but if she chooses to come, no want of cordiality on my part will keep her away. I could not help asking Reginald if he intended being in London this winter, as soon as I found her ladyship's steps would be bent thither; and though he professed himself quite undetermined, there was something in his look and voice as he spoke which contradicted his words. I have done with lamentation; I look upon the event as so far decided that I resign myself to it in despair. If he leaves you soon for London, everything will be concluded.

Your affectionate, etc.,

C. VERNON.

XXVIII

Mrs. Johnson to Lady Susan

EDWARD STREET.

MY DEAREST FRIEND,—I write in the greatest distress; the most unfortunate event has just

LADY SUSAN

taken place. Mr. Johnson has hit on the most effectual manner of plaguing us all. He had heard, I imagine, by some means or other, that you were soon to be in London, and immediately contrived to have such an attack of the gout as must at least delay his journey to Bath, if not wholly prevent it. I am persuaded the gout is brought on or kept off at pleasure; it was the same when I wanted to join the Hamiltons to the Lakes; and three years ago, when I had a fancy for Bath, nothing could induce him to have a gouty symptom.

I am pleased to find that my letter had so much effect on you, and that De Courcy is certainly your own. Let me hear from you as soon as you arrive, and in particular tell me what you mean to do with Mainwaring. It is impossible to say when I shall be able to come to you; my confinement must be great. It is such an abominable trick to be ill here instead of at Bath that I can scarcely command myself at all. At Bath his old aunts would have nursed him, but here it all falls upon me; and he bears pain with such patience that I have not the common excuse for losing my temper.

Yours ever,

ALICIA.

LADY SUSAN

XXIX

Lady Susan Vernon to Mrs. Johnson

UPPER SEYMOUR STREET.

MY DEAR ALICIA,—There needed not this last fit of the gout to make me detest Mr. Johnson, but now the extent of my aversion is not to be estimated. To have you confined as nurse in his apartment! My dear Alicia, of what a mistake were you guilty in marrying a man of his age! just old enough to be formal, ungovernable, and to have the gout; too old to be agreeable, too young to die. I arrived last night about five, had scarcely swallowed my dinner when Mainwaring made his appearance. I will not dissemble what real pleasure his sight afforded me, nor how strongly I felt the contrast between his person and manners and those of Reginald, to the infinite disadvantage of the latter. For an hour or two I was even staggered in my resolution of marrying him, and though this was too idle and nonsensical an idea to remain long on my mind, I do not feel very eager for the conclusion of my marriage, nor look forward with much impatience to the time when Reginald, according to our agreement, is to be in town. I shall probably put off his arrival under some pretence or other. He must

LADY SUSAN

not come till Mainwaring is gone. I am still doubtful at times as to marrying; if the old man would die I might not hesitate, but a state of dependence on the caprice of Sir Reginald will not suit the freedom of my spirit; and if I resolve to wait for that event, I shall have excuse enough at present in having been scarcely ten months a widow. I have not given Mainwaring any hint of my intention, or allowed him to consider my acquaintance with Reginald as more than the commonest flirtation, and he is tolerably appeased. Adieu, till we meet; I am enchanted with my lodgings.

Yours ever,

S. VERNON.

XXX

Lady Susan Vernon to Mr. De Courcy

UPPER SEYMOUR STREET.

I HAVE received your letter, and though I do not attempt to conceal that I am gratified by your impatience for the hour of meeting, I yet feel myself under the necessity of delaying that hour beyond the time originally fixed. Do not think me unkind for such an exercise of my power, nor accuse me of instability without first hearing my reasons. In the course of my journey from Churchhill I had ample leisure for re-

LADY SUSAN

flection on the present state of our affairs, and every review has served to convince me that they require a delicacy and cautiousness of conduct to which we have hitherto been too little attentive. We have been hurried on by our feelings to a degree of precipitation which ill accords with the claims of our friends or the opinion of the world. We have been unguarded in forming this hasty engagement, but we must not complete the imprudence by ratifying it while there is so much reason to fear the connection would be opposed by those friends on whom you depend. It is not for us to blame any expectations on your father's side of your marrying to advantage; where possessions are so extensive as those of your family, the wish of increasing them, if not strictly reasonable, is too common to excite surprise or resentment. He has a right to require a woman of fortune in his daughter-in-law, and I am sometimes quarrelling with myself for suffering you to form a connection so imprudent; but the influence of reason is often acknowledged too late by those who feel like me. I have now been but a few months a widow, and, however little indebted to my husband's memory for any happiness derived from him during a union of some years, I cannot forget that the indelicacy of so early a second marriage must subject me to the censure of the

LADY SUSAN

world, and incur, what would be still more insupportable, the displeasure of Mr. Vernon. I might perhaps harden myself in time against the injustice of general reproach, but the loss of his valued esteem I am, as you well know, ill-fitted to endure; and when to this may be added the consciousness of having injured you with your family, how am I to support myself? With feelings so poignant as mine, the conviction of having divided the son from his parents would make me, even with you, the most miserable of beings. It will surely, therefore, be advisable to delay our union—to delay it till appearances are more promising—till affairs have taken a more favourable turn. To assist us in such a resolution I feel that absence will be necessary. We must not meet. Cruel as this sentence may appear, the necessity of pronouncing it, which can alone reconcile it to myself, will be evident to you when you have considered our situation in the light in which I have found myself imperiously obliged to place it. You may be—you must be—well assured that nothing but the strongest conviction of duty could induce me to wound my own feelings by urging a lengthened separation, and of insensibility to yours you will hardly suspect me. Again, therefore, I say that we ought not, we must not, yet meet. By a removal for some months from

LADY SUSAN

each other we shall tranquillise the sisterly fears of Mrs. Vernon, who, accustomed herself to the enjoyment of riches, considers fortune as necessary everywhere, and whose sensibilities are not of a nature to comprehend ours. Let me hear from you soon—very soon. Tell me that you submit to my arguments, and do not reproach me for using such. I cannot bear reproaches: my spirits are not so high as to need being repressed. I must endeavour to seek amusement, and fortunately many of my friends are in town; amongst them the Mainwarings; you know how sincerely I regard both husband and wife.

I am, very faithfully yours,
S. VERNON.

XXXI

Lady Susan to Mrs. Johnson

UPPER SEYMOUR STREET.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—That tormenting creature, Reginald, is here. My letter, which was intended to keep him longer in the country, has hastened him to town. Much as I wish him away, however, I cannot help being pleased with such a proof of attachment. He is devoted to me, heart and soul. He will carry this note himself, which is to serve as an introduction to

LADY SUSAN

you, with whom he longs to be acquainted. Allow him to spend the evening with you, that I may be in no danger of his returning here. I have told him that I am not quite well, and must be alone; and should he call again there might be confusion, for it is impossible to be sure of servants. Keep him, therefore, I entreat you, in Edward Street. You will not find him a heavy companion, and I allow you to flirt with him as much as you like. At the same time do not forget my real interest; say all that you can to convince him that I shall be quite wretched if he remains here; you know my reasons,—propriety, and so forth. I would urge them more myself, but that I am impatient to be rid of him, as Mainwaring comes within half an hour. Adieu!

S. VERNON.

XXXII

Mrs. Johnson to Lady Susan.

EDWARD STREET.

MY DEAR CREATURE,—I am in agonies, and know not what to do. Mr. De Courcy arrived just when he should not. Mrs. Mainwaring had that instant entered the house, and forced herself into her guardian's presence, though I did not know a syllable of it till afterwards, for

LADY SUSAN

I was out when both she and Reginald came, or I should have sent him away at all events; but she was shut up with Mr. Johnson, while he waited in the drawing-room for me. She arrived yesterday in pursuit of her husband, but perhaps you know this already from himself. She came to this house to entreat my husband's interference, and before I could be aware of it, everything that you could wish to be concealed was known to him, and unluckily she had wormed out of Mainwaring's servant that he had visited you every day since your being in town, and had just watched him to your door herself! What could I do? Facts are such horrid things! All is by this time known to De Courcy, who is now alone with Mr. Johnson. Do not accuse me; indeed, it was impossible to prevent it. Mr. Johnson has for some time suspected De Courcy of intending to marry you, and would speak with him alone as soon as he knew him to be in the house. That detestable Mrs. Mainwaring, who, for your comfort, has fretted herself thinner and uglier than ever, is still here, and they have been all closeted together. What can be done? At any rate, I hope he will plague his wife more than ever. With anxious wishes,

Yours faithfully,

ALICIA.

LADY SUSAN

XXXIII

Lady Susan to Mrs. Johnson

UPPER SEYMOUR STREET.

THIS *éclaircissement* is rather provoking. How unlucky that you should have been from home! I thought myself sure of you at seven! I am undismayed, however. Do not torment yourself with fears on my account; depend on it, I can make my story good with Reginald. Mainwaring is just gone; he brought me the news of his wife's arrival. Silly woman, what does she expect by such manœuvres? Yet I wish she had stayed quietly at Langford. Reginald will be a little enraged at first, but by tomorrow's dinner everything will be well again.

Adieu!

S. V.

XXXIV

Mr. De Courcy to Lady Susan

— HOTEL.

I WRITE only to bid you farewell, the spell is removed; I see you as you are. Since we parted yesterday, I have received from indisputable authority such a history of you as must bring the most mortifying conviction of the imposi-

LADY SUSAN

tion I have been under, and the absolute necessity of an immediate and eternal separation from you. You cannot doubt to what I allude. Langford! Langford! that word will be sufficient. I received my information in Mr. Johnson's house, from Mrs. Mainwaring herself. You know how I have loved you; you can intimately judge of my present feelings, but I am not so weak as to find indulgence in describing them to a woman who will glory in having excited their anguish, but whose affection they have never been able to gain.

R. DE COURCY.

XXXV.

Lady Susan to Mr. De Courcy

UPPER SEYMOUR STREET.

I WILL not attempt to describe my astonishment in reading the note this moment received from you. I am bewildered in my endeavours to form some rational conjecture of what Mrs. Mainwaring can have told you to occasion so extraordinary a change in your sentiments. Have I not explained everything to you with respect to myself which could bear a doubtful meaning, and which the ill-nature of the world had interpreted to my discredit? What can you now have heard to stagger your esteem for me?

LADY SUSAN

Have I ever had a concealment from you? Reginald, you agitate me beyond expression. I cannot suppose that the old story of Mrs. Mainwaring's jealousy can be revived again, or at least be listened to again. Come to me immediately, and explain what is at present absolutely incomprehensible. Believe me, the single word of Langford is not of such potent intelligence as to supersede the necessity of more. If we are to part, it will at least be handsome to take your personal leave—but I have little heart to jest; in truth, I am serious enough; for to be sunk, though but for an hour, in your esteem is a humiliation to which I know not how to submit. I shall count every minute till your arrival.

S. V.

XXXVI

Mr. De Courcy to Lady Susan

— HOTEL.

WHY would you write to me? Why do you require particulars? But since it must be so, I am obliged to declare that all the accounts of your misconduct during the life and since the death of Mr. Vernon, which had reached me, in common with the world in general, and gained my entire belief before I saw you, but which you, by the exertion of your perverted abilities,

LADY SUSAN

had made me resolved to disallow, have been unanswerably proved to me, nay more, I am assured that a connection of which I had never before entertained a thought, has for some time existed, and still continues to exist, between you and the man whose family you robbed of its peace in return for the hospitality with which you were received into it; that you have corresponded with him ever since your leaving Langford; not with his wife, but with him, and that he now visits you every day. Can you, dare you deny it? and all this at the time when I was an encouraged, an accepted lover! From what have I not escaped! I have only to be grateful. Far from me be all complaint, every sigh of regret. My own folly had endangered me, my preservation I owe to the kindness, the integrity of another; but the unfortunate Mrs. Mainwaring, whose agonies while she related the past seemed to threaten her reason,—how is she to be consoled! After such a discovery as this, you will scarcely affect further wonder at my meaning in bidding you adieu. My understanding is at length restored, and teaches no less to abhor the artifices which had subdued me than to despise myself for the weakness on which their strength was founded.

R. DE COURCY.

LADY SUSAN

XXXVII

Lady Susan to Mr. De Courcy

UPPER SEYMOUR STREET.

I AM satisfied, and will trouble you no more when these few lines are dismissed. The engagement which you were eager to form a fortnight ago is no longer compatible with your views, and I rejoice to find that the prudent advice of your parents has not been given in vain. Your restoration to peace will, I doubt not, speedily follow this act of filial obedience, and I flatter myself with the hope of surviving my share in this disappointment.

S. V.

XXXVIII

Mrs. Johnson to Lady Susan Vernon

EDWARD STREET.

I AM grieved, though I cannot be astonished, at your rupture with Mr. De Courcy; he has just informed Mr. Johnson of it by letter. He leaves London, he says, to-day. Be assured that I partake in all your feelings, and do not be angry if I say that our intercourse, even by letter, must soon be given up. It makes me miserable; but Mr. Johnson vows that if I persist

LADY SUSAN

in the connection, he will settle in the country for the rest of his life, and you know it is impossible to submit to such an extremity while any other alternative remains. You have heard of course that the Mainwarings are to part, and I am afraid Mrs. M. will come home to us again; but she is still so fond of her husband, and frets so much about him, that perhaps she may not live long. Miss Mainwaring is just come to town to be with her aunt, and they say that she declares she will have Sir James Martin before she leaves London again. If I were you, I would certainly get him myself. I had almost forgot to give you my opinion of Mr. De Courcy: I am really delighted with him; he is full as handsome, I think, as Mainwaring, and with such an open, good-humoured countenance that one cannot help loving him at first sight. Mr. Johnson and he are the greatest friends in the world. Adieu, my dearest Susan, I wish matters did not go so perversely. That unlucky visit to Langford! but I dare say you did all for the best, and there is no defying destiny.

Your sincerely attached,

ALICIA.

LADY SUSAN

XXXIX

Lady Susan to Mrs. Johnson

UPPER SEYMOUR STREET.

MY DEAR ALICIA,—I yield to the necessity which parts us. Under circumstances you could not act otherwise. Our friendship cannot be impaired by it, and in happier times, when your situation is as independent as mine, it will unite us again in the same intimacy as ever. For this I shall impatiently wait, and meanwhile can safely assure you that I never was more at ease, or better satisfied with myself and everything about me than at the present hour. Your husband I abhor, Reginald I despise, and I am secure of never seeing either again. Have I not reason to rejoice? Mainwaring is more devoted to me than ever; and were we at liberty, I doubt if I could resist even matrimony offered by him. This event, if his wife live with you, it may be in your power to hasten. The violence of her feelings, which must wear her out, may be easily kept in irritation. I rely on your friendship for this. I am now satisfied that I never could have brought myself to marry Reginald, and am equally determined that Frederica never shall. To-morrow I shall fetch her from Churchhill, and let Maria Mainwaring

LADY SUSAN

tremble for the consequence. Frederica shall be Sir James's wife before she quits my house, and she may whimper, and the Vernons may storm, I regard them not. I am tired of submitting my will to the caprices of others; of resigning my own judgment in deference to those to whom I owe no duty, and for whom I feel no respect; I have given up too much, have been too easily worked on, but Frederica shall now feel the difference. Adieu, dearest of friends; may the next gouty attack be more favourable! and may you always regard me as unalterably yours,

S. VERNON.

XL

Lady De Courcy to Mrs. Vernon

MY DEAR CATHERINE,—I have charming news for you, and if I had not sent off my letter this morning you might have been spared the vexation of knowing of Reginald's being gone to London, for he is returned. Reginald is returned, not to ask our consent to his marrying Lady Susan, but to tell us they are parted forever. He has been only an hour in the house, and I have not been able to learn particulars, for he is so very low that I have not the heart to ask questions, but I hope we shall soon know

LADY SUSAN

all. This is the most joyful hour he has ever given us since the day of his birth. Nothing is wanting but to have you here, and it is our particular wish and entreaty that you would come to us as soon as you can. You have owed us a visit many long weeks; I hope nothing will make it inconvenient to Mr. Vernon; and pray bring all my grandchildren; and your dear niece is included, of course; I long to see her. It has been a sad, heavy winter hitherto, without Reignald, and seeing nobody from Churchhill. I never found the season so dreary before; but this happy meeting will make us young again. Frederica runs much in my thoughts, and when Reignald has recoved his usual good spirits (as I trust he soon will), we will try to rob him of his heart once more, and I am full of hopes of seeing their hands joined at no great distance.

Your affectionate mother,

C. DE COURCY.

XLI

Mrs. Vernon to Lady De Courcy

CHURCHHILL.

MY DEAR MOTHER,—Your letter has surprised me beyond measure! Can it be true that they are really separated—and forever? I

LADY SUSAN

should be overjoyed if I dared depend on it, but after all that I have seen how can one be secure? And Reginald really with you! My surprise is the greater because on Wednesday, the very day of his coming to Parklands, we had a most unexpected and unwelcome visit from Lady Susan, looking all cheerfulness and good-humour, and seeming more as if she were to marry him when she got to London than as if parted from him forever. She stayed nearly two hours, was as affectionate and agreeable as ever, and not a syllable, not a hint was dropped, of any disagreement or coolness between them. I asked her whether she had seen my brother since his arrival in town; not, as you may suppose, with any doubt of the fact, but merely to see how she looked. She immediately answered, without any embarrassment, that he had been kind enough to call on her on Monday; but she believed he had already returned home, which I was very far from crediting. Your kind invitation is accepted by us with pleasure, and on Thursday next we and our little ones will be with you. Pray heaven, Reginald may not be in town again by that time! I wish we could bring dear Frederica too, but I am sorry to say that her mother's errand hither was to fetch her away; and, miserable as it made the poor girl, it was impossible to detain her. I was thor-

LADY SUSAN

oughly unwilling to let her go, and so was her uncle; and all that could be urged we did urge; but Lady Susan declared that as she was now about to fix herself in London for several months, she could not be easy if her daughter were not with her for masters, etc. Her manner, to be sure, was very kind and proper, and Mr. Vernon believes that Frederica will now be treated with affection. I wish I could think so too. The poor girl's heart was almost broke at taking leave of us. I charged her to write to me very often, and to remember that if she were in any distress we should be always her friends. I took care to see her alone, that I might say all this, and I hope made her a little more comfortable; but I shall not be easy till I can go to town and judge of her situation myself. I wish there were a better prospect than now appears of the match which the conclusion of your letter declares your expectations of. At present it is not very likely.

Yours ever, etc.,

C. VERNON.

LADY SUSAN

CONCLUSION

THIS correspondence, by a meeting between some of the parties, and a separation between the others, could not, to the great detriment of the Post-Office revenue, be continued any longer. Very little assistance to the State could be derived from the epistolary intercourse of Mrs. Vernon and her niece; for the former soon perceived, by the style of Frederica's letters, that they were written under her mother's inspection! and therefore, deferring all particular inquiry till she could make it personally in London, ceased writing minutely or often. Having learnt enough in the meanwhile, from her open-hearted brother, of what had passed between him and Lady Susan to sink the latter lower than ever in her opinion, she was proportionably more anxious to get Frederica removed from such a mother, and placed under her own care; and, though with little hope of success, was resolved to leave nothing unattempted that might offer a chance of obtaining her sister-in-law's consent to it. Her anxiety on the subject made her press for an early visit to London; and Mr. Vernon, who, as it must already have appeared,

LADY SUSAN

lived only to do whatever he was desired, soon found some accommodating business to call him thither. With a heart full of the matter, Mrs. Vernon waited on Lady Susan shortly after her arrival in town, and was met with such an easy and cheerful affection, as made her almost turn from her with horror. No remembrance of Reginald, no consciousness of guilt, gave one look of embarrassment; she was in excellent spirits, and seemed eager to show at once by every possible attention to her brother and sister her sense of their kindness, and her pleasure in their society. Frederica was no more altered than Lady Susan; the same restrained manners, the same timid look in the presence of her mother as heretofore, assured her aunt of her situation being uncomfortable, and confirmed her in the plan of altering it. No unkindness, however, on the part of Lady Susan appeared. Persecution on the subject of Sir James was entirely at an end; his name merely mentioned to say that he was not in London; and indeed, in all her conversation she was solicitous only for the welfare and improvement of her daughter, acknowledging, in terms of grateful delight, that Frederica was now growing every day more and more what a parent could desire. Mrs. Vernon, surprised and incredulous, knew not what to suspect, and, without any change in

LADY SUSAN

her own views, only feared greater difficulty in accomplishing them. The first hope of anything better was derived from Lady Susan's asking her whether she thought Frederica looked quite as well as she had done at Church-hill, as she must confess herself to have sometimes an anxious doubt of London's perfectly agreeing with her. Mrs. Vernon, encouraging the doubt, directly proposed her niece's returning with them into the country. Lady Susan was unable to express her sense of such kindness, yet knew not, from a variety of reasons, how to part with her daughter; and as, though her own plans were not yet wholly fixed, she trusted it would ere long be in her power to take Frederica into the country herself, concluded by declining entirely to profit by such unexampled attention. Mrs. Vernon persevered, however, in the offer of it; and though Lady Susan continued to resist, her resistance in the course of a few days seemed somewhat less formidable. The lucky alarm of an influenza decided what might not have been decided quite so soon. Lady Susan's maternal fears were then too much awakened for her to think of anything but Frederica's removal from the risk of infection; above all disorders in the world she most dreaded the influenza for her daughter's constitution!

LADY SUSAN

Frederica returned to Churchhill with her uncle and aunt; and three weeks afterwards, Lady Susan announced her being married to Sir James Martin. Mrs. Vernon was then convinced of what she had only suspected before, that she might have spared herself all the trouble of urging a removal which Lady Susan had doubtless resolved on from the first. Frederica's visit was nominally for six weeks; but her mother, though inviting her to return in one or two affectionate letters, was very ready to oblige the whole party by consenting to a prolongation of her stay, and in the course of two months ceased to write of her absence, and in the course of two more to write to her at all. Frederica was therefore fixed in the family of her uncle and aunt till such time as Reginald de Courcy could be talked, flattered, and finessed into an affection for her which, allowing leisure for the conquest of his attachment to her mother, for his abjuring all future attachments, and detesting the sex, might be reasonably looked for in the course of a twelvemonth. Three months might have done it in general, but Reginald's feelings were no less lasting than lively. Whether Lady Susan was or was not happy in her second choice, I do not see how it can ever be ascertained; for who would take her assurance of it on either side of the question?

LADY SUSAN

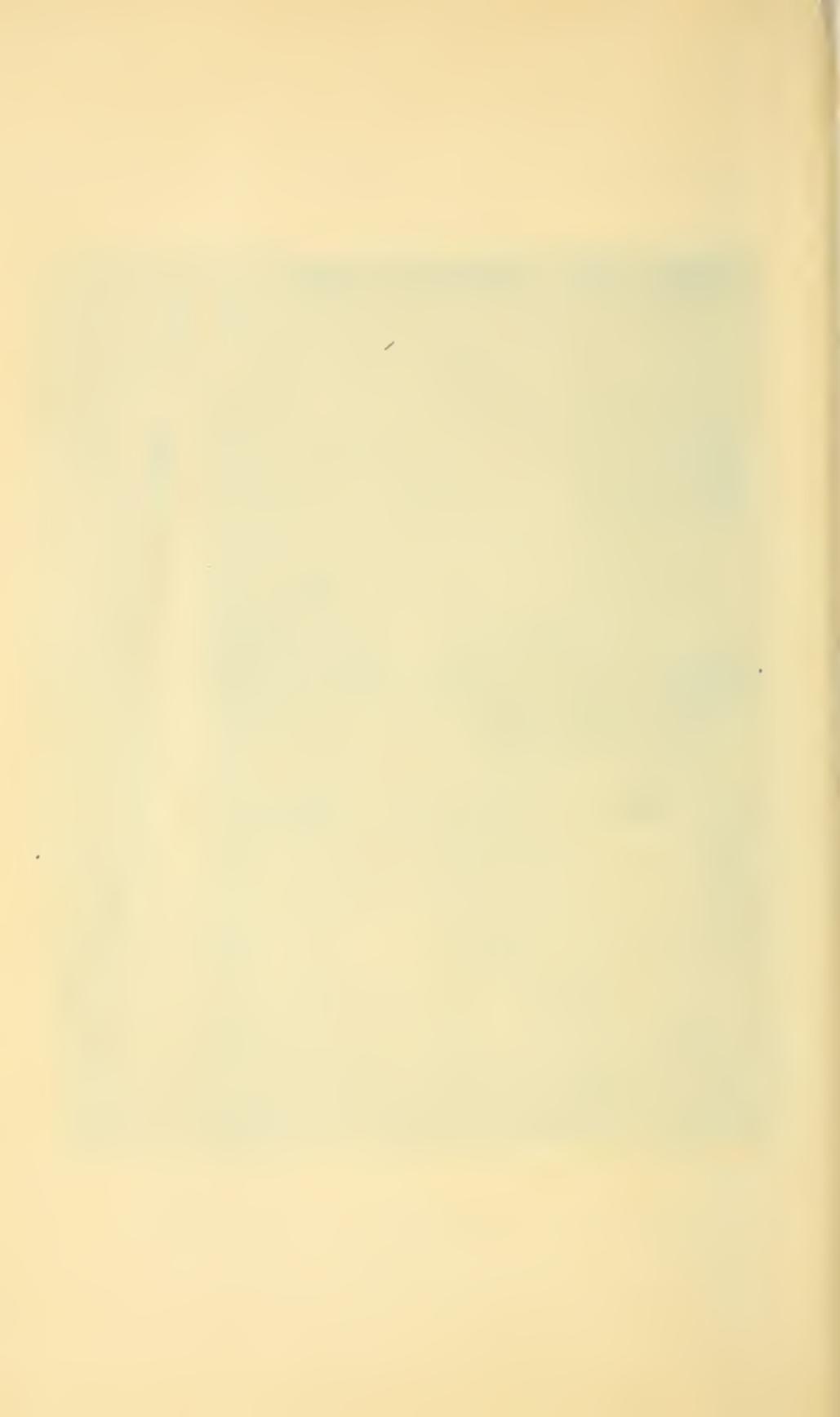
The world must judge from probabilities; she had nothing against her but her husband and her conscience. Sir James may seem to have drawn a harder lot than mere folly merited; I leave him, therefore, to all the pity that anybody can give him. For myself, I confess that *I* can pity only Miss Mainwaring, who, coming to town, and putting herself to an expense in clothes which impoverished her for two years, on purpose to secure him, was defrauded of her due by a woman ten years older than herself.



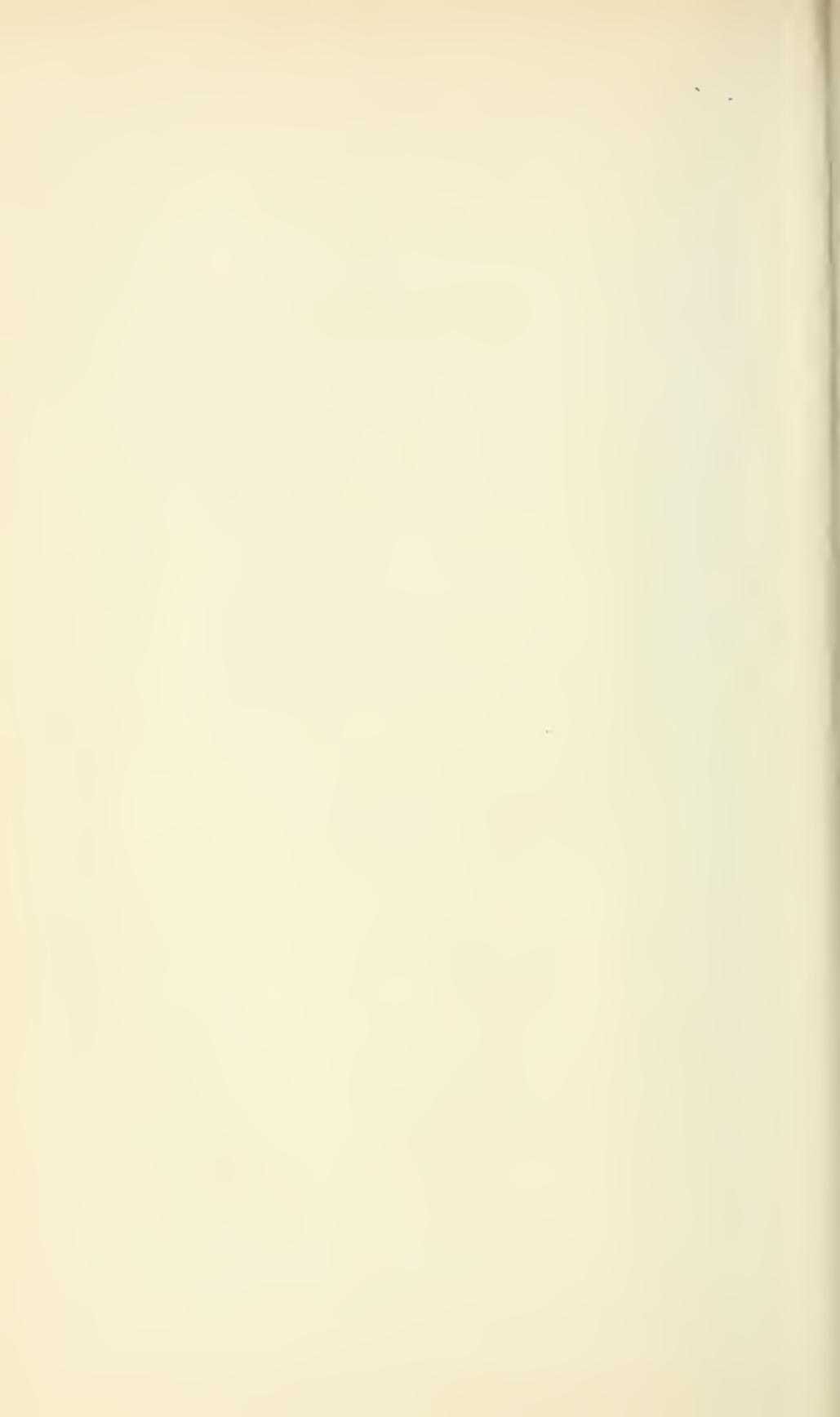
Home in Winchester where Jane Austen died, from a
photograph by Mrs. Wm. Lyon Philips, September,
1900

How to illustrate your book from the
photograph by the first chapter
(1900)





THE WATSONS



PREFACE

“THE WATSONS” is the name given by those who published it, to a fragment written by Jane Austen when living at Bath. It is in the writer’s mature style and is no girl-ish composition. It is unelaborated and incomplete, but promises well, and it is a regret that the writer did not finish it. Why she laid it aside is not known; probably it was interrupted by the pressure of social engagements and she thus lost interest in it when the thread was broken.

Her nephew expresses the opinion that she became aware of the mistake of having placed her heroine too low in the social scale, in such a position of poverty and obscurity which, though not necessarily connected with vulgarity, has a sad tendency to degenerate into it, and therefore, like a singer who has begun on a wrong key, she discontinued the strain. Jane Austen was genteel in the meaning of the word in her own day, not in the obvious meaning of the word at present. But the Watsons are gentlefolk: they go to

PREFACE

balls where they meet the aristocracy, though they go in a friend's carriage, not in their own, and when aristocratic acquaintances call, the early dinner rather put them to shame.

Emma Watson became the object of attention to a peer and to another man of independent fortune at the same time. It appears from the outline of the plot which the author confessed to her sister, that Emma was to decline an offer of marriage from a peer and to marry a most eligible clergyman. That the story was carrying her out of the region of gentility can hardly have been Jane Austen's reason for laying it aside. Nor could it be that "The Watsons" was broken up for the purpose of using the materials in another fabric. Mrs. Robert Watson, with her vulgar airs of fashion, bears a strong resemblance to Mrs. Elton; Henry Crawford as a gay breaker of hearts of women has a resemblance to Tom Musgrave; and the querulous selfishness of Margaret foreshadows that of Mary Musgrove. But no other affinities appear. Mr. Watson is, like Mr. Woodhouse, an invalid, but he is not a valetudinarian.

The characters of "The Watsons," like those of the entire Austen repertory, move, live, and have their being in an atmosphere of sanctimonious gentility. Love and marriage are the

PREFACE

staple motives of these extremely natural studies of the eighteenth century English middle class. Her character painting is true to life, even if the characters are artificial, and true to the eighteenth century environment.

The Watsons



THE first winter assembly in the town of D. in Surrey was to be held on Tuesday, October 13th, and it was generally expected to be a very good one. A long list of county families was confidently run over as sure of attending, and sanguine hopes were entertained that the Osbornes themselves would be there. The Edwards' invitation to the Watsons followed, of course. The Edwards were people of fortune, who lived in the town and kept their coach. The Watsons inhabited a village about three miles distant, were poor, and had no close carriage; and ever since there had been balls in the place, the former were accustomed to invite the latter to dress, dine, and sleep at their house on every monthly return throughout the winter. On the present occasion, as only two of Mr. Watson's children were at home, and one was always necessary as companion to himself, for he was sickly and had lost his wife, one only could profit by the kindness of their friends. Miss Emma Watson, who was very

THE WATSONS

recently returned to her family from the care of an aunt who had brought her up, was to make her first public appearance in the neighbourhood, and her eldest sister, whose delight in a ball was not lessened by a ten years' enjoyment, had some merit in cheerfully undertaking to drive her and all her finery in the old chair to D. on the important morning.

As they splashed along the dirty lane, Miss Watson thus instructed and cautioned her inexperienced sister:—

“I dare say it will be a very good ball, and among so many officers you will hardly want partners. You will find Mrs. Edwards' maid very willing to help you, and I would advise you to ask Mary Edwards' opinion if you are at all at a loss, for she has a very good taste. If Mr. Edwards does not lose his money at cards, you will stay as late as you can wish for; if he does, he will hurry you home perhaps—but you are sure of some comfortable soup. I hope you will be in good looks. I should not be surprised if you were to be thought one of the prettiest girls in the room; there is a great deal in novelty. Perhaps Tom Musgrave may take notice of you; but I would advise you by all means not to give him any encouragement. He generally pays attention to every new girl; but he is a great flirt, and never means anything serious.”

THE WATSONS

“I think I have heard you speak of him before,” said Emma; “who is he?”

“A young man of very good fortune, quite independent, and remarkably agreeable,—a universal favourite wherever he goes. Most of the girls hereabout are in love with him, or have been. I believe I am the only one among them that have escaped with a whole heart; and yet I was the first he paid attention to when he came into this country six years ago; and very great attention did he pay me. Some people say that he has never seemed to like any girl so well since, though he is always behaving in a particular way to one or another.”

“And how came your heart to be the only cold one?” said Emma, smiling.

“There was a reason for that,” replied Miss Watson, changing colour,—“I have not been very well used among them, Emma. I hope you will have better luck.”

“Dear sister, I beg your pardon if I have unthinkingly given you pain.”

“When first we knew Tom Musgrave,” continued Miss Watson, without seeming to hear her, “I was very much attached to a young man of the name of Purvis, a particular friend of Robert’s, who used to be with us a great deal. Everybody thought it would have been a match.”

THE WATSONS

A sigh accompanied these words, which Emma respected in silence; but her sister after a short pause went on.

“You will naturally ask why it did not take place, and why he is married to another woman, while I am still single. But you must ask him, not me,—you must ask Penelope. Yes, Emma, Penelope was at the bottom of it all. She thinks everything fair for a husband. I trusted her; she set him against me, with a view of gaining him herself, and it ended in his discontinuing his visits, and soon after marrying somebody else. Penelope makes light of her conduct, but I think such treachery very bad. It has been the ruin of my happiness. I shall never love any man as I loved Purvis. I do not think Tom Musgrave should be named with him in the same day.”

“You quite shock me by what you say of Penelope,” said Emma. “Could a sister do such a thing? Rivalry, treachery between sisters! I shall be afraid of being acquainted with her. But I hope it was not so; appearances were against her.”

“You do not know Penelope. There is nothing she would not do to get married. She would as good as tell you so herself. Do not trust her with any secrets of your own, take warning by me, do not trust her; she has her good qualities,

THE WATSONS

but she has no faith, no honour, no scruples, if she can promote her own advantage. I wish with all my heart she was well married. I declare I had rather have her well married than myself."

"Than yourself! yes, I can suppose so. A heart wounded like yours can have little inclination for matrimony."

"Not much indeed—but you know we must marry. I could do very well single for my own part; a little company, and a pleasant ball now and then, would be enough for me, if one could be young forever; but my father cannot provide for us, and it is very bad to grow old and be poor and laughed at. I have lost Purvis, it is true; but very few people marry their first loves. I should not refuse a man because he was not Purvis. Not that I can ever quite forgive Penelope."

Emma shook her head in acquiescence.

"Penelope, however, has had her troubles," continued Miss Watson. "She was sadly disappointed in Tom Musgrave, who afterwards transferred his attentions from me to her, and whom she was very fond of; but he never means anything serious, and when he had trifled with her long enough, he began to slight her for Margaret, and poor Penelope was very wretched. And since then she has been trying to make

THE WATSONS

some match at Chichester,—she won't tell us with whom; but I believe it is a rich old Dr. Harding, uncle to the friend she goes to see; and she has taken a vast deal of trouble about him, and given up a great deal of time to no purpose as yet. When she went away the other day, she said it should be the last time. I suppose you did not know what her particular business was at Chichester, nor guess at the object which could take her away from Stanton just as you were coming home after so many years' absence."

"No indeed, I had not the smallest suspicion of it. I considered her engagement to Mrs. Shaw just at that time as very unfortunate for me. I had hoped to find all my sisters at home, to be able to make an immediate friend of each."

"I suspect the Doctor to have had an attack of the asthma, and that she was hurried away on that account. The Shaws are quite on her side,—at least, I believe so; but she tells me nothing. She professes to keep her own counsel; she says, and truly enough, that 'Too many cooks spoil the broth.'"

"I am sorry for her anxieties," said Emma; "but I do not like her plans or her opinions. I shall be afraid of her. She must have too masculine and bold a temper. To be so bent on

THE WATSONS

marriage, to pursue a man merely for the sake of situation, is a sort of thing that shocks me; I cannot understand it. Poverty is a great evil; but to a woman of education and feeling it ought not, it cannot be the greatest. I would rather be teacher at a school (and I can think of nothing worse) than marry a man I did not like."

"I would rather do anything than be teacher at a school," said her sister. "I have been at school, Emma, and know what a life they lead; you never have. I should not like marrying a disagreeable man any more than yourself; but I do not think there are many very disagreeable men; I think I could like any good-humoured man with a comfortable income. I suppose my aunt brought you up to be rather refined."

"Indeed I do not know. My conduct must tell you how I have been brought up. I am no judge of it myself. I cannot compare my aunt's method with any other person's, because I know no other."

"But I can see in a great many things that you are very refined. I have observed it ever since you came home, and I am afraid it will not be for your happiness. Penelope will laugh at you very much."

"That will not be for my happiness, I am sure. If my opinions are wrong, I must cor-

THE WATSONS

rect them; if they are above my situation, I must endeavour to conceal them; but I doubt whether ridicule—Has Penelope much wit?”

“Yes; she has great spirits, and never cares what she says.”

“Margaret is more gentle, I imagine?”

“Yes; especially in company. She is all gentleness and mildness when anybody is by; but she is a little fretful and perverse among ourselves. Poor creature! She is possessed with the notion of Tom Musgrave’s being more seriously in love with her than he ever was with anybody else, and is always expecting him to come to the point. This is the second time within this twelvemonth that she has gone to spend a month with Robert and Jane on purpose to egg him on by her absence; but I am sure she is mistaken, and that he will no more follow her to Croydon now than he did last March. He will never marry unless he can marry somebody very great,—Miss Osborne, perhaps, or somebody in that style.”

“Your account of this Tom Musgrave, Elizabeth, gives me very little inclination for his acquaintance.”

“You are afraid of him; I do not wonder at you.”

“No, indeed; I dislike and despise him.”

“Dislike and despise Tom Musgrave! No,

THE WATSONS

that you never can. I defy you not to be delighted with him if he takes notice of you. I hope he will dance with you; and I dare say he will, unless the Osbornes come with a large party, and then he will not speak to anybody else."

"He seems to have most engaging manners!" said Emma. "Well, we shall see how irresistible Mr. Tom Musgrave and I find each other. I suppose I shall know him as soon as I enter the ball-room; he must carry some of his charms in his face."

"You will not find him in the ball-room, I can tell you; you will go early, that Mrs. Edwards may get a good place by the fire, and he never comes till late; if the Osbornes are coming, he will wait in the passage and come in with them. I should like to look in upon you, Emma. If it was but a good day with my father, I would wrap myself up, and James should drive me over as soon as I had made tea for him; and I should be with you by the time the dancing began."

"What! Would you come late at night in this chair?"

"To be sure I would. There, I said you were very refined, and that's an instance of it."

Emma for a moment made no answer. At last she said,—

THE WATSONS

“I wish, Elizabeth, you had not made a point of my going to this ball; I wish you were going instead of me. Your pleasure would be greater than mine. I am a stranger here, and know nobody but the Edwards; my enjoyment, therefore, must be very doubtful. Yours, among all your acquaintance, would be certain. It is not too late to change. Very little apology could be requisite to the Edwards, who must be more glad of your company than of mine, and I should most readily return to my father; and should not be at all afraid to drive this quiet old creature home. Your clothes I would undertake to find means of sending to you.”

“My dearest Emma,” cried Elizabeth, warmly, “do you think I would do such a thing? Not for the universe! But I shall never forget your good-nature in proposing it. You must have a sweet temper indeed! I never met with anything like it! And would you really give up the ball that I might be able to go to it? Believe me, Emma, I am not so selfish as that comes to. No; though I am nine years older than you are, I would not be the means of keeping you from being seen. You are very pretty, and it would be very hard that you should not have as fair a chance as we have all had to make your fortune. No, Emma, whoever stays at home this winter, it sha’n’t be you. I am sure I should

THE WATSONS

never have forgiven the person who kept me from a ball at nineteen.”

Emma expressed her gratitude, and for a few minutes they jogged on in silence. Elizabeth first spoke:—

“You will take notice who Mary Edwards dances with?”

“I will remember her partners, if I can; but you know they will be all strangers to me.”

“Only observe whether she dances with Captain Hunter more than once,—I have my fears in that quarter. Not that her father or mother like officers; but if she does, you know, it is all over with poor Sam. And I have promised to write him word who she dances with.”

“Is Sam attached to Miss Edwards?”

“Did not you know that?”

“How should I know it? How should I know in Shropshire what is passing of that nature in Surrey? It is not likely that circumstances of such delicacy should have made any part of the scanty communication which passed between you and me for the last fourteen years.”

“I wonder I never mentioned it when I wrote. Since you have been at home, I have been so busy with my poor father and our great wash that I have had no leisure to tell you anything; but, indeed, I concluded you knew it all. He has been very much in love with her these two years,

THE WATSONS

and it is a great disappointment to him that he cannot always get away to our balls; but Mr. Curtis won't often spare him, and just now it is a sickly time at Guildford."

"Do you suppose Miss Edwards inclined to like him?"

"I am afraid not: you know she is an only child, and will have at least ten thousand pounds."

"But still she may like our brother."

"Oh, no! The Edwards look much higher. Her father and mother would never consent to it. Sam is only a surgeon, you know. Sometimes I think she does like him. But Mary Edwards is rather prim and reserved; I do not always know what she would be at."

"Unless Sam feels on sure grounds with the lady herself, it seems a pity to me that he should be encouraged to think of her at all."

"A young man must think of somebody," said Elizabeth, "and why should not he be as lucky as Robert, who has got a good wife and six thousand pounds?"

"We must not all expect to be individually lucky," replied Emma. "The luck of one member of a family is luck to all."

"Mine is all to come, I am sure," said Elizabeth, giving another sigh to the remembrance of Purvis. "I have been unlucky enough; and I

THE WATSONS

cannot say much for you, as my aunt married again so foolishly. Well, you will have a good ball, I daresay. The next turning will bring us to the turnpike: you may see the church-tower over the hedge, and the White Hart is close by it. I shall long to know what you think of Tom Musgrave."

Such were the last audible sounds of Miss Watson's voice, before they passed through the turnpike-gate, and entered on the pitching of the town, the jumbling and noise of which made further conversation most thoroughly undesirable. The old mare trotted heavily on, wanting no direction of the reins to take the right turning, and making only one blunder, in proposing to stop at the milliner's before she drew up towards Mr. Edwards' door. Mr. Edwards lived in the best house in the street, and the best in the place, if Mr. Tomlinson, the banker, might be indulged in calling his newly erected house at the end of the town, with a shrubbery and sweep, in the country.

Mr. Edwards' house was higher than most of its neighbours, with four windows on each side the door; the windows guarded by posts and chains and the door approached by a flight of stone steps.

"Here we are," said Elizabeth, as the carriage ceased moving, "safely arrived, and by the

THE WATSONS

market clock we have been only five-and-thirty minutes coming; which I think is doing pretty well, though it would be nothing for Penelope. Is not it a nice town? The Edwards have a noble house, you see, and they live quite in style. The door will be opened by a man in livery, with a powdered head, I can tell you."

Emma had seen the Edwards only one morning at Stanton; they were therefore all but strangers to her; and though her spirits were by no means insensible to the expected joys of the evening, she felt a little uncomfortable in the thought of all that was to precede them. Her conversation with Elizabeth, too, giving her some very unpleasant feelings with respect to her own family, had made her more open to disagreeable impressions from any other cause, and increased her sense of the awkwardness of rushing into intimacy on so slight an acquaintance.

There was nothing in the manner of Mrs. and Miss Edwards to give immediate change to these ideas. The mother, though a very friendly woman, had a reserved air, and a great deal of formal civility; and the daughter, a genteel-looking girl of twenty-two, with her hair in papers, seemed very naturally to have caught something of the style of her mother, who had brought her up. Emma was soon left to know

THE WATSONS

what they could be, by Elizabeth's being obliged to hurry away; and some very languid remarks on the probable brilliancy of the ball were all that broke, at intervals, a silence of half an hour, before they were joined by the master of the house. Mr. Edwards had a much easier and more communicative air than the ladies of the family; he was fresh from the street, and he came ready to tell whatever might interest. After a cordial reception of Emma, he turned to his daughter with,—

“Well, Mary, I bring you good news: the Osbornes will certainly be at the ball to-night. Horses for two carriages are ordered from the White Hart to be at Osborne Castle by nine.”

“I am glad of it,” observed Mrs. Edwards, “because their coming gives a credit to our assembly. The Osbornes being known to have been at the first ball, will dispose a great many people to attend the second. It is more than they deserve; for, in fact, they add nothing to the pleasure of the evening: they come so late and go so early; but great people have always their charm.”

Mr. Edwards proceeded to relate many other little articles of news which his morning's lounge had supplied him with, and they chatted with greater briskness, till Mrs. Edwards' moment for dressing arrived, and the young ladies were

THE WATSONS

carefully recommended to lose no time. Emma was shown to a very comfortable apartment, and as soon as Mrs. Edwards' civilities could leave her to herself, the happy occupation, the first bliss of a ball, began. The girls, dressing in some measure together, grew unavoidably better acquainted. Emma found in Miss Edwards the show of good sense, a modest unpretending mind, and a great wish of obliging; and when they returned to the parlour where Mrs. Edwards was sitting, respectably attired in one of the two satin gowns which went through the winter, and a new cap from the milliner's, they entered it with much easier feelings and more natural smiles than they had taken away. Their dress was now to be examined: Mrs. Edwards acknowledged herself too old-fashioned to approve of every modern extravagance, however sanctioned; and though complacently viewing her daughter's good looks, would give but a qualified admiration; and Mr. Edwards, not less satisfied with Mary, paid some compliments of good-humoured gallantry to Emma at her expense. The discussion led to more intimate remarks, and Miss Edwards gently asked Emma if she was not often reckoned very like her youngest brother. Emma thought she could perceive a faint blush accompany the question, and there seemed something

THE WATSONS

still more suspicious in the manner in which Mr. Edwards took up the subject.

“You are paying Miss Emma no great compliment, I think, Mary,” said he, hastily. “Mr. Sam Watson is a very good sort of young man, and I dare say a very clever surgeon; but his complexion has been rather too much exposed to all weathers to make a likeness to him very flattering.”

Mary apologised, in some confusion,—

“She had not thought a strong likeness at all incompatible with very different degrees of beauty. There might be resemblance in countenance, and the complexion and even the features be very unlike.”

“I know nothing of my brother’s beauty,” said Emma, “for I have not seen him since he was seven years old; but my father reckons us alike.”

“Mr. Watson!” cried Mr. Edwards; “well, you astonish me. There is not the least likeness in the world; your brother’s eyes are grey, yours are brown; he has a long face and a wide mouth. My dear, do you perceive the least resemblance?”

“Not the least: Miss Emma Watson puts me very much in mind of her eldest sister, and sometimes I see a look of Miss Penelope, and once or twice there has been a glance of Mr. Robert,

THE WATSONS

but I cannot perceive any likeness to Mr. Samuel.”

“I see the likeness between her and Miss Watson,” replied Mr. Edwards, “very strongly, but I am not sensible of the others. I do not much think she is like any of the family but Miss Watson; but I am very sure there is no resemblance between her and Sam.”

This matter was settled, and they went to dinner.

“Your father, Miss Emma, is one of my oldest friends,” said Mr. Edwards, as he helped her to wine, when they were drawn round the fire to enjoy their dessert. “We must drink to his better health. It is a great concern to me, I assure you, that he should be such an invalid. I know nobody who likes a game of cards, in a social way, better than he does, and very few people who play a fairer rubber. It is a thousand pities that he should be so deprived of the pleasure. For now we have a quiet little Whist Club, that meets three times a week at the White Hart; and if he could but have his health, how much he would enjoy it!”

“I dare say he would, sir; and I wish, with all my heart, he were equal to it.”

“Your club would be better fitted for an invalid,” said Mrs. Edwards, “if you did not keep it up so late.”

THE WATSONS

This was an old grievance.

“So late, my dear! What are you talking of?” cried the husband, with sturdy pleasantry. “We are always at home before midnight. They would laugh at Osborne Castle to hear you call that late; they are but just rising from dinner at midnight.”

“That is nothing to the purpose,” retorted the lady, calmly. “The Osbornes are to be no rule for us. You had better meet every night, and break up two hours sooner.”

So far the subject was very often carried; but Mr. and Mrs. Edwards were so wise as never to pass that point; and Mr. Edwards now turned to something else. He had lived long enough in the idleness of a town to become a little of a gossip, and having some anxiety to know more of the circumstances of his young guest than had yet reached him, he began with,—

“I think, Miss Emma, I remember your aunt very well, about thirty years ago; I am pretty sure I danced with her in the old rooms at Bath the year before I married. She was a very fine woman then; but like other people, I suppose, she is grown somewhat older since that time. I hope she is likely to be happy in her second choice.”

“I hope so; I believe so, sir,” said Emma, in some agitation.

THE WATSONS

“ Mr. Turner had not been dead a great while, I think? ”

“ About two years, sir. ”

“ I forget what her name is now. ”

“ O’Brien. ”

“ Irish! ah, I remember; and she is gone to settle in Ireland. I do wonder that you should not wish to go with her into that country, Miss Emma; but it must be a great deprivation to her, poor lady! after bringing you up like a child of her own. ”

“ I was not so ungrateful, sir, ” said Emma, warmly, “ as to wish to be anywhere but with her. It did not suit Captain O’Brien that I should be of the party. ”

“ Captain! ” repeated Mrs. Edwards. “ The gentleman is in the army then? ”

“ Yes, ma’am. ”

“ Ay, there is nothing like your officers for captivating the ladies, young or old. There is no resisting a cockade, my dear. ”

“ I hope there is, ” said Mrs. Edwards, gravely, with a quick glance at her daughter; and Emma had just recovered from her own perturbation in time to see a blush on Miss Edwards’ cheek, and in remembering what Elizabeth had said of Captain Hunter, to wonder and waver between his influence and her brother’s.

THE WATSONS

“Elderly ladies should be careful how they make a second choice,” observed Mr. Edwards.

“Carefulness and discretion should not be confined to elderly ladies or to a second choice,” added his wife. “They are quite as necessary to young ladies in their first.”

“Rather more so, my dear,” replied he; “because young ladies are likely to feel the effects of it longer. When an old lady plays the fool, it is not in the course of nature that she should suffer from it many years.”

Emma drew her hand across her eyes; and Mrs. Edwards, in perceiving it, changed the subject to one of less anxiety to all.

With nothing to do but to expect the hour of setting off, the afternoon was long to the two young ladies; and though Miss Edwards was rather discomposed at the very early hour which her mother always fixed for going, that early hour itself was watched for with some eagerness.

The entrance of the tea-things at seven o'clock was some relief; and luckily Mr. and Mrs. Edwards always drank a dish extraordinary and ate an additional muffin when they were going to sit up late, which lengthened the ceremony almost to the wished-for moment.

At a little before eight o'clock the Tomlinsons' carriage was heard to go by, which was

THE WATSONS

the constant signal for Mrs. Edwards to order hers to the door; and in a very few minutes the party were transported from the quiet and warmth of a snug parlour to the bustle, noise, and draughts of air of a broad entrance passage of an inn. Mrs. Edwards, carefully guarding her own dress, while she attended with yet greater solicitude to the proper security of her young charges' shoulders and throats, led the way up the wide staircase, while no sound of a ball but the first scrape of one violin blessed the ears of her followers; and Miss Edwards, on hazarding the anxious inquiry of whether there were many people come yet, was told by the waiter, as she knew she should, that Mr. Tomlinson's family were in the room.

In passing along a short gallery to the assembly-room, brilliant in lights before them, they were accosted by a young man in a morning-dress and boots, who was standing in the doorway of a bed-chamber apparently on purpose to see them go by.

"Ah! Mrs. Edwards, how do you do? How do you do, Miss Edwards?" he cried, with an easy air. "You are determined to be in good time, I see, as usual. The candles are but this moment lit."

"I like to get a good seat by the fire, you know, Mr. Musgrave," replied Mrs. Edwards.

THE WATSONS

“I am this moment going to dress,” said he. “I am waiting for my stupid fellow. We shall have a famous ball. The Osbornes are certainly coming; you may depend upon that, for I was with Lord Osborne this morning.”

The party passed on. Mrs. Edwards’ satin gown swept along the clean floor of the ball-room to the fireplace at the upper end, where one party only were formally seated, while three or four officers were lounging together, passing in and out from the adjoining card-room. A very stiff meeting between these near neighbours ensued; and as soon as they were all duly placed again, Emma, in a low whisper, which became the solemn scene, said to Miss Edwards,—

“The gentleman we passed in the passage was Mr. Musgrave, then; he is reckoned remarkably agreeable, I understand?”

Miss Edwards answered hesitatingly, “Yes; he is very much liked by many people; but we are not very intimate.”

“He is rich, is not he?”

“He has about eight or nine hundred a year, I believe. He came into possession of it when he was very young, and my father and mother think it has given him rather an unsettled turn. He is no favourite with them.”

The cold and empty appearance of the room,

THE WATSONS

and the demure air of the small cluster of females at one end of it, began soon to give way. The inspiriting sound of other carriages was heard, and continual accessions of portly chaperons and strings of smartly dressed girls were received, with now and then a fresh gentleman straggler, who, if not enough in love to station himself near any fair creature, seemed glad to escape into the card-room.

Among the increasing number of military men, one now made his way to Miss Edwards with an air of empressement which decidedly said to her companion, "I am Captain Hunter;" and Emma, who could not but watch her at such a moment, saw her looking rather distressed, but by no means displeased, and heard an engagement formed for the two first dances, which made her think her brother Sam's a hopeless case.

Emma in the meanwhile was not unobserved or unadmired herself. A new face, and a very pretty one, could not be slighted. Her name was whispered from one party to another; and no sooner had the signal been given by the orchestra's striking up a favourite air, which seemed to call the young to their duty and people the centre of the room, than she found herself engaged to dance with a brother officer, introduced by Captain Hunter.

THE WATSONS

Emma Watson was not more than of the middle height, well made and plump, with an air of healthy vigour. Her skin was very brown, but clear, smooth, and glowing, which, with a lively eye, a sweet smile, and an open countenance, gave beauty to attract, and expression to make that beauty improve on acquaintance. Having no reason to be dissatisfied with her partner, the evening began very pleasantly to her, and her feelings perfectly coincided with the reiterated observation of others, that it was an excellent ball. The two first dances were not quite over when the returning sound of carriages after a long interruption called general notice. "The Osbornes are coming! The Osbornes are coming!" was repeated round the room. After some minutes of extraordinary bustle without and watchful curiosity within, the important party, preceded by the attentive master of the inn to open a door which was never shut, made their appearance. They consisted of Lady Osborne; her son, Lord Osborne; her daughter, Miss Osborne; Miss Carr, her daughter's friend; Mr. Howard, formerly tutor to Lord Osborne, now clergyman of the parish in which the castle stood; Mrs. Blake, a widow sister, who lived with him; her son, a fine boy of ten years old; and Mr. Tom Musgrave, who probably, imprisoned within his own room, had

THE WATSONS

been listening in bitter impatience to the sound of the music for the last half-hour. In their progress up the room they paused almost immediately behind Emma to receive the compliments of some acquaintance; and she heard Lady Osborne observe that they had made a point of coming early for the gratification of Mrs. Blake's little boy, who was uncommonly fond of dancing. Emma looked at them all as they passed, but chiefly and with most interest on Tom Musgrave, who was certainly a genteel, good-looking young man. Of the females Lady Osborne had by much the finest person; though nearly fifty, she was very handsome, and had all the dignity of rank.

Lord Osborne was a very fine young man; but there was an air of coldness, of carelessness, even of awkwardness about him, which seemed to speak him out of his element in a ball-room. He came, in fact, only because it was judged expedient for him to please the borough; he was not fond of women's company, and he never danced. Mr. Howard was an agreeable-looking man, a little more than thirty.

At the conclusion of the two dances Emma found herself, she knew not how, seated amongst the Osbornes' set; and she was immediately struck with the fine countenance and animated gestures of the little boy, as he was standing be-

THE WATSONS

fore his mother, considering when they should begin.

“You will not be surprised at Charles’ impatience,” said Mrs. Blake, a lively, pleasant-looking little woman of five or six and thirty, to a lady who was standing near her, “when you know what a partner he is to have. Miss Osborne has been so very kind as to promise to dance the two first dances with him.”

“Oh, yes! we have been engaged this week,” cried the boy, “and we are to dance down every couple.”

On the other side of Emma, Miss Osborne, Miss Carr, and a party of young men were standing engaged in very lively consultation; and soon afterwards she saw the smartest officer of the set walking off to the orchestra to order the dance, while Miss Osborne, passing before her to her little expecting partner, hastily said: “Charles, I beg your pardon for not keeping my engagement, but I am going to dance these two dances with Colonel Beresford. I know you will excuse me, and I will certainly dance with you after tea;” and without staying for an answer, she turned again to Miss Carr, and in another minute was led by Colonel Beresford to begin the set. If the poor little boy’s face had in its happiness been interesting to Emma, it was infinitely more so under this sudden re-

THE WATSONS

verse; he stood the picture of disappointment, with crimsoned cheeks, quivering lips, and eyes bent on the floor. His mother, stifling her own mortification, tried to soothe his with the prospect of Miss Osborne's second promise; but though he contrived to utter, with an effort of boyish bravery, "Oh, I do not mind!" it was very evident, by the unceasing agitation of his features, that he minded it as much as ever.

Emma did not think or reflect; she felt and acted. "I shall be very happy to dance with you, sir, if you like it," said she, holding out her hand with the most unaffected good-humour. The boy, in one moment restored to all his first delight, looked joyfully at his mother; and stepping forwards with an honest, simple "Thank you, ma'am," was instantly ready to attend his new acquaintance. The thankfulness of Mrs. Blake was more diffuse; with a look most expressive of unexpected pleasure and lively gratitude, she turned to her neighbour with repeated and fervent acknowledgments of so great and condescending a kindness to her boy. Emma with perfect truth could assure her that she could not be giving greater pleasure than she felt herself; and Charles being provided with his gloves and charged to keep them on, they joined the set which was now rapidly forming, with nearly equal complacency. It was a partner-

THE WATSONS

ship which could not be noticed without surprise. It gained her a broad stare from Miss Osborne and Miss Carr as they passed her in the dance. "Upon my word, Charles, you are in luck," said the former, as she turned him; "you have got a better partner than me;" to which the happy Charles answered "Yes."

Tom Musgrave, who was dancing with Miss Carr, gave her many inquisitive glances; and after a time Lord Osborne himself came, and under pretence of talking to Charles, stood to look at his partner. Though rather distressed by such observation, Emma could not repent what she had done, so happy had it made both the boy and his mother; the latter of whom was continually making opportunities of addressing her with the warmest civility. Her little partner she found, though bent chiefly on dancing, was not unwilling to speak, when her questions or remarks gave him anything to say; and she learnt, by a sort of inevitable inquiry, that he had two brothers and a sister, that they and their mamma all lived with his uncle at Wickstead, that his uncle taught him Latin, that he was very fond of riding, and had a horse of his own given him by Lord Osborne; and that he had been out once already with Lord Osborne's hounds.

At the end of these dances Emma found they

THE WATSONS

were to drink tea; Miss Edwards gave her a caution to be at hand, in a manner which convinced her of Mrs. Edwards' holding it very important to have them both close to her when she moved into the tea-room; and Emma was accordingly on the alert to gain her proper station. It was always the pleasure of the company to have a little bustle and crowd when they adjourned for refreshment. The tea-room was a small room within the card-room; and in passing through the latter, where the passage was straitened by tables, Mrs. Edwards and her party were for a few moments hemmed in. It happened close by Lady Osborne's casino-table; Mr. Howard, who belonged to it, spoke to his nephew; and Emma, on perceiving herself the object of attention both to Lady Osborne and him, had just turned away her eyes in time to avoid seeming to hear her young companion exclaim delightedly aloud, "Oh, uncle! do look at my partner; she is so pretty!" As they were immediately in motion again, however, Charles was hurried off without being able to receive his uncle's suffrage. On entering the tea-room, in which two long tables were prepared, Lord Osborne was to be seen quite alone at the end of one, as if retreating as far as he could from the ball, to enjoy his own thoughts and gape without restraint. Charles instantly pointed him out

THE WATSONS

to Emma. "There's Lord Osborne; let you and I go and sit by him."

"No, no," said Emma, laughing; "you must sit with my friends."

Charles was now free enough to hazard a few questions in his turn. "What o'clock was it?"

"Eleven."

"Eleven! and I am not at all sleepy. Mamma said I should be asleep before ten. Do you think Miss Osborne will keep her word with me when tea is over?"

"Oh, yes! I suppose so;" though she felt that she had no better reason to give than that Miss Osborne had not kept it before.

"When shall you come to Osborne Castle?"

"Never, probably. I am not acquainted with the family."

"But you may come to Wickstead and see mamma, and she can take you to the castle. There is a monstrous curious stuffed fox there, and a badger; anybody would think they were alive. It is a pity you should not see them."

On rising from tea there was again a scramble for the pleasure of being first out of the room, which happened to be increased by one or two of the card-parties having just broken up, and the players being disposed to move exactly the different way. Among these was Mr. Howard, his sister leaning on his arm; and no sooner

THE WATSONS

were they within reach of Emma, than Mrs Blake, calling her notice by a friendly touch, said, "Your goodness to Charles, my dear Miss Watson, brings all his family upon you. Give me leave to introduce my brother." Emma curtsied, the gentleman bowed, made a hasty request for the honour of her hand in the two next dances, to which as hasty an affirmative was given, and they were immediately impelled in opposite directions. Emma was very well pleased with the circumstance; there was a quietly cheerful, gentlemanlike air in Mr. Howard which suited her; and in a few minutes afterwards the value of her engagement increased, when as she was sitting in the card-room, somewhat screened by a door, she heard Lord Osborne, who was lounging on a vacant table near her, call Tom Musgrave towards him and say, "Why do not you dance with that beautiful Emma Watson? I want you to dance with her, and I will come and stand by you."

"I was determined on it this very moment, my lord; I'll be introduced and dance with her directly."

"Ay, do; and if you find she does not want much talking to, you may introduce me by and by."

"Very well, my lord; if she is like her sisters, she will only want to be listened to. I will go

THE WATSONS

this moment. I shall find her in the tea-room. That stiff old Mrs. Edwards has never done tea.”

Away he went, Lord Osborne after him; and Emma lost no time in hurrying from her corner exactly the other way, forgetting in her haste that she left Mrs. Edwards behind.

“ We had quite lost you,” said Mrs. Edwards, who followed her with Mary in less than five minutes. “ If you prefer this room to the other, there is no reason why you should not be here; but we had better all be together.”

Emma was saved the trouble of apologising, by their being joined at the moment by Tom Musgrave, who requesting Mrs. Edwards aloud to do him the honour of presenting him to Miss Emma Watson, left that good lady without any choice in the business, but that of testifying by the coldness of her manner that she did it unwillingly. The honour of dancing with her was solicited without loss of time; and Emma, however she might like to be thought a beautiful girl by lord or commoner, was so little disposed to favour Tom Musgrave himself that she had considerable satisfaction in avowing her previous engagement. He was evidently surprised and discomposed. The style of her last partner had probably led him to believe her not overpowered with applications.

THE WATSONS

“My little friend, Charles Blake,” he cried, “must not expect to engross you the whole evening. We can never suffer this. It is against the rules of the assembly, and I am sure it will never be patronised by our good friend here, Mrs. Edwards; she is by much too nice a judge of decorum to give her license to such a dangerous particularity—”

“I am not going to dance with Master Blake, sir!”

The gentleman, a little disconcerted, could only hope he might be fortunate another time, and seeming unwilling to leave her, though his friend, Lord Osborne, was waiting in the doorway for the result, as Emma with some amusement perceived, he began to make civil inquiries after her family.

“How comes it that we have not the pleasure of seeing your sisters here this evening? Our assemblies have been used to be so well treated by them that we do not know how to take this neglect.”

“My eldest sister is the only one at home, and she could not leave my father.”

“Miss Watson the only one at home! You astonish me! It seems but the day before yesterday that I saw all three in this town. But I am afraid I have been a very sad neighbour of late. I hear dreadful complaints of my negli-

THE WATSONS

gence wherever I go, and I confess it is a shameful length of time since I was at Stanton. But I shall now endeavour to make myself amends for the past."

Emma's calm courtesy in reply must have struck him as very unlike the encouraging warmth he had been used to receive from her sisters, and gave him probably the novel sensation of doubting his own influence, and of wishing for more attention than she bestowed. The dancing now recommenced; Miss Carr being impatient to call, everybody was required to stand up; and Tom Musgrave's curiosity was appeased on seeing Mr. Howard come forward and claim Emma's hand.

"That will do as well for me," was Lord Osborne's remark, when his friend carried him the news, and he was continually at Howard's elbow during the two dances.

The frequency of his appearance there was the only unpleasant part of the engagement, the only objection she could make to Mr. Howard. In himself, she thought him as agreeable as he looked; though chatting on the commonest topics, he had a sensible, unaffected way of expressing himself, which made them all worth hearing, and she only regretted that he had not been able to make his pupil's manners as unexceptionable as his own. The two dances seemed

THE WATSONS

very short, and she had her partner's authority for considering them so. At their conclusion the Osbornes and their train were all on the move.

"We are off at last," said his lordship to Tom. "How much longer do you stay in this heavenly place?—till sunrise?"

"No, faith! my lord; I have had quite enough of it, I assure you. I shall not show myself here again when I have had the honour of attending Lady Osborne to her carriage. I shall retreat in as much secrecy as possible to the most remote corner of the house, where I shall order a barrel of oysters, and be famously snug."

"Let me see you soon at the castle, and bring me word how she looks by daylight."

Emma and Mrs. Blake parted as old acquaintance, and Charles shook her by the hand, and wished her good-bye at least a dozen times. From Miss Osborne and Miss Carr she received something like a jerking curtsey as they passed her; even Lady Osborne gave her a look of complacency, and his lordship actually came back, after the others were out of the room, to "beg her pardon," and look in the window-seat behind her for the gloves which were visibly compressed in his hand. As Tom Musgrave was seen no more, we may suppose his plan to have succeeded, and imagine him mortifying with his

THE WATSONS

barrel of oysters in dreary solitude, or gladly assisting his landlady in her bar to make fresh negus for the happy dancers above. Emma could not help missing the party by whom she had been, though in some respects unpleasantly, distinguished; and the two dances which followed and concluded the ball were rather flat in comparison with the others. Mr. Edwards having played with good luck, they were some of the last in the room.

“Here we are back again, I declare,” said Emma, sorrowfully, as she walked into the dining-room, where the table was prepared, and the neat upper maid was lighting the candles. “My dear Miss Edwards, how soon it is at an end! I wish it could all come over again.”

A great deal of kind pleasure was expressed in her having enjoyed the evening so much; and Mr. Edwards was as warm as herself in the praise of the fulness, brilliancy, and spirit of the meeting, though as he had been fixed the whole time at the same table in the same room, with only one change of chairs, it might have seemed a matter scarcely perceived; but he had won four rubbers out of five, and everything went well. His daughter felt the advantage of this gratified state of mind, in the course of the remarks and retrospections which now ensued over the welcome soup.

THE WATSONS

“How came you not to dance with either of the Mr. Tomlinsons, Mary?” said her mother.

“I was always engaged when they asked me.”

“I thought you were to have stood up with Mr. James the two last dances; Mrs. Tomlinson told me he was gone to ask you, and I had heard you say two minutes before that you were not engaged.”

“Yes, but there was a mistake; I had misunderstood. I did not know I was engaged. I thought it had been for the two dances after, if we stayed so long; but Captain Hunter assured me it was for those very two.”

“So you ended with Captain Hunter, Mary, did you?” said her father. “And whom did you begin with?”

“Captain Hunter,” was repeated in a very humble tone.

“Hum! That is being constant, however. But who else did you dance with?”

“Mr. Norton and Mr. Styles.”

“And who are they?”

“Mr. Norton is a cousin of Captain Hunter’s.”

“And who is Mr. Styles?”

“One of his particular friends.”

“All in the same regiment,” added Mrs. Edwards. “Mary was surrounded by red-coats all the evening. I should have been better pleased

THE WATSONS

to see her dancing with some of our old neighbours, I confess.”

“Yes, yes; we must not neglect our old neighbours. But if these soldiers are quicker than other people in a ball-room, what are young ladies to do?”

“I think there is no occasion for their engaging themselves so many dances beforehand, Mr. Edwards.”

“No, perhaps not; but I remember, my dear, when you and I did the same.”

Mrs. Edwards said no more, and Mary breathed again. A good deal of good-humoured pleasantry followed; and Emma went to bed in charming spirits, her head full of Osbornes, Blakes, and Howards.

The next morning brought a great many visitors. It was the way of the place always to call on Mrs. Edwards the morning after a ball, and this neighbourly inclination was increased in the present instance by a general spirit of curiosity on Emma's account, as everybody wanted to look again at the girl who had been admired the night before by Lord Osborne. Many were the eyes, and various the degrees of approbation with which she was examined. Some saw no fault, and some no beauty. With some her brown skin was the annihilation of every grace, and others could never be persuaded that she

THE WATSONS

was half so handsome as Elizabeth Watson had been ten years ago. The morning passed quickly away in discussing the merits of the ball with all this succession of company; and Emma was at once astonished by finding it two o'clock, and considering that she had heard nothing of her father's chair. After this discovery she had walked twice to the window to examine the street, and was on the point of asking leave to ring the bell and make inquiries, when the light sound of a carriage driving up to the door set her heart at ease. She stepped again to the window, but instead of the convenient though very un-smart family equipage perceived a neat cur-ricle. Mr. Musgrave was shortly afterwards announced, and Mrs. Edwards put on her very stiffest look at the sound. Not at all dismayed, however, by her chilling air, he paid his compliments to each of the ladies with no unbecoming ease, and continuing to address Emma, presented her a note, which "he had the honour of bringing from her sister, but to which he must observe a verbal postscript from himself would be requisite."

The note, which Emma was beginning to read rather before Mrs. Edwards had entreated her to use no ceremony, contained a few lines from Elizabeth importing that their father, in consequence of being unusually well, had taken

THE WATSONS

the sudden resolution of attending the visitation that day, and that as his road lay quite wide from D., it was impossible for her to come home till the following morning, unless the Edwards would send her, which was hardly to be expected, or she could meet with any chance conveyance, or did not mind walking so far. She had scarcely run her eye through the whole, before she found herself obliged to listen to Tom Musgrave's further account.

“ I received that note from the fair hands of Miss Watson only ten minutes ago,” said he; “ I met her in the village of Stanton, whither my good stars prompted me to turn my horses' heads. She was at that moment in quest of a person to employ on the errand, and I was fortunate enough to convince her that she could not find a more willing or speedy messenger than myself. Remember, I say nothing of my disinterestedness. My reward is to be the indulgence of conveying you to Stanton in my curriole. Though they are not written down, I bring your sister's orders for the same.”

Emma felt distressed; she did not like the proposal,—she did not wish to be on terms of intimacy with the proposer; and yet, fearful of encroaching on the Edwards, as well as wishing to go home herself, she was at a loss how entirely to decline what he offered. Mrs. Ed-

THE WATSONS

wards continued silent, either not understanding the case, or waiting to see how the young lady's inclination lay. Emma thanked him, but professed herself very unwilling to give him so much trouble. "The trouble was of course honour, pleasure, delight,—what had he or his horses to do?" Still she hesitated,— "She believed she must beg leave to decline his assistance; she was rather afraid of the sort of carriage. The distance was not beyond a walk." Mrs. Edwards was silent no longer. She inquired into the particulars, and then said, "We shall be extremely happy, Miss Emma, if you can give us the pleasure of your company till to-morrow; but if you cannot conveniently do so, our carriage is quite at your service, and Mary will be pleased with the opportunity of seeing your sister."

This was precisely what Emma had longed for, and she accepted the offer most thankfully, acknowledging that as Elizabeth was entirely alone, it was her wish to return home to dinner. The plan was warmly opposed by their visitor,—

"I cannot suffer it, indeed. I must not be deprived of the happiness of escorting you. I assure you there is not a possibility of fear with my horses. You might guide them yourself. Your sisters all know how quiet they are; they have none of them the smallest scruple in trust-

THE WATSONS

ing themselves with me, even on a race-course. Believe me," added he, lowering his voice, "you are quite safe,—the danger is only mine."

Emma was not more disposed to oblige him for all this.

"And as to Mrs. Edwards' carriage being used the day after a ball, it is a thing quite out of rule, I assure you,—never heard of before. The old coachman will look as black as his horses,—won't he, Miss Edwards?"

No notice was taken. The ladies were silently firm, and the gentleman found himself obliged to submit.

"What a famous ball we had last night!" he cried, after a short pause. "How long did you keep it up after the Osbornes and I went away?"

"We had two dances more."

"It is making it too much of a fatigue, I think, to stay so late. I suppose your set was not a very full one."

"Yes; quite as full as ever, except the Osbornes. There seemed no vacancy anywhere; and everybody danced with uncommon spirit to the very last."

Emma said this, though against her conscience.

"Indeed! perhaps I might have looked in upon you again, if I had been aware of as

THE WATSONS

much; for I am rather fond of dancing than not. Miss Osborne is a charming girl, is not she?"

"I do not think her handsome," replied Emma, to whom all this was chiefly addressed.

"Perhaps she is not critically handsome, but her manners are delightful. And Fanny Carr is a most interesting little creature. You can imagine nothing more *naïve* or *piquante*; and what do you think of Lord Osborne, Miss Watson?"

"He would be handsome even though he were not a lord, and perhaps, better bred; more desirous of pleasing and showing himself pleased in a right place."

"Upon my word, you are severe upon my friend! I assure you Lord Osborne is a very good fellow."

"I do not dispute his virtues, but I do not like his careless air."

"If it were not a breach of confidence," replied Tom, with an important look, "perhaps I might be able to win a more favourable opinion of poor Osborne."

Emma gave him no encouragement, and he was obliged to keep his friend's secret. He was also obliged to put an end to his visit, for Mrs. Edwards having ordered her carriage, there was no time to be lost on Emma's side in preparing

THE WATSONS

for it. Miss Edwards accompanied her home; but as it was dinner-hour at Stanton, stayed with them only a few minutes.

“Now, my dear Emma,” said Miss Watson, as soon as they were alone, “you must talk to me all the rest of the day without stopping, or I shall not be satisfied; but, first of all, Nanny shall bring in the dinner. Poor thing! You will not dine as you did yesterday, for we have nothing but some fried beef. How nice Mary Edwards looks in her new pelisse! And now tell me how you like them all, and what I am to say to Sam. I have begun my letter; Jack Stokes is to call for it to-morrow, for his uncle is going within a mile of Guildford next day.”

Nanny brought in the dinner.

“We will wait upon ourselves,” continued Elizabeth, “and then we shall lose no time. And so you would not come home with Tom Musgrave?”

“No, you had said so much against him that I could not wish either for the obligation or the intimacy which the use of his carriage must have created. I should not even have liked the appearance of it.”

“You did very right; though I wonder at your forbearance, and I do not think I could have done it myself. He seemed so eager to fetch you that I could not say no, though it

THE WATSONS

rather went against me to be throwing you together, so well as I knew his tricks; but I did long to see you, and it was a clever way of getting you home. Besides, it won't do to be too nice. Nobody could have thought of the Edwards letting you have their coach, after the horses being out so late. But what am I to say to Sam?"

"If you are guided by me, you will not encourage him to think of Miss Edwards. The father is decidedly against him, the mother shows him no favour, and I doubt his having any interest with Mary. She danced twice with Captain Hunter, and I think shows him in general as much encouragement as is consistent with her disposition and the circumstances she is placed in. She once mentioned Sam, and certainly with a little confusion; but that was perhaps merely owing to the consciousness of his liking her, which may very probably have come to her knowledge."

"Oh, dear! yes. She has heard enough of that from us all. Poor Sam! he is out of luck as well as other people. For the life of me, Emma, I cannot help feeling for those that are crossed in love. Well, now begin, and give me an account of everything as it happened."

Emma obeyed her, and Elizabeth listened with

THE WATSONS

very little interruption till she heard of Mr. Howard as a partner.

“Dance with Mr. Howard! Good heavens! you don’t say so! Why, he is quite one of the great and grand ones. Did you not find him very high?”

“His manners are of a kind to give me much more ease and confidence than Tom Musgrave’s.”

“Well, go on. I should have been frightened out of my wits to have had anything to do with the Osbornes’ set.”

Emma concluded her narration.

“And so you really did not dance with Tom Musgrave at all; but you must have liked him,—you must have been struck with him altogether.”

“I do not like him, Elizabeth. I allow his person and air to be good, and that his manners to a certain point—his address rather—is pleasing; but I see nothing else to admire in him. On the contrary, he seems very vain, very conceited, absurdly anxious for distinction, and absolutely contemptible in some of the measures he takes for being so. There is a ridiculousness about him that entertains me; but his company gives me no other agreeable emotion.”

“My dearest Emma! you are like nobody else

THE WATSONS

in the world. It is well Margaret is not by. You do not offend me, though I hardly know how to believe you; but Margaret would never forgive such words."

"I wish Margaret could have heard him profess his ignorance of her being out of the country; he declared it seemed only two days since he had seen her."

"Ay, that is just like him; and yet this is the man she will fancy so desperately in love with her. He is no favourite of mine, as you well know, Emma; but you must think him agreeable. Can you lay your hand on your heart, and say you do not?"

"Indeed, I can, both hands; and spread them to their widest extent."

"I should like to know the man you do think agreeable."

"His name is Howard."

"Howard! Dear me; I cannot think of him but as playing cards with Lady Osborne, and looking proud. I must own, however, that it is a relief to me to find you can speak as you do of Tom Musgrave. My heart did misgive me that you would like him too well. You talked so stoutly beforehand, that I was sadly afraid your brag would be punished. I only hope it will last, and that he will not come on to pay you much attention. It is a hard thing for a woman to

THE WATSONS

stand against the flattering ways of a man when he is bent upon pleasing her.”

As their quietly sociable little meal concluded, Miss Watson could not help observing how comfortably it had passed.

“It is so delightful to me,” said she, “to have things going on in peace and good-humour. Nobody can tell how much I hate quarrelling. Now, though we have had nothing but fried beef, how good it has all seemed! I wish everybody were as easily satisfied as you; but poor Margaret is very snappish, and Penelope owns she would rather have quarrelling going on than nothing at all.”

Mr. Watson returned in the evening not the worse for the exertion of the day, and, consequently, pleased with what he had done, and glad to talk of it over his own fireside. Emma had not foreseen any interest to herself in the occurrences of a visitation; but when she heard Mr. Howard spoken of as the preacher, and as having given them an excellent sermon, she could not help listening with a quicker ear.

“I do not know when I have heard a discourse more to my mind,” continued Mr. Watson, “or one better delivered. He reads extremely well, with great propriety, and in a very impressive manner, and at the same time without any theatrical grimace or violence. I own I do

THE WATSONS

not like much action in the pulpit; I do not like the studied air and artifical inflexions of voice which your very popular and most admired preachers generally have. A simple delivery is much better calculated to inspire devotion, and shows a much better taste. Mr. Howard read like a scholar and a gentleman.”

“And what had you for dinner, sir?” said his eldest daughter.

He related the dishes, and told what he had ate himself.

“Upon the whole,” he added, “I have had a very comfortable day. My old friends were quite surprised to see me amongst them, and I must say that everybody paid me great attention, and seemed to feel for me as an invalid. They would make me sit near the fire; and as the partridges were pretty high, Dr. Richards would have them sent away to the other end of the table, ‘that they might not offend Mr. Watson,’ which I thought very kind of him. But what pleased me as much as anything was Mr. Howard’s attention. There is a pretty steep flight of steps up to the room we dine in, which do not quite agree with my gouty foot; and Mr. Howard walked by me from the bottom to the top, and would make me take his arm. It struck me as very becoming in so young a man; but I am sure I had no claim to expect it, for I never saw

THE WATSONS

him before in my life. By the by, he inquired after one of my daughters; but I do not know which. I suppose you know among yourselves.”

On the third day after the ball, as Nanny, at five minutes before three, was beginning to bustle into the parlour with the tray and knife-case, she was suddenly called to the front door by the sound of as smart a rap as the end of a riding-whip could give; and though charged by Miss Watson to let nobody in, returned in half a minute with a look of awkward dismay to hold the parlour door open for Lord Osborne and Tom Musgrave. The surprise of the young ladies may be imagined. No visitors would have been welcome at such a moment, but such visitors as these,—such an one as Lord Osborne at least, a nobleman and a stranger, was really distressing.

He looked a little embarrassed himself, as, on being introduced by his easy, voluble friend, he muttered something of doing himself the honour of waiting upon Mr. Watson. Though Emma could not but take the compliment of the visit to herself, she was very far from enjoying it. She felt all the inconsistency of such an acquaintance with the very humble style in which they were obliged to live; and having in her aunt's family been used to many of the elegancies of life, was fully sensible of all that must

THE WATSONS

be open to the ridicule of richer people in her present home. Of the pain of such feelings, Elizabeth knew very little. Her simple mind, or juster reason, saved her from such mortification; and though shrinking under a general sense of inferiority, she felt no particular shame. Mr. Watson, as the gentlemen had already heard from Nanny, was not well enough to be downstairs. With much concern they took their seats; Lord Osborne near Emma, and the convenient Mr. Musgrave, in high spirits at his own importance, on the other side of the fireplace, with Elizabeth. He was at no loss for words; but when Lord Osborne had hoped that Emma had not caught cold at the ball, he had nothing more to say for some time, and could only gratify his eye by occasional glances at his fair companion. Emma was not inclined to give herself much trouble for his entertainment; and after hard labour of mind, he produced the remark of its being a very fine day, and followed it up with the question of, "Have you been walking this morning?"

"No, my lord; we thought it too dirty."

"You should wear half-boots." After another pause: "Nothing sets off a neat ankle more than a half-boot; nankeen, galoshed with black looks very well. Do not you like half-boots?"

THE WATSONS

“Yes; but unless they are so stout as to injure their beauty, they are not fit for country walking.”

“Ladies should ride in dirty weather. Do you ride?”

“No, my lord.”

“I wonder every lady does not; a woman never looks better than on horseback.”

“But every woman may not have the inclination or the means.”

“If they knew how much it became them, they would all have the inclination; and I fancy, Miss Watson, when once they had the inclination, the means would soon follow.”

“Your lordship thinks we always have our own way. That is a point on which ladies and gentlemen have long disagreed; but without pretending to decide it, I may say that there are some circumstances which even women cannot control. Female economy will do a great deal, my lord; but it cannot turn a small income into a large one.”

Lord Osborne was silenced. Her manner had been neither sententious nor sarcastic; but there was a something in its mild seriousness, as well as in the words themselves, which made his lordship think; and when he addressed her again, it was with a degree of considerate propriety totally unlike the half-awkward, half-fearless

THE WATSONS

style of his former remarks. It was a new thing with him to wish to please a woman; it was the first time that he had ever felt what was due to a woman in Emma's situation; but as he was wanting neither in sense nor a good disposition, he did not feel it without effect.

"You have not been long in this country, I understand," said he, in the tone of a gentleman. "I hope you are pleased with it."

He was rewarded by a gracious answer, and a more liberal full view of her face than she had yet bestowed. Unused to exert himself, and happy in contemplating her, he then sat in silence for some minutes longer, while Tom Musgrave was chattering to Elizabeth; till they were interrupted by Nanny's approach, who, half-opening the door and putting in her head, said,—

"Please, ma'am, master wants to know why he be n't to have his dinner?"

The gentlemen, who had hitherto disregarded every symptom, however positive, of the nearness of that meal, now jumped up with apologies, while Elizabeth called briskly after Nanny to take up the fowls.

"I am sorry it happens so," she added, turning good-humouredly towards Musgrave, "but you know what early hours we keep."

Tom had nothing to say for himself; he knew it very well, and such honest simplicity, such

THE WATSONS

shameless truth, rather bewildered him. Lord Osborne's parting compliments took some time, his inclination for speech seeming to increase with the shortness of the term for indulgence. He recommended exercise in defiance of dirt; spoke again in praise of half-boots; begged that his sister might be allowed to send Emma the name of her shoemaker; and concluded with saying, "My hounds will be hunting this country next week. I believe they will throw off at Stanton Wood on Wednesday, at nine o'clock. I mention this in hopes of your being drawn out to see what's going on. If the morning's tolerable, pray do us the honour of giving us your good wishes in person."

The sisters looked on each other with astonishment when their visitors had withdrawn.

"Here's an unaccountable honour!" cried Elizabeth, at last. "Who would have thought of Lord Osborne's coming to Stanton? He is very handsome; but Tom Musgrave looks all to nothing the smartest and most fashionable man of the two. I am glad he did not say anything to me; I would not have had to talk to such a great man for the world. Tom was very agreeable, was not he? But did you hear him ask where Miss Penelope and Miss Margaret were, when he first came in? It put me out of patience. I am glad Nanny had not laid the cloth, however,

THE WATSONS

—it would have looked so awkward; just the tray did not signify.” To say that Emma was not flattered by Lord Osborne’s visit would be to assert a very unlikely thing and describe a very odd young lady; but the gratification was by no means unalloyed: his coming was a sort of notice which might please her vanity, but did not suit her pride; and she would rather have known that he wished the visit without presuming to make it, than have seen him at Stanton.

Among other unsatisfactory feelings it once occurred to her to wonder why Mr. Howard had not taken the same privilege of coming, and accompanied his lordship; but she was willing to suppose that he had either known nothing about it, or had declined any share in a measure which carried quite as much impertinence in its form as good-breeding. Mr. Watson was very far from being delighted when he heard what had passed; a little peevish under immediate pain, and ill-disposed to be pleased, he only replied,—

“Pooh! pooh! what occasion could there be for Lord Osborne’s coming? I have lived here fourteen years without being noticed by any of the family. It is some fooling of that idle fellow, Tom Musgrave. I cannot return the visit. I would not if I could.” And when Tom Musgrave was met with again, he was commissioned

THE WATSONS

with a message of excuse to Osborne Castle, on the too-sufficient plea of Mr. Watson's infirm state of health.

A week or ten days rolled quietly away after this visit before any new bustle arose to interrupt even for half a day the tranquil and affectionate intercourse of the two sisters, whose mutual regard was increasing with the intimate knowledge of each other which such intercourse produced. The first circumstance to break in on their security was the receipt of a letter from Croydon to announce the speedy return of Margaret, and a visit of two or three days from Mr. and Mrs. Robert Watson, who undertook to bring her home, and wished to see their sister Emma.

It was an expectation to fill the thoughts of the sisters at Stanton and to busy the hours of one of them at least; for, as Jane had been a woman of fortune, the preparations for her entertainment were considerable; and as Elizabeth had at all times more goodwill than method in her guidance of the house, she could make no change without a bustle. An absence of fourteen years had made all her brothers and sisters strangers to Emma, but in her expectation of Margaret there was more than the awkwardness of such an alienation; she had heard things which made her dread her return; and the day which brought the party to Stanton seemed to her the

THE WATSONS

probable conclusion of almost all that had been comfortable in the house.

Robert Watson was an attorney at Croydon, in a good way of business; very well satisfied with himself for the same, and for having married the only daughter of the attorney to whom he had been clerk, with a fortune of six thousand pounds. Mrs. Robert was not less pleased with herself for having had that six thousands pounds and for being now in possession of a very smart house in Croydon, where she gave genteel parties and wore fine clothes. In her person there was nothing remarkable; her manners were pert and conceited. Margaret was not without beauty; she had a slight pretty figure, and rather wanted countenance than good features; but the sharp and anxious expression of her face made her beauty in general little felt. On meeting her long-absent sister, as on every occasion of show, her manner was all affection and her voice all gentleness; continual smiles and a very slow articulation being her constant resource when determined on pleasing.

She was now "so delighted to see dear, dear Emma," that she could hardly speak a word in a minute.

"I am sure we shall be great friends," she observed with much sentiment, as they were sitting together. Emma scarcely knew how to answer

THE WATSONS

such a proposition, and the manner in which it was spoken she could not attempt to equal. Mrs. Robert Watson eyed her with much familiar curiosity and triumphant compassion: the loss of the aunt's fortune was uppermost in her mind at the moment of meeting; and she could not but feel how much better it was to be the daughter of a gentleman of property in Croydon than the niece of an old woman who threw herself away on an Irish captain. Robert was carelessly kind, as became a prosperous man and a brother; more intent on settling with the post-boy, inveighing against the exorbitant advance in posting, and pondering over a doubtful half-crown, than on welcoming a sister who was no longer likely to have any property for him to get the direction of.

“Your road through the village is infamous, Elizabeth,” said he; “worse than ever it was. By Heaven! I would indict it if I lived near you. Who is surveyor now?”

There was a little niece at Croydon to be fondly inquired after by the kind-hearted Elizabeth, who regretted very much her not being of the party.

“You are very good,” replied her mother, “and I assure you it went very hard with Augusta to have us come away without her. I was forced to say we were only going to church, and

THE WATSONS

promise to come back for her directly. But you know it would not do to bring her without her maid, and I am as particular as ever in having her properly attended to."

"Sweet little darling!" cried Margaret. "It quite broke my heart to leave her."

"Then why was you in such a hurry to run away from her?" cried Mrs. Robert. "You are a sad, shabby girl. I have been quarrelling with you all the way we came, have not I? Such a visit as this I never heard of! You know how glad we are to have any of you with us, if it be for months together; and I am sorry (with a witty smile) we have not been able to make Croydon agreeable this autumn."

"My dearest Jane, do not overpower me with your raillery. You know what inducements I had to bring me home. Spare me, I entreat you. I am no match for your arch sallies."

"Well, I only beg you will not set your neighbours against the place. Perhaps Emma may be tempted to go back with us and stay till Christmas, if you don't put in your word."

Emma was greatly obliged. "I assure you we have very good society at Croydon. I do not much attend the balls, they are rather too mixed; but our parties are very select and good. I had seven tables last week in my drawing-room."

THE WATSONS

“Are you fond of the country? How do you like Stanton?”

“Very much,” replied Emma, who thought a comprehensive answer most to the purpose. She saw that her sister-in-law despised her immediately. Mrs. Robert Watson was indeed wondering what sort of a home Emma could possibly have been used to in Shropshire, and setting it down as certain that the aunt could never have had six thousand pounds.

“How charming Emma is,” whispered Margaret to Mrs. Robert, in her most languishing tone. Emma was quite distressed by such behaviour; and she did not like it better when she heard Margaret five minutes afterwards say to Elizabeth in a sharp, quick accent, totally unlike the first, “Have you heard from Pen since she went to Chichester? I had a letter the other day. I don’t find she is likely to make anything of it. I fancy she’ll come back ‘Miss Penelope,’ as she went.”

Such she feared would be Margaret’s common voice when the novelty of her own appearance were over; the tone of artificial sensibility was not recommended by the idea. The ladies were invited upstairs to prepare for dinner.

“I hope you will find things tolerably comfortable, Jane,” said Elizabeth, as she opened the door of the spare bedchamber.

THE WATSONS

“My good creature,” replied Jane, “use no ceremony with me, I entreat you. I am one of those who always take things as they find them. I hope I can put up with a small apartment for two or three nights without making a piece of work. I always wish to be treated quite *en famille* when I come to see you. And now I do hope you have not been getting a great dinner for us. Remember we never eat suppers.”

“I suppose,” said Margaret, rather quickly to Emma, “you and I are to be together; Elizabeth always takes care to have a room to herself.”

“No. Elizabeth gives me half hers.”

“Oh!” in a softened voice, and rather mortified to find that she was not ill-used.

“I am sorry I am not to have the pleasure of your company, especially as it makes me nervous to be much alone.”

Emma was the first of the females in the parlour again; on entering it she found her brother alone.

“So, Emma,” said he, “you are quite a stranger at home. It must seem odd enough for you to be here. A pretty piece of work your Aunt Turner has made of it! By Heaven! a woman should never be trusted with money. I always said she ought to have settled something on you, as soon as her husband died.”

THE WATSONS

“But that would have been trusting me with money,” replied Emma; “and I am a woman too.”

“It might have been secured to your future use, without your having any power over it now. What a blow it must have been upon you! To find yourself, instead of heiress of 8,000*l.* or 9,000*l.*, sent back a weight upon your family, without a sixpence. I hope the old woman will smart for it.”

“Do not speak disrespectfully of her; she was very good to me, and if she has made an imprudent choice, she will suffer more from it herself than I can possibly do.”

“I do not mean to distress you, but you know everybody must think her an old fool. I thought Turner had been reckoned an extraordinarily sensible, clever man. How the devil came he to make such a will?”

“My uncle’s sense is not at all impeached in my opinion by his attachment to my aunt. She had been an excellent wife to him. The most liberal and enlightened minds are always the most confiding. The event has been unfortunate; but my uncle’s memory is, if possible, endeared to me by such a proof of tender respect for my aunt.”

“That’s odd sort of talking. He might have provided decently for his widow, without leav-

THE WATSONS

ing everything that he had to dispose of, or any part of it, at her mercy.”

“My aunt may have erred,” said Emma, warmly; “she has erred, but my uncle’s conduct was faultless: I was her own niece, and he left to her the power of providing for me.”

“But unluckily she has left the pleasure of providing for you to your father, and without the power. That’s the long and short of the business. After keeping you at a distance from your family for such a length of time as must do away all natural affection among us, and breeding you up (I suppose) in a superior style, you are returned upon their hands without a sixpence.”

“You know,” replied Emma, struggling with her tears, “my uncle’s melancholy state of health. He was a greater invalid than my father. He could not leave home.”

“I do not mean to make you cry,” said Robert, rather softened,—and after a short silence, by way of changing the subject, he added: “I am just come from my father’s room; he seems very indifferent. It will be a sad break up when he dies. Pity you can none of you get married! You must come to Croydon as well as the rest, and see what you can do there. I believe if Margaret had had a thousand or fifteen hundred

THE WATSONS

pounds, there was a young man who would have thought of her.”

Emma was glad when they were joined by the others; it was better to look at her sister-in-law's finery than listen to Robert, who had equally irritated and grieved her. Mrs. Robert, exactly as smart as she had been at her own party, came in with apologies for her dress.

“I would not make you wait,” said she; “so I put on the first thing I met with. I am afraid I am a sad figure. My dear Mr. W. (addressing her husband), you have not put any fresh powder in your hair.”

“No, I do not intend it. I think there is powder enough in my hair for my wife and sisters.”

“Indeed, you ought to make some alteration in your dress before dinner when you are out visiting, though you do not at home.”

“Nonsense.”

“It is very odd you do not like to do what other gentlemen do. Mr. Marshall and Mr. Hemming change their dress every day of their lives before dinner. And what was the use of my putting up your last new coat, if you are never to wear it?”

“Do be satisfied with being fine yourself, and leave your husband alone.”

THE WATSONS

To put an end to this altercation and soften the evident vexation of her sister-in-law, Emma (though in no spirits to make such nonsense easy), began to admire her gown. It produced immediate complacency.

“Do you like it?” said she. “I am very happy. It has been excessively admired; but sometimes I think the pattern too large. I shall wear one to-morrow which I think you will prefer to this. Have you seen the one I gave Margaret?”

Dinner came, and except when Mrs. Robert looked at her husband’s head, she continued gay and flippant, chiding Elizabeth for the profusion on the table, and absolutely protesting against the entrance of the roast turkey, which formed the only exception to “You see your dinner.” “I do beg and entreat that no turkey may be seen to-day. I am really frightened out of my wits with the number of dishes we have already. Let us have no turkey, I beseech you.”

“My dear,” replied Elizabeth, “the turkey is roasted, and it may just as well come in as stay in the kitchen. Besides, if it is cut, I am in hopes my father may be tempted to eat a bit, for it is rather a favourite dish.”

“You may have it in, my dear; but I assure you I sha’n’t touch it.”

Mr. Watson had not been well enough to join

THE WATSONS

the party at dinner, but was prevailed on to come down and drink tea with them.

“I wish he may be able to have a game of cards, to-night,” said Elizabeth to Mrs. Robert, after seeing her father comfortably seated in his arm-chair.

“Not on my account, my dear, I beg. You know I am no card-player. I think a snug chat infinitely better. I always say cards are very well sometimes to break a formal circle, but one never wants them among friends.”

“I was thinking of it's being something to amuse my father,” said Elizabeth, “if it was not disagreeable to you. He says his head won't bear whist, but perhaps if we make a round game he may be tempted to sit down with us.”

“By all means, my dear creature, I am quite at your service; only do not oblige me to choose the game, that's all. Speculation is the only round game at Croydon now, but I can play anything. When there is only one or two of you at home, you must be quite at a loss to amuse him. Why do you not get him to play at cribbage? Margaret and I have played at cribbage most nights that we have not been engaged.”

A sound like a distant carriage was at this moment caught: everybody listened; it became more decided; it certainly drew nearer. It was

THE WATSONS

an unusual sound for Stanton at any time of the day, for the village was on no very public road, and contained no gentleman's family but the rector's. The wheels rapidly approached; in two minutes the general expectation was answered; they stopped beyond a doubt at the garden-gate of the parsonage. Who could it be? It was certainly a postchaise. Penelope was the only creature to be thought of; she might perhaps have met with some unexpected opportunity of returning. A pause of suspense ensued. Steps were distinguished along the paved footway, which led under the window of the house to the front door, and then within the passage. They were the steps of a man. It could not be Penelope. It must be Samuel. The door opened, and displayed Tom Musgrave in the wrap of a traveller. He had been in London, and was now on his way home, and he had come half-a-mile out of his road merely to call for ten minutes at Stanton. He loved to take people by surprise with sudden visits at extraordinary seasons, and, in the present instance, he had the additional motive of being able to tell the Miss Watsons, whom he depended on finding sitting quietly employed after tea, that he was going home to an eight-o'clock dinner.

As it happened, he did not give more surprise than he received, when, instead of being shown

THE WATSONS

into the usual little sitting-room, the door of the best parlour (a foot larger each way than the other) was thrown open, and he beheld a circle of smart people whom he could not immediately recognize, arranged with all the honours of visiting round the fire, and Miss Watson seated at the best Pembroke table, with the best tea-things before her. He stood a few seconds in silent amazement. "Musgrave," ejaculated Margaret, in a tender voice. He recollected himself, and came forward, delighted to find such a circle of friends, and blessing his good fortune for the unlooked-for indulgence. He shook hands with Robert, bowed and smiled to the ladies, and did everything very prettily; but as to any particularity of address or emotion towards Margaret, Emma, who closely observed him, perceived nothing that did not justify Elizabeth's opinion, though Margaret's modest smiles imported that she meant to take the visit to herself. He was persuaded without much difficulty to throw off his great-coat and drink tea with them. For "whether he dined at eight or nine," as he observed, "was a matter of very little consequence;" and without seeming to seek, he did not turn away from the chair close by Margaret, which she was assiduous in providing him. She had thus secured him from her sisters, but it was not immediately in her power to preserve him

THE WATSONS

from her brother's claims; for as he came avowedly from London, and had left it only four hours ago, the last current report as to public news, and the general opinion of the day, must be understood before Robert could let his attention be yielded to the less rational and important demands of the women. At last, however, he was at liberty to hear Margaret's soft address, as she spoke her fears of his having had a most terrible cold, dark, dreadful journey.

"Indeed, you should not have set out so late."

"I could not be earlier," he replied. "I was detained chatting at the Bedford by a friend. All hours are alike to me. How long have you been in the country, Miss Margaret?"

"We only came this morning; my kind brother and sister brought me home this very morning. 'T is singular,—is it not?"

"You were gone a great while, were not you? A fortnight, I suppose?"

"You may call a fortnight a great while, Mr. Musgrave," said Mrs. Robert, sharply; "but we think a month very little. I assure you we bring her home at the end of a month much against our will."

"A month! Have you really been gone a month? 'T is amazing how time flies."

"You may imagine," said Margaret, in a sort

THE WATSONS

of whisper, "what are my sensations in finding myself once more at Stanton; you know what a sad visitor I make. And I was so excessively impatient to see Emma; I dreaded the meeting, and at the same time longed for it. Do you not comprehend the sort of feeling?"

"Not at all," cried he, aloud: "I could never dread a meeting with Miss Emma Watson, or any of her sisters."

It was lucky that he added that finish.

"Were you speaking to me?" said Emma, who had caught her own name.

"Not absolutely," he answered; "but I was thinking of you, as many at a greater distance are probably doing at this moment. Fine open weather, Miss Emma,—charming season for hunting."

"Emma is delightful, is not she?" whispered Margaret; "I have found her more than answer my warmest hopes. Did you ever see anything more perfectly beautiful? I think even you must be a convert to a brown complexion."

He hesitated. Margaret was fair herself, and he did not particularly want to compliment her; but Miss Osborne and Miss Carr were likewise fair, and his devotion to them carried the day.

"Your sister's complexion," said he, at last, "is as fine as a dark complexion can be; but I

THE WATSONS

still profess my preference of a white skin. You have seen Miss Osborne? She is my model for a truly feminine complexion, and she is very fair."

"Is she fairer than me?"

Tom made no reply. "Upon my honour, ladies," said he, giving a glance over his own person, "I am highly indebted to your condescension for admitting me in such dishabille into your drawing-room. I really did not consider how unfit I was to be here, or I hope I should have kept my distance. Lady Osborne would tell me that I was growing as careless as her son if she saw me in this condition."

The ladies were not wanting in civil returns, and Robert Watson, stealing a view of his own head in an opposite glass, said with equal civility,—

"You cannot be more in dishabille than myself. We got here so late that I had not time even to put a little fresh powder into my hair."

Emma could not help entering into what she supposed her sister-in-law's feelings at the moment.

When the tea-things were removed, Tom began to talk of his carriage; but the old card-table being set out, and the fish and counters, with a tolerably clean pack brought forward from the buffet by Miss Watson, the general voice was

THE WATSONS

so urgent with him to join their party that he agreed to allow himself another quarter of an hour. Even Emma was pleased that he would stay, for she was beginning to feel that a family party might be the worst of all parties; and the others were delighted.

“What’s your game?” cried he, as they stood round the table.

“Speculation, I believe,” said Elizabeth. “My sister recommends it, and I fancy we all like it. I know you do, Tom.”

“It is the only round game played at Croydon now,” said Mrs. Robert; “we never think of any other. I am glad it is a favourite with you.”

“Oh, me!” said Tom. “Whatever you decide on will be a favourite with me. I have had some pleasant hours at speculation in my time; but I have not been in the way of it for a long while. Vingt-un is the game at Osborne Castle. I have played nothing but vingt-un of late. You would be astonished to hear the noise we make there—the fine old lofty drawing-room rings again. Lady Osborne sometimes declares she cannot hear herself speak. Lord Osborne enjoys it famously, and he makes the best dealer without exception that I ever beheld,—such quickness and spirit, he lets nobody dream over their cards. I wish you could see him overdraw

THE WATSONS

himself on both his own cards. It is worth anything in the world!"

"Dear me!" cried Margaret, "why should not we play vingt-un? I think it is a much better game than speculation. I cannot say I am very fond of speculation."

Mrs. Robert offered not another word in support of the game. She was quite vanquished, and the fashions of Osborne Castle carried it over the fashions of Croydon.

"Do you see much of the parsonage family at the castle, Mr. Musgrave?" said Emma, as they were taking their seats.

"Oh, yes; they are almost always there. Mrs. Blake is a nice little good-humoured woman; she and I are sworn friends; and Howard's a very gentlemanlike, good sort of fellow. You are not forgotten, I assure you, by any of the party. I fancy you must have a little cheek-glowing now and then, Miss Emma. Were not you rather warm last Saturday about nine or ten o'clock in the evening? I will tell you how it was,—I see you are dying to know. Says Howard to Lord Osborne—"

At this interesting moment he was called on by the others to regulate the game, and determine some disputable point; and his attention was so totally engaged in the business, and afterward by the course of the game, as never to re-

THE WATSONS

vert to what he had been saying before; and Emma, though suffering a good deal from curiosity, dared not remind him.

He proved a very useful addition at their table. Without him it would have been a party of such very near relations as could have felt little interest, and perhaps maintained little complaisance; but his presence gave variety and secured good manners. He was, in fact, excellently qualified to shine at a round game, and few situations made him appear to greater advantage. He played with spirit, and had a great deal to say; and, though no wit himself, could sometimes make use of the wit of an absent friend, and had a lively way of retailing a common-place or saying a mere nothing, that had great effect at a card-table. The ways and good jokes of Osborne Castle were now added to his ordinary means of entertainment. He repeated the smart sayings of one lady, detailed the oversights of another, and indulged them even with a copy of Lord Osborne's overdrawing himself on both cards.

The clock struck nine while he was thus agreeably occupied; and when Nanny came in with her master's basin of gruel, he had the pleasure of observing to Mr. Watson that he should leave him at supper while he went home to dinner himself. The carriage was ordered to the door, and

THE WATSONS

no entreaties for his staying longer could now avail; for he well knew that if he stayed he would have to sit down to supper in less than ten minutes, which to a man whose heart had been long fixed on calling his next meal a dinner, was quite insupportable. On finding him determined to go, Margaret began to wink and nod at Elizabeth to ask him to dinner for the following day, and Elizabeth at last, not able to resist hints which her own hospitable social temper more than half seconded, gave the invitation: "Would he give Robert the meeting, they should be very happy?"

"With the greatest pleasure," was his first reply. In a moment afterwards, "That is, if I can possibly get here in time; but I shoot with Lord Osborne, and therefore must not engage. You will not think of me unless you see me." And so he departed, delighted in the uncertainty in which he had left it.

Margaret, in the joy of her heart, under circumstances which she chose to consider as peculiarly propitious, would willingly have made a confidante of Emma when they were alone for a short time the next morning, and had proceeded so far as to say, "The young man who was here last night, my dear Emma, and returns to-day, is more interesting to me than perhaps

THE WATSONS

you may be aware;" but Emma, pretending to understand nothing extraordinary in the words, made some very inapplicable reply, and jumping up, ran away from a subject which was odious to her. As Margaret would not allow a doubt to be repeated of Musgrave's coming to dinner, preparations were made for his entertainment much exceeding what had been deemed necessary the day before; and taking the office of superintendence entirely from her sister, she was half the morning in the kitchen herself, directing and scolding.

After a great deal of indifferent cooking and anxious suspense, however, they were obliged to sit down without their guest. Tom Musgrave never came; and Margaret was at no pains to conceal her vexation under the disappointment, or repress the peevishness of her temper. The peace of the party for the remainder of that day and the whole of the next, which comprised the length of Robert's and Jane's visit, was continually invaded by her fretful displeasure and querulous attacks. Elizabeth was the usual object of both. Margaret had just respect enough for her brother's and sister's opinion to behave properly by them, but Elizabeth and the maids could never do right; and Emma, whom she seemed no longer to think about, found the continuance of the gentle voice beyond calculation

THE WATSONS

short. Eager to be as little among them as possible, Emma was delighted with the alternative of sitting above with her father, and warmly entreated to be his constant companion each evening; and as Elizabeth loved company of any kind too well not to prefer being below at all risks; as she had rather talk of Croydon with Jane, with every interruption of Margaret's perverseness, than sit with only her father, who frequently could not endure talking at all,—the affair was so settled, as soon as she could be persuaded to believe it no sacrifice on her sister's part. To Emma the change was most acceptable and delightful. Her father, if ill, required little more than gentleness and silence, and being a man of sense and education, was, if able to converse, a welcome companion. In his chamber Emma was at peace from the dreadful mortifications of unequal society and family discord; from the immediate endurance of hard-hearted prosperity, low-minded conceit, and wrong-headed folly, engrafted on an untoward disposition. She still suffered from them in the contemplation of their existence, in memory and in prospect, but for the moment she ceased to be tortured by their effects. She was at leisure; she could read and think, though her situation was hardly such as to make reflection very soothing. The evils arising from the loss of her uncle

THE WATSONS

were neither trifling nor likely to lessen; and when thought had been freely indulged in contrasting the past and the present, the employment of mind and dissipation of unpleasant ideas, which only reading could produce, made her thankfully turn to a book.

The change in her home society and style of life, in consequence of the death of one friend and the imprudence of another, had indeed been striking. From being the first object of hope and solicitude to an uncle who had formed her mind with the care of a parent, and of tenderness to an aunt whose amiable temper had delighted to give her every indulgence; from being the life and spirit of a house where all had been comfort and elegance, and the expected heiress of an easy independence, she was become of importance to no one,—a burden on those whose affections she could not expect, an addition in a house already overstocked, surrounded by inferior minds, with little chance of domestic comfort, and as little hope of future support. It was well for her that she was naturally cheerful, for the change had been such as might have plunged weak spirits in despondence.

She was very much pressed by Robert and Jane to return with them to Croydon, and had some difficulty in getting a refusal accepted, as they thought too highly of their own kindness

THE WATSONS

and situation to suppose the offer could appear in less advantageous light to anybody else. Elizabeth gave them her interest, though evidently against her own, in privately urging Emma to go.

“You do not know what you refuse, Emma,” said she, “nor what you have to bear at home. I would advise you by all means to accept the invitation; there is always something lively going on at Croydon. You will be in company almost every day, and Robert and Jane will be very kind to you. As for me, I shall be no worse off without you than I have been used to be; but poor Margaret’s disagreeable ways are new to you, and they would vex you more than you think for, if you stay at home.”

Emma was of course uninfluenced, except to greater esteem for Elizabeth, by such representations, and the visitors departed without her.

When the author’s sister, Cassandra, showed the manuscript of this work to some of her nieces, she also told them something of the intended story; for with this dear sister—though, I believe, with no one else—Jane seems to have talked freely of any work that she might have in hand. Mr. Watson was soon to die; and

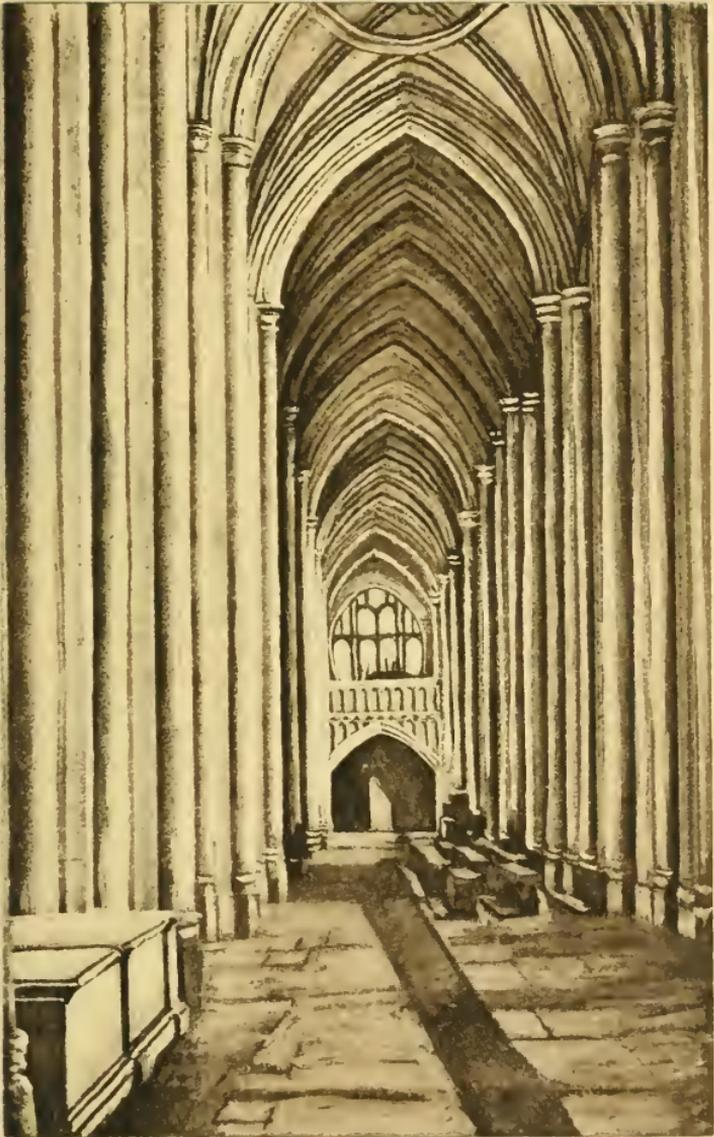
THE WATSONS

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, and much of the interest of the tale was to arise from Lady Osborne's love for Mr. Howard, and his counter affection for Emma, whom he was finally to marry.



North Aisle of Winchester Cathedral; Burial Place of Jane Austen

North Side of Winchester Cathedral. From the
Austen



LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN



A MEMOIR

“He knew of no one himself who was inclined to the work. This is no uncommon motive. A man sees something to be done, knows of no one who will do it but himself, and so is driven to the enterprise.”

HELP'S *Life of Columbus*, ch. i.

TO

THE QUEEN'S MOST EXCELLENT MAJESTY.

MADAM,

It was the knowledge that your Majesty so highly appreciated the works of Jane Austen which emboldened me to ask permission to dedicate to your Majesty these volumes, containing as they do numerous letters of that authoress, of which, as her grand-nephew, I have recently become possessed. These letters are printed, with the exception of a very few omissions which appeared obviously desirable, just as they were written, and if there should be found in them, or in the chapters which accompany them, anything which may interest or amuse your Majesty, I shall esteem myself doubly fortunate in having been the means of bringing them under your Majesty's notice.

I am, Madam,

Your Majesty's very humble
and obedient subject,

BRABOURNE.

INTRODUCTION

It is right that some explanation should be given of the manner in which the letters now published came into my possession.

The Rev. J. E. Austen Leigh, nephew to Jane Austen, and first cousin to my mother Lady Knatchbull, published in 1869 a "Memoir" of his aunt, and supplemented it by a second and enlarged edition in the following year, to which he added the hitherto unpublished tale, "Lady Susan," for the publication of which he states in his preface that he had "lately received permission from the author's niece, Lady Knatchbull, of Provender, in Kent, to whom the autograph copy was given." It seems that the autograph copy of another unpublished tale, "The Watsons," had been given to Mr. Austen Leigh's half-sister, Mrs. Lefroy, and that each recipient took a copy of what was given to the other, by which means Mr. Austen Leigh became acquainted with the existence and contents of "Lady Susan," and knowing that it was the property of my mother, wrote to ask her permission to attach it to, and publish it with, the second edition of his

INTRODUCTION

“Memoir.” My mother was at that time unable to attend to business, and my youngest sister, who lived with her, replied to the request, giving the desired permission on her behalf, but stating at the same time that the autograph copy had been lost for the last six years, that any letters which existed could not be found, and that my mother was not in a fit state to allow of any search being made. It so happened that no reference was made to me, and I only knew of the request having been made and granted when I saw the tale in print. But on my mother’s death, in December, 1882, all her papers came into my possession, and I not only found the original copy of “Lady Susan”—in Jane Austen’s own handwriting—among the other books in the Provender library, but a square box full of letters, fastened up carefully in separate packets, each of which was endorsed “For Lady Knatchbull,” in the handwriting of my great-aunt, Cassandra Austen, and with which was a paper endorsed, in my mother’s handwriting, “Letters from my dear Aunt Jane Austen, and two from Aunt Cassandra after her decease,” which paper contained the letters written to my mother herself. The box itself had been endorsed by my mother as follows:—

“Letters from Aunt Jane to Aunt Cassandra at different periods of her life—a few to me—

INTRODUCTION

and some from Aunt Cassandra to me after At. Jane's death."

This endorsement bears the date August, 1856, and was probably made the last time my mother looked at the letters. At all events, a comparison of these letters with some quoted by Mr. Austen Leigh makes it abundantly clear that they have never been in his hands, and that they are now presented to the public for the first time. Indeed, it is much to be regretted that the "Memoir" should have been published without the additional light which many of these letters throw upon the "Life," though of course no blame attaches to Mr. Austen Leigh in the matter.

The opportunity, however, having been lost, and "Lady Susan" already published, it remained for me to consider whether the letters which had come into my possession were of sufficient public interest to justify me in giving them to the world. They had evidently, for the most part, been left to my mother by her Aunt Cassandra Austen; they contain the confidential outpourings of Jane Austen's soul to her beloved sister, interspersed with many family and personal details which, doubtless, she would have told to no other human being. But to-day, more than seventy long years have rolled away since the greater part of them were written; no one now living can, I think, have any possible just

INTRODUCTION

cause of annoyance at their publication, whilst, if I judge rightly, the public never took a deeper or more lively interest in all that concerns Jane Austen than at the present moment. Her works, slow in their progress towards popularity, have achieved it with the greater certainty, and have made an impression the more permanent from its gradual advance. The popularity continues, although the customs and manners which Jane Austen describes have changed and varied so much as to belong in a great measure to another age. But the reason of its continuance is not far to seek. Human nature is the same in all ages of the world, and "the inimitable Jane" (as an old friend of mine used always to call her) is true to Nature from first to last. She does not attract our imagination by sensational descriptions or marvellous plots; but, with so little "plot" at all as to offend those who read only for excitement, she describes men and women exactly as men and women really are, and tells her tale of ordinary, everyday life with such truthful delineation, such bewitching simplicity, and, moreover, with such purity of style and language, as have rarely been equalled, and perhaps never surpassed.

This being the case, it has seemed to me that the letters which show what her own "ordinary, everyday life" was, and which afford a picture

INTRODUCTION

of her such as no history written by another person could give so well, are likely to interest a public which, both in Great Britain and America, has learned to appreciate Jane Austen. It will be seen that they are ninety-four in number, ranging in date from 1796 to 1816—that is to say, over the last twenty years of her life. Some other letters, written to her sister Cassandra, appear in Mr. Austen Leigh's book, and it would seem that at Cassandra's death, in 1845, the correspondence must have been divided, and whilst the bulk of it came to my mother, a number of letters passed into the possession of Mr. Austen Leigh's sisters, from whom he obtained them. These he made use of without being aware of the existence of the rest.

However this may be, it is certain that I am now able to present to the public entirely new matter, from which may be gathered a fuller and more complete knowledge of Jane Austen and her "belongings" than could otherwise have been obtained. Miss Tytler, indeed, has made a praiseworthy effort to impart to the world information respecting the life and works of her favourite authoress, but her "Life" is little more than a copy of Mr. Austen Leigh's Memoir. I attempt no "Memoir" that can properly be so called, but I give the letters as they were written, with such comments and explanations as I think may add

INTRODUCTION

to their interest. I am aware that in some of the latter I have wandered somewhat far away from Jane Austen, having been led aside by allusions which awaken old memories and recall old stories. But whilst my "addenda" may be read or skipped as the reader pleases, they do not detract from the actual value of the genuine letters which I place before him. These, I think, can hardly fail to be of interest to all who desire to know more of the writer; and, although they form no continuous narrative and record no stirring events, it will be remarked that, amid the most ordinary details and most commonplace topics, every now and then sparkle out the same wit and humour which illuminate the pages of "Pride and Prejudice," "Mansfield Park," "Emma," &c., and which have endeared the name of Jane Austen to many thousands of readers in English-speaking homes.

BRABOURNE.

May, 1884.

Letters of Jane Austen

8

1796

THE first two letters which I am able to present to my readers were written from Steventon to Jane Austen's sister Cassandra in January, 1796. The most interesting allusion, perhaps, is to her "young Irish friend," who would seem by the context to have been the late Lord Chief Justice of Ireland, though at the time of writing only "Mr. Tom Lefroy." I have no means of knowing how serious the "flirtation" between the two may have been, or whether it was to this that Mr. Austen Leigh refers when he tells us that "in her youth she had declined the addresses of a gentleman who had the recommendations of good character and connections, and position in life, of everything, in fact, except the subtle power of touching her heart." I am inclined, however, upon the whole, to think, from the tone of the letters, as well as from some passages in later letters, that this little affair had nothing to do with the "addresses" referred to, any more than with that

[199]

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

“ passage of romance in her history ” with which Mr. Austen Leigh was himself so “ imperfectly acquainted ” that he can only tell us that there *was* a gentleman whom the sisters met “ whilst staying at some seaside place,” whom Cassandra Austen thought worthy of her sister Jane, and likely to gain her affection, but who very provokingly died suddenly after having expressed his “ intention of soon seeing them again.” Mr. Austen Leigh thinks that, “ if Jane ever loved, it was this unnamed gentleman ”; but I have never met with any evidence upon the subject, and from all I have heard of “ Aunt Jane,” I strongly incline to the opinion that, whatever passing inclination she may have felt for anyone during her younger days (and that there was once such an inclination is, I believe, certain), she was too fond of home, and too happy among her own relations, to have sought other ties, unless her heart had been really won, and that this was a thing which never actually happened. Her allusion (letter two) to the day on which “ I am to flirt my last with Tom Lefroy ” rather negatives the idea that there was anything serious between the two, whilst a later reference (letter ten) to Mrs. Lefroy’s “ friend ” seems to intimate that, whoever the latter may have been, any attachment which existed was rather on the side of the gentleman than of the lady,

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

and was not recognised by her as being of a permanent nature.

The first letter is written on her sister Cassandra's birthday, and is directed to her at Kintbury, where she seems to have been staying with her friend Elizabeth Fowle (often referred to in these letters as "Eliza"), *née* Lloyd, whose sister was the "Mary" who "would never have guessed" the "tall clergyman's" name, and who afterwards married the "James" (Jane's brother) who was taken into the carriage as an encouragement to his improved dancing. Elizabeth Lloyd married the Rev. Fulwar Craven Fowle, who was the Vicar of Kintbury, near Newbury. Mr. Fowle was, I have always heard, a good sportsman, a good preacher, and a man of some humour. He had a hunter at one time which he named "Biscay," because it was "a great roaring bay." He commanded a troop of Volunteers in the war-time, and King George the Third is reported to have said of him that he was "the best preacher, rider to hounds, and cavalry officer in Berks."

The Harwoods of Deane were country neighbours of whom we shall find frequent mention. They were a very old Hampshire family, living upon their own property, which was formerly much larger than at the date of our letters, and which, I believe, has now passed away altogether

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

from its former possessors. Close to Deane is Ashe, of which Mr. Lefroy was rector, and Ashe Park, now occupied by Col. R. Portal, and in 1796 belonging to Mr. Portal, of Laverstoke, was at that time occupied by the family of St. John. The Rivers family lived, I believe, at Worthy Park, Kingsworthy, and I imagine the Miss Deanes to have been of the family of that name living in Winchester. One member of this family has since held the neighbouring living of Bighton. The Lyfords were medical men, father and son, living at Basingstoke. It will be noted that one of them attended Mrs. George Austen in the illness mentioned in the earlier letters, and it was one of the same family who was Jane Austen's doctor in her last illness at Winchester. In a little volume concerning the "Vine hunt" which he printed privately in 1865, Mr. Austen Leigh tells a good story of the grandfather of the "John Lyford" here mentioned, "a fine tall man, with such a flaxen wig as is not to be seen or conceived by this generation." He knew nothing about fox-hunting, but had a due and proper regard for those who indulged in it, and it is recorded of him that upon one occasion, having accidentally fallen in with Mr. Chute's hounds when checked, he caused great confusion by galloping up in a very excited state, waving his hat, and exclaiming "Tally-ho!

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

Mr. Chute. Tally-ho! Mr. Chute." Not that he had seen the fox, but because he imagined that "Tally-ho!" was the word with which fox-hunters ordinarily greeted each other in the field.

Among the people mentioned as having been at "the Harwoods' ball" were several who deserve notice. "Mr. Heathcote" was William, the brother of Sir Thomas, the fourth Baronet of Hursley. Two years after the date of this letter, viz., in 1798, he married Elizabeth, daughter of Lovelace Bigg Wither, Esq., of Manydown; he was Prebendary of Winchester, and pre-deceasing his brother, his son William succeeded the latter as fifth baronet in 1825, sat for Hants in five Parliaments, and afterwards for Oxford University for fourteen years. He was made a Privy Councillor in 1870, and lived till 1881, very greatly respected and beloved by a large circle of friends. In 1796 the Heathcotes lived at Worting, a house in a village of the same name, situate about five or six miles from Steventon. Mr. J. Portal was Mr. Portal, of Freefolk House, near Overton. He married twice, and, living till 1848, was succeeded by the eldest son of his second wife, Melville Portal, who was afterwards for a short time member for North Hants. Mr. John Portal's eldest daughter by his first marriage was Caroline, who married Edward Austen's fourth son William. Adela, one

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

of his daughters by his second wife, became the second wife of the "little Edward" mentioned in the letters, who was the eldest son of the same Edward Austen, Jane's brother, the owner of Godmersham and Chawton. She died in 1870. Mr. Portal's brother William lived at Laverstoke, which, as well as Ashe Park, belonged to him. Mr. Bigg Wither, of Manydown, had two other daughters besides Mrs. Heathcote, namely, Alithea, with whom "James danced," and Catherine, who afterwards married the Rev. Herbert Hill, who enjoyed the double distinction of being Southey's uncle and (at one time) chaplain to the British factory at Lisbon. "Ibthorp" was a house near Lord Portsmouth's place, Hurstbourne, where lived as a widow Mrs. Lloyd, the mother of Eliza, Martha, and Mary. Her husband, the Rev. Nowys Lloyd, had held the two livings of Enbourne near Newbury and Bishopston, Wilts, and at the latter place fell in love with "Martha Craven," who was living there with an "Aunt Willoughby," having run away from a mother whom family tradition alleges to have treated her badly. Mrs. Lloyd died in April, 1805, when the Austens were at Bath. The Coopers, whose arrival is expected in the first, and announced in the second letter, were Dr. Cooper, already mentioned as having married Jane Austen's aunt, Jane Leigh, with his

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

wife and their two children, Edward and Jane, of whom we shall frequently hear. I have no means of knowing who is referred to as "Warren," but there was, and is, a Hampshire family of that name, of Worting House, Basingstoke, and it may very likely be one of them, since they were of course near neighbours, and likely to be intimate at Steventon. Neither can I bring proof positive as to the identity of Mr. Benjamin Portal, which is the more to be regretted because a person with such "handsome" eyes deserves to be identified. There was, however, a certain clergyman, the Rev. William Portal, a member of the Freefolk and Laverstoke family, who had a wife, seven sons, and the Rectory of Stoke Charity in Hants. None of these sons married, but, judging by dates, some of them must have been living about 1796, and probably Benjamin was one of them.

The third letter of 1796 is dated from London, where the writer had evidently stopped for a night on her way from Steventon to Rowling, a journey which in those days was a much more serious affair than at present, when a few hours of railroad take us comfortably from one place to the other. Rowling was and is a small place belonging to the Bridges family, being about a mile distant from Goodnestone. Edward Austen, Jane's brother, lived there at this time,

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

though whether his brother-in-law, Sir Brook, let it or lent it to him I cannot say. Probably the former; at any rate, here he lived, and here were his three eldest children born. The subsequent letters (four to seven inclusive) were written whilst Jane was visiting her brother, and are full of touches of her own quaint humour. Mrs. Knight had not left Godmersham at this time, but was about to do so, and my grandfather and grandmother were going to take possession. The "Mr. and Mrs. Cage" were Lewis Cage and his wife, Fanny Bridges. Harriet and Louisa were the two unmarried sisters of the latter; Edward, their brother, and the "Mr. and Mrs. Bridges" must have been Henry Bridges, next brother to Sir Brook (fourth baronet), who was Rector of Danbury and Woodham Ferrers, in Essex, who had married Jane Hales the year before this letter was written. Sir Thomas Hales, his father-in-law, was M.P. for Dover, and had four daughters besides Jane, of whom the two youngest, Harriet and Caroline, are here mentioned. Harriet died unmarried, Caroline married Mr. Gore in 1798. Sir Thomas had died in 1773, and was succeeded by his son of the same name, who dying in 1824, and having only one daughter, the baronetcy became extinct. The allusion to "Camilla in Mr. Dubster's summer-house" (to whom Jane likens herself when

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

her brother's absence obliged her to stay at Rowling till he should return to escort her home) will be understood by those who have perused Miss Burney's novel of that name, and to those who have not will, I hope, be an inducement to do so, as it will certainly repay the perusal. Lady Waltham was the wife of Lord Waltham, and a great friend of Lady Bridges.

There are other allusions to things and people scattered throughout these letters, to understand which it is necessary to bear in mind that they are often made in the purest spirit of playful nonsense, and are by no means to be taken as grave and serious expressions of opinion or statement of facts. When, for instance, speaking of Mrs. Knight, the widow of Godmersham, she says "it is imagined that she will shortly be married again," and in the next letter speaks of her brother Edward as intending to get some of a vacant farm into his occupation, "if he can cheat Sir Brook enough in the agreement," she is writing in the same spirit of fun as when she presently tells us that her brother had thoughts of "taking the name of Claringbould," that "Mr. Richard Harvey's match is put off till he has got a better Christian name," and that two gentlemen about to marry "are to have one wife between them." Mrs. Knight was advanced in years at the time, and her marrying a second

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

time a very unlikely thing to occur; and I suppose no man ever lived who was less likely to "cheat" or take advantage of another than my grandfather, Edward Austen. It is in the same vein of fun, or of originality, if the phrase be better, that she speaks (letter seven) of "the Captain John Gore, commanded by the 'Triton,'" instead of "the 'Triton,' commanded by Captain John Gore," and, in the postscript to the same letter, of her brother Frank being "much pleased with the prospect of having Captain Gore under his command," when of course the relative position of the two was precisely the reverse. Many people will think this explanation superfluous, but I have so often met with matter-of-fact individuals who persist in taking everything in its plain and literal sense, that I think it well to make it. It is to this day a peculiarity of some of the Austens (and doubtless not confined to them) to talk and write nonsense to each other which, easily understood between themselves at the time, might have a curious appearance if published a hundred years hence. Such expressions as a "chutton mop" for "a mutton chop," to clerge (i.e. to perform the duties of a clergyman), and to "ronge"—i.e. "to affect with a pleasing melancholy"—are well enough when used and appreciated in family letters and conversations, but might give rise

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

to curious dissertations upon the different use of particular English words at different times, if given without comment or explanation to the public, whilst the literal interpretation of things said in jest to those who understood the jest at the time would cause the most serious mistakes as to the real meaning of the writer and the spirit in which she wrote.

The sixth and seventh letters are full of local and personal allusions of more or less interest. The dinner-party at Nackington is pleasantly described, and the wealth of Mr. Milles referred to in the pretended expectation expressed that he would have advanced money to a person with whom he had no relationship which might have induced such generosity. It was natural that Lady Sondes' picture should be found in her father's house, for in that relationship stood Mr. Milles to her. She was at this time living at Lees Court with her husband, who did not die until ten years later. Bifrons was at this time in the possession of the Taylor family, from whom it afterwards passed to the Conyngams; but I do not know to whom Jane refers as the individual upon whom she once fondly doated, although the "once" could not have been very long before, as at this time she had not yet completed her twenty-first year. Mrs. Joan Knatchbull lived in Canterbury. She was the only sister of Sir Wynd-

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

ham Knatchbull, who died in 1763, when the title and estates went to his uncle. The other people referred to in these letters are either dealt with in the preliminary chapters, or do not appear to require further notice, having little to do with Jane or her family.

I.

Steventon: Saturday (January 9).

In the first place I hope you will live twenty-three years longer. Mr. Tom Lefroy's birthday was yesterday, so that you are very near of an age.

After this necessary preamble I shall proceed to inform you that we had an exceeding good ball last night, and that I was very much disappointed at not seeing Charles Fowle of the party, as I had previously heard of his being invited. In addition to our set at the Harwoods' ball, we had the Grants, St. Johns, Lady Rivers, her three daughters and a son, Mr. and Miss Heathcote, Mrs. Lefevre, two Mr. Watkins, Mr. J. Portal, Miss Deanes, two Miss Ledgers, and a tall clergyman who came with them, whose name Mary would never have guessed.

We were so terrible good as to take James in

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

our carriage, though there were three of us before; but indeed he deserves encouragement for the very great improvement which has lately taken place in his dancing. Miss Heathcote is pretty, but not near so handsome as I expected. Mr. H. began with Elizabeth, and afterwards danced with her again; but *they* do not know how *to be particular*. I flatter myself, however, that they will profit by the three successive lessons which I have given them.

You scold me so much in the nice long letter which I have this moment received from you, 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 gentlemanlike, good-looking, pleasant young man, I assure you. But as to our having ever met, except at the three last 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.

We left Warren at Dean Gate, in our way home last night, and he is now on his road to

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

town. He left his love, &c., to you, and I will deliver it when we meet. Henry goes to Harden to-day in his way to his Master's degree. We shall feel the loss of these two most agreeable young men exceedingly, and shall have nothing to console us till the arrival of the Coopers on Tuesday. As they will stay here till the Monday following, perhaps Caroline will go to the Ashe ball with me, though I dare say she will not.

I danced twice with Warren last night, and once with Mr. Charles Watkins, and, to my inexpressible astonishment, I entirely escaped John Lyford. I was forced to fight hard for it, however. We had a very good supper, and the greenhouse was illuminated in a very elegant manner.

We had a visit yesterday morning from Mr. Benjamin Portal, whose eyes are as handsome as ever. Everybody is extremely anxious for your return, but as you cannot come home by the Ashe ball, I am glad that I have not fed them with false hopes. James danced with Alithea, and cut up the turkey last night with great perseverance. You say nothing of the silk stockings; I flatter myself, therefore, that Charles has not purchased any, as I cannot very well afford to pay for them; all my money is spent in buying white gloves and pink persian. I wish Charles had been at Manydown, because he would have

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

given you some description of my friend, and I think you must be impatient to hear something about him.

Henry is still hankering after the Regulars, and as his project of purchasing the adjutancy of the Oxfordshire is now over, he has got a scheme in his head about getting a lieutenancy and adjutancy in the 86th, a new-raised regiment, which he fancies will be ordered to the Cape of Good Hope. I heartily hope that he will, as usual, be disappointed in this scheme. We have trimmed up and given away all the old paper hats of Mamma's manufacture; I hope you will not regret the loss of yours.

After I had written the above, we received a visit from Mr. Tom Lefroy and his cousin George. The latter is really very well-behaved now; and as for the other, he has but *one* fault, which time will, I trust, entirely remove—it is that his morning coat is a great deal too light. He is a very great admirer of Tom Jones, and therefore wears the same coloured clothes, I imagine, which *he* did when he was wounded.

Sunday.—By not returning till the 19th, you will exactly contrive to miss seeing the Coopers, which I suppose it is your wish to do. We have heard nothing from Charles for some time. One would suppose they must have sailed by this time, as the wind is so favourable. What a funny

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

name Tom has got for his vessel! But he has no taste in names, as we well know, and I dare say he christened it himself. I am sorry for the Beaches' loss of their little girl, especially as it is the one so much like me.

I condole with Miss M. on her losses and with Eliza on her gains, and am ever yours,

J. A.

To Miss Austen,

Rev. Mr. Fowle's, Kintbury, Newbury.

II.

Steventon: Thursday (January 16).

I 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 pleasantly; 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

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

bespeak the stockings! I hope he will be too hot all the rest of his life for it!

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

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

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 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 favourable 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 tomorrow. 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

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

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 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, &c., I am affectionately yours,
J. AUSTEN.

Miss Austen,

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

III.

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.

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

Edward and Frank are both gone out to seek their fortunes; the latter is to return soon and 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.

IV.

Rowling: Thursday (September 1).

MY DEAREST CASSANDRA,

The letter which I have this moment received from you has diverted me beyond moderation. I could die of laughter at it, as they used to say at school. You are indeed the finest comic writer of the present age.

Since I wrote last, we have been very near returning to Steventon so early as next week.

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

Such, for a day or two, was our dear brother Henry's scheme, but at present matters are restored, not to what they were, for my absence seems likely to be lengthened still farther. I am sorry for it, but what can I do?

Henry leaves us to-morrow for Yarmouth, as he wishes very much to consult his physician there, on whom he has great reliance. He is better than he was when he first came, though still by no means well. According to his present plan, he will not return here till about the 23rd, and bring with him, if he can, leave of absence for three weeks, as he wants very much to have some shooting at Godmersham, whither Edward and Elizabeth are to remove very early in October. If this scheme holds, I shall hardly be at Steventon before the middle of that month; but if you cannot do without me, I could return, I suppose, with Frank if he ever goes back. He enjoys himself here very much, for he has just learnt to turn, and is so delighted with the employment, that he is at it all day long.

I am sorry that you found such a conciseness in the strains of my first letter. I must endeavour to make you amends for it, when we meet, by some elaborate details, which I shall shortly begin composing.

I have had my new gown made up, and it really makes a very superb surplice. I am sorry

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

to say that my new coloured gown is very much washed out, though I charged everybody to take great care of it. I hope yours is so too. Our men had but indifferent weather for their visit to Godmersham, for it rained great part of the way there and all the way back. They found Mrs. Knight remarkably well and in very good spirits. It is imagined that she will shortly be married again. I have taken little George once in my arms since I have been here, which I thought very kind. I have told Fanny about the bead of her necklace, and she wants very much to know where you found it.

To-morrow I shall be just like Camilla in Mr. Dubster's summer-house; for my Lionel will have taken away the ladder by which I came here, or at least by which I intended to get away, and here I must stay till his return. My situation, however, is somewhat preferable to hers, for I am very happy here, though I should be glad to get home by the end of the month. I have no idea that Miss Pearson will return with me.

What a fine fellow Charles is, to deceive us into writing two letters to him at Cork! I admire his ingenuity extremely, especially as he is so great a gainer by it.

Mr. and Mrs. Cage and Mr. and Mrs. Bridges dined with us yesterday. Fanny seemed

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

as glad to see me as anybody, and inquired very much after you, whom she supposed to be making your wedding-clothes. She is as handsome as ever, and somewhat fatter. We had a very pleasant day, and some *liqueurs* in the evening. Louisa's figure is very much improved; she is as stout again as she was. Her face, from what I could see of it one evening, appeared not at all altered. She and the gentlemen walked up here on Monday night—she came in the morning with the Cages from Hythe.

Lady Hales, with her two youngest daughters, have been to see us. Caroline is not grown at all coarser than she was, nor Harriet at all more delicate. I am glad to hear so good an account of Mr. Charde, and only fear that my long absence may occasion his relapse. I practise every day as much as I can—I wish it were more for his sake. I have heard nothing of Mary Robinson since I have been (here). I expect to be well scolded for daring to doubt, whenever the subject is mentioned.

Frank has turned a very nice little butter-churn for Fanny. I do not believe that any of the party were aware of the valuables they had left behind; nor can I hear anything of Anna's gloves. Indeed I have not inquired at all about them hitherto.

We are very busy making Edward's shirts,

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

and I am proud to say that I am the neatest worker of the party. They say that there are a prodigious number of birds hereabouts this year, so that perhaps *I* may kill a few. I am glad to hear so good an account of Mr. Limprey and J. Lovett. I know nothing of my mother's handkerchief, but I dare say I shall find it soon.

I am very affectionately yours,

JANE.

Miss Austen, Steventon, Overton, Hants.

V

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 obliged to dance with Mr. Tincton the whole evening.

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

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 Marianne at all. On Thursday Mr. and Mrs. Bridges return to Danbury; Miss Har-

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

riet 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 neighbourhood, 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 without bidding. Give my love to Mary Harri-

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

son, and tell her I wish, whenever she is attached to a young man, some *respectable* Dr. Marchmont may keep them apart for five volumes.

.

VI

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 anyone 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 mantel-piece in the dining-room, and the pictures of her three children in an ante-

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

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 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.

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

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, 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

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

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 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.

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

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 me. As you are likely to have the Williams and Lloyds with you next week, you would hardly find room for us then. If anyone 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.

VII

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 uncer-

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

tainty 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, 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 say no more about it.

My father will be so good as to fetch home his prodigal daughter from town, I hope, unless he wishes me to walk the hospitals, enter at the Temple, or mount guard at St. James'. It will hardly be in Frank's power to take me home—nay, it certainly will not. I shall write again as soon as I get to Greenwich.

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

What dreadful hot weather we have! It keeps one in a continual state of inelegance.

If Miss Pearson should return with me, pray be careful not to expect too much beauty. I will not pretend to say that *on a first view* she quite answered the opinion I had formed of her. My mother, I am sure, will be disappointed if she does not take great care. From what I remember of her picture, it is no great resemblance.

I am very glad that the idea of returning with Frank occurred to me; for as to Henry's coming into Kent again, the time of its taking place is so very uncertain that I should be waiting for *dead men's shoes*. I had once determined to go with Frank to-morrow and take my chance, &c., but they dissuaded me from so rash a step, as I really think on consideration it would have been; for if the Pearsons were not at home, I should inevitably fall a sacrifice to the arts of some fat woman who would make me drunk with small beer.

Mary is brought to bed of a boy—both doing very well. I shall leave you to guess what Mary I mean. Adieu, with best love to all your agreeable inmates. Don't let the Lloyds go on any account before I return, unless Miss P. is of the party. How ill I have written! I begin to hate myself.

Yours ever, J. AUSTEN.

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

The "Triton" is a new 32 frigate just launch at Deptford. Frank is much pleased with the prospect of having Captain Gore under his command.

Miss Austen, Steventon, Overton, Hants.

1798, 1799

THE next division of letters comprises those written in 1798 and in January, 1799. The first is written from Dartford, evidently the first stage of a journey home to Steventon from Godmersham, where Mr. and Mrs. George Austen had been visiting their son Edward in his new abode, probably for the first time, since he could not have been settled there for more than a year; and there is a graphic account of the loss and recovery of Jane's writing and dressing boxes, which appear to have had a narrow escape from a voyage to the West Indies. From this and the following letters, it would seem that Mrs. Austen was in delicate health, and apparently thought herself worse than was really the case. At any rate, she rallied from the attack of which she complained at this time, and lived happily on until 1827, when she died at the ripe age of eighty-eight, having survived her husband twen-

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

ty-two and her daughter Jane ten years. The other nine letters are all written from Steventon, and record the details of the everyday life in Jane Austen's home. She manages the household for her mother, visits the poor, enjoys such society as the neighbourhood affords, and fills her letters with such gossip about things and people as would be likely to interest her sister. Most of the people to whom she alludes will be identified by reference to the introductory chapters of this book, and of others there is nothing more to be said than that they were country neighbours of various stations in life, to whom attaches no particular interest as far as Jane Austen is concerned. The Digweeds were brothers who occupied a fine old Elizabethan manor-house and a large farm in Steventon, which belonged to the Knight family until Mr. E. Knight (son of E. Austen) sold it to the Duke of Wellington, and the late Duke sold it in 1874 to Mr. Harris. An attempt to restore it failed, and eventually a new house was built some fifty yards from the old one; but, although the latter was turned into stables, its appearance in front at least was not injured, and there is a charming view of it across the lawn from the drawing-room of the new house. Previous to its sale to the present owner, the Digweed family had occupied the manor-

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

house for more than 150 years, but not being Irish tenants, I suppose they got no compensation for "disturbance."

"John Bond" was Mr. Austen's "factotum" in his farming operations. There is an anecdote extant relating to this worthy which may as well be told here: Mr. Austen used to join Mr. Digweed in buying twenty or thirty sheep, and that all might be fair, it was their custom to open the pen, and the first half of the sheep which ran out were counted as belonging to the rector. Going down to the fold on one occasion after this process had been gone through, Mr. Austen remarked one sheep among his lot larger and finer than the rest. "Well, John," he observed to Bond, who was with him, "I think we have had the best of the luck with Mr. Digweed today, in getting that sheep." "Maybe not so much in the luck as you think, sir," responded the faithful John. "I see'd her the moment I come in, and set eyes on the sheep, so when we opened the pen I just giv'd her a 'huck' with my stick, and out a run."

There is an allusion in the sixteenth letter to "First Impressions"—her original name for the work afterwards published as "Pride and Prejudice"—which shows that, as regards this book at least, her having written it was not secret from her family. It is singular that it should have

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

remained so long unpublished, but at all events this proves that it was no hasty production, but one which had been well considered, and submitted to the judgment of others long before it was given to the public. Jane changed the name of another novel also between composition and publication, "Sense and Sensibility" having been at first entitled "Elinor and Marianne."

In the same letter there is an observation about "Mrs. Knight's giving up the Godmersham estate to Edward being no such prodigious act of generosity after all," which was certainly not intended seriously, or if so, was written under a very imperfect knowledge of the facts. I have seen the letters which passed upon the occasion. The first is from Mrs. Knight, offering to give up the property in the kindest and most generous terms, and this when she was not much above forty years of age, and much attached to the place. Then comes my grandfather's answer, deprecating the idea of her making such a sacrifice, and saying that he and his wife were already well enough off through Mrs. Knight's kindness, and could not endure that she should leave for their sakes a home which she loved so much. Mrs. Knight replies that it was through her great affection for my grandfather that her late husband had adopted him, that she loved him as if he was her own son, that his letter had

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

strengthened her in her resolution to give up the property to him, and that she considered there were duties attaching to the possession of landed property which could not be discharged by a woman so well as by a man. She reminds him how that the poor had always been liberally treated by the Godmersham family, and expresses her happiness at feeling that he will do his duty in this and other respects, and that she shall spend the rest of her days near enough to see much of him and his wife. I am quite sure that my grandfather was most gratefully fond of Mrs. Knight, and considered her conduct, as indeed it was, an act of affectionate generosity.

VIII

“ Bull and George,” Dartford:
Wednesday (October 24).

MY DEAR CASSANDRA,

You have already heard from Daniel, I conclude, in what excellent time we reached and quitted Sittingbourne, and how very well my mother bore her journey thither. I am now able to send you a continuation of the same good account of her. She was very little fatigued on her arrival at this place, has been refreshed by a

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

comfortable dinner, and now seems quite stout. It wanted five minutes of twelve when we left Sittingbourne, from whence we had a famous pair of horses, which took us to Rochester in an hour and a quarter; the postboy seemed determined to show my mother that Kentish drivers were not always tedious, and really drove as fast as *Cax*.

Our next stage was not quite so expeditiously performed; the road was heavy and our horses very indifferent. However, we were in such good time, and my mother bore her journey so well, that expedition was of little importance to us; and as it was, we were very little more than two hours and a half coming hither, and it was scarcely past four when we stopped at the inn. My mother took some of her bitters at Ospringe, and some more at Rochester, and she ate some bread several times.

We have got apartments up two pair of stairs, as we could not be otherwise accommodated with a sitting-room and bed-chambers on the same floor, which we wished to be. We have one double-bedded and one single-bedded room; in the former my mother and I are to sleep. I shall leave you to guess who is to occupy the other. We sate down to dinner a little after five, and had some beefsteaks and a boiled fowl, but no oyster sauce.

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

I should have begun my letter soon after our arrival but for a little adventure which prevented me. After we had been here a quarter of an hour it was discovered that my writing and dressing boxes had been by accident put into a chaise which was just packing off as we came in, and were driven away towards Gravesend in their way to the West Indies. No part of my property could have been such a prize before, for in my writing-box was all my worldly wealth, £7, and my dear Harry's deputation. Mr. Nottley immediately despatched a man and horse after the chaise, and in half an hour's time I had the pleasure of being as rich as ever; they were got about two or three miles off.

My day's journey has been pleasanter in every respect than I expected. I have been very little crowded and by no means unhappy. Your watchfulness with regard to the weather on our accounts was very kind and very effectual. We had one heavy shower on leaving Sittingbourne, but afterwards the clouds cleared away, and we had a very bright *chrystal* afternoon.

My father is now reading the "Midnight Bell," which he has got from the library, and mother sitting by the fire. Our route to-morrow is not determined. We have none of us much inclination for London, and if Mr. Nottley will give us leave, I think we shall go to Staines

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

through Croydon and Kingston, which will be much pleasanter than any other way; but he is decidedly for Clapham and Battersea. God bless you all!

Yours affectionately,
J. A.

I flatter myself that *itty Dordy* will not forget me at least under a week. Kiss him for me.

Miss Austen, Godmersham Park,
Faversham.

IX

Steventon: Saturday (October 27).

MY DEAR CASSANDRA,

Your letter was a most agreeable surprise to me to-day, and I have taken a long sheet of paper to show my gratitude.

We arrived here yesterday between four and five, but I cannot send you quite so triumphant an account of our last day's journey as of the first and second. Soon after I had finished my letter from Staines, my mother began to suffer from the exercise or fatigue of travelling, and she was a good deal indisposed. She had not a very good night at Staines, but bore her journey better than I had expected, and at Basingstoke, where we stopped more than half an hour, received much comfort from a mess of broth and

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

the sight of Mr. Lyford, who recommended her to take twelve drops of laudanum when she went to bed as a composer, which she accordingly did.

James called on us just as we were going to tea, and my mother was well enough to talk very cheerfully to him before she went to bed. James seems to have taken to his old trick of coming to Steventon in spite of Mary's reproaches, for he was here before breakfast and is now paying us a second visit. They were to have dined here to-day, but the weather is too bad. I have had the pleasure of hearing that Martha is with them. James fetched her from Ibthorp on Thursday, and she will stay with them till she removes to Kintbury.

We met with no adventures at all in our journey yesterday, except that our trunk had once nearly slipped off, and we were obliged to stop at Hartley to have our wheels greased.

Whilst my mother and Mr. Lyford were together I went to Mrs. Ryder's and bought what I intended to buy, but not in much perfection. There were no narrow braces for children and scarcely any notting silk; but Miss Wood, as usual, is going to town very soon, and will lay in a fresh stock. I gave 2*s.* 3*d.* a yard for my flannel, and I fancy it is not very good, but it is so disgraceful and contemptible an article in itself that its being comparatively good or bad is

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

of little importance. I bought some Japan ink likewise, and next week shall begin my operations on my hat, on which you know my principal hopes of happiness depend.

I am very grand indeed; I had the dignity of dropping out my mother's laudanum last night. I carry about the keys of the wine and closet, and twice since I began this letter have had orders to give in the kitchen. Our dinner was very good yesterday, and the chicken boiled perfectly tender; therefore I shall not be obliged to dismiss Nanny on that account.

Almost everything was unpacked and put away last night. Nanny chose to do it, and I was not sorry to be busy. I have unpacked the gloves and placed yours in your drawer. Their colour is light and pretty, and I believe exactly what we fixed on.

Your letter was chaperoned here by one from Mrs. Cooke, in which she says that "Battle-ridge" is not to come out before January, and she is so little satisfied with Cawthorn's dilatoriness that she never means to employ him again.

Mrs. Hall, of Sherborne, was brought to bed yesterday of a dead child, some weeks before she expected, owing to a fright. I suppose she happened unawares to look at her husband.

There has been a great deal of rain here for this last fortnight, much more than in Kent, and

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

indeed we found the roads all the way from Staines most disgracefully dirty. Steventon lane has its full share of it, and I don't know when I shall be able to get to Deane.

I hear that Martha is in better looks and spirits than she has enjoyed for a long time, and I flatter myself she will now be able to jest openly about Mr. W.

The spectacles which Molly found are my mother's, the scissors my father's. We are very glad to hear such a good account of your patients, little and great. My dear itty Dordy's remembrance of me is very pleasing to me—foolishly pleasing, because I know it will be over so soon. My attachment to him will be more durable. I shall think with tenderness and delight on his beautiful and smiling countenance and interesting manner until a few years have turned him into an ungovernable, ungracious fellow.

The books from Winton are all unpacked and put away; the binding has compressed them most conveniently, and there is now very good room in the bookcase for all that we wish to have there. I believe the servants were very glad to see us. Nanny was, I am sure. She confesses that it was very dull, and yet she had her child with her till last Sunday. I understand that there are some grapes left, but I believe not many; they

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

must be gathered as soon as possible, or this rain will entirely rot them.

I am quite angry with myself for not writing closer; why is my alphabet so much more sprawly than yours? Dame Tilbury's daughter has lain in. Shall I give her any of your baby clothes? The laceman was here only a few days ago. How unfortunate for both of us that he came so soon! Dame Bushell washes for us only one week more, as Sukey has got a place. John Steevens' wife undertakes our purification. She does not look as if anything she touched would ever be clean, but who knows? We do not seem likely to have any other maidservant at present, but Dame Staples will supply the place of one. Mary has hired a young girl from Ashe who has never been out to service to be her scrub, but James fears her not being strong enough for the place.

Earle Harwood has been to Deane lately, as I think Mary wrote us word, and his family then told him that they would receive his wife, if she continued to behave well for another year. He was very grateful, as well he might; their behaviour throughout the whole affair has been particularly kind. Earle and his wife live in the most private manner imaginable at Portsmouth, without keeping a servant of any kind. What a prodigious innate love of virtue she must have, to marry under such circumstances!

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

It is now Saturday evening, but I wrote the chief of this in the morning. My mother has not been down at all to-day; the laudanum made her sleep a good deal, and upon the whole I think she is better. My father and I dined by ourselves. How strange! He and John Bond are now very happy together for I have just heard the heavy step of the latter along the passage.

James Digweed called to-day, and I gave him his brother's deputation. Charles Harwood, too, has just called to ask how we are, in his way from Dummer, whither he has been conveying Miss Garrett, who is going to return to her former residence in Kent. I *will* leave off, or I shall not have room to add a word to-morrow.

Sunday.—My mother has had a very good night, and feels much better to-day.

I have received my Aunt's letter, and thank you for your scrap. I will write to Charles soon. Pray give Fanny and Edward a kiss from me, and ask George if he has got a new song for me. 'Tis really very kind of my Aunt to ask us to Bath again; a kindness that deserves a better return than to profit by it. Yours ever,

J. A.

Miss Austen, Godmersham Park,
Faversham, Kent.

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

X

Saturday, November 17, 1798.

MY DEAR CASSANDRA,

If you paid any attention to the conclusion of my last letter, you will be satisfied, before you receive this, that my mother has had no relapse, and that Miss Debary comes. The former continues to recover, and though she does not gain strength very rapidly, my expectations are humble enough not to outstride her improvements. She was able to sit up nearly eight hours yesterday, and to-day I hope we shall do as much. . . . So much for my patient—now for myself.

Mrs. Lefroy did come last Wednesday, and the Harwoods came likewise, but very considerably paid their visit before Mrs. Lefroy's arrival, 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 did not once mention the name of the former to *me*, and I was too proud to make any inquiries; but on my father's afterwards asking where he was, I learnt that he was gone back to London in his way to Ireland, where he is called to the Bar and means to practise.

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

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." 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. She saw a great deal of the Mapletons while she was in Bath. Christian is still in a very bad state of health, consumptive, and not likely to recover.

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

Mrs. Portman is not much admired in Dorsetshire; the good-natured world, as usual, extolled her beauty so highly, that all the neighbourhood have had the pleasure of being disappointed.

My mother desires me to tell you that I am a very good housekeeper, which I have no reluctance in doing, because I really think it my peculiar excellence, and for this reason—I always take care to provide such things as please my own appetite, which I consider as the chief merit in housekeeping. I have had some ragout veal, and I mean to have some haricot mutton tomorrow. We are to kill a pig soon.

There is to be a ball at Basingstoke next Thursday. Our assemblies have very kindly declined ever since we laid down the carriage, so that dis-convenience and dis-inclination to go have kept pace together.

My father's affection for Miss Cuthbert is as lively as ever, and he begs that you will not neglect to send him intelligence of her or her brother, whenever you have any to send. I am likewise to tell you that one of his Leicestershire sheep, sold to the butcher last week, weighed 27 lb. and $\frac{1}{4}$ per quarter.

I went to Deane with my father two days ago to see Mary, who is still plagued with the rheumatism, which she would be very glad to get rid of, and still more glad to get rid of her child, of

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

whom she is heartily tired. Her nurse is come, and has no particular charm either of person or manner; but as all the Hurstbourne world pronounce her to be the best nurse that ever was, Mary expects her attachment to increase.

What fine weather this is! Not very becoming perhaps early in the morning, but very pleasant out of doors at noon, and very wholesome—at least everybody fancies so, and imagination is everything. To Edward, however, I really think dry weather of importance. I have not taken to fires yet.

I believe I never told you that Mrs. Coulthard and Anne, late of Manydown, are both dead, and both died in childbed. We have not regaled Mary with this news. Harry St. John is in Orders, has done duty at Ashe, and performs very well.

I am very fond of experimental housekeeping, such as having an ox-cheek now and then; I shall have one next week, and I mean to have some little dumplings put into it, that I may fancy myself at Godmersham.

I hope George was pleased with my designs. Perhaps they would have suited him as well had they been less elaborately finished; but an artist cannot do anything slovenly. I suppose baby grows and improves.

• *Sunday.*—I have just received a note from

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

James to say that Mary was brought to bed last night, at eleven o'clock, of a fine little boy, and that everything is going on very well. My mother had desired to know nothing of it before it should be all over, and we were clever enough to prevent her having any suspicion of it, though Jenny, who had been left here by her mistress, was sent for home. . . .

I called yesterday on Betty Londe, who inquired particularly after you, and said she seemed to miss you very much, because you used to call in upon her very often. This was an oblique reproach at me, which I am sorry to have merited, and from which I will profit. I shall send George another picture when I write next, which I suppose will be soon, on Mary's account. My mother continues well.

Yours,

J. A.

Miss Austen, Godmersham.

XI

Steventon: Sunday (November 25).

MY DEAR SISTER,

I expected to have heard from you this morning, but no letter is come. I shall not take the trouble of announcing to you any more of Mary's children, if, instead of thanking me for the intelligence, you always sit down and write

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

to James. I am sure nobody can desire your letters so much as I do, and I don't think anybody deserves them so well.

Having now relieved my heart of a great deal of malevolence, I will proceed to tell you that Mary continues quite well, and my mother tolerably so. I saw the former on Friday, and though I had seen her comparatively hearty the Tuesday before, I was really amazed at the improvement which three days had made in her. She looked well, her spirits were perfectly good, and she spoke much more vigorously than Elizabeth did when we left Godmersham. I had only a glimpse at the child, who was asleep; but Miss Debary told me that his eyes were large, dark, and handsome. *She* looks much as she used to do, is netting herself a gown in worsteds, and wears what Mrs. Birch would call a *pot hat*. A short and compendious history of Miss Debary!

I suppose you have heard from Henry himself that his affairs are happily settled. We do not know who furnishes the qualification. Mr. Mowell would have readily given it, had not all his Oxfordshire property been engaged for a similar purpose to the Colonel. Amusing enough!

Our family affairs are rather deranged at present, for Nanny has kept her bed these three

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

or four days, with a pain in her side and fever, and we are forced to have two charwomen, which is not very comfortable. She is considerably better now, but it must still be some time, I suppose, before she is able to do anything. You and Edward will be amused, I think, when you know that Nanny Littlewart dresses my hair.

The ball on Thursday was a very small one indeed, hardly so large as an Oxford smack. There were but seven couples, and only twenty-seven people in the room.

The Overton Scotchman has been kind enough to rid me of some of my money, in exchange for six shifts and four pair of stockings. The Irish is not so fine as I should like it; but as I gave as much money for it as I intended, I have no reason to complain. It cost me 3s. 6d. per yard. It is rather finer, however, than our last, and not so harsh a cloth.

We have got "Fitz-Albini"; my father has bought it against my private wishes, for it does not quite satisfy my feelings that we should purchase the only one of Egerton's works of which his family are ashamed. That these scruples, however, do not at all interfere with my reading it, you will easily believe. We have neither of us yet finished the first volume. My father is disappointed—I am not, for I expected nothing better. Never did any book carry more in-

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

ternal evidence of its author. Every sentiment is completely Egerton's. There is very little story, and what there is is told in a strange, unconnected way. There are many characters introduced, apparently merely to be delineated. We have not been able to recognise any of them hitherto, except Dr. and Mrs. Hey and Mr. Oxenden, who is not very tenderly treated.

You must tell Edward that my father gives 25*s.* apiece to Seward for his last lot of sheep, and, in return for this news, my father wishes to receive some of Edward's pigs.

We have got Boswell's "Tour to the Hebrides," and are to have his "Life of Johnson"; and, as some money will yet remain in Burdon's hands, it is to be laid out in the purchase of Cowper's works. This would please Mr. Clarke, could he know it.

By the bye, I have written to Mrs. Birch among my other writings, and so I hope to have some account of all the people in that part of the world before long. I have written to Mrs. E. Leigh, too, and Mrs. Heathcote has been ill-natured enough to send me a letter of inquiry; so that altogether I am tolerably tired of letter-writing, and, unless I have anything new to tell you of my mother or Mary, I shall not write again for many days; perhaps a little repose may restore my regard for a pen. Ask little Edward

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

whether Bob Brown wears a great coat this cold weather.

Miss Austen, Godmersham Park,

XII

Steventon: December 1.

MY DEAR CASSANDRA,

I am so good as to write to you again thus speedily, to let you know that I have just heard from Frank. He was at Cadiz, alive and well, on October 19, and had then very lately received a letter from you, written as long ago as when the "London" was at St. Helen's. But his *rally* latest intelligence of us was in one from me of September 1, which I sent soon after we got to Godmersham. He had written a packet full for his dearest friends in England, early in October, to go by the "Excellent"; but the "Excellent" was not sailed, nor likely to sail, when he despatched this to me. It comprehended letters for both of us, for Lord Spencer, Mr. Daysh, and the East India Directors. Lord St. Vincent had left the fleet when he wrote, and was gone to Gibraltar, it was said to superintend the fitting out of a private expedition from thence against some of the enemies' ports; Minorca or Malta were conjectured to be the objects.

Frank writes in good spirits, but says that our

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

correspondence cannot be so easily carried on in future as it has been, as the communication between Cadiz and Lisbon is less frequent than formerly. You and my mother, therefore, must not alarm yourselves at the long intervals that may divide his letters. I address this advice to you two as being the most tender-hearted of the family.

My mother made her *entrée* into the dressing-room through crowds of admiring spectators yesterday afternoon, and we all drank tea together for the first time these five weeks. She has had a tolerable night, and bids fair for a continuance in the same brilliant course of action to-day. . . .

Mr. Lyford was here yesterday; he came while we were at dinner, and partook of our elegant entertainment. I was not ashamed at asking him to sit down to table, for we had some pease-soup, a sparerib, and a pudding. He wants my mother to look yellow and to throw out a rash, but she will do neither.

I was at Deane yesterday morning. Mary was very well, but does not gain bodily strength very fast. When I saw her so stout on the third and sixth days, I expected to have seen her as well as ever by the end of a fortnight.

James went to Ibthorp yesterday to see his mother and child. Letty is with Mary at present,

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

of course exceedingly happy, and in raptures with the child. Mary does not manage matters in such a way as to make me want to lay in myself. She is not tidy enough in her appearance; she has no dressing-gown to sit up in; her curtains are all too thin, and things are not in that comfort and style about her which are necessary to make such a situation an enviable one. Elizabeth was really a pretty object with her nice clean cap put on so tidily and her dress so uniformly white and orderly. We live entirely in the dressing-room now, which I like very much; I always feel so much more elegant in it than in the parlour.

No news from Kintbury yet. Eliza sports with our impatience. She was very well last Thursday. Who is Miss Maria Montresor going to marry, and what is to become of Miss Mulcaster?

I find great comfort in my stuff gown, but I hope you do not wear yours too often. I have made myself two or three caps to wear of evenings since I came home, and they save me a world of torment as to hair-dressing, which at present gives me no trouble beyond washing and brushing, for my long hair is always plaited up out of sight, and my short hair curls well enough to want no papering. I have had it cut lately by Mr. Butler.

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

There is no reason to suppose that Miss Morgan is dead after all. Mr. Lyford gratified us very much yesterday by his praises of my father's mutton, which they all think the finest that was ever ate. John Bond begins to find himself grow old, which John Bonds ought not to do, and unequal to much hard work; a man is therefore hired to supply his place as to labour, and John himself is to have the care of the sheep. There are not more people engaged than before, I believe; only men instead of boys. I fancy so at least, but you know my stupidity as to such matters. Lizzie Bond is just apprenticed to Miss Small, so we may hope to see her able to spoil gowns in a few years.

My father has applied to Mr. May for an ale-house for Robert, at his request, and to Mr. Deane, of Winchester, likewise. This was my mother's idea, who thought he would be proud to oblige a relation of Edward in return for Edward's accepting his money. He sent a very civil answer indeed, but has no house vacant at present. May expects to have an empty one soon at Farnham, so perhaps Nanny may have the honour of drawing ale for the Bishop. I shall write to Frank to-morrow.

Charles Powlett gave a dance on Thursday, to the great disturbance of all his neighbours, of course, who, you know, take a most lively inter-

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

est in the state of his finances, and live in hopes of his being soon ruined.

We are very much disposed to like our new maid; she knows nothing of a diary, to be sure, which, in our family, is rather against her, but she is to be taught it all. In short, we have felt the inconvenience of being without a maid so long, that we are determined to like her, and she will find it a hard matter to displease us. As yet, she seems to cook very well, is uncommonly stout, and says she can work well at her needle.

Sunday.—My father is glad to hear so good an account of Edward's pigs, and desires he may be told, as encouragement to his taste for them, that Lord Bolton is particularly curious in *his* pigs, has had pigstyes of a most elegant construction built for them, and visits them every morning as soon as he rises.

Affectionately yours,

J. A.

Miss Austen, Godmersham Park,
Faversham.

XIII

Steventon: Tuesday (December 18).

MY DEAR CASSANDRA,

Your letter came quite as soon as I expected, and so your letters will always do, because I have

[257]

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

made it a rule not to expect them till they come, in which I think I consult the ease of us both.

It is a great satisfaction to us to hear that your business is in a way to be settled, and so settled as to give you as little inconvenience as possible. You are very welcome to my father's name and to his services if they are ever required in it. I shall keep my ten pounds too, to wrap myself up in next winter.

I took the liberty a few days ago of asking your black velvet bonnet to lend me its cawl, which it very readily did, and by which I have been enabled to give a considerable improvement of dignity to cap, which was before too *nidgetty* to please me. I shall wear it on Thursday, but I hope you will not be offended with me for following your advice as to its ornaments only in part. I still venture to retain the narrow silver round it, put twice round without any bow, and instead of the black military feather shall put in the coquelicot one as being smarter, and besides coquelicot is to be all the fashion this winter. After the ball I shall probably make it entirely black.

I am sorry that our dear Charles begins to feel the dignity of ill-usage. My father will write to Admiral Gambier. He must have already received so much satisfaction from his acquaintance and patronage of Frank, that he

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

will be delighted, I dare say, to have another of the family introduced to him. I think it would be very right in Charles to address Sir Thomas on the occasion, though I cannot approve of *your* scheme of writing to him (which you communicated to me a few nights ago) to request him to come home and convey you to Steventon. To do you justice, however, you had some doubts of the propriety of such a measure yourself.

I am very much obliged to my dear little George for his message—for his *love* at least; his *duty*, I suppose, was only in consequence of some hint of my favourable intentions towards him from his father or mother. I am sincerely rejoiced, however, that I ever was born, since it has been the means of procuring him a dish of tea. Give my best love to him.

This morning has been made very gay to us by visits from our two lively neighbours, Mr. Holder and Mr. John Harwood.

I have received a very civil note from Mrs. Martin, requesting my name as a subscriber to her library which opens January 14, and my name, or rather yours, is accordingly given. My mother finds the money. May subscribes too, which I am glad of, but hardly expected. As an inducement to subscribe, Mrs. Martin tells me that her collection is not to consist only of novels, but of every kind of literature, &c. She might

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

have spared this pretension to *our* family, who are great novel-readers and not ashamed of being so; but it was necessary, I suppose, to the self-consequence of half her subscribers.

I hope and imagine that Edward Taylor is to inherit all Sir Edward Dering's fortune as well as all his own father's. I took care to tell Mrs. Lefroy of your calling on her mother, and she seemed pleased with it.

I enjoyed the hard black frosts of last week very much, and one day while they lasted walked to Deane by myself. I do not know that I ever did such a thing in my life before.

Charles Powlett has been very ill, but is getting well again. His wife is discovered to be everything that the neighbourhood could wish her, silly and cross as well as extravagant. Earle Harwood and his friend Mr. Bailey came to Deane yesterday, but are not to stay above a day or two. Earle has got the appointment to a prison-ship at Portsmouth, which he has been for some time desirous of having, and he and his wife are to live on board for the future.

We dine now at half-past three, and have done dinner, I suppose, before you begin. We drink tea at half-past six. I am afraid you will despise us. My father reads Cowper to us in the morning, to which I listen when I can. How do you spend your evenings? I guess that Elizabeth

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

works, that you read to her, and that Edward goes to sleep. My mother continues hearty; her appetite and nights are very good, but she sometimes complains of an asthma, a dropsy, water in her chest, and a liver disorder.

The third Miss Irish Lefroy is going to be married to a Mr. Courteney, but whether James or Charles I do not know. Miss Lyford is gone into Suffolk with her brother and Miss Lodge. Everybody is now very busy in making up an income for the two latter. Miss Lodge has only 800*l.* of her own, and it is not supposed that her father can give her much; therefore the good offices of the neighbourhood will be highly acceptable. John Lyford means to take pupils.

James Digweed has had a very ugly cut—how could it happen? It happened by a young horse which he had lately purchased, and which he was trying to back into its stable; the animal kicked him down with his forefeet, and kicked a great hole in his head; he scrambled away as soon as he could, but was stunned for a time, and suffered a good deal of pain afterwards. Yesterday he got upon the horse again, and, for fear of something worse, was forced to throw himself off.

Wednesday.—I have changed my mind, and changed the trimmings of my cap this morning;

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

they are now such as you suggested. I felt as if I should not prosper if I strayed from your directions, and I think it makes me look more like Lady Conyngham now than it did before, which is all that one lives for now. I believe I *shall* make my new gown like my robe, but the back of the latter is all in a piece with the tail, and will seven yards enable me to copy it in that respect?

Mary went to church on Sunday, and had the weather been smiling, we should have seen her here before this time. Perhaps I may stay at Manydown as long as Monday, but not longer. Martha sends me word that she is too busy to write to me now, and but for your letter I should have supposed her deep in the study of medicine preparatory to their removal from Ibthorp. The letter to Gambier goes to-day.

I expect a very stupid ball; there will be nobody worth dancing with, and nobody worth talking to but Catherine, for I believe Mrs. Le-froy will not be there. Lucy is to go with Mrs. Russell.

People get so horridly poor and economical in this part of the world that I have no patience with them. Kent is the only place for happiness; everybody is rich there. I must do similar justice, however, to the Windsor neighbourhood. I have been forced to let James and Miss Debary

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

have two sheets of your drawing-paper, but they shan't have any more; there are not above three or four left, besides one of a smaller and richer sort. Perhaps you may want some more if you come through town in your return, or rather buy some more, for your wanting it will not depend on your coming through town, I imagine.

I have just heard from Martha and Frank: his letter was written on November 12. All well and nothing particular.

J. A.

Miss Austen, Godmersham Park,
Faversham.

XIV.

Steventon: Monday night (December 24).

MY DEAR CASSANDRA,

I have got some pleasant news for you which I am eager to communicate, and therefore begin my letter sooner, though I shall not *send* it sooner than usual.

Admiral Gambier, in reply to my father's application, writes as follows:—"As it is usual to keep young officers in small vessels, it being most proper on account of their inexperience, and it being also a situation where they are more in the way of learning their duty, your son has been continued in the 'Scorpion'; but I have men-

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

tioned to the Board of Admiralty his wish to be in a frigate, and when a proper opportunity offers and it is judged that he has taken his turn in a small ship, I hope he will be removed. With regard to your son now in the 'London' I am glad I can give you the assurance that his promotion is likely to take place very soon, as Lord Spencer has been so good as to say he would include him in an arrangement that he proposes making in a short time relative to some promotions in that quarter."

There! I may now finish my letter and go and hang myself, for I am sure I can neither write nor do anything which will not appear insipid to you after this. *Now* I really think he will soon be made, and only wish we could communicate our foreknowledge of the event to him whom it principally concerns. My father has written to Daysh to desire that he will inform us, if he can, when the commission is sent. Your chief wish is now ready to be accomplished; and could Lord Spencer give happiness to Martha at the same time, what a joyful heart he would make of yours!

I have sent the same extract of the sweets of Gambier to Charles, who, poor fellow, though he sinks into nothing but an humble attendant on the hero of the piece, will, I hope, be contented with the prospect held out to him. By

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

what the Admiral says, it appears as if he had been designedly kept in the "Scorpion." But I will not torment myself with conjectures and suppositions; facts shall satisfy me.

Frank had not heard from any of us for ten weeks when he wrote to me on November 12 in consequence of Lord St. Vincent being removed to Gibraltar. When his commission is sent, however, it will not be so long on its road as our letters, because all the Government despatches are forwarded by land to his lordship from Lisbon with great regularity.

I returned from Manydown this morning, and found my mother certainly in no respect worse than when I left her. She does not like the cold weather, but that we cannot help. I spent my time very quietly and very pleasantly with Catherine. Miss Blackford is agreeable enough. I do not want people to be very agreeable, as it saves me the trouble of liking them a great deal. I found only Catherine and her when I got to Manydown on Thursday. We dined together and went together to Worthing to seek the protection of Mrs. Clarke, with whom were Lady Mildmay, her eldest son, and a Mr. and Mrs. Hoare.

Our ball was very thin, but by no means unpleasant. There were thirty-one people, and only eleven ladies out of the number, and but five

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

single women in the room. Of the gentlemen present you may have some idea from the list of my partners—Mr. Wood, G. Lefroy, Rice, a Mr. Butcher (belonging to the Temples, a sailor and not of the 11th Light Dragoons), Mr. Temple (not the horrid one of all), Mr. Wm. Orde (cousin to the Kingsclere man), Mr. John Harwood, and Mr. Calland, who appeared as usual with his hat in his hand, and stood every now and then behind Catherine and me to be talked to and abused for not dancing. We teased him, however, into it at last. I was very glad to see him again after so long a separation, and he was altogether rather the genius and flirt of the evening. He inquired after you.

There were twenty dances, and I danced them all, and without any fatigue. I was glad to find myself capable of dancing so much, and with so much satisfaction as I did; from my slender enjoyment of the Ashford balls (as assemblies for dancing) I had not thought myself equal to it, but in cold weather and with few couples I fancy I could just as well dance for a week together as for half an hour. My black cap was openly admired by Mrs. Lefroy, and secretly I imagine by everybody else in the room.

Tuesday.—I thank you for your long letter, which I will endeavour to deserve by writing the rest of this as closely as possible. I am full of

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

joy at much of your information; that you should have been to a ball, and have danced at it, and supped with the Prince, and that you should meditate the purchase of a new muslin gown, are delightful circumstances. *I* am determined to buy a handsome one whenever I can, and I am so tired and ashamed of half my present stock, that I even blush at the sight of the wardrobe which contains them. But I will not be much longer libelled by the possession of my coarse spot; I shall turn it into a petticoat very soon. I wish you a merry Christmas, but *no* compliments of the season.

Poor Edward! It is very hard that he, who has everything else in the world that he can wish for, should not have good health too. But I hope with the assistance of stomach complaints, faintnesses, and sicknesses, he will soon be restored to that blessing likewise. If his nervous complaint proceeded from a suppression of something that ought to be thrown out, which does not seem unlikely, the first of these disorders may really be a remedy, and I sincerely wish it may, for I know no one more deserving of happiness without alloy than Edward is.

I cannot determine what to do about my new gown; I wish such things were to be bought ready-made. I have some hopes of meeting Martha at the christening at Deane next Tues-

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

day, and shall see what she can do for me. I want to have something suggested which will give me no trouble of thought or direction.

Again I return to my joy that you danced at Ashford, and that you supped with the Prince. I can perfectly comprehend Mrs. Cage's distress and perplexity. She has all those kind of foolish and incomprehensible feelings which would make her fancy herself uncomfortable in such a party. I love her, however, in spite of all her nonsense. Pray give "t'other Miss Austen's" compliments to Edward Bridges when you see him again.

I insist upon your persevering in your intention of buying a new gown; I am sure you must want one, and as you will have 5*l.* due in a week's time, I am certain you may afford it very well, and if you think you cannot, I will give you the body-lining.

Of my charities to the poor since I came home you shall have a faithful account. I have given a pair of worsted stockings to Mary Hutchins, Dame Kew, Mary Steevens, and Dame Staples; a shift to Hannah Staples, and a shawl to Betty Dawkins; amounting in all to about half a guinea. But I have no reason to suppose that the *Battys* would accept of anything, because I have not made them the offer.

I am glad to hear such a good account of Har-

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

riet Bridges; she goes on now as young ladies of seventeen ought to do, admired and admiring, in a much more rational way than her three elder sisters, who had so little of that kind of youth. I dare say she fancies Major Elkington as agreeable as Warren, and if she can think so, it is very well.

I was to have dined at Deane to-day, but the weather is so cold that I am not sorry to be kept at home by the appearance of snow. We are to have company to dinner on Friday: the three Digweeds and James. We shall be a nice silent party, I suppose. Seize upon the scissors as soon as you possibly can on the receipt of this. I only fear your being too late to secure the prize.

The Lords of the Admiralty will have enough of our applications at present, for I hear from Charles that he has written to Lord Spencer himself to be removed. I am afraid his Serene Highness will be in a passion, and order some of our heads to be cut off.

My mother wants to know whether Edward has ever made the hen-house which they planned together. I am rejoiced to hear from Martha that they certainly continue at Ibthorp, and I have just heard that I am sure of meeting Martha at the christening.

You deserve a longer letter than this; but it

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

is my unhappy fate seldom to treat people so well as they deserve. . . . God bless you!

Yours affectionately,

JANE AUSTEN.

Wednesday.—The snow came to nothing yesterday, so I *did* go to Deane, and returned home at nine o'clock at night in the little carriage, and without being very cold.

Miss Austen, Godmersham Park,
Faversham, Kent.

XV.

Steventon: Friday (December 28).

MY DEAR CASSANDRA,

Frank is made. He was yesterday raised to the rank of Commander, and appointed to the "Petterel" sloop, now at Gibraltar. A letter from Daysh has just announced this, and as it is confirmed by a very friendly one from Mr. Mathew to the same effect, transcribing one from Admiral Gambier to the General, we have no reason to suspect the truth of it.

As soon as you have cried a little for joy, you may go on, and learn farther that the India House have taken *Captain Austen's* petition into consideration—this comes from Daysh—and likewise that Lieutenant Charles John Austen

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

is removed to the "Tamar" frigate—this comes from the Admiral. We cannot find out where the "Tamar" is, but I hope we shall now see Charles here at all events.

This letter is to be dedicated entirely to good news. If you will send my father an account of your washing and letter expenses, &c., he will send you a draft for the amount of it, as well as for your next quarter, and for Edward's rent. If you don't buy a muslin gown now on the strength of this money and Frank's promotion, I shall never forgive you.

Mrs. Lefroy has just sent me word that Lady Dorchester meant to invite me to her ball on January 8, which, though an humble blessing compared with what the last page records, I do not consider as any calamity.

I cannot write any more now, but I have written enough to make you very happy, and therefore may safely conclude.

Yours affectionately,

JANE.

Miss Austen, Godmersham Park.

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

XVI

Steventon: Tuesday (January 8).

MY DEAR CASSANDRA,

You must read your letters over *five* times in future before you send them, and then, perhaps, you may find them as entertaining as I do. I laughed at several parts of the one which I am now answering.

Charles is not come yet, but he must come this morning, or he shall never know what I will do to him. The ball at Kempshott is this evening, and I have got him an invitation, though I have not been so considerate as to get him a partner. But the cases are different between him and Eliza Bailey, for he is not in a dying way, and may therefore be equal to getting a partner for himself. I believe I told you that Monday was to be the ball night, for which, and for all other errors into which I may ever have led you, I humbly ask your pardon.

Elizabeth is very cruel about my writing music, and, as a punishment for her, I should insist upon always writing out all hers for her in future, if I were not punishing myself at the same time.

I am tolerably glad to hear that Edward's income is so good a one—as glad as I can be at

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

anybody's being rich except you and me—and I am thoroughly rejoiced to hear of his present to you.

I am not to wear my white satin cap to-night. after all; I am to wear a mamalone cap instead, which Charles Fowle sent to Mary, and which she lends me. It is all the fashion now; worn at the opera, and by Lady Mildmays at Hackwood balls. I hate describing such things, and I dare say you will be able to guess what it is like. I have got over the dreadful epocha of mantua-making much better than I expected. My gown is made very much like my blue one, which you always told me sat very well, with only these variations: the sleeves are short, the wrap fuller, the apron comes over it, and a band of the same completes the whole.

I assure you that I dread the idea of going to Brighton as much as you do, but I am not without hopes that something may happen to prevent it.

F—— has lost his election at B——, and perhaps they may not be able to see company for some time. They talk of going to Bath, too, in the spring, and perhaps they may be overturned in their way down, and all laid up for the summer.

Wednesday.—I have had a cold and weakness in one of my eyes for some days, which makes

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

writing neither very pleasant nor very profitable, and which will probably prevent my finishing this letter myself. My mother has undertaken to do it for me, and I shall leave the Kempshott ball for her.

You express so little anxiety about my being murdered under Ash Park Copse by Mrs. Hulbert's servant, that I have a great mind not to tell you whether I was or not, and shall only say that I did not return home that night or the next, as Martha kindly made room for me in her bed, which was the shut-up one in the new nursery. Nurse and the child slept upon the floor, and there we all were in some confusion and great comfort. The bed did exceedingly well for us, both to lie awake in and talk till two o'clock, and to sleep in the rest of the night. I love Martha better than ever, and I mean to go and see her, if I can, when she gets home. We all dined at the Harwoods' on Thursday, and the party broke up the next morning.

This complaint in my eye has been a sad bore to me, for I have not been able to read or work in any comfort since Friday, but one advantage will be derived from it, for I shall be such a proficient in music by the time I have got rid of my cold, that I shall be perfectly qualified in *that* science at least to take Mr. Roope's office at Eastwell next summer; and I am sure of Eliza-

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

beth's recommendation, be it only on Harriet's account. Of my talent in drawing I have given specimens in my letters to you, and I have nothing to do but to invent a few hard names for the stars.

Mary grows rather more reasonable about her child's beauty, and says that she does not think him really handsome; but I suspect her moderation to be something like that of W—— W——'s mamma. Perhaps Mary has told you that they are going to enter more into dinner parties; the Biggs and Mr. Holder dine there to-morrow, and I am to meet them. I shall sleep there. Catherine has the honour of giving her name to a set, which will be composed of two Withers, two Heathcotes, a Blackford, and no Bigg except herself. She congratulated me last night on Frank's promotion, as if she really felt the joy she talked of.

My sweet little George! I am delighted to hear that he has such an inventive genius as to face-making. I admired his yellow wafer very much, and hope he will choose the wafer for your next letter. I wore my green shoes last night, and took my *white fan* with me; I am very glad he never threw it into the river.

Mrs. Knight giving up the Godmersham estate to Edward was no such prodigious act of generosity after all, it seems, for she has reserved

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

herself an income out of it still; this ought to be known, that her conduct may not be overrated. I rather think Edward shows the most magnanimity of the two, in accepting her resignation with such incumbrances.

The more I write, the better my eye gets, so I shall at least keep on till it is quite well, before I give up my pen to my mother.

Mrs. Bramston's little movable apartment was tolerably filled last night by herself, Mrs. H. Blackstone, her two daughters, and me. I do not like the Miss Blackstones; indeed, I was always determined not to like them, so there is the less merit in it. Mrs. Bramston was very civil, kind, and noisy. I spent a very pleasant evening, chiefly among the Manydown party. There was the same kind of supper as last year, and the same want of chairs. There were more dancers than the room could conveniently hold, which is enough to constitute a good ball at any time.

I do not think I was very much in request. People were rather apt not to ask me till they could not help it; one's consequence, you know, varies so much at times without any particular reason. There was one gentleman, an officer of the Cheshire, a very good-looking young man, who, I was told, wanted very much to be introduced to me; but as he did not want it quite

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

enough to take much trouble in effecting it, we never could bring it about.

I danced with Mr. John Wood again, twice with a Mr. South, a lad from Winchester, who, I suppose, is as far from being related to the bishop of that diocese as it is possible to be, with G. Lefroy, and J. Harwood, who, I think, takes to me rather more than he used to do. One of my gayest actions was sitting down two dances in preference to having Lord Bolton's eldest son for my partner, who danced too ill to be endured. The Miss Charterises were there, and played the parts of the Miss Edens with great spirit. Charles never came. Naughty Charles! I suppose he could not get superseded in time.

Miss Debary has replaced your two sheets of drawing-paper with two of superior size and quality; so I do not grudge her having taken them at all now. Mr. Ludlow and Miss Pugh of Andover are lately married, and so is Mrs. Skeete of Basingstoke, and Mr. French, chemist, of Reading.

I do not wonder at your wanting to read "First Impressions" again, so seldom as you have gone through it, and that so long ago. I am much obliged to you for meaning to leave my old petticoat behind you. I have long secretly wished it might be done, but had not courage to make the request.

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

Pray mention the name of Maria Montresor's lover when you write next. My mother wants to know it, and I have not courage to look back into your letters to find it out.

I shall not be able to send this till to-morrow, and you will be disappointed on Friday; I am very sorry for it, but I cannot help it.

The partnership between Jeffereys, Toomer, and Legge is dissolved; the two latter are melted away into nothing, and it is to be hoped that Jeffereys will soon break, for the sake of a few heroines whose money he may have. I wish you joy of your birthday twenty times over.

I *shall* be able to send this to the post to-day, which exalts me to the utmost pinnacle of human felicity, and makes me bask in the sunshine of prosperity, or gives me any other sensation of pleasure in studied language which you may prefer. Do not be angry with me for not filling my sheet, and believe me yours affectionately,

J. A.

Miss Austen, Godmersham Park,
Faversham.

XVII

Steventon: Monday (January 21).

MY DEAR CASSANDRA,

I will endeavour to make this letter more worthy your acceptance than my last, which was so

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

shabby a one that I think Mr. Marshall could never charge you with the postage. My eyes have been very indifferent since it was written, but are now getting better once more; keeping them so many hours open on Thursday night, as well as the dust of the ball-room, injured them a good deal. I use them as little as I can, but *you* know, and *Elizabeth* knows, and everybody who ever had weak eyes knows, how delightful it is to hurt them by employment, against the advice and entreaty of all one's friends.

Charles leaves us to-night. The "Tamar" is in the Downs, and Mr. Daysh advises him to join her there directly, as there is no chance of her going to the westward. Charles does not approve of this at all, and will not be much grieved if he should be too late for her before she sails, as he may then hope to get into a better station. He attempted to go to town last night, and got as far on his road thither as Dean Gate; but both the coaches were full, and we had the pleasure of seeing him back again. He will call on Daysh to-morrow to know whether the "Tamar" has sailed or not, and if she is still at the Downs he will proceed in one of the night coaches to Deal. I want to go with him, that I may explain the country to him properly between Canterbury and Rowling, but the unpleasantness of returning by myself deters me. I should like to go as

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

far as Ospringle with him very much indeed, that I might surprise you at Godmersham.

Martha writes me word that Charles was very much admired at Kintbury, and Mrs. Lefroy never saw anyone so much improved in her life, and thinks him handsomer than Henry. He appears to far more advantage here than he did at Godmersham, not surrounded by strangers and neither oppressed by a pain in his face or powder in his hair.

James christened Elizabeth Caroline on Saturday morning, and then came home. Mary, Anna, and Edward have left us of course; before the second went I took down her answer to her cousin Fanny.

Yesterday came a letter to my mother from Edward Cooper to announce, not the birth of a child, but of a living; for Mrs. Leigh has begged his acceptance of the Rectory of Hamstall-Ridware in Staffordshire, vacant by Mr. Johnson's death. We collect from his letter that he means to reside there, in which he shows his wisdom. Staffordshire is a good way off; so we shall see nothing more of them till, some fifteen years hence, the Miss Coopers are presented to us, fine, jolly, handsome, ignorant girls. The living is valued at 140*l.* a year, but perhaps it may be improvable. How will they be able to convey the furniture of the dressing-room so far in safety?

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

Our first cousins seem all dropping off very fast. One is incorporated into the family, another dies, and a third goes into Staffordshire. We can learn nothing of the disposal of the other living. I have not the smallest notion of Fulwar's having it. Lord Craven has probably other connections and more intimate ones, in that line, than he now has with the Kintbury family.

Our ball on Thursday was a very poor one, only eight couple and but twenty-three people in the room; but it was not the ball's fault, for we were deprived of two or three families by the sudden illness of Mr. Wither, who was seized that morning at Winchester with a return of his former alarming complaint. An express was sent off from thence to the family; Catherine and Miss Blackford were dining with Mrs. Russell. Poor Catherine's distress must have been very great. She was prevailed on to wait till the Heathcotes could come from Wintney, and then with those two and Harris proceeded directly to Winchester. In such a disorder his danger, I suppose, must always be great; but from this attack he is now rapidly recovering, and will be well enough to return to Manydown, I fancy, in a few days.

It was a fine thing for conversation at the ball. But it deprived us not only of the Biggs, but of Mrs. Russell too, and of the Boltons and John

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

Harwood, who were dining there likewise, and of Mr. Lane, who kept away as related to the family. Poor man!—I mean Mr. Wither—his life is so useful, his character so respectable and worthy, that I really believe there was a good deal of sincerity in the general concern expressed on his account.

Our ball was chiefly made up of Jervoises and Terrys, the former of whom were apt to be vulgar, the latter to be noisy. I had an odd set of partners: Mr. Jenkins, Mr. Street, Col. Jervoise, James Digweed, J. Lyford, and Mr. Biggs, a friend of the latter. I had a very pleasant evening, however, though you will probably find out that there was no particular reason for it; but I do not think it worth while to wait for enjoyment until there is some real opportunity for it. Mary behaved very well, and was not at all fidgetty. For the history of her adventures at the ball I refer you to Anna's letter.

When you come home you will have some shirts to make up for Charles. Mrs. Davies frightened him into buying a piece of Irish when we were in Basingstoke. Mr. Daysh supposes that Captain Austen's commission has reached him by this time.

Tuesday.—Your letter has pleased and amused me very much. Your essay on happy fortnights is highly ingenious, and the talobert skin

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

made me laugh a good deal. Whenever I fall into misfortune, how many jokes it ought to furnish to my acquaintance in general, or I shall die dreadfully in their debt for entertainment.

It began to occur to me before you mentioned it that I had been somewhat silent as to my mother's health for some time, but I thought you could have no difficulty in divining its exact state—you, who have guessed so much stranger things. She is tolerably well—better upon the whole than she was some weeks ago. She would tell you herself that she has a very dreadful cold in her head at present; but I have not much compassion for colds in the head without fever or sore throat.

Our own particular little brother got a place in the coach last night, and is now, I suppose, in town. I have no objection at all to your buying our gowns there, as your imagination has pictured to you exactly such a one as is necessary to make me happy. You quite abash me by your progress in notting, for I am still without silk. You must get me some in town or in Canterbury; it should be finer than yours.

I thought Edward would not approve of Charles being a crop, and rather wished you to conceal it from him at present, lest it might fall on his spirits and retard his recovery. My father furnishes him with a pig from Cheesedown; it is

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

already killed and cut up, but it is not to weigh more than nine stone; the season is too far advanced to get him a larger one. My mother means to pay herself for the salt and the trouble of ordering it to be cured by the sparibs, the souse, and the lard. We have had one dead lamb.

I congratulate you on Mr. E. Hatton's good fortune. I suppose the marriage will now follow out of hand. Give my compliments to Miss Finch.

What time in March may we expect your return in? I begin to be very tired of answering people's questions on that subject, and, independent of *that*, I shall be very glad to see you at home again, and then if we can get Martha and shirk . . . who will be so happy as we?

I think of going to Ibthorp in about a fortnight. My eyes are pretty well, I thank you, if you please.

Wednesday, 23rd.—I wish my dear Fanny many returns of this day, and that she may on every return enjoy as much pleasure as she is now receiving from her doll's-beds.

I have just heard from Charles, who is by this time at Deal. He is to be Second Lieutenant, which pleases him very well. The "Endymion" is come into the Downs, which pleases him likewise. He expects to be ordered to Sheerness shortly, as the "Tamar" has never been refitted.

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

My father and mother made the same match for you last night, and are very much pleased with it. *He* is a beauty of my mother's.

Yours affectionately,

JANE.

Miss Austen, Godmersham Park,
Faversham, Kent.

1799

THE third division consists of four letters written from Bath in May and June, 1799, when Mr. and Mrs. Austen of Godmersham had taken a house for a month, in order that the former might "try the waters" for the benefit of his health, which was supposed to be delicate; the experiment seems to have been successful, for he lived fifty-three years longer, dying at Godmersham in December, 1852, at the good old age of eighty-two. Cassandra had stayed at home with her father at Steventon, and Mrs. Austen and Jane had accompanied the Godmersham party. These letters contain little more than ordinary chit-chat, and for the most part explain themselves. There is another allusion to "Pride and Prejudice" under the name of "First Impressions," which Martha Lloyd seems to have been

[285]

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

allowed to read; another proof that this work at least was read and talked over in the family long before it was published.

XVIII

13, Queen's Square, Friday (May 17).

MY DEAREST CASSANDRA,

Our journey yesterday went off exceedingly well; nothing occurred to alarm or delay us. We found the roads in excellent order, had very good horses all the way, and reached Devizes with ease by four o'clock. I suppose John has told you in what manner we were divided when we left Andover, and no alteration was afterwards made. At Devizes we had comfortable rooms and a good dinner, to which we sat down about five; amongst other things we had asparagus and a lobster, which made me wish for you, and some cheesecakes, on which the children made so delightful a supper as to endear the town of Devizes to them for a long time.

Well, here we are at Bath; we got here about one o'clock, and have been arrived just long enough to go over the house, fix on our rooms, and be very well pleased with the whole of it. Poor Elizabeth has had a dismal ride of it from Devizes, for it has rained almost all the way, and

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

our first view of Bath has been just as gloomy as it was last November twelvemonth.

I have got so many things to say, so many things equally important, that I know not on which to decide at present, and shall therefore go and eat with the children.

We stopped in Paragon as we came along, but as it was too wet and dirty for us to get out, we could only see Frank, who told us that his master was very indifferent, but had had a better night last night than usual. In Paragon we met Mrs. Foley and Mrs. Dowdeswell with her yellow shawl airing out, and at the bottom of Kingsdown Hill we met a gentleman in a buggy, who, on minute examination, turned out to be Dr. Hall—and Dr. Hall in such very deep mourning that either his mother, his wife, or himself must be dead. These are all of our acquaintances who have yet met our eyes.

I have some hopes of being plagued about my trunk; I *had* more a few hours ago, for it was too heavy to go by the coach which brought Thomas and Rebecca from Devizes; there was reason to suppose that it might be too heavy likewise for any other coach, and for a long time we could hear of no waggon to convey it. At last, however, we unluckily discovered that one was just on the point of setting out for this place, but at any rate the trunk cannot be here till to-morrow;

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

so far we are safe, and who knows what may not happen to procure a farther delay?

I put Mary's letter into the postoffice at Andover with my own hand.

We are exceedingly pleased with the house; the rooms are quite as large as we expected. Mrs. Bromley is a fat woman in mourning, and a little black kitten runs about the staircase. Elizabeth has the apartment within the drawing-room; she wanted my mother to have it, but as there was no bed in the inner one, and the stairs are so much easier of ascent, or my mother so much stronger than in Paragon as not to regard the double flight, it is settled for us to be above, where we have two very nice-sized rooms, with dirty quilts and everything comfortable. I have the outward and larger apartment, as I ought to have; which is quite as large as our bedroom at home, and my mother's is not materially less. The beds are both as large as any at Steventon, and I have a very nice chest of drawers and a closet full of shelves—so full indeed that there is nothing else in it, and it should therefore be called a cupboard rather than a closet, I suppose.

Tell Mary that there were some carpenters at work in the inn at Devizes this morning, but as I could not be sure of their being Mrs. W. Fowle's relations, I did not make myself known to them.

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

I hope it will be a tolerable afternoon. When first we came, all the umbrellas were up, but now the pavements are getting very white again.

My mother does not seem at all the worse for her journey, nor are any of us, I hope, though Edward seemed rather fagged last night, and not very brisk this morning; but I trust the bustle of sending for tea, coffee, and sugar, &c., and going out to taste a cheese himself, will do him good.

There was a very long list of arrivals here in the newspaper yesterday, so that we need not immediately dread absolute solitude; and there is a public breakfast in Sydney Gardens every morning, so that we shall not be wholly starved.

Elizabeth has just had a very good account of the three little boys. I hope you are very busy and very comfortable. I find no difficulty in closing my eyes. I like our situation very much; it is far more cheerful than Paragon, and the prospect from the drawing-room window, at which I now write, is rather picturesque, as it commands a prospective view of the left side of Brock Street, broken by three Lombardy poplars in the garden of the last house in Queen's Parade.

I am rather impatient to know the fate of my best gown, but I suppose it will be some days before Frances can get through the trunk. In

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

the meantime I am, with many thanks for your trouble in making it, as well as marking my silk stockings,

Yours very affectionately,

JANE.

A great deal of love from everybody.

Miss Austen, Steventon, Overton, Hants.

XIX

13, Queen's Square, Sunday (June 2).

MY DEAR CASSANDRA,

I am obliged to you for two letters, one from yourself and the other from Mary, for of the latter I knew nothing till on the receipt of yours yesterday, when the pigeon-basket was examined, and I received my due. As I have written to her since the time which ought to have brought me hers, I suppose she will consider herself, as I choose to consider, still in my debt.

I will lay out all the little judgment I have in endeavouring to get such stockings for Anna as she will approve; but I do not know that I shall execute Martha's commission at all, for I am not fond of ordering shoes; and, at any rate, they shall all have flat heels.

What must I tell you of Edward? Truth or falsehood. I will try the former, and you may choose for yourself another time. He was better

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

yesterday than he had been for two or three days before—about as well as while he was at Steventon. He drinks at the Hetling Pump, is to bathe to-morrow, and try electricity on Tuesday. He proposed the latter himself to Dr. Fellowes, who made no objection to it, but I fancy we are all unanimous in expecting no advantage from it. At present I have no great notion of our staying here beyond the month.

I heard from Charles last week; they were to sail on Wednesday.

My mother seems remarkably well. My uncle overwalked himself at first, and can now only travel in a chair, but is otherwise very well.

My cloak is come home. I like it very much, and can now exclaim with delight, like J. Bond at hay-harvest, "This is what I have been looking for these three years." I saw some gauzes in a shop in Bath Street yesterday at only 4*d.* a yard, but they were not so good or so pretty as mine. Flowers are very much worn, and fruit is still more the thing. Elizabeth has a bunch of strawberries, and I have seen grapes, cherries, plums, and apricots. There are likewise almonds and raisins, French plums, and tamarinds at the grocers', but I have never seen any of them in hats. A plum or greengage would cost three shillings; cherries and grapes about five, I believe, but this is at some of the dearest shops.

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

My aunt has told me of a very cheap one, near Walcot Church, to which I shall go in quest of something for you. I have never seen an old woman at the pump-room.

Elizabeth has given me a hat, and it is not only a pretty hat, but a pretty *style* of hat too. It is something like Eliza's, only, instead of being all straw, half of it is narrow purple ribbon. I flatter myself, however, that you can understand very little of it from this description. Heaven forbid that I should ever offer such encouragement to explanations as to give a clear one on any occasion myself! But I must write no more of this. . . .

I spent Friday evening with the Mapletons, and was obliged to submit to being pleased in spite of my inclination. We took a very charming walk from six to eight up Beacon Hill, and across some fields, to the village of Charlecombe, which is sweetly situated in a little green valley, as a village with such a name ought to be. Marianne is sensible and intelligent, and even Jane, considering how fair she is, is not unpleasant. We had a Miss North and a Mr. Gould of our party; the latter walked home with me after tea. He is a very young man, just entered Oxford, wears spectacles, and has heard that "Evelina" was written by Dr. Johnson.

I am afraid I cannot undertake to carry Mar-

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

tha's shoes home, for, though we had plenty of room in our trunks when we came, we shall have many more things to take back, and I must allow besides for *my* packing.

There is to be a grand gala on Tuesday evening in Sydney Gardens, a concert, with illuminations and fireworks. To the latter Elizabeth and I look forward with pleasure, and even the concert will have more than its usual charm for me, as the gardens are large enough for me to get pretty well beyond the reach of its sound. In the morning Lady Willoughby is to present the colours to some corps, or Yeomanry, or other, in the Crescent, and that such festivities may have a proper commencement, we think of going to . . .

I am quite pleased with Martha and Mrs. Lefroy for wanting the pattern of our caps, but I am not so well pleased with your giving it to them. >Some wish, some prevailing wish, is necessary to the animation of everybody's mind,< and in gratifying this you leave them to form some other which will not probably be half so innocent. I shall not forget to write to Frank. Duty and love, &c

Yours affectionately,

JANE.

My uncle is quite surprised at my hearing

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

from you so often; but as long as we can keep the frequency of our correspondence from Martha's uncle we will not fear our own.

Miss Austen, Steventon.

XX

13, Queen Square, Tuesday (June 11).

MY DEAR CASSANDRA,

Your letter yesterday made me very happy. I am heartily glad that you have escaped any share in the impurities of Deane, and not sorry, as it turns out, that our stay here has been lengthened. I feel tolerably secure of our getting away next week, though it is certainly possible that we may remain till Thursday the 27th. I wonder what we shall do with all our intended visits this summer! I should like to make a compromise with Adlestrop, Harden, and Bookham, that Martha's spending the summer at Steventon should be considered as our respective visits to them all.

Edward has been pretty well for this last week, and as the waters have never *disagreed* with him in any respect, we are inclined to hope that he will derive advantage from them in the end. Everybody encourages us in this expectation, for they all say that the effect of the waters cannot be negative, and many are the instances in which

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

their benefit is felt afterwards more than on the spot. He is more comfortable here than I thought he would be, and so is Elizabeth, though they will both, I believe, be very glad to get away—the latter especially, which one can't wonder at *somehow*. So much for Mrs. Piozzi. I had some thoughts of writing the whole of my letter in her style, but I believe I shall not.

Though you have given me unlimited powers concerning your sprig, I cannot determine what to do about it, and shall therefore in this and in every other future letter continue to ask your farther directions. We have been to the cheap shop, and very cheap we found it, but there are only flowers made there, no fruit; and as I could get four or five very pretty sprigs of the former for the same money which would procure only one Orleans plum—in short, could get more for three or four shillings than I could have means of bringing home—I cannot decide on the fruit till I hear from you again. Besides, I cannot help thinking that it is more natural to have flowers grow out of the head than fruit. What do you think on that subject?

I would not let Martha read "First Impressions" again upon any account, 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

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

more perusal must enable her to do it. As for "Fitzalbini," when I get home she shall have it, as soon as ever she will own that Mr. Elliott is handsomer than Mr. Lance, that fair men are preferable to black; for I mean to take every opportunity of rooting out her prejudices.

Benjamin Portal is here. How charming that is! I do not exactly know why, but the phrase followed so naturally that I could not help putting it down. My mother saw him the other day, but without making herself known to him.

I am very glad you liked my lace, and so are you, and so is Martha, and we are all glad together. I have got your cloak home, which is quite delightful—as delightful at least as half the circumstances which are called so.

I do not know what is the matter with me to-day, but I cannot write quietly; I am always wandering away into some exclamation or other. Fortunately I have nothing very particular to say.

We walked to Weston one evening last week, and liked it very much. Liked *what* very much? Weston? No, *walking* to Weston. I have not expressed myself properly, but I hope you will understand me.

We have not been to any public place lately, nor performed anything out of the common daily routine of No. 13, Queen Square, Bath. But

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

to-day we were to have dashed away at a very extraordinary rate, by dining out, had it not so happened that we did not go.

Edward renewed his acquaintance lately with Mr. Evelyn, who lives in the Queen's Parade, and was invited to a family dinner, which I believe at first Elizabeth was rather sorry at his accepting; but yesterday Mrs. Evelyn called on us, and her manners were so pleasing that we liked the idea of going very much. The Biggs would call her a nice woman. But Mr. Evelyn, who was indisposed yesterday, is worse to-day, and we are put off.

It is rather impertinent to suggest any household care to a housekeeper, but I just venture to say that the coffee-mill will be wanted every day while Edward is at Steventon, as he always drinks coffee for breakfast.

Fanny desires her love to you, her love to grandpapa, her love to Anna, and her love to Hannah; the latter is particularly to be remembered. Edward desires his love to you, to grandpapa, to Anna, to little Edward, to Aunt James and Uncle James, and he hopes all your turkeys and ducks, and chicken and guinea fowls are very well; and he wishes you very much to send him a printed letter, and so does Fanny—and they both rather think they shall answer it.

“On more accounts than one you wished our

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

stay here to be lengthened beyond last Thursday." There is some mystery in this. What have you going on in Hampshire besides the *itch* from which you want to keep us?

Dr. Gardiner was married yesterday to Mrs. Percy and her three daughters.

Now I will give you the history of Mary's veil, in the purchase of which I have so considerably involved you that it is my duty to economise for you in the flowers. I had no difficulty in getting a muslin veil for half a guinea, and not much more in discovering afterwards that the muslin was thick, dirty, and ragged, and therefore would by no means do for a united gift. I changed it consequently as soon as I could, and, considering what a state my imprudence had reduced me to, I thought myself lucky in getting a black lace one for sixteen shillings. I hope the half of that sum will not greatly exceed what you had intended to offer upon the altar of sister-in-law affection. Yours affectionately, JANE.

They do not seem to trouble you much from Manydown. I have long wanted to quarrel with them, and I believe I shall take this opportunity. There is no denying that they are very capricious—for they like to enjoy their elder sister's company when they can.

Miss Austen, Steventon, Overton, Hants.

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

XXI

13, Queen Square, Wednesday (June 19).

MY DEAR CASSANDRA,

The children were delighted with your letters, as I fancy they will tell you themselves before this is concluded. Fanny expressed some surprise at the wetness of the wafers, but it did not lead to any suspicion of the truth.

Martha and you were just in time with your commissions, for two o'clock on Monday was the last hour of my receiving them. The office is now closed.

John Lyford's history is a melancholy one. I feel for his family, and when I know that his wife was really fond of him, I will feel for her too, but at present I cannot help thinking their loss the greatest.

Edward has not been well these last two days; his appetite has failed him, and he has complained of sick and uncomfortable feelings, which, with other symptoms, make us think of the gout; perhaps a fit of it might cure him, but I cannot wish it to begin at Bath. He made an important purchase yesterday: no less so than a pair of coach-horses. His friend Mr. Evelyn found them out and recommended them, and if the judgment of a Yahoo can ever be depended on, I suppose it

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

may now, for I believe Mr. Evelyn has all his life thought more of horses than of anything else. Their colour is black and their size not large; their price sixty guineas, of which the chair mare was taken as fifteen—but this is of course to be a secret.

Mrs. Williams need not pride herself upon her knowledge of Dr. Mapleton's success here; she knows no more than everybody else knows in Bath. There is not a physician in the place who writes so many prescriptions as he does. I cannot help wishing that Edward had not been tied down to Dr. Fellowes, for, had he come disengaged, we should all have recommended Dr. Mapleton; my uncle and aunt as earnestly as ourselves. I do not see the Miss Mapletons very often, but just as often as I like; we are always very glad to meet, and I do not wish to wear out our satisfaction.

Last Sunday we all drank tea in Paragon; my uncle is still in his flannels, but is getting better again.

On Monday Mr. Evelyn was well enough for us to fulfil our engagement with him; the visit was very quiet and uneventful—pleasant enough. We met only another Mr. Evelyn, his cousin, whose wife came to tea.

Last night we were in Sydney Gardens again, as there was a repetition of the gala which went

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

off so ill on the 4th. We did not go till nine, and then were in very good time for the fireworks, which were really beautiful, and surpassing my expectation; the illuminations, too, were very pretty. The weather was as favourable as it was otherwise a fortnight ago. The play on Saturday is, *I hope*, to conclude our gaieties here, for nothing but a lengthened stay will make it otherwise. We go with Mrs. Fellowes.

Edward will not remain at Steventon longer than from Thursday to the following Monday, I believe, as the rent-day is to be fixed for the *consecutive* Friday.

I can recollect nothing more to say at present; perhaps breakfast may assist my ideas. I was deceived—my breakfast supplied only two ideas—that the rolls were good and the butter bad. But the post has been more friendly to me—it has brought me a letter from Miss Pearson.

You may remember that I wrote to her above two months ago about the parcel under my care; and as I had heard nothing from her since, I thought myself obliged to write again, two or three days ago, for after all that has passed I was determined that the correspondence should never cease through my means. This second letter has produced an apology for her silence, founded on the illness of several of the family. The exchange of packets is to take place through

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

the medium of Mr. Nutt, probably one of the sons belonging to Woolwich Academy, who comes to Overton in the beginning of July. I am tempted to suspect from some parts of her letter that she has a matrimonial project in view. I shall question her about it when I answer her letter, but all this you know is *en mystère* between ourselves.

Edward has seen the apothecary to whom Dr. Millman recommended him, a sensible, intelligent man, since I began this, and he attributes his present little feverish indisposition to his having ate something unsuited to his stomach. I do not understand that Mr. Anderton suspects the gout at all; the occasional particular glow in the hands and feet, which we considered as a symptom of that disorder, he only calls the effect of the water in promoting a better circulation of the blood.

I cannot help thinking from your account of Mrs. E. H. that Earle's vanity has tempted him to invent the account of her former way of life, that his triumph in securing her might be greater; I dare say she was nothing but an innocent country girl in fact. Adieu! I shall not write again before Sunday, unless anything particular happens.

Yours ever,
JANE.

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

We shall be with you on Thursday to a very late dinner—later, I suppose, than my father will like for himself—but I give him leave to eat one before. You must give us something very nice, for we are used to live well.

Miss Austen, Steventon, Overton, Hants.

1800, 1801

THESE are all addressed to Godmersham, where Cassandra was staying with her brother Edward. "Heathcote and Chute forever," in the first letter (No. 22), refers to the two Conservative members, who again stood and were returned without a contest in 1802. Mr. William Chute, of the Vine, in the parish of Sherborn St. John, Basingstoke, was a mighty fox-hunter, and the founder of the celebrated pack which has since been called by the name of his house. He was elected M.P. for Hants in 1795. Camden mentions this seat in the following laudatory words, after the description of Basing House:—

"Neere unto this house, the Vine sheweth it-
selfe, a very faire place, and mansion house of
the Baron Sands, so named of the vines there,
which wee have had in Britaine, since Probus the
emperour's time, rather for shade than fruit.
For, hee permitted the Britaines to have vines.

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

The first of these Barons was Sir William Sands, whom King Henry the Eighth advanced to that dignitie, being Lord Chamberlaine unto him, and having much amended his estate by marrying Margerie Bray, daughter and heire of John Bray, and cousin to Sir Reinold Bray, a most worthy Knight of the Order of the Garter, and a right noble Banneret: whose son Thomas Lord Sands was grandfather to William L. Sands that now liveth."

Warner has, in his "History of Hampshire," an interesting account of this place and of the Sands family, concluding thus: "About 1654, the ancient family mansion of the Vine, together with the estate, was sold, in those unhappy times, to Chaloner Chute, Esq., a lawyer, who, in 1656, was returned member for Middlesex; and again for the same place in the Parliament of Richard Cromwell; and also Speaker of the House, but from the anxiety of his mind respecting the tumults, he was so ill, that the Parliament chose another Speaker, until his health should be re-established; but that never happened: he dying April 15, 1659." Anthony Chute, says Warner, "stood the famous contested election for the county" in 1734, and afterwards sat for Yarmouth and subsequently for Newport in the Isle of Wight. A collateral branch of Chutes, from Norfolk, came into this property in 1776.

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

An allusion in letter No. 24 (written November 20, 1800) to James Digweed's compliment to Cassandra respecting the fall of two elms, suggests the quotation from a letter published by Mr. Austen Leigh, of the date of November 8, in that same year:—"Sunday evening. We have had a dreadful storm of wind in the fore-part of this day which has done a great deal of mischief among our trees. I was sitting alone in the dining-room when an odd kind of crash startled me; in a moment afterwards it was repeated. I then went to the window, which I reached just in time to see the last of our two highly valued elms descend into the sweep; the other, which had fallen, I suppose, in the first crash, and which was the nearest to the pond, taking a more easterly direction, sank among our screen of chestnuts and firs, knocking down one spruce fir, breaking off the head of another, and stripping the two corner chestnuts of several branches in its fall. This is not all. One large elm out of the two on the left-hand side as you enter what I call the elm walk was likewise blown down; the maple bearing the weather-cock was broke in two, and what I regret more than all the rest is, that all the three elms which grew in Hall's meadow and gave such ornament to it are gone; two were blown down, and the other so much injured that it cannot stand. I am happy to add,

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

however, that no greater evil than the loss of the trees has been the consequence of the storm in this place, or in our immediate neighbourhood; we grieve, therefore, in some comfort." In this same twenty-fourth letter occurs the sentence, "You and George walking to Eggerton!" Eggerton, or more properly Eggarton, was an old manor-house near Godmersham, on the other side of the river. It formerly belonged—that is to say, so long ago as the reign of Queen Elizabeth—to the Scots of Scot's Hall, from whose possession it passed through several hands until it came into those of the Gott family, one of whom left it to the co-heiresses of William Western Hugessen of Provender; and when these two ladies married respectively Sir Edward Knatchbull (my grandfather) and Sir Joseph Banks, this property was sold to Jane, a sister of Mr. Thomas Knight. Another of his sisters, Mrs. Elizabeth Knight, was of weak intellect, and after the two sisters had resided first at Bilting, she was moved to Eggarton, a larger and more convenient house, and two lady attendants, Miss Cuthbert and her sister Maria, were engaged to look after her, which they did for many years. It was to these ladies that the visits from Godmersham were paid. Eggarton House stood on the east side of Godmersham, in the parish of Crundale, near a wood, which went by the name

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

of Purr Wood, and was eventually pulled down by my grandfather, Mr. Knight, who did not care to let it, being so near Godmersham.

The twenty-fifth letter is almost entirely taken up with remarks upon the preparations for leaving Steventon and settling at Bath, which event occurred in 1801, and does not seem to have been regretted by Jane as much as one would have expected. But the fact is that she was very little dependent upon the world outside her own family, and carried with her wherever she went occupations and resources of her own which did not require to be supplemented by extraneous assistance. Her home was wherever her own people were, and whether at Steventon, Bath, or elsewhere, her cheerful temperament was even and unvaried, and assured her own happiness as well as that of those with whom she lived.

The other letters in this division do not seem to require further explanation.

XXII

Steventon: Saturday evening (October 25).

MY DEAR CASSANDRA,

I am not yet able to acknowledge the receipt of any parcel from London, which I suppose will not occasion you much surprise. I was a little disappointed to-day, but not more so than is per-

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

fectly agreeable, and I hope to be disappointed again to-morrow, as only one coach comes down on Sundays.

You have had a very pleasant journey of course and have found Elizabeth and all the children very well on your arrival at Godmersham, and I congratulate you on it. Edward is rejoicing this evening, I dare say, to find himself once more at home, from which he fancies he has been absent a great while. His son left behind him the very fine chestnuts which had been selected for planting at Godmersham, and the drawing of his own which he had intended to carry to George; the former will therefore be deposited in the soil of Hampshire instead of Kent, the latter I have already consigned to another element.

We have been exceedingly busy ever since you went away. In the first place we have had to rejoice two or three times every day at your having such very delightful weather for the whole of your journey, and in the second place we have been obliged to take advantage of the very delightful weather ourselves by going to see almost all our neighbours.

On Thursday we walked to Deane, yesterday to Oakley Hall and Oakley, and to-day to Deane again. At Oakley Hall we did a great deal—eat some sandwiches all over mustard, admired Mr.

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

Bramston's porter, and Mrs. Bramston's transparencies, and gained a promise from the latter of two roots of heartsease, one all yellow and the other all purple, for you. At Oakley we bought ten pair of worsted stockings and a shift; the shift is for Betty Dawkins, as we find she wants it more than a rug; she is one of the most grateful of all whom Edward's charity has reached, or at least she expresses herself more warmly than the rest, for she sends him a "sight of thanks."

This morning we called at the Harwoods', and in their dining-room found "Heathcote and Chute forever." Mrs. William Heathcote and Mrs. Chute—the first of whom took a long ride yesterday morning with Mrs. Harwood into Lord Carnarvon's park, and fainted away in the evening, and the second walked down from Oakley Hall attended by Mrs. Augusta Bramston; they had meant to come on to Steventon afterwards, but we knew a trick worth two of that. If I had thought of it in time, I would have said something civil to her about Edward's never having had any serious idea of calling on Mr. Chute while he was in Hampshire; but unluckily it did not occur to me. Mrs. Heathcote is gone home to-day; Catherine had paid her an early visit at Deane in the morning, and brought a good account of Harris.

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

James went to Winchester Fair yesterday, and bought a new horse, and Mary has got a new maid—two great acquisitions; one comes from Folly farm, is about five years old, used to draw, and thought very pretty, and the other is niece to Dinah at Kintbury.

James called by my father's desire on Mr. Bayle to inquire into the cause of his being so horrid. Mr. Bayle did not attempt to deny his being horrid, and made many apologies for it; he did not plead his having a drunken self, he talked only of a drunken foreman, &c., and gave hopes of the tables being at Steventon on Monday se'night next. We have had no letter since you left us, except one from Mr. Serle of Bishopstoke to inquire the character of James Elton.

Our whole neighbourhood is at present very busy grieving over poor Mrs. Martin, who has totally failed in her business, and had very lately an execution in her house. Her own brother and Mr. Rider are the principal creditors, and they have seized her effects in order to prevent other people's doing it. There has been the same affair going on, we are told, at Wilson's, and my hearing nothing of you makes me apprehensive that you, your fellow travellers, and all your effects, might be seized by the bailiffs when you stopt at the house, and sold altogether for the benefit of the creditors.

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

In talking of Mr. Deedes' new house, Mrs. Bramston told us one circumstance, which, that we should be ignorant of it before, must make Edward's conscience fly into his face; she told us that one of the sitting rooms at Sandling, an oval room, with a bow at one end, has the very remarkable and singular feature of a fireplace with a window, the centre window of the bow, exactly over the mantel-piece.

Sunday.—This morning's unpromising aspect makes it absolutely necessary for me to observe once more how peculiarly fortunate you have been in your weather, and then I will drop the subject forever. Our improvements have advanced very well; the bank along the *elm walk* is sloped down for the reception of thorns and lilacs, and it is settled that the other side of the path is to continue turfed, and to be planted with beech, ash, and larch.

Monday.—I am glad I had no means of sending this yesterday, as I am now able to thank you for executing my commission so well. I like the gown very much, and my mother thinks it very ugly. I like the stockings also very much, and greatly prefer having two pair only of that quality to three of an inferior sort. The combs are very pretty, and I am much obliged to you for your present, but am sorry you should make me so many. The pink shoes are not particu-

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

larly beautiful, but they fit me very well; the others are faultless. I am glad that I have still my cloak to expect.

Among my other obligations, I must not omit to remember your writing me so long a letter in a time of such hurry. I am amused by your going to Milgate at last, and glad that you have so charming a day for your journey home.

My father approves his stockings very highly, and finds no fault with any part of Mrs. Hancock's bill except the charge of 3*s.* 6*d.* for the packing-box.

The weather does not know how to be otherwise than fine. I am surprised that Mrs. Marriot should not be taller. Surely you have made a mistake. Did Mr. Roland make you look well?

Yours affectionately, J. A.

Miss Austen, Godmersham Park,
Faversham, Kent.

XXIII

Steventon: Saturday (November 1).

MY DEAR CASSANDRA,

You have written, I am sure, though I have received no letter from you since your leaving London; the post, and not yourself, must have been unpunctual.

We have at last heard from Frank; a letter

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

from him to you came yesterday, and I mean to send it on as soon as I can get a ditto (*that* means a frank), which I hope to do in a day or two. *En attendant*, you must rest satisfied with knowing that on the 8th of July the "Petterel," with the rest of the Egyptian squadron, was off the Isle of Cyprus, whither they went from Jaffa for provisions, &c., and whence they were to sail in a day or two for Alexandria, there to wait the result of the English proposals for the evacuation of Egypt. The rest of the letter, according to the present fashionable style of composition, is chiefly descriptive. Of his promotion he knows nothing; of prizes he is guiltless.

Your letter is come; it came, indeed, twelve lines ago, but I could not stop to acknowledge it before, and I am glad it did not arrive till I had completed my first sentence, because the sentence had been made ever since yesterday, and I think forms a very good beginning.

Your abuse of our gowns amuses but does not discourage me; I shall take mine to be made up next week, and the more I look at it the better it pleases me. My cloak came on Tuesday, and, though I expected a good deal, the beauty of the lace astonished me. It is too handsome to be worn—almost too handsome to be looked at. The glass is all safely arrived also, and gives great satisfaction. The wine-glasses are much smaller

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

than I expected, but I suppose it is the proper size. *We* find no fault with your manner of performing any of our commissions, but if you like to think yourself remiss in any of them, pray do.

My mother was rather vexed that you could not go to Penlington's, but she has since written to him, which does just as well. Mary is disappointed, of course, about her locket, and of course delighted about the mangle, which is safe at Basingstoke. You will thank Edward for it on their behalf, &c., &c., and, as you know how much it was wished for, will not feel that you are inventing gratitude.

Did you think of our ball on Thursday evening, and did you suppose me at it? You might very safely, for there I was. On Wednesday morning it was settled that Mrs. Harwood, Mary, and I should go together, and shortly afterwards a very civil note of invitation for me came from Mrs. Bramston, who wrote I believe as soon as as she knew of the ball. I might likewise have gone with Mrs. Lefroy, and therefore, with three methods of going, I must have been more at the ball than anyone else. I dined and slept at Deane; Charlotte and I did my hair, which I fancy looked very indifferent; nobody abused it, however, and I retired delighted with my success.

It was a pleasant ball, and still more good than

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

pleasant, for there were nearly sixty people, and sometimes we had seventeen couple. The Portsmouths, Dorchesters, Boltons, Portals, and Clerks were there, and all the meaner and more usual &c., &c.'s. There was a scarcity of men in general, and a still greater scarcity of any that were good for much. I danced nine dances out of ten—five with Stephen Terry, T. Chute, and James Digweed, and four with Catherine. There was commonly a couple of ladies standing up together, but not often any so amiable as ourselves.

I heard no news, except that Mr. Peters, who was not there, is supposed to be particularly attentive to Miss Lyford. You were inquired after very prettily, and I hope the whole assembly now understands that you are gone into Kent, which the families in general seemed to meet in ignorance of. Lord Portsmouth surpassed the rest in his attentive recollection of you, inquired more into the length of your absence, and concluded by desiring to be “remembered to you when I wrote next.”

Lady Portsmouth had got a different dress on, and Lady Bolton is much improved by a wig. The three Miss Terries were there, but no Annie; which was a great disappointment to me. I hope the poor girl had not set her heart on her appearance that evening so much as I had. Mr.

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

Terry is ill, in a very low way. I said civil things to Edward for Mr. Chute, who amply returned them by declaring that, had he known of my brother's being at Steventon, he should have made a point of calling upon him to thank him for his civility about the Hunt.

I have heard from Charles, and am to send his shirts by half-dozens as they are finished; one set will go next week. The "Endymion" is now waiting only for orders, but may wait for them perhaps a month. Mr. Coulthard¹ was unlucky in very narrowly missing another unexpected guest at Chawton, for Charles had actually set out and got half way thither in order to spend one day with Edward, but turned back on discovering the distance to be considerably more than he had fancied, and finding himself and his horse to be very much tired. I should regret it the more if his friend Shipley had been of the party, for Mr. Coulthard might not have been so well pleased to see only one come at a time.

Miss Harwood is still at Bath, and writes word that she never was in better health, and never more happy. Joshua Wakeford died last Saturday, and my father buried him on Thursday. A deaf Miss Fonnereau is at Ashe, which has prevented Mrs. Lefroy's going to Worthing or Basingstoke during the absence of Mr. Lefroy.

¹ Mr. Coulthard rented Chawton House at this time.

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

My mother is very happy in the prospect of dressing a new doll which Molly has given Anna. My father's feelings are not so enviable, as it appears that the farm cleared 300*l.* last year. James and Mary went to Ibthorp for one night last Monday, and found Mrs. Lloyd not in very good looks. Martha has been lately at Kintbury, but is probably at home by this time. Mary's promised maid has jilted her, and hired herself elsewhere. The Debaries persist in being afflicted at the death of their uncle, of whom they now say they saw a great deal in London. Love to all. I am glad George remembers me.

Yours very affectionately, J. A.

I am very unhappy. In re-reading your letter I find I might have spared myself any intelligence of Charles. To have written only what you knew before! You may guess how much I feel. I wore at the ball your favourite gown, a bit of muslin of the same round my head, bordered with Mrs. Cooper's band, and one little comb.

Miss Austen, Godmersham Park.

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

XXIV

Steventon: Thursday (November 20).

MY DEAR CASSANDRA,

Your letter took me quite by surprise this morning; you are very welcome, however, and I am very much obliged to you. I believe I drank too much wine last night at Hurstbourne; I know not how else to account for the shaking of my hand to-day. You will kindly make allowance therefore for any indistinctness of writing, by attributing it to this venial error.

Naughty Charles did not come on Tuesday, but good Charles came yesterday morning. About two o'clock he walked in on a Gosport hack. His feeling equal to such a fatigue is a good sign, and his feeling no fatigue in it a still better. He walked down to Deane to dinner; he danced the whole evening, and to-day is no more tired than a gentleman ought to be.

Your desiring to hear from me on Sunday will, perhaps, bring you a more particular account of the ball than you may care for, because one is prone to think much more of such things the morning after they happen, than when time has entirely driven them out of one's recollection.

It was a pleasant evening; Charles found it remarkably so, but I cannot tell why, unless the absence of Miss Terry, towards whom his con-

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

science reproaches him with being now perfectly indifferent, was a relief to him. There were only twelve dances, of which I danced nine, and was merely prevented from dancing the rest by the want of a partner. We began at ten, supped at one, and were at Deane before five. There were but fifty people in the room; very few families indeed from our side of the county, and not many more from the other. My partners were the two St. Johns, Hooper, Holder, and very prodigious Mr. Mathew, with whom I called the last, and whom I liked the best of my little stock.

There were very few beauties, and such as there were were not very handsome. Miss Iremonger did not look well, and Mrs. Blount was the only one much admired. She appeared exactly as she did in September, with the same broad face, diamond bandeau, white shoes, pink husband, and fat neck. The two Miss Coxes were there: I traced in one the remains of the vulgar, broad-featured girl who danced at Enham eight years ago; the other is refined into a nice, composed-looking girl, like Catherine Bigg. I looked at Sir Thomas Champneys and thought of poor Rosalie; I looked at his daughter, and thought her a queer animal with a white neck. Mrs. Warren, I was constrained to think, a very fine young woman, which I much regret. She danced

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

away with great activity. Her husband is ugly enough, uglier even than his cousin John; but he does not look so *very* old. The Miss Maitlands are both prettyish, very like Anne, with brown skins, large dark eyes, and a good deal of nose. The General has got the gout, and Mrs. Maitland the jaundice. Miss Debary, Susan, and Sally, all in black, but without any stature, made their appearance, and I was as civil to them as circumstances would allow me.

They told me nothing new of Martha. I mean to go to her on Thursday, unless Charles should determine on coming over again with his friend Shipley for the Basingstoke ball, in which case I shall not go till Friday. I shall write to you again, however, before I set off, and I shall hope to hear from you in the meantime. If I do not stay for the ball, I would not on any account do so uncivil a thing by the neighbourhood as to set off at that very time for another place, and shall therefore make a point of not being later than Thursday *morning*.

Mary said that I looked very well last night. I wore my aunt's gown and handkerchief, and my hair was at least tidy, which was all my ambition. I will now have done with the ball, and I will moreover go and dress for dinner.

Thursday evening.—Charles leaves us on Saturday, unless Henry should take us in his way

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

to the island, of which we have some hopes, and then they will probably go together on Sunday.

The young lady whom it is expected that Sir Thomas is to marry is Miss Emma Wabshaw; she lives somewhere between Southampton and Winchester, is handsome, accomplished, amiable, and everything but rich. He is certainly finishing his house in a great hurry. Perhaps the report of his being to marry a Miss Fanshawe might originate in his attentions to this very lady—the names are not unlike.

Summers has made my gown very well indeed, and I get more and more pleased with it. Charles does not like it, but my father and Mary do. My mother is very much resigned to it; and as for James, he gives it the preference over everything of the kind he ever saw, in proof of which I am desired to say that if you like to sell yours Mary will buy it.

We had a very pleasant day on Monday at Ashe, we sat down fourteen to dinner in the study, the dining-room being not habitable from the storms having blown down its chimney. Mrs. Bramston talked a good deal of nonsense, which Mr. Bramston and Mr. Clerk seemed almost equally to enjoy. There was a whist and a casino table, and six outsiders. Rice and Lucy made love, Mat. Robinson fell asleep, James and Mrs. Augusta alternately read Dr. Finnis' pam-

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

phlet on the cow-pox, and I bestowed my company by turns on all.

On inquiring of Mrs. Clerk, I find that Mrs. Heathcote made a great blunder in her news of the Crookes and Morleys. It is young Mr. Crook who is to marry the second Miss Morley, and it is the Miss Morleys instead of the second Miss Crooke who were the beauties at the music meeting. This seems a more likely tale, a better devised imposture.

The three Digweeds all came on Tuesday, and we played a pool at commerce. James Digweed left Hampshire to-day. I think he must be in love with you, from his anxiety to have you go to the Faversham balls, and likewise from his supposing that the two elms fell from their grief at your absence. Was not it a gallant idea? It never occurred to me before, but I dare say it was so.

Hacker has been here to-day putting in the fruit trees. A new plan has been suggested concerning the plantation of the new inclosure of the right-hand side of the elm walk: the doubt is whether it would be better to make a little orchard of it by planting apples, pears, and cherries, or whether it should be larch, mountain ash, and acacia. What is your opinion? I say nothing, and am ready to agree with anybody.

You and George walking to Eggerton! What

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

a droll party! Do the Ashford people still come to Godmersham church every Sunday in a cart? It is *you* that always disliked Mr. N. Toke so much, not *I*. I do not like his wife, and I do not like Mr. Brett, but as for Mr. Toke, there are few people whom I like better.

Miss Harwood and her friend have taken a house fifteen miles from Bath; she writes very kind letters, but sends no other particulars of the situation. Perhaps it is one of the first houses in Bristol.

Farewell; Charles sends *you* his best love and Edward his worst. If you think the distinction improper, you may take the worst yourself. He will write to you when he gets back to his ship, and in the meantime desires that you will consider me as
Your affectionate sister, J. A.

Friday.—I have determined to go on Thursday, but of course not before the post comes in. Charles is in very good looks indeed. I had the comfort of finding out the other evening who all the fat girls with long noses were that disturbed me at the 1st H. ball. They all prove to be Miss Atkinsons of En— (illegible).

I rejoice to say that we have just had another letter from our dear Frank. It is to you, very short, written from Larnica in Cyprus, and so lately as October 2. He came from Alexandria,

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

and was to return there in three or four days, knew nothing of his promotion, and does not write above twenty lines, from a doubt of the letter's ever reaching you, and an idea of all letters being opened at Vienna. He wrote a few days before to you from Alexandria by the "Mercury," sent with despatches to Lord Keith. Another letter must be owing to us besides this, *one* if not *two*; because none of these are to me. Henry comes to-morrow, for one night only.

My mother has heard from Mrs. E. Leigh. Lady Saye and Seale and her daughter are going to remove to Bath. Mrs. Estwick is married again to a Mr. Sloane, a young man under age, without the knowledge of either family. He bears a good character, however.

Miss Austen, Godmersham Park,
Faversham, Kent.

XXV.

Steventon: Saturday (January 3).

MY DEAR CASSANDRA,

As you have by this time received my last letter, it is fit that I should begin another, and I begin with the hope, which is at present uppermost in my mind, that you often wore a white gown in the morning at the time of all the gay parties being with you.

Our visit at Ash Park, last Wednesday, went

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

off in a *come-ça* way. We met Mr. Lefroy and Tom Chute, played at cards, and came home again. James and Mary dined here on the following day, and at night Henry set off in the mail for London. He was as agreeable as ever during his visit, and has not lost anything in Miss Lloyd's estimation.

Yesterday we were quite alone—only our four selves; but to-day the scene is agreeably varied by Mary's driving Martha to Basingstoke, and Martha's afterwards dining at Deane.

My mother looks forward with as much certainty as you can do to our keeping two maids; my father is the only one not in the secret. We plan having a steady cook and a young, giddy housemaid, with a sedate, middle-aged man, who is to undertake the double office of husband to the former and sweetheart to the latter. No children, of course, to be allowed on either side.

You feel more for John Bond than John Bond deserves. I am sorry to lower his character, but he is not ashamed to own himself that he has no doubt at all of getting a good place, and that he had even an offer many years ago from a Farmer Paine of taking him into his service whenever he might quit my father's.

There are three parts of Bath which we have thought of as likely to have houses in them—Westgate Buildings, Charles Street, and some

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

of the short streets leading from Laura Place or Pulteney Street.

Westgate Buildings, though quite in the lower part of the town, are not badly situated themselves. The street is broad, and has rather a good appearance. Charles Street, however, I think, is preferable. The buildings are new, and its nearness to Kingsmead Fields would be a pleasant circumstance. Perhaps you may remember, or perhaps you may forget, that Charles Street leads from the Queen Square Chapel to the two Green Park Streets.

The houses in the streets near Laura Place I should expect to be above our price. Gay Street would be too high, except only the lower house on the left-hand side as you ascend. Towards *that* my mother has no disinclination; it used to be lower rented than any other house in the row, from some inferiority in the apartments. But above all others her wishes are at present fixed on the corner house in Chapel Row, which opens into Prince's Street. Her knowledge of it, however, is confined only to the outside, and therefore she is equally uncertain of its being really desirable as of its being to be had. In the meantime she assures you that she will do everything in her power to avoid Trim Street, although you have not expressed the fearful presentiment of it which was rather expected.

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

We know that Mrs. Perrot will want to get us into Oxford Buildings, but we all unite in particular dislike of that part of the town, and therefore hope to escape. Upon all these different situations you and Edward may confer together, and your opinion of each will be expected with eagerness.

As to our pictures, the battle-piece, Mr. Nibbs, Sir William East, and all the old heterogeneous miscellany, manuscript, Scriptural pieces dispersed over the house, are to be given to James. Your own drawings will not cease to be your own, and the two paintings on tin will be at your disposal. My mother says that the French agricultural prints in the best bedroom were given by Edward to his two sisters. Do you or he know anything about it?

She has written to my aunt, and we are all impatient for the answer. I do not know how to give up the idea of our both going to Paragon in May. *Your* going I consider as indispensably necessary, and I shall not like being left behind; there is no place here or hereabouts that I shall want to be staying at, and though, to be sure, the keep of two will be more than of one, I will endeavour to make the difference less by disordering my stomach with Bath buns; and as to the *trouble* of accommodating us, whether there are one or two, it is much the same.

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

According to the first plan, my mother and our two selves are to travel down together, and my father follow us afterwards in about a fortnight or three weeks. We have promised to spend a couple of days at Ibthorp in our way. We must all meet at Bath, you know, before we set out for the sea, and, everything considered, I think the first plan as good as any.

My father and mother, wisely aware of the difficulty of finding in all Bath such a bed as their own, have resolved on taking it with them; all the beds, indeed, that we shall want are to be removed—viz., besides theirs, our own two, the best for a spare one, and two for servants; and these necessary articles will probably be the only material ones that it would answer to send down. I do not think it will be worth while to remove any of our chests of drawers; we shall be able to get some of a much more commodious sort, made of deal, and painted to look very neat; and I flatter myself that for little comforts of all kinds our apartment will be one of the most complete things of the sort all over Bath, Bristol included.

We have thought at times of removing the sideboard, or a Pembroke table, or some other piece of furniture, but, upon the whole, it has ended in thinking that the trouble and risk of the removal would be more than the advantage

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

of having them at a place where everything may be purchased. Pray send your opinion.

Martha has as good as promised to come to us again in March. Her spirits are better than they were.

I have now attained the true art of letter-writing, which we are always told is to express on paper exactly what one would say to the same person by word of mouth. I have been talking to you almost as fast as I could the whole of this letter.

Your Christmas gaieties are really quite surprising; I think they would satisfy even Miss Walter herself. I hope the ten shillings won by Miss Foote may make everything easy between her and her cousin Frederick. So Lady Bridges, in the delicate language of Coulson Wallop, is *in for it!* I am very glad to hear of the Pearsons' good fortune. It is a piece of promotion which I know they looked forward to as very desirable some years ago, on Captain Lockyer's illness. It brings them a considerable increase of income and a better house.

My mother bargains for having no trouble at all in furnishing our house in Bath, and I have engaged for your willingly undertaking to do it all. I get more and more reconciled to the idea of our removal. We have lived long enough in this neighbourhood: the Basingstoke balls are cer-

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

tainly 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.

The threatened Act of Parliament does not seem to give any alarm.

My father is doing all in his power to increase his income, by raising his tithes, &c., and I do not despair of getting very nearly six hundred a year.

In what part of Bath do you mean to place your bees? We are afraid of the South Parade's being too hot.

Monday.—Martha desires her best love, and says a great many kind things about spending some time with you in March, and depending on a large return from us both in the autumn. Perhaps I may not write again before Sunday.

Yours affectionately, J. A.

Miss Austen, Godmersham Park,
Faversham, Kent.

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

XXVI

Steventon: Thursday (January 8).

MY DEAR CASSANDRA,

The "perhaps" which concluded my last letter being only a "perhaps," will not occasion your being overpowered with surprise, I dare say, if you *should* receive this before Tuesday, which, unless circumstances are very perverse, will be the case. I received yours with much general philanthropy, and still more peculiar good will, two days ago; and I suppose I need not tell you that it was very long, being written on a foolscap sheet, and very entertaining, being written by you.

Mr. Payne has been dead long enough for Henry to be out of mourning for him before his last visit, though we knew nothing of it till about that time. Why he died, or of what complaint, or to what noblemen he bequeathed his four daughters in marriage, we have not heard.

I am glad that the Wildmans are going to give a ball, and hope you will not fail to benefit both yourself and me by laying out a few kisses in the purchase of a frank. I believe you are right in proposing to delay the cambric muslin, and I submit with a kind of voluntary reluctance.

Mr. Peter Debary has declined Deane curacy;

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

he wishes to be settled near London. A foolish reason! as if Deane were not near London in comparison of Exeter or York. Take the whole world through, and he will find many more places at a greater distance from London than Deane than he will at a less. What does he think of Glencoe or Lake Katherine?

I feel rather indignant that any possible objection should be raised against so valuable a piece of preferment, so delightful a situation!—that Deane should not be universally allowed to be as near the metropolis as any other country villages. As this is the case, however, as Mr. Peter Debary has shown himself a Peter in the blackest sense of the word, we are obliged to look elsewhere for an heir; and my father has thought it a necessary compliment to James Digweed to offer the curacy to him, though without considering it as either a desirable or an eligible situation for him. Unless he is in love with Miss Lyford, I think he had better not be settled exactly in this neighbourhood; and unless he is very much in love with her indeed, he is not likely to think a salary of 50*l.* equal in value or efficiency to one of 75*l.*

Were *you* indeed to be considered as one of the fixtures of the house!—but you were never actually erected in it either by Mr. Egerton Brydges or Mrs. Lloyd.

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

Martha and I dined yesterday at Deane to meet the Powletts and Tom Chute, which we did not fail to do. Mrs. Powlett was at once expensively and nakedly dressed; we have had the satisfaction of estimating her lace and her muslins; and she said too little to afford us much other amusement.

Mrs. John Lyford is so much pleased with the state of widowhood as to be going to put in for being a widow again; she is to marry a Mr. Fendall, a banker in Gloucester, a man of very good fortune, but considerably older than herself, and with three little children. Miss Lyford has never been here yet; she can come only for a day, and is not able to fix the day.

I fancy Mr. Holder will have the farm, and without being obliged to depend on the accommodating spirit of Mr. William Portal; he will probably have it for the remainder of my father's lease. This pleases us all much better than its falling into the hands of Mr. Harwood or Farmer Twitchen. Mr. Holder is to come in a day or two to talk to my father on the subject, and then John Bond's interest will not be forgotten.

I have had a letter to-day from Mrs. Cooke. Mrs. Laurel is going to be married to a Mr. Hinchman, a rich East Indian. I hope Mary will be satisfied with this proof of her cousin's

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

existence and welfare, and cease to torment herself with the idea of his bones being bleaching in the sun on Wantage Downs.

Martha's visit is drawing towards its close, which we all four sincerely regret. The wedding day is to be celebrated on the 16th, because the 17th falls on Saturday; and a day or two before the 16th Mary will drive her sister to Ibthorp to find all the festivity she can in contriving for everybody's comfort, and being thwarted or teased by almost everybody's temper. Fulwar, Eliza, and Tom Chute are to be of the party. I know of nobody else. I was asked, but declined it.

Eliza has seen Lord Craven at Barton, and probably by this time at Kintbury, where he was expected for one day this week. She found his manners very pleasing indeed. The little flaw of having a mistress now living with him at Ashdown Park seems to be the only displeasing circumstance about him. From Ibthorp, Fulwar and Eliza are to return with James and Mary to Deane.

The Prices are *not* to have an house on Weyhill; for the present he has lodgings in Andover, and they are in view of a dwelling hereafter in Appleshaw, that village of wonderful elasticity, which stretches itself out for the reception of

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

everybody who does not wish for a house on Speen Hill.

Pray give my love to George; tell him that I am very glad to hear he can skip so well already, and that I hope he will continue to send me word of his improvement in the art.

I think you judge very wisely in putting off your London visit, and I am mistaken if it be not put off for some time. You speak with such noble resignation of Mrs. Jordan and the Opera House, that it would be an insult to suppose consolation required; but to prevent your thinking with regret of this rupture of your engagement with Mr. Smithson, I must assure you that Henry suspects him to be a great miser.

Friday.—No answer from my aunt. She has no time for writing, I suppose, in the hurry of selling furniture, packing clothes, and preparing for their removal to Scarletts.

You are very kind in planning presents for me to make, and my mother has shown me exactly the same attention; but as I do not choose to have generosity dictated to me, I shall not resolve on giving my cabinet to Anna till the first thought of it has been my own.

Sidmouth is now talked of as our summer abode. Get all the information, therefore, about it that you can from Mrs. C. Cage.

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

My father's old ministers are already deserting him to pay their court to his son. The brown mare, which, as well as the black, was to devolve on James at our removal, has not had patience to wait for that, and has settled herself even now at Deane. The death of Hugh Capet, which, like that of Mr. Skipsey, though undesired, was not wholly unexpected, being purposely effected, has made the immediate possession of the mare very convenient, and everything else I suppose will be seized by degrees in the same manner. Martha and I work at the books every day.

Yours affectionately, J. A.

Miss Austen, Godmersham Park,
Faversham, Kent.

XXVII

Steventon: Wednesday (January 14).

Poor Miss Austen! It appears to me that I have rather oppressed you of late by the frequency of my letters. You had hoped not to hear from me again before Tuesday, but Sunday showed you with what a merciless sister you had to deal. I cannot recall the past, but you shall not hear from me quite so often in future.

Your letter to Mary was duly received before she left Dean with Martha yesterday morning, and it gives us great pleasure to know that the

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

Chilham ball was so agreeable, and that you danced four dances with Mr. Kemble. Desirable, however, as the latter circumstance was, I cannot help wondering at its taking place. Why did you dance four dances with so stupid a man? Why not rather dance two of them with some elegant brother officer who was struck with your appearance as soon as you entered the room?

Martha left you her best love. She will write to you herself in a short time; but, trusting to my memory rather than her own, she has nevertheless desired me to ask you to purchase for her two bottles of Steele's lavender water when you are in town, provided you should go to the shop on your own account, otherwise you may be sure that she would not have you recollect the request.

James dined with us yesterday, wrote to Edward in the evening, filled three sides of paper, every line inclining too much towards the north-east, and the very first line of all scratched out, and this morning he joins his lady in the fields of Elysium and Ibthorp.

Last Friday was a very busy day with us. We were visited by Miss Lyford and Mr. Bayle. The latter began his operations in the house, but had only time to finish the four sitting-rooms; the rest is deferred till the spring is more advanced and the days longer. He took his paper of appraisement away with him, and therefore

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

we only know the estimate he has made of one or two articles of furniture which my father particularly inquired into. I understand, however, that he was of opinion that the whole would amount to more than two hundred pounds, and it is not imagined that this will comprehend the brewhouse and many other, &c., &c.

Miss Lyford was very pleasant, and gave my mother such an account of the houses in Westgate Buildings, where Mrs. Lyford lodged four years ago, as made her think of a situation there with great pleasure, but your opposition will be without difficulty decisive, and my father, in particular, who was very well inclined towards the Row before, has now ceased to think of it entirely. At present the environs of Laura Place seem to be his choice. His views on the subject are much advanced since I came home; he grows quite ambitious, and actually requires now a comfortable and a creditable-looking house.

On Saturday Miss Lyford went to her long home—that is to say, it was a long way off—and soon afterwards a party of fine ladies issuing from a well-known commodious green vehicle, their heads full of Bantam cocks and Galinies, entered the house—Mrs. Heathcote, Mrs. Harwood, Mrs. James Austen, Miss Bigg, Miss Jane Blachford.

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

Hardly a day passes in which we do not have some visitor or other: yesterday came Mrs. Bramstone, who is very sorry that she is to lose us, and afterwards Mr. Holder, who was shut up for an hour with my father and James in a most awful manner. John Bond *est à lui*.

Mr. Holder was perfectly willing to take him on exactly the same terms with my father, and John seems exceedingly well satisfied. The comfort of not changing his home is a very material one to him, and since such are his unnatural feelings, his belonging to Mr. Holder is the every thing needful; but otherwise there would have been a situation offering to him, which I had thought of with particular satisfaction, viz., under Harry Digweed, who, if John had quitted Cheesedown, would have been eager to engage him as superintendent at Steventon, would have kept a horse for him to ride about on, would probably have supplied him with a more permanent home, and I think would certainly have been a more desirable master altogether.

John and Corbett are not to have any concern with each other—there are to be two farms and two bailiffs. We are of opinion that it would be better in only one.

This morning brought my aunt's reply, and most thoroughly affectionate is its tenor. She thinks with the greatest pleasure of our being

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

settled in Bath—it is an event which will attach her to the place more than anything else could do, &c., &c. She is, moreover, very urgent with my mother not to delay her visit in Paragon, if she should continue unwell, and even recommends her spending the whole winter with them. At present and for many days past my mother has been quite stout, and she wishes not to be obliged by any relapse to alter her arrangements.

Mr. and Mrs. Chamberlayne are in Bath, lodging at the Charitable Repository; I wish the scene may suggest to Mrs. C. the notion of selling her black beaver bonnet for the relief of the poor. Mrs. Welby has been singing duets with the Prince of Wales.

My father has got above 500 volumes to dispose of; I want James to take them at a venture at half a guinea a volume. The whole repairs of the parsonage at Deane, inside and out, coachbox, basket and dickey will not much exceed 100*l.*

Have you seen that Major Byng, a nephew of Lord Torrington, is dead? That must be Edmund.

Friday.—I thank you for yours, though I should have been more grateful for it if it had not been charged 8*d.* instead of 6*d.*, which has given me the torment of writing to Mr. Lam-

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

ould on the occasion. I am rather surprised at the revival of the London visit; but Mr. Dori-court has travelled—he knows best.

That James Digweed has refused Deane curacy I suppose he has told you himself, though probably the subject has never been mentioned between you. Mrs. Milles flatters herself falsely, it has never been Mrs. Rice's wish to have her son settled near herself; and there is now a hope entertained of her relenting in favour of Deane.

Mrs. Lefroy and her son-in-law were here yesterday; she tries not to be sanguine, but *he* was in excellent spirits. I rather wish they may have the curacy. It would be an amusement to Mary to superintend their household management, and abuse them for expense, especially as Mrs. L. means to advise them to put their washing out.

Yours affectionately, J. A.

Miss Austen, Godmersham Park,
Faversham, Kent.

XXVIII

Steventon: Wednesday (January 21).

Expect a most agreeable letter, for not being overburdened with subject (having nothing at all to say), I shall have no check to my genius from beginning to end.

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

Well, and so Frank's letters has made you very happy, but you are afraid he would not have patience to stay for the "Haarlem," which you wish him to have done as being safer than the merchantman. Poor fellow! to wait from the middle of November to the end of December, and perhaps even longer, it must be sad work; especially in a place where the ink is so abominably pale. What a surprise to him it must have been on October 20, to be visited, collared, and thrust out of the "Petterell" by Captain Inglis. He kindly passes over the poignancy of his feelings in quitting his ship, his officers, and his men.

What a pity it is that he should not be in England at the time of this promotion, because he certainly would have had an appointment, so everybody says, and therefore it must be right for me to say it too. Had he been really here, the certainty of the appointment, I dare say, would not have been half so great, but as it could not be brought to the proof his absence will be always a lucky source of regret.

Eliza talks of having read in a newspaper that all the 1st lieutenants of the frigates whose captains were to be sent into line-of-battle ships were to be promoted to the rank of commanders. If it be true, Mr. Valentine may afford himself a fine Valentine's knot, and Charles may perhaps

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

become 1st of the "Endymion," though I suppose Captain Durham is too likely to bring a villain with him under that denomination.

I dined at Deane yesterday, as I told you I should, and met the two Mr. Holders. We played at vingt-un, which, as Fulwar was unsuccessful, gave him an opportunity of exposing himself as usual.

Eliza says she is quite well, but she is thinner than when we saw her last, and not in very good looks. I suppose she has not recovered from the effects of her illness in December. She cuts her hair too short over her forehead, and does not wear her cap far enough upon her head; in spite of these many disadvantages, however, I can still admire her beauty. They all dine here to-day; much good may it do us all.

William and Tom are much as usual; Caroline is improved in her person; I think her now really a pretty child. She is still very shy, and does not talk much.

Fulwar goes next month into Gloucestershire, Leicestershire, and Warwickshire, and Eliza spends the time of his absence at Ibthorp and Deane; she hopes, therefore, to see you before it is long.

Lord Craven was prevented by company at home from paying his visit at Kintbury, but, as I told you before, Eliza is greatly pleased with

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

him, and they seem likely to be on the most friendly terms.

Martha returns into this country next Tuesday, and then begins her two visits at Deane.

I expect to see Miss Bigg every day to fix the time for my going to Manydown; I think it will be next week, and I shall give you notice of it, if I can, that you may direct to me there.

The neighbourhood have quite recovered the death of Mrs. Rider; so much so, that I think they are rather rejoiced at it now; her things were so very dear! and Mrs. Rogers is to be all that is desirable. Not even death itself can fix the friendship of the world.

You are not to give yourself the trouble of going to Penlingtons when you are in town; my father is to settle the matter when he goes there himself; you are only to take special care of the bills of his in your hands, and I dare say will not be sorry to be excused the rest of the business.

Thursday.—Our party yesterday was very quietly pleasant. To-day we all attack Ashe Park, and to-morrow I dine again at Deane. What an eventful week!

Eliza left me a message for you, which I have great pleasure in delivering: she will write to you and send you your money next Sunday. Mary has likewise a message: she will be much obliged

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

to you if you can bring her the pattern of the jacket and trousers, or whatever it is that Elizabeth's boys wear when they are first put into breeches; so if you could bring her an old suit itself, she would be very glad, but that I suppose is hardly done.

I am happy to hear of Mrs. Knight's amendment, whatever might be her complaint.

The Wylmots being robbed must be an amusing thing to their acquaintance, and I hope it is as much their pleasure as it seems their avocation to be subjects of general entertainment.

I have a great mind not to acknowledge the receipt of your letter, which I have just had the pleasure of reading, because I am so ashamed to compare the sprawling lines of this with it. But if I say all that I have to say, I hope I have no reason to hang myself.

Caroline was only brought to bed on the 7th of this month, so that her recovery does seem pretty rapid. I have heard twice from Edward on the occasion, and his letters have each been exactly what they ought to be—cheerful and amusing. He dares not write otherwise to *me*, but perhaps he might be obliged to purge himself from the guilt of writing nonsense by filling his shoes with whole peas for a week afterwards. Mrs. G. has left him 100*l.*, his wife and son 500*l.* each.

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

I join with you in wishing for the environs of Laura Place, but do not venture to expect it. My mother hankers after the Square dreadfully, and it is but natural to suppose that my uncle will take *her* part. It would be very pleasant to be near Sydney Gardens; we might go into the labyrinth every day.

You need not endeavour to match my mother's morning calico; she does not mean to make it up any more.

Why did not J. D. make his proposals to you? I suppose he went to see the cathedral, that he might know how he should like to be married in it.

Fanny shall have the boarding-school, as soon as her papa gives me an opportunity of sending it; and I do not know whether I may not by that time have worked myself into so generous a fit as to give it to her forever.

We have a ball on Thursday too; I expect to go to it from Manydown. Do not be surprised, or imagine that Frank is come, if I write again soon; it will only be to say that I am going to M., and to answer your question about my gown.

Miss Austen, Godmersham Park,
Faversham, Kent.

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

XXIX

Steventon: Sunday (January 25).

I have nothing to say about Manydown, but I write because you will expect to hear from me, and because if I waited another day or two, I hope your visit to Goodnestone would make my letter too late in its arrival. I dare say I shall be at M. in the course of this week, but as it is not certain you will direct to me at home.

I shall want two new coloured gowns for the summer, for my pink one will not do more than clear me from Steventon. I shall not trouble you, however, to get more than one of them, and that is to be a plain brown cambric muslin, for morning wear; the other, which is to be a very pretty yellow and white cloud, I mean to buy in Bath. Buy two brown ones, if you please, and both of a length, but one longer than the other—it is for a tall woman. Seven yards for my mother, seven yards and a half for me; a dark brown, but the kind of brown is left to your own choice, and I had rather they were different, as it will be always something to say, to dispute about which is the prettiest. They must be cambric muslin.

How do you like this cold weather? I hope you have all been earnestly praying for it as a

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

salutary relief from the dreadful mild and unhealthy season preceding it, fancying yourself half putrified from the want of it, and that now you all draw into the fire, complain that you never felt such bitterness of cold before, that you are half starved, quite frozen, and wish the mild weather back again with all your hearts.

Your unfortunate sister was betrayed last Thursday into a situation of the utmost cruelty. I arrived at Ashe Park before the party from Deane, and was shut up in the drawing-room with Mr. Holder alone for ten minutes. I had some thoughts of insisting on the housekeeper or Mary Corbett being sent for, and nothing could prevail on me to move two steps from the door, on the lock of which I kept one hand constantly fixed. We met nobody but ourselves, played at *vingt-un* again, and were very cross.

On Friday I wound up my four days of dissipation by meeting William Digweed at Deane, and am pretty well, I thank you, after it. While I was there a sudden fall of snow rendered the roads impassable, and made my journey home in the little carriage much more easy and agreeable than my journey down.

Fulwar and Eliza left Deane yesterday. You will be glad to hear that Mary is going to keep another maid. I fancy Sally is too much of a

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

servant to find time for everything, and Mary thinks Edward is not so much out of doors as he ought to be; there is therefore to be a girl in the nursery.

I would not give much for Mr. Price's chance of living at Deane; he builds his hope, I find, not upon anything that his mother has written, but upon the effect of what he has written himself. He must write a great deal better than those eyes indicate if he can persuade a perverse and narrow-minded woman to oblige those whom she does not love.

Your brother Edward makes very honourable mention of you, I assure you, in his letter to James, and seems quite sorry to part with you. It is a great comfort to me to think that my cares have not been thrown away, and that you are respected in the world. Perhaps you may be prevailed on to return with him and Elizabeth into Kent, when they leave us in April, and I rather suspect that your great wish of keeping yourself disengaged has been with that view. Do as you like; I have overcome my desire of your going to Bath with my mother and me. There is nothing which energy will not bring one to.

Edward Cooper is so kind as to want us all to come to Hamstall this summer, instead of going to the sea, but we are not so kind as to mean

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

to do it. The summer after, if you please, Mr. Cooper, but for the present we greatly prefer the sea to all our relations.

I dare say you will spend a very pleasant three weeks in town. I hope you will see everything worthy of notice, from the Opera House to Henry's office in Cleveland Court; and I shall expect you to lay in a stock of intelligence that may procure me amusement for a twelvemonth to come. You will have a turkey from Steven-ton while you are there, and pray note down how many full courses of exquisite dishes M. Hala-vant converts it into.

I cannot write any closer. Neither my affec-tion for you nor for letter-writing can stand out against a Kentish visit. For a three-months' ab-sence I can be a very loving relation and a very excellent correspondent, but beyond that I de-generate into negligence and indifference.

I wish you a very pleasant ball on Thursday, and myself another, and Mary and Martha a third, but they will not have theirs till Friday, as they have a scheme for the Newbury As-sembly.

Nanny's husband is decidedly against her quitting service in such times as these, and I be-lieve would be very glad to have her continue with us. In some respects she would be a great comfort, and in some we should wish for a dif-

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

ferent sort of servant. The washing would be the greatest evil. Nothing is settled, however, at present with her, but I should think it would be as well for all parties if she could suit herself in the meanwhile somewhere nearer her husband and child than Bath. Mrs. H. Rice's place would be very likely to do for her. It is not many, as she is herself aware, that she is qualified for.

My mother has not been so well for many months as she is now.

Adieu. Yours sincerely, J. A.

Miss Austen, Godmersham Park,
Faversham, Kent.

1801

Mr. and Mrs. Leigh Perrot were the uncle and aunt who lived at Paragon, Bath, and it would seem that the Steventon family, having made up their mind to settle in Bath upon Mr. George Austen's giving over his clerical duties to his son, made the Perrots' house their head-quarters whilst they looked about for a fitting abode. Cassandra Austen seems to have been visiting, first at Mrs. Lloyd's and then at Kintbury, for to these places the letters are addressed. They

[351]

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

have not many allusions which require explanation, being chiefly occupied by observations regarding the search for a house, the people whom Jane encountered at Bath, and the news they heard of the sale of their effects at Steventon Rectory. I suppose "the Chamberlaynes" to have been the family of the Rev. Thomas Chamberlayne, rector and patron of Charlton, who married in 1799 Maria Francesca, daughter of Captain Robert Walter, R.N., and whose eldest son is described in "Burke's Landed Gentry" as Thomas Chamberlayne, of Cranbury Park and Weston Grove, Hants—which, by the way, the unwary reader must not confound with the Weston to which Jane and Mrs. Chamberlayne walked, which was, of course, the Weston by Bath, celebrated for the battle of 1643, in which the Royalist Sir Bevil Grenville lost his life, and which was fought on Lansdown, mostly in this parish, from which the present Marquis of that name takes his title.

It will be seen that there is an "hiatus" in the letters after 1801, for I have discovered none between May in that year and August, 1805. During this period the family lived in Bath, first at No. 4 Sydney Terrace, and afterwards in Green Park Buildings, until Mr. Austen's death. Before the move to Southampton, which occurred later in the same year, Jane went to

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

pay a visit to her relations in Kent, from which county the next letters were written.

XXX

Paragon: Tuesday (May 5).

MY DEAR CASSANDRA,

I have the pleasure of writing from my *own* room up two pair of stairs, with everything very comfortable about me.

Our journey here 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.

Between Luggershall and Everley we made our grand meal, and then with admiring astonishment perceived in what a magnificent manner our support had been provided for. We could not with the utmost exertion consume above the twentieth part of the beef. The cucumber will, I believe, be a very acceptable present, as my uncle talks of having inquired the price of one lately, when he was told a shilling.

We had a very neat chaise from Devizes; it looked almost as well as a gentleman's, at least

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

as a very shabby gentleman's; in spite of this advantage, however, we were above three hours coming from thence to Paragon, and it was half after seven by your clocks before we entered the house.

Frank, whose black head was in waiting in the Hall window, received us very kindly; and his master and mistress did not show less cordiality. They both look very well, though my aunt has a violent cough. We drank tea as soon as we arrived, and so ends the account of our journey, which my mother bore without any fatigue.

How do you do to-day? I hope you improve in sleeping—I think you must, because *I* fall off; I have been awake ever since five and sooner; I fancy I had too much clothes over me; I thought I *should* by the feel of them before I went to bed, but I had not courage to alter them. I am warmer here without any fire than I have been lately with an excellent one.

Well, and so the good news is confirmed, and Martha triumphs. My uncle and aunt seemed quite surprised that you and my father were not coming sooner.

I have given the soap and the basket, and each have been kindly received. *One* thing only among all our concerns has not arrived in safety: when I got into the chaise at Devizes I discovered that your drawing ruler was broke in two;

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

it is just at the top where the cross-piece is fastened on. I beg pardon.

There is to be only one more ball—next Monday is the day. The Chamberlaynes are still here. I begin to think better of Mrs. C——, and upon recollection believe she has rather a long chin than otherwise, as she remembers us in Gloucestershire when we were very charming young women.

The first view of Bath in fine weather does not answer my expectations; I think I see more distinctly through rain. The sun was got behind everything, and the appearance of the place from the top of Kingsdown was all vapour, shadow, smoke, and confusion.

I fancy we are to have a house in Seymour Street, or thereabouts. My uncle and aunt both like the situation. I was glad to hear the former talk of all the houses in New King Street as too small; it was my own idea of them. I had not been two minutes in the dining-room before he questioned me with all his accustomed eager interest about Frank and Charles, their views and intentions. I did my best to give information.

I am not without hopes of tempting Mrs. Lloyd to settle in Bath; meat is only 8*d.* per pound, butter 12*d.*, and cheese 9½*d.* You must carefully conceal from her, however, the exorbitant price of fish: a salmon has been sold at 2*s.*

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

9*d.* per pound the whole fish. The Duchess of York's removal is expected to make that article more reasonable—and till it really appears so, say nothing about salmon.

Tuesday night.—When my uncle went to take his second glass of water I walked with him, and in our morning's circuit we looked at two houses in Green Park Buildings, one of which pleased me very well. We walked all over it except into the garret; the dining-room is of a comfortable size, just as large as you like to fancy it; the second room about 14 ft. square. The apartment over the drawing-room pleased me particularly, because it is divided into two, the smaller one a very nice-sized dressing-room, which upon occasion might admit a bed. The aspect is south-east. The only doubt is about the dampness of the offices, of which there were symptoms.

Wednesday.—Mrs. Mussell has got my gown, and I will endeavour to explain what her intentions are. It is to be a round gown, with a jacket and a frock front, like Cath. Bigg's, to open at the side. The jacket is all in one with the body, and comes as far as the pocket-holes—about half a quarter of a yard deep, I suppose, all the way round, cut off straight at the corners with a broad hem. No fulness appears either in the body or the flap; the back is quite plain in this

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

form \sqcup , and the sides equally so. The front is sloped round to the bosom and drawn in, and there is to be a frill of the same to put on occasionally when all one's handkerchiefs are dirty—which frill *must* fall back. She is to put two breadths and a-half in the tail, and no gores—gores not being so much worn as they were. There is nothing new in the sleeves: they are to be plain, with a fulness of the same falling down and gathered up underneath, just like some of Martha's, or perhaps a little longer. Low in the back behind, and a belt of the same. I can think of nothing more, though I am afraid of not being particular enough.

My mother has ordered a new bonnet, and so have I; both white strip, trimmed with white ribbon. I find my straw bonnet looking very much like other people's, and quite as smart. Bonnets of cambric muslin on the plan of Lady Bridges' are a good deal worn, and some of them are very pretty; but I shall defer one of that sort till your arrival. Bath is getting so very empty that I am not afraid of doing too little. Black gauze cloaks are worn as much as anything. I shall write again in a day or two. Best love.

Yours ever, J. A.

We have had Mrs. Lillingstone and the Chamberlaynes to call on us. My mother was

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

very much struck with the odd looks of the two latter; *I* have only seen *her*. Mrs. Busby drinks tea and plays at cribbage here to-morrow; and on Friday, I believe, we go to the Chamberlaynes'. Last night we walked by the Canal.

Miss Austen, Mrs. Lloyd's, Up Hurstbourne,
Andover.

XXXI

Paragon: Tuesday (May 12).

MY DEAR CASSANDRA,

My mother has heard from Mary, and I have heard from Frank; we therefore know something now of our concerns in distant quarters; and you, I hope, by some means or other are equally instructed, for I do not feel inclined to transcribe the letter of either.

You know from Elizabeth, I dare say, that my father and Frank, deferring their visit to Kippington on account of Mr.¹ M. Austen's absence, are to be at Godmersham to-day; and James, I dare say, has been over to Ibthorp by this time to inquire particularly after Mrs. Lloyd's health, and forestall whatever intelligence of the sale I might attempt to give; sixty-one guineas and a-half for the three cows gives

¹ Francis Motley-Austen, who bought Kippington from Sir Chas. Farnaby.

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

one some support under the blow of only eleven guineas for the tables. Eight for my pianoforte is about what I really expected to get; I am more anxious to know the amount of my books, especially as they are said to have sold well.

My adventures since I wrote last have not been numerous; but such as they are, they are much at your service.

We met not a creature at Mrs. Lillingstone's, and yet were not so very stupid, as I expected, which I attribute to my wearing my new bonnet and being in good looks. On Sunday we went to church twice, and after evening service walked a little in the Crescent fields, but found it too cold to stay long.

Yesterday morning we looked into a house in Seymour Street, which there is reason to suppose will soon be empty; and as we are assured from many quarters that no inconvenience from the river is felt in those buildings, we are at liberty to fix in them if we can. But this house was not inviting; the largest room downstairs was not much more than fourteen feet square, with a western aspect.

In the evening, 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 Win-

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

stone 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 an hundred people, dancing in the Upper Rooms at Bath.

After tea we *cheered up*; the breaking up of private parties sent some scores more to the ball, and though it was shockingly and inhumanly thin for this place, there were people enough, I suppose, to have made five or six very pretty Basingstoke assemblies.

I then got Mr. Evelyn to talk to, and Miss T. to look at; and I am proud to say that though repeatedly assured that another in the same party was the *She*, I fixed upon the right one from the first. A resemblance to Mrs. L. was my guide. She is not so pretty as I expected; her face has the same defect of baldness as her sisters, and her features not so handsome; she was highly rouged, and looked rather quietly and contentedly silly than anything else.

Mrs. B. and two young woman were of the same party, except when Mrs. B. thought herself obliged to leave them to run round the room after her drunken husband. His avoidance, and her pursuit, with the probable intoxication of both, was an amusing scene.

The Evelyns returned our visit on Saturday;

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

we were very happy to meet, and all that; they are going to-morrow into Gloucestershire to the Dolphins for ten days. Our acquaintance, Mr. Woodward, is just married to a Miss Rowe, a young lady rich in money and music.

I thank you for your Sunday's letter, it is very long and very agreeable. I fancy you know many more particulars of our sale than we do; we have heard the price of nothing but the cows, bacon, hay, hops, tables, and my father's chest of drawers and study table. Mary is more minute in her account of their own gains than in ours; probably being better informed in them. I will attend to Mrs. Lloyd's commission and to her abhorrence of musk when I write again.

I have bestowed three calls of inquiry on the Mapletons, and I fancy very beneficial ones to Marianne, as I am always told that she is better. I have not seen any of them. Her complaint is a bilious fever.

I like my dark gown very much indeed, colour, make, and everything; I mean to have my new white one made up now, in case we should go to the rooms again next Monday, which is to be really the last time.

Wednesday.—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

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

on and talk nonsense to each other. Lady Fust, Mrs. Busby, and a Mrs. Owen sat down with my uncle to whist, within five minutes after the three old *Toughs* came in, and there they sat, with only the exchange of Adm. Stanhope for my uncle, till their chairs were announced.

I cannot anyhow continue to find people agreeable; I respect Mrs. Chamberlayne for doing her hair well, but cannot feel a more tender sentiment. Miss Langley is like any other short girl, with a broad nose and wide mouth, fashionable dress and exposed bosom. Adm. Stanhope is a gentleman-like man, but then his legs are too short and his tail too long. Mrs. Stanhope could not come; I fancy she had a private appointment with Mr. Chamberlayne, whom I wished to see more than all the rest.

My uncle has quite got the better of his lameness, or at least his walking with a stick is the only remains of it. He and I are soon to take the long-planned walk to the Cassoon, and on Friday we are all to accompany Mrs. Chamberlayne and Miss Langley to Weston.

My mother had a letter yesterday from my father; it seems as if the W. Kent Scheme was entirely given up. He talks of spending a fortnight at Godmersham, and then returning to town.

Yours ever,

J. A.

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

Excepting a slight cold, my mother is very well; she has been quite free from feverish or bilious complaints since her arrival here.

Miss Austen, Mrs. Lloyd's,
Hurstbourn Tarrant, Andover.

XXXII

Paragon: Thursday (May 21).

MY DEAR CASSANDRA,

To make long sentences upon unpleasant subjects is very odious, and I shall therefore get rid of the one now uppermost in my thoughts as soon as possible.

Our views on G. P. Buildings seem all at an end; the observation of the damp still remaining in the offices of an house which has been only vacated a week, with reports of discontented families and putrid fevers, has given the *coup de grace*. We have now nothing in view. When you arrive, we will at least have the pleasure of examining some of these putrefying houses again; they are so very desirable in size and situation, that there is some satisfaction in spending ten minutes within them.

I will now answer the inquiries in your last letter. I cannot learn any other explanation of the coolness between my aunt and Miss Bond than that the latter felt herself slighted by the

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

former's leaving Bath last summer without calling to see her before she went. It seems the oddest kind of quarrel in the world. They never visit, but I believe they speak very civilly if they meet. My uncle and Miss Bond certainly do.

The four boxes of lozenges, at 1s. 1½*d.* per box, amount, as I was told, to 4s. 6*d.*, and as the sum was so trifling, I thought it better to pay at once than contest the matter.

I have just heard from Frank. My father's plans are now fixed; you will see him at Kintbury on Friday, and, unless inconvenient to you, we are to see you both here on Monday, the 1st of June. Frank has an invitation to Milgate, which I believe he means to accept.

Our party at Ly. Fust's was made up of the same set of people that you have already heard of—the Winstones, Mrs. Chamberlayne, Mrs. Busby, Mrs. Franklyn, and Mrs. Maria Somerville; yet I think it was not quite so stupid as the two preceding parties here.

The friendship between Mrs. Chamberlayne and me 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 was accomplished in a very striking manner. Every one of the party declined it under some pretence or other except our two selves, and we had therefore a *tête-à-tête*, but

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

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 any shade to her hat, stopping for nothing, and crossing the churchyard 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.

Yesterday evening we had a short call from two of the Miss Arnolds, who came from Chippenham on business. They are very civil, and not too genteel, and upon hearing that we wanted a house, recommended one at Chippenham.

This morning we have been visited again by Mrs. and Miss Holder; they wanted us to fix an evening for drinking tea with them, but my mother's still remaining cold allows her to decline everything of the kind. As *I* had a separate invitation, however, I believe I shall go

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

some afternoon. It is the fashion to think them both very detestable, but they are so civil, and their gowns look so white and so nice (which, by the bye, my aunt thinks an absurd pretension in this place), that I cannot utterly abhor them, especially as Miss Holder owns that she has no taste for music.

After they left us I went with my mother to help look at some houses in New King Street, towards which she felt some kind of inclination, but their size has now satisfied her. They were smaller than I expected to find them; one in particular out of the two was quite monstrously little; the best of the sitting-rooms not so large as the little parlour at Steventon, and the second room in every floor about capacious enough to admit a very small single bed.

We are to have a tiny party here to-night. I hate tiny parties, they force one into constant exertion. Miss Edwards and her father, Mrs. Busby and her nephew, Mr. Maitland, and Mrs. Lillingstone are to be the whole; and I am prevented from setting my black cap at Mr. Maitland by his having a wife and ten children.

My aunt has a very bad cough—do not forget to have heard about *that* when you come—and I think she is deafer than ever. My mother's cold disordered her for some days, but she seems now very well. Her resolution as to remaining here

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

begins to give way a little; she will not like being left behind, and will be glad to compound matters with her enraged family.

You will be sorry to hear that Marianne Mableton's disorder has ended fatally. She was believed out of danger on Sunday, but a sudden relapse carried her off the next day. So affectionate a family must suffer severely; and many a girl on early death has been praised into an angel, I believe, on slighter pretensions to beauty, sense, and merit than Marianne.

Mr. Bent seems *bent* upon being very detestable, for he values the books at only 70*l.* The whole world is in a conspiracy to enrich one part of our family at the expense of another. Ten shillings for Dodsley's Poems, however, please me to the quick, and I do not care how often I sell them for as much. When Mrs. Bramston has read them through I will sell them again. I suppose you can hear nothing of your *magnesia*?

Friday.—You have a nice day for your journey, in whatever way it is to be performed, whether in the Debary's coach or on your own twenty toes.

When you have made Martha's bonnet you must make her a cloak of the same sort of materials; they are very much worn here, in different forms—many of them just like her black silk

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

spencer, with a trimming round the armholes instead of sleeves; some are long before, and some long all round, like C. Bigg's. Our party last night supplied me with no new idea for my letter.

Yours ever,

J. A.

The Pickfords are in Bath, and have called here. She is the most elegant-looking woman I have seen since I left Martha; *he* is as raffish in his appearance as I would wish every disciple of Godwin to be. We drink tea to-night with Mrs. Busby. I scandalised her nephew cruelly; he has but three children instead of ten.

Best love to everybody.

Miss Austen, the Rev. F. C. Fowle's,
Kintbury, Newbury.

1805

THE thirty-third letter begins with an account of a visit to Eastwell Park, where lived George Hatton and his wife, Lady Elizabeth (*née* Murray). The two boys, George and Daniel, to whom reference is made, were the late Earl of Winchilea (ninth earl, who succeeded his cousin in 1826), and his brother, who subsequently mar-

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

ried Lady Louisa Greville (daughter of the Earl of Warwick), and was Rector of Great Weldon, Northamptonshire, and Chaplain to the Queen. Lady Gordon and Miss Anne Finch were the sisters of the owner of Eastwell Park, the former of whom married Sir Jenison William Gordon, K.C.B., and the latter died unmarried. Goodnestone Farm, to which the first letter was written, and from which Jane afterwards writes, is a comfortable house very near the great house, which has generally been inhabited as a dower house or by some younger member of the Bridges family, to whom it belongs. "Harriot" means Harriet Bridges, as this was the year before she married Mr. Moore. It will be noticed that Jane always has a good word for her when she speaks of her, which, considering the freedom of her general remarks upon her acquaintance, is a high testimony to character, which was doubtless deserved. It must be admitted that my beloved great-aunt was a careless speller. She invariably spells "niece" "neice" in these letters, and in that now before me she spells Lady Bridges' name "Brydges" twice, which I note to remark that the Goodnestone family spell their name with an "i," the Wootton family with a "y," which makes a difference, though I cannot describe it in the same terms as Mr. Justice Hali-burton (Sam Slick) once used to me in the

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

House of Commons, when, having occasion to write his name, I asked him if I should spell it with one "l" or two. "Sir," he replied, "on no account with more than one; *there is an 'l' of a difference.*" The Knatchbulls who are mentioned as having stayed at Godmersham at this time were Captain Charles Knatchbull, R.N., son of Wadham Knatchbull, Chancellor and Prebendary of Durham, who had married his cousin Frances, only daughter and heiress of Major Norton Knatchbull (youngest son of the fourth Hatch baronet), of Babington, Somersetshire, which place Captain Charles now possessed in right of his wife.

The Duke of Gloucester, whose death put off the Deal ball, was the brother of King George the Third, who died in his 62d year. At the time of his death he commanded a regiment of Guards, and was Warden and Keeper of the New Forest, Ranger of Windsor Forest and of Hampton Court Park, and Chancellor of Dublin University.

The Marianne mentioned in the thirty-fifth letter as being strikingly like "Catherine Bigg" was a younger daughter of Sir Brook and Lady Bridges (Fanny Fowler), who was an invalid and died unmarried in 1811.

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

XXXIII

Godmersham Park: Saturday (August 24).

MY DEAR CASSANDRA,

How do you do; and how is Harriot's cold? I hope you are at this time sitting down to answer these questions.

Our visit to Eastwell was very agreeable; I found Ly. Gordon's manners as pleasing as they had been described, and saw nothing to dislike in Sir Janison, excepting once or twice a sort of sneer at Mrs. Anne Finch. He was just getting into talk with Elizabeth as the carriage was ordered, but during the first part of the visit he said very little.

Your going with Harriot was highly approved of by everyone, and only too much applauded as an act of virtue on your part. I said all I could to lessen your merit. The Mrs. Finches were afraid you would find Goodnestone very dull; I wished when I heard them say so that they could have heard Mr. E. Bridges' solicitude on the subject, and have known all the amusements that were planned to prevent it.

They were very civil to me, as they always are; Fortune was also very civil to me in placing Mr. E. Hatton by me at dinner. I have discovered that Lady Elizabeth, for a woman of her age

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

and situation, has astonishingly little to say for herself, and that Miss Hatton has not much more. Her eloquence lies in her fingers; they were most fluently harmonious.

George is a fine boy, and well behaved, but Daniel chiefly delighted me; the good humour of his countenance is quite bewitching. After tea we had a cribbage-table, and he and I won two rubbers of his brother and Mrs. Mary. Mr. Brett was the only person there, besides our two families.

It was considerably past eleven before we were at home, and I was so tired as to feel no envy of those who were at Ly. Yates' ball. My good wishes for its being a pleasant one were, I hope, successful.

Yesterday was a very quiet day with us; my noisiest efforts were writing to Frank, and playing at battledore and shuttlecock with William; he and I have practised together two mornings, and improve a little; we have frequently kept it up *three* times, and once or twice *six*.

The two Edwards went to Canterbury in the chaise, and found Mrs. Knight, as you found her, I suppose, the day before, cheerful but weak. Fanny was met walking with Miss Sharp and Miss Milles, the happiest being in the world; she sent a private message to her mamma implying as much. "Tell mamma that I am quite

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

Palmerstone!" If little Lizzy used the same language she would, I dare say, send the same message from Goodnestone.

In the evening we took a quiet walk round the farm, with George and Henry to animate us by their races and merriment. Little Edward is by no means better, and his papa and mamma have determined to consult Dr. Wilmot. Unless he recovers his strength beyond what is now probable, his brothers will return to school without him, and he will be of the party to Worthing. If sea-bathing should be recommended he will be left there with us, but this is not thought likely to happen.

I have been used very ill this morning: I have received a letter from Frank which I ought to have had when Elizabeth and Henry had theirs, and which in its way from Albany to Godmersham has been to Dover and Steventon. It was finished on ye 16th, and tells what theirs told before as to his present situation; he is in a great hurry to be married, and I have encouraged him in it, in the letter which ought to have been an answer to his. He must think it very strange that I do not acknowledge the receipt of his, when I speak of those of the same date to Eliz. and Henry; and to add to my injuries, I forgot to number mine on the outside.

I have found your white mittens; they were

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

folded up within my clean nightcap, and send their duty to you.

Elizabeth has this moment proposed a scheme which will be very much for my pleasure if equally convenient to the other party; it is that when you return on Monday, I should take your place at Goodnestone for a few days. Harriot cannot be insincere, let her try for it ever so much, and therefore I defy her to accept this self-invitation of mine, unless it be really what perfectly suits her. As there is no time for an answer, I shall go in the carriage on Monday, and can return with you, if my going on to Goodnestone is at all inconvenient.

The Knatchbulls come on Wednesday to dinner, and stay only till Friday morning at the latest. Frank's letter to me is the only one that you or I have received since Thursday.

Mr. Hall walked off this morning to Ospringle, with no inconsiderable booty. He charged Elizabeth 5*s.* for every time of dressing her hair, and 5*s.* for every lesson to Sace, allowing nothing for the pleasures of his visit here, for meat, drink, and lodging, the benefit of country air, and the charms of Mrs. Salkeld's and Mrs. Sace's society.¹ Towards me he was as considerate as I had hoped for from my relationship to you, charging me only 2*s.* 6*d.* for cutting

¹ The Godmersham housekeeper and lady's-maid.

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

my hair, though it was as thoroughly dressed after being cut for Eastwell as it had been for the Ashford assembly. He certainly respects either our youth or our poverty.

My writing to you to-day prevents Elizabeth writing to Harriot, for which evil I implore the latter's pardon. Give my best love to her, and kind remembrance to her brothers.

Yours very affectionately,
J. A.

You are desired to bring back with you Henry's picture of Rowling for the Misses Finches.

As I find, on looking into my affairs, that instead of being very rich I am likely to be very poor, I cannot afford more than ten shillings for Sackree; but as we are to meet in Canterbury I need not have mentioned this. It is as well, however, to prepare you for the sight of a sister sunk in poverty, that it may not overcome your spirits.

Elizabeth hopes you will not be later here on Monday than five o'clock, on Lizzy's account.

We have heard nothing from Henry since he went. Daniel told us that he went from Osprunge in one of the coaches.

Miss Austen, Goodnestone Farm, Wingham.

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

XXXIV

Goodnestone Farm: Tuesday (August 27).

MY DEAR CASSANDRA,

We had a very pleasant drive from Canterbury, and reached this place about half-past four, which seemed to bid fair for a punctual dinner at five; but scenes of great agitation awaited us, and there was much to be endured and done before we could sit down to table.

Harriot found a letter from Louisa Hatton, desiring to know if she and her brothers were to be at the ball at Deal on Friday, and saying that the Eastwell family had some idea of going to it, and were to make use of Rowling if they did; and while I was dressing she came to me with another letter in her hand, in great perplexity. It was from Captain Woodford, containing a message from Lady Forbes, which he had intended to deliver in person, but had been prevented from doing.

The offer of a ticket for this grand ball, with an invitation to come to her house at Dover before and after it, was Lady Forbes' message. Harriot was at first very little inclined, or rather totally disinclined, to profit by her ladyship's attention; but at length, after many debates, she was persuaded by me and herself together to ac-

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

cept the ticket. The offer of dressing and sleeping at Dover she determined on Marianne's account to decline, and her plan is to be conveyed by Lady Elizabeth Hatton.

I hope their going is by this time certain, and will be soon known to be so. I think Miss H. would not have written such a letter if she had not been all but sure of it, and a little more. I am anxious on the subject, from the fear of being in the way if they do not come to give Harriot a conveyance. I proposed and pressed being sent home on Thursday, to prevent the possibility of being in the wrong place, but Harriot would not hear of it.

There is no chance of tickets for the Mr. Bridgeses, as no gentlemen but of the garrison are invited.

With a civil note to be fabricated to Lady F., and an answer written to Miss H., you will easily believe that we could not begin dinner till six. We were agreeably surprised by Edward Bridges' company to it. He had been, strange to tell, too late for the cricket match, too late at least to play himself, and, not being asked to dine with the players, came home. It is impossible to do justice to the hospitality of his attentions towards me; he made a point of ordering toasted cheese for supper entirely on my account.

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

We had a very agreeable evening, and here I am before breakfast writing to you, having got up between six and seven; Lady Brydges' room must be good for early rising.

Mr. Sankey was here last night, and found his patient better, but I have heard from a maid-servant that she has had but an indifferent night.

Tell Elizabeth that I did not give her letter to Harriot till we were in the carriage, when she received it with great delight, and could read it in comfort.

. As you have been here so lately, I need not particularly describe the house or style of living, in which all seems for use and comfort; nor need I be diffuse on the state of Lady Brydges' bookcase and corner-shelves upstairs. What a treat to my mother to arrange them!

Harriot is constrained to give up all hope of seeing Edward here to fetch me, as I soon recollected that Mr. and Mrs. Charles Knatchbull's being at Godmersham on Thursday must put it out of the question.

Had I waited till after breakfast, the chief of all this might have been spared. The Duke of Gloucester's death sets my heart at ease, though it will cause some dozens to ache. Harriot's is not among the number of the last; she is very well pleased to be spared the trouble of preparation. She joins me in best love to you all, and

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

will write to Elizabeth soon. I shall be very glad to hear from you, that we may know how you all are, especially the two Edwards.

I have asked Sophie if she has anything to say to Lizzy in acknowledgment of the little bird, and her message is that, with her love, she is very glad Lizzy sent it. She volunteers, moreover, her love to little Marianne, with the promise of bringing her a doll the next time she goes to Godmersham.

John is just come from Ramsgate, and brings a good account of the people there. He and his brother, you know, dine at Nackington; we are to dine at four, that we may walk afterwards. As it is now two, and Harriot has letters to write, we shall probably not get out before.

Yours affectionately,

J. A.

Three o'clock.—Harriot is just come from Marianne, and thinks her upon the whole better. The sickness has not returned, and a headache is at present her chief complaint, which Henry attributes to the sickness.

Miss Austen, Edward Austen's, Esq.
Godmersham Park, Faversham.

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

XXXV

Goodnestone Farm: Friday (August 30).

MY DEAR CASSANDRA,

I have determined on staying here till Monday. Not that there is any occasion for it on Marianne's account, as she is now almost as well as usual, but Harriot is so kind in her wishes for my company that I could not resolve on leaving her to-morrow, especially as I had no reason to give for its necessity. It would be inconvenient to me to stay with her longer than the beginning of next week, on account of my clothes, and therefore I trust it will suit Edward to fetch or send for me on Monday, or Tuesday if Monday should be wet. Harriot has this moment desired me to propose his coming hither on Monday, and taking me back the next day.

The purport of Elizabeth's letter makes me anxious to hear more of what we are to do and not to do, and I hope you will be able to write me your own plans and opinions to-morrow. The journey to London is a point of the first expediency, and I am glad it is resolved on, though it seems likely to injure our Worthing scheme. I expect that *we* are to be at Sandling, while *they* are in town.

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

It gives us great pleasure to hear of little Edward's being better, and we imagine, from his mamma's expressions, that he is expected to be well enough to return to school with his brothers.

Marianne was equal to seeing me two days ago; we sat with her for a couple of hours before dinner, and the same yesterday, when she was evidently better, more equal to conversation, and more cheerful than during our first visit. She received me very kindly, and expressed her regret in not having been able to see you.

She is, of course, altered since we saw her in October, 1794. Eleven years could not pass away even in health without making some change, but in her case it is wonderful that the change should be so little. I have not seen her to advantage, as I understand she has frequently a nice colour, and her complexion has not yet recovered from the effects of her late illness. Her face is grown longer and thinner, and her features more marked, and the likeness which I remember to have always seen between her and Catherine Bigg is stronger than ever, and so striking is the voice and manner of speaking that I seem to be really hearing Catherine, and once or twice have been on the point of calling Harriot "Alethea." She is very pleasant, cheerful, and interested in everything about her, and

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

at the same time shows a thoughtful, considerate, and decided turn of mind.

Edward Bridges dined at home yesterday; the day before he was at St. Albans; to-day he goes to Broome, and to-morrow to Mr. Hallett's, which latter engagement has had some weight in my resolution of not leaving Harriot till Monday.

We have walked to Rowling on each of the two last days after dinner, and very great was my pleasure in going over the house and grounds. We have also found time to visit all the principal walks of this place, except the walk round the top of the park, which we shall accomplish probably to-day.

Next week seems likely to be an unpleasant one to this family on the matter of game. The evil intentions of the Guards are certain, and the gentlemen of the neighbourhood seem unwilling to come forward in any decided or early support of their rights. Edward Bridges has been trying to arouse their spirits, but without success. Mr. Hammond, under the influence of daughters and an expected ball, declares he will do nothing.

Harriot hopes my brother will not mortify her by resisting all her plans and refusing all her invitations; she has never yet been successful with him in any, but she trusts he will now make her all the amends in his power by coming on Mon-

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

day. She thanks Elizabeth for her letter, and you may be sure is not less solicitous than myself for her going to town.

Pray say everything kind for us to Miss Sharpe, who could not regret the shortness of our meeting in Canterbury more than we did. I hope she returned to Godmersham as much pleased with Mrs. Knight's beauty and Miss Milles' judicious remarks as those ladies respectively were with hers. You must send me word that you have heard from Miss Irvine.

I had almost forgot to thank you for your letter. I am glad you recommended "Gisborne," for having begun, I am pleased with it, and I had quite determined not to read it.

I suppose everybody will be black for the D. of G. Must we buy lace, or will ribbon do?

We shall not be at Worthing so soon as we have been used to talk of, shall we? This will be no evil to us, and we are sure of my mother and Martha being happy together. Do not forget to write to Charles. As I am to return so soon, we shall not send the pincushions.

Yours affectionately, J. A.

You continue, I suppose, taking hartshorn, and I hope with good effect.

Miss Austen, Edward Austen's, Esq.
Godmersham Park, Faversham.

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

1807

THERE are no letters of 1806, so that this batch were written after the Austens had been established at Southampton for more than a year. "Our guests" in the thirty-sixth letter were James and Mary, who had been staying with their relations in Castle Square. There is little to observe in the rest of the letter, although one is glad to find that Captain Foote was not put out of temper by having to eat underdone mutton, and that Mrs. Austen's finances were in a satisfactory condition at the commencement of the new year.

"Clarentine" is, of course, Miss S. S. Burney's work, which other people besides Jane have thought "foolish." It is a novel of the most ordinary description, and not one which she would have been likely to approve. There is a playful allusion in these letters to the chance of Martha Lloyd's marriage; Jane could not foresee that this even would be delayed until her own brother Frank sought the lady's affection many years later.

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

XXXVI

Southampton: Wednesday (January 7).

MY DEAR CASSANDRA,

You were mistaken in supposing I should expect your letter on Sunday; I had no idea of hearing from you before Tuesday, and my pleasure yesterday was therefore unhurt by any previous disappointment. I thank you for writing so much; you must really have sent me the value of two letters in one. We are extremely glad to hear that Elizabeth is so much better, and hope you will be sensible of still further amendment in her when you return from Canterbury.

Of your visit there I must now speak "incessantly"; it surprises, but pleases me more, and I consider it as a very just and honourable distinction of you, and not less to the credit of Mrs. Knight. I have no doubt of your spending your time with her most pleasantly in quiet and rational conversation, and am so far from thinking her expectations of you will be deceived, that my only fear is of your being so agreeable, so much to her taste, as to make her wish to keep you with her for ever. If that should be the case, we must remove to Canterbury, which I should not like so well as Southampton.

When you receive this, our guests will be all

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

gone or going; and I shall be left to the comfortable disposal of my time, to ease of mind from the torments of rice puddings and apple dumplings, and probably to regret that I did not take more pains to please them all.

Mrs. J. Austen has asked me to return with her to Steventon; I need not give my answer; and she has invited my mother to spend there the time of Mrs. F. A.'s confinement, which she seems half inclined to do.

A few days ago I had a letter from Miss Irvine, and as I was in her debt, you will guess it to be a remonstrance, not a very severe one, however; the first page is in her usual retrospective, jealous, inconsistent style, but the remainder is chatty and harmless. She supposes my silence may have proceeded from resentment of her not having written to inquire particularly after my hooping cough, &c. She is a funny one.

I have answered her letter, and have endeavoured to give something like the truth with as little incivility as I could, by placing my silence to the want of subject in the very quiet way in which we live. Phebe has repented, and stays. I have also written to Charles, and I answered Miss Buller's letter by return of post, as I intended to tell you in my last.

Two or three things I recollected when it was too late, that I might have told you; one is, that

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

the Welbys have lost their eldest son by a putrid fever at Eton, and another that Tom Chute is going to settle in Norfolk.

You have scarcely ever mentioned Lizzy since your being at Godmersham. I hope it is not because she is altered for the worse.

I cannot yet satisfy Fanny as to Mrs. Foote's baby's name, and I must not encourage her to expect a good one, as Captain Foote is a professed adversary to all but the plainest; he likes only Mary, Elizabeth, Anne, &c. Our best chance is of "Caroline," which in compliment to a sister seems the only exception.

He dined with us on Friday, and I fear will not soon venture again, for the strength of our dinner was a boiled leg of mutton, underdone even for James; and Captain Foote has a particular dislike to underdone mutton; but he was so good-humoured and pleasant that I did not much mind his being starved. He gives us all the most cordial invitation to his house in the country, saying just what the Williams ought to say to make us welcome. Of them we have seen nothing since you left us, and we hear that they are just gone to Bath again, to be out of the way of further alterations at Brooklands.

Mrs. F. A. has had a very agreeable letter from Mrs. Dickson, who was delighted with the purse, and desires her not to provide herself with

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

a christening dress, which is exactly what her young correspondent wanted; and she means to defer making any of the caps as long as she can, in hope of having Mrs. D.'s present in time to be serviceable as a pattern. She desires me to tell you that the gowns were cut out before your letter arrived, but that they are long enough for Caroline. The *Beds*, as I believe they are called, have fallen to Frank's share to continue, and of course are cut out to admiration. 3

"Alphonsine" did not do. We were disgusted in twenty pages, as, independent of a bad translation, it has indelicacies which disgrace a pen hitherto so pure; and we changed it for the "Female Quixotte," which now makes our evening amusement; to me a very high one, as I find the work quite equal to what I remembered it. Mrs. F. A., to whom it is new, enjoys it as one could wish; the other Mary, I believe, has little pleasure from that or any other book.

My mother does not seem at all more disappointed than ourselves at the termination of the family treaty; she thinks less of *that* just now than of the comfortable state of her own finances, which she finds on closing her year's accounts beyond her expectation, as she begins the new year with a balance of 30*l.* in her favour; and when she has written her answer to my aunt, which you know always hangs a little upon her mind, she

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

will be above the world entirely. You will have a great deal of unreserved discourse with Mrs. K., I dare say, upon this subject, as well as upon many other of our family matters. Abuse everybody but me.

Thursday.—We expected James yesterday, but he did not come; if he comes at all now, his visit will be a very short one, as he must return to-morrow, that Ajax and the chair may be sent to Winchester on Saturday. Caroline's new pelisse depended upon her mother's being able or not to come so far in the chair; how the guinea that will be saved by the same means of return is to be spent I know not. Mrs. J. A. does not talk much of poverty now, though she has no hope of my brother's being able to buy another horse *next* summer.

Their scheme against Warwickshire continues, but I doubt the family's being at Stoneleigh so early as James says he must go, which is May.

My mother is afraid I have not been explicit enough on the subject of her wealth; she began 1806 with 68*l.*, she begins 1807 with 99*l.*, and this after 32*l.* purchase of stock. Frank, too, has been settling his accounts and making calculations, and each party feels quite equal to our present expenses; but much increase of house rent would not do for either. Frank limits himself, I believe, to four hundred a year.

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

You will be surprised to hear that Jenny is not yet come back; we have heard nothing of her since her reaching Itchingswell, and can only suppose that she must be detained by illness in somebody or other, and that she has been each day expecting to be able to come on the morrow. I am glad I did not know beforehand that she was to be absent during the whole or almost the whole of our friends being with us, for though the inconvenience has not been nothing, I should have feared still more. Our dinners have certainly suffered not a little by having only Molly's head and Molly's hands to conduct them; she fries better than she did, but not like Jenny.

We did *not* take our walk on Friday, it was too dirty, nor have we yet done it; we may perhaps do something like it to-day, as after seeing Frank skate, which he hopes to do in the meadows by the beech, we are to treat ourselves with a passage over the ferry. It is one of the pleasantest frosts I ever knew, so very quiet. I hope it will last some time longer for Frank's sake, who is quite anxious to get some skating; he tried yesterday, but it would not do.

Our acquaintance increase too fast. He was recognized lately by Admiral Bertie, and a few days since arrived the Admiral and his daughter Catherine to wait upon us. There was nothing

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

to like or dislike in either. To the Berties are to be added the Lances, with whose cards we have been endowed, and whose visit Frank and I returned yesterday. They live about a mile and three-quarters from S. to the right of the new road to Portsmouth, and I believe their house is one of those which are to be seen almost anywhere among the woods on the other side of the Itchen. It is a handsome building, stands high, and in a very beautiful situation.

We found only Mrs. Lance at home, and whether she boasts any offspring besides a grand pianoforte did not appear. She was civil and chatty enough, and offered to introduce us to some acquaintance in Southampton, which we gratefully declined.

I suppose they must be acting by the orders of Mr. Lance of Netherton in this civility, as there seems no other reason for their coming near us. They will not come often, I dare say. They live in a handsome style and are rich, and she seemed to like to be rich, and we gave her to understand that we were far from being so; she will soon feel therefore that we are not worth her acquaintance.

You must have heard from Martha by this time. We have had no accounts of Kintbury since her letter to me.

Mrs. F. A. has had one fainting fit lately;

LETTERS OF JANE AUSTEN

it came on as usual after eating a hearty dinner, but did not last long.

I can recollect nothing more to say. When my letter is gone, I suppose I shall.

Yours affectionately, J. A.

I have just asked Caroline if I should send her love to her godmama, to which she answered "Yes."

Miss Austen, Godmersham Park,
Faversham, Kent.

END OF FIRST VOLUME

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA LIBRARY
Los Angeles

This book is DUE on the last date stamped below.

REC'D URL

APR 03 1988

ORION
LD/URL JAN 10 '90

RENEWAL
LD URL

REC'D LD-URL
FEB 07 1990
FEB 17 1996

REC'D LD-URL

FEB 03 1990

REC'D LD-URL
AL MAY 06 1996

FEB 17 1996

REC'D LD-URL

FEB 17 1996



3 1158 00424 9669

no

