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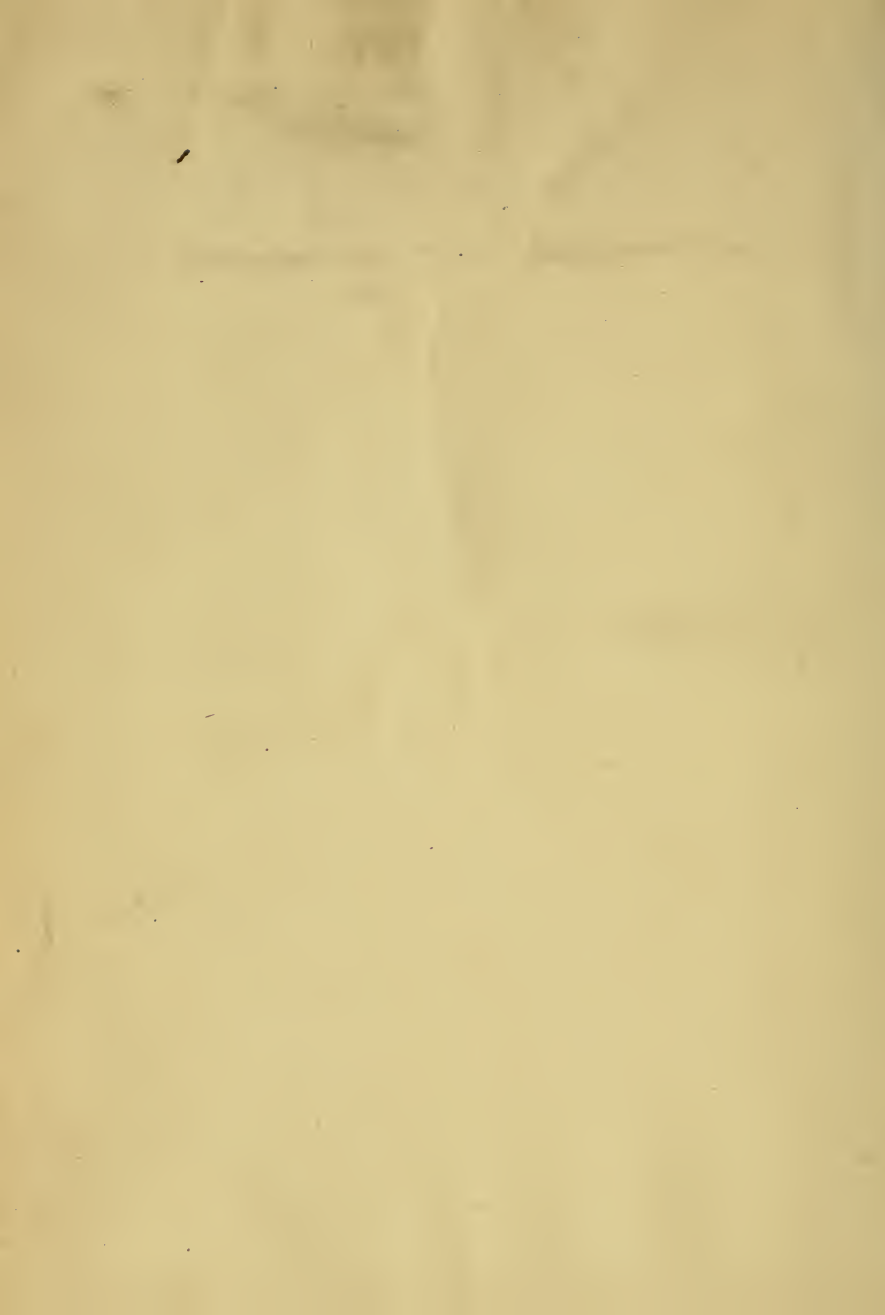
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LETTERS
OF
JANE AUSTEN

EDITED

WITH AN INTRODUCTION AND CRITICAL REMARKS

BY

EDWARD, LORD BRABOURNE

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. I.



LONDON

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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 great-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.

CONTENTS
OF
THE FIRST VOLUME.

CHAPTER	PAGE
INTRODUCTION	ix
I. GODMERSHAM AND GOODNESTONE	1
II. AUSTENS AND KNIGHTS	24
III. STEVENTON AND CHAWTON, WINCHESTER	47
IV. THE NOVELS	53
V. THE NOVELS	81
LETTERS	113

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of his aunt, and supplemented it by a second and enlarged edition in the following year, to which he added the hitherto unpublished tale, 'Lady Susan,' for the publication of which he states in his preface that he had 'lately received permission from the author's niece, Lady Knatchbull, of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 It seems that the autograph copy of another unpublished tale, 'The Watsons,' had been given to Mr.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 '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—and some from Aunt Cass. 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 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 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 correspond-

ence 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 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 recal 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.



CHAPTER I.

GODMERSHAM AND GOODNESTONE.

My great-aunt, Jane Austen, died on July 18, 1817. As circumstances over which I had no control prevented my appearance in the world until twelve years later, I was unfortunately debarred from that personal acquaintance with her and her surroundings which would have enabled me to describe both with greater accuracy of detail than I can at present hope to attain. I feel, however, that I have some claim to undertake the task which I am about to commence, from the fact that my mother, the eldest daughter of the Edward Austen so often alluded to in the accompanying letters, was the favourite niece of

Aunt Jane, and that the latter's name has been a household word in my family from the earliest period of my recollection. It is of my mother that Jane Austen writes to her sister Cassandra (October 7, 1808), 'I am greatly pleased with your account of Fanny; I found her in the summer just what you describe, almost another sister, and could not have supposed that a neice¹ would ever have been so much to me. She is quite after one's own heart.' And it is *to* my mother that her Aunt Cassandra writes in 1817, after her sister's death: 'I believe she was better known to you than to any human being besides myself.' The memory of 'Aunt Jane' was so constantly and so tenderly cherished by my mother, and I have always heard her spoken of in such terms of affection, that I feel very much as if I must have known her myself, and I am not content to let these letters go forth to the world without such additional information as I am able to impart with respect to the people and things of whom and of which they treat.

In order to be properly interested in a biography or in biographical letters, it is necessary

¹ Always so spelt in her letters.

that the reader should know something of the ‘*dramatis personæ*,’ so as to feel as nearly as possible as if they were personal acquaintances; and if this desirable point is once reached, the amusement to be found in the narrative is sensibly increased. Of course it is very possible to fall into the error of going too much into detail, and provoking the exclamation, ‘What has this got to do with Jane Austen?’ I think that this is an exclamation very likely to be made by some of those who may peruse these volumes; but, on the other hand, I am inclined to believe that, upon the whole, it is better to give too much than too little information. For my own part, I confess that, if I read letters of this kind at all, I like to know as much as is to be known about the people and places mentioned. To leave me at the end of my perusal uncertain as to the fate of some of the people, or as to the present condition of the places, is to my mind a distinct fraud upon the good nature which has induced me to take sufficient interest in them to read the book. I like to know whom John married, what became of Mary, who lives at A——, and whether B—— is

still in the possession of the same family ; and, such being my view of the case, I have endeavoured to give as much information as I could about everybody and everything. At the distance of time from which these letters were written, it is next to impossible not to miss, and perhaps occasionally misunderstand, some of the allusions ; but, for the most part, I hope and think this has been avoided.

To a considerable extent, the letters tell their own story, the first being written in 1796, when the writer was not yet twenty-one—the last in 1816, the year before she died. The ‘Memoir’ published by Mr. Austen Leigh gives an outline of Jane Austen’s history which these letters will do much to fill up and complete ; but there are some points which he has left untouched, and others upon which he was not in possession of the information which I am now able to impart. For instance, Mr. Austen Leigh speaks of letters written in November, 1800, as ‘the earliest letters’ he has seen, whereas the present collection comprises more than twenty which were written before that time. Again, he quotes a sentence written in April, 1805, as ‘evidence that Jane Austen was acquainted with Bath

before it became her residence in 1801,' the fact of which acquaintance, the reason for it and the manner in which it came about, will all be found in these letters.

It is not my desire or intention to attempt a regular biography of Jane Austen, by which I mean an account of the events of her life set down in chronological order and verified with historical precision. In truth, the chief beauty of Jane Austen's life really consisted in its being uneventful: *it* was emphatically a home life, and *she* the light and blessing of a home circle. When it has been said that she was born at Steventon Rectory on December 16, 1775, that the family moved to Bath in 1801, that her father died there in January, 1805, that she subsequently went with her mother to Southampton, in 1809 settled at Chawton, and went in 1817 to die at Winchester, the whole record of the life has been nearly completed; its beauty is to be found in the illustrations which these letters afford, revealing to us as they do more of the character and inner life of the writer than could be discovered by the mere dry recital of events.

To judge the letters fairly, however, and to

understand them as they ought to be understood to make them interesting, I think it is very desirable to arrive at a more complete knowledge than has hitherto been possible for the general public, of the circumstances under which they were written, and the places to and from which they were addressed.

Of Steventon, where the first half of Jane Austen's life was passed, there is little to be said beyond what has been already told by Mr. Austen Leigh. But it is interesting to enquire how it was that Steventon became Jane Austen's home, and the more so since it was through the same channel that her family became interested in Godmersham Park and Chawton House, from or to the former of which many of her letters were addressed, and near to the latter of which was the home where she passed the later period of her life. In fact, before one can thoroughly understand and feel at home with the people of whom Jane Austen writes, and who were the friends and companions of her life, one should know something of the history of Godmersham and Goodnestone, in Kent, as well as of Steventon and Chawton, in Hampshire; and I am bound to say, speaking from personal expe-

rience, that the more we know about them, the better we shall like them.

I will take Godmersham first, partly because I know it best, and partly because it obliges me to enter upon a genealogical sketch which is required in order to trace the way in which this place became connected with Jane Austen and Jane Austen with the place. Godmersham Park is situated in one of the most beautiful parts of Kent, namely, in the Valley of the Stour, which lies between Ashford and Canterbury. Soon after you pass the Wye Station of the railway from the former to the latter place, you see Godmersham Church on your left hand, and just beyond it comes into view the wall which shuts off the shrubberies and pleasure grounds of the great house from the road; close to the church nestles the home farm, and beyond it the rectory, with lawn sloping down to the River Stour, which, for a distance of nearly a mile, runs through the east end of the park. A little beyond the church you see the mansion, between which and the railroad lies the village, divided by the old high road from Ashford to Canterbury, nearly opposite Godmersham. The Valley of the Stour makes a break in that ridge of

chalk hills (the proper name of which is the Backbone of Kent) which runs from Dover to Folkestone, and from Folkestone by Lyminge, Norton, Stowting, Brabourne, and Brook to Wye, where the break occurs, and on the other side of the valley the hills appear again, running down from Chilham, past Godmersham to Challock and Eastwell, and away behind Charing and Lenham. So that Godmersham Park, beyond the house, is upon the chalk downs, and on its further side is bounded by King's Wood, a large tract of woodland containing many hundred acres and possessed by several different owners. It is a healthy as well as a lovely situation, with Chilham Park to the north and Eastwell Park to the south, $6\frac{1}{2}$ miles from Ashford and 8 miles from Canterbury, and within an easy drive from the quaint little town of Wye.

Godmersham formerly belonged to the ancient family of Brodnax, one of whom lived in the reign of Henry V., and married Alicie Scappe, from whom descended various generations of the name, who seem to have lived either at Hythe, Burmarsh, or Cheriton—all places in Kent adjoining each other—until we come to Thomas Brodnax, of Godmersham, who, having married, first a Gilbert,

and then a Brockman, of Beachborough, died in 1602. His great-grandson William, having married the daughter of Thomas Digges, of Chilham, was knighted, either for that reason or a better, in 1664, and left a son William, who married, first a Coppin and then a May, and died in 1726.

It is through Thomas Brodnax, the son of this last-named William, that the Austen family became connected with Godmersham. He changed his name, doubtless for very good cause, first in 1727 to May (his mother's name), and then, in 1738, to Knight. As Thomas May Knight he ended his life, in 1781, aged eighty years, and of him Hasted, the Kentish historian, says that 'he was a gentleman whose eminent worth ought not here to pass unnoticed; whose high character for upright conduct and integrity stamped a universal confidence and authority on all he said and did, which rendered his life as honourable as it was good, and caused his death to be lamented by everyone as a public loss.'

It was this Thomas May Knight's marriage with which we have now to deal, and to do so in a satisfactory manner we must turn to the genealogical tree of the Austens, who are, according to

Hasted, 'a family of ancient standing in Kent,' and one of whom, John Austen, of Broadford, not only died there, in 1620, but was comfortably buried in the parish church, where are—or were—hung his coat of arms in commemoration of the event. From him descended John Austen, of Gravehurst and Broadford, who died in 1705, aged seventy-six, having had a son John and a daughter Jane by his wife Jane Atkins. The son married Elizabeth Weller, had a son William, and then died the year before his father. The daughter married Stephen Stringer, and had a daughter named Hannah. William Austen and Hannah Stringer being thus first cousins, the former married Rebecca Hampson, and had a son George, who was Jane Austen's father; the latter married William Monk, and had a daughter Jane, who married Thomas May Knight, of Godmersham Park and Chawton House. This latter couple had one son, Thomas Knight, who married Catherine, daughter of Wadham Knatchbull, Canon and Prebendary of Durham, and, having no children, Mr. Knight adopted Edward Austen, George Austen's second son, and, dying in 1794, left him all his property, subject to his widow's life interest

It will be seen by the foregoing account how it was that the Austens became concerned with Godmersham, and it will also be seen that the various county histories which Mr. Austen Leigh follows, in saying that Mr. Thomas Knight left his property to 'his cousin Edward Austen,' certainly make the most of the relationship. All that the two could fairly say was that their great-grandfather and great-grandmother were brother and sister, and their grandfather and grandmother first cousins; but, according to the present ideas of the world, it is somewhat straining a point to claim the relationship of 'cousin' for the second generation after the indisputable first-cousinship. I believe, however, that, as a matter of fact, Mr. Knight had no nearer relations than this branch of the family, and personally I have no objection to the relationship having been established and accepted in this case, since thereby Edward Austen, who was my much-respected grandfather, became possessed of large property, which enabled him, by an early marriage, to bring about that satisfactory relationship with my unworthy self. When Mr. Knight (who was member for Kent for a short time [1774] during his father's lifetime) died in 1794, being then

under sixty years of age, his widow, as will appear from the letters, gave up the property to Edward Austen, to whom it would otherwise have come only at her decease. She reserved a certain income for herself, retired to Canterbury, and settled down in a house known as 'White Friars,' so called from the Augustine or 'White Friars' (though the appellation more properly belonged to the Carmelites), who formerly possessed it, and from whom it passed through various hands till it came by marriage into the possession of the Papillons of Acrise, from whom Mr. W. O. Hammond, of St. Albans Court, bought it, lived there for a time, and then sold it to Mrs. Knight, who inhabited it until her death in October 1812. In November 1812 Edward Austen and his family took the name of Knight.

Mrs. Knight (*née* Catherine Knatchbull) lived on the best of terms with those who succeeded her at Godmersham. She was a very superior woman, with a good understanding and highly cultivated mind; she was my mother's godmother, and I shall add to the present collection of letters two of hers, one to my mother and the other to my father, Sir Edward Knatchbull, which I think are of some

interest. Mrs. Knight was not only a very superior, but a very beautiful woman, if we may judge from her picture, by Romney, which now hangs in the dining-room at Chawton House, and is enough to make anyone proud of being related to her. It was, as I have said, the adoption of my maternal grandfather Edward Austen, by Mr. Knight, which enabled the former to marry; and this brings me to the connection of Jane Austen and her family with Goodnestone, which shall duly be set forth in a manner which will throw light upon many of the characters in our play. For the 'Elizabeth' to whom frequent reference is made throughout these letters, being the wife chosen by my revered grandfather, and consequently occupying the undoubted position of my maternal grandmother, was a daughter of the family of Sir Brook Bridges, of Goodnestone, which family requires immediate and careful attention.

Now there are two Goodnestones in Kent (pronounced 'Gunstone'), between which let the unwary reader fall into no error. Goodnestone 'next Faversham' is a different place altogether from *our* Goodnestone, which is 'next Wingham,'

and is in old records written Godwinceston, 'which name,' says Hasted, 'it took from Earl Godwin, once owner of it.' Goodnestone was not the original seat of the Bridges race. Collins tells us that 'this family has been of good antiquity in Ireland, where several of the branches thereof have now considerable estates; but the first that settled in England was John Bridges of South Littleton, in Worcestershire, who, on November 14, 1578, purchased an house and lands at Alcester, in Warwickshire. His grandson, John Bridges, settled at Hackney, and was the father of Col. John Bridges, whose second son, Brooke, was the first Bridges who possessed Goodnestone. For we find from Hasted that in the reign of Queen Anne one Sir Thos. Engham sold it to Brook Bridges, of Grove, auditor of the imprest, who new built the mansion, and died possessed of it in 1717. 'He built,' says Collins, 'a very handsome house, and very much improv'd the gardens, and along the side of the *terras* walks, stand the busts of the twelve Cæsars, in marble, larger than the life; they were brought from Rome, and cost about 600*l*.' His son, who was created a baronet in 1718, married, first, Margaret Marsham, daughter of Sir Robt. Marsham and

sister of the first Lord Romney; secondly, Mary, daughter of Sir Thomas Hales, of Bekesbourne.

It is necessary to go back as far as this, in order to show the connection and kinship of various persons to whom allusion is made in some of the Godmersham and Goodnestone letters. Sir Brook left two children by his first wife: Margaret, who married John Plumptre, Esq., of Fredville near Wingham, M.P. for Nottingham in 1750, and died without children (with which a second wife amply supplied him), and Brook, who succeeded him as second baronet in March, 1728. This Sir Brook married Anne, daughter of Sir Thomas Palmer, of Wingham (of whom more anon), but died during his shrievalty (May 23, 1733), after which a posthumous child was born to him, who is a person of great consequence to my history, as will be presently seen when I come to speak of his children. He, being the third Sir Brook, married Fanny Fowler, daughter of Christopher Fowler, Esq., of Graces, Essex, who, to judge by her picture, of which there are several copies in the family, did credit to his taste. It may be properly here remarked that through this lady's mother, Frances Mildmay, came the claim to the

Fitzwalter peerage, which the fifth Sir Brook so nearly sustained before the Committee of Privileges of the House of Lords in later years, that no one ever quite knew how he failed to get it, any more than they understood the species of wild justice by which a peerage of the same name, but *not* the same peerage, was eventually given to, and died with him. The third Sir Brook and Fanny Fowler (who died March 15, 1825) had ten children, all of whom are mentioned, some of them frequently, in these letters. There were four sons, of whom William, the eldest, became the fourth baronet upon the death of his father in 1791, took the name of Brook by Act of Parliament, married Eleanor Foote, the daughter of John Foote, Esq., banker, of London, and by her (who died in 1806) had two sons, Sir Brook (who succeeded him, married his first cousin Fanny Cage, was created Lord Fitzwalter, of Woodham Walter, Sussex, in 1868, and died without issue in 1875) and George, who married Louisa, daughter of Chas. Chaplin, Esq., M.P., of Blankney, Lincolnshire, and succeeded his brother as sixth baronet. The fourth Sir Brook also left a daughter Eleanor, who married in 1828 the Rev. Henry Western

Plumptre, third son of Mr. Plumptre, of Fredville, and had a large family.

But I am descending into modern times far too rapidly, having yet to deal with the seven younger children of the third Sir Brook and Fanny Fowler. The second son was Henry, who also took the name of Brook, married in 1795 Jane, daughter of Sir Thos. Pym Hales, and had sundry children who need not here be specified. The other two sons were Brook Edward and Brook John, who also married, but who do not signify to us at present. It is with the daughters that we are more concerned, for four of the six married—three of them in the same year—and to them or their children we have constant references in the letters before us. Fanny married Lewis Cage, of Milgate, the family place, $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles from Maidstone, and was the mother of Fanny Cage, who, as has been already mentioned, married her cousin Sir Brook, and as Lady Fitzwalter died without issue in 1874. Sophia married William Deedes, Esq., of Sandling, near Hythe, became the mother of no less than twenty children, and died in 1844. Elizabeth married Edward Austen, and had eleven children, of whom my mother was the eldest, and

fifteen years later, in 1806, Harriet Mary married the Rev. Geo. Moore, Rector of Canterbury, and eldest son of the then Archbishop of Canterbury, by whom she also had a numerous family.

I cannot forbear interrupting my genealogical narrative here, in the hope that my lady readers will be interested in the matter which causes the interruption, inasmuch as it relates to the manners and customs of just a hundred years ago with regard to matrimonial engagements. I have the letters in which Fanny Fowler, Lady Bridges, announces the coming marriages of her three elder daughters; they were written to her husband's half-brother's (Chas. Fielding) wife, and being interesting, although very remotely connected with 'Jane Austen,' if I may not properly insert them, as I shall venture to do, in the appendix to these volumes, what is the use of having an appendix at all? I shall certainly do so, for the benefit of all those mothers who have daughters, married or to be married, in order that they may see and appreciate the manner in which my beloved great-grandmother bore the loss (by marriage) of three daughters in one year. Besides these three and Mrs. Moore, however, she had two daughters to

console her, neither of whom was married. Marianne (mentioned in the thirty-fifth letter, who was a confirmed invalid all her life, and died in 1811) and Louisa. The latter, who is mentioned in letter sixty-six as having gone with her mother to Bath in 1813, lived many years, much loved and respected by all my generation, who knew her as 'Great-Aunt Louisa,' and often saw her at Godmersham and Goodnestone, at the latter of which she died in June 1856. When Sir Brook, the third baronet, died in 1791, his widow retired to Goodnestone Farm, and lived there with these two unmarried daughters and the two Miss Cages, Fanny and Sophia, who came to her after the death of their parents, the latter having died within a few months of each other.

I have now shown, as I hope with sufficient clearness, how the two Kentish places, Godmersham and Goodnestone, became connected with the life of Jane Austen; Godmersham, as the home of her brother Edward; Goodnestone, as the home of his wife Elizabeth; and, in the genealogical sketches which I have given, I have shown something of those interweaving and interwoven

relationships of the eastern part of Kent which have given rise to the saying that 'in Kent they are all first cousins.' But I cannot forbear saying a few more words in this place upon Kentish relationships, which will assist in explaining some other allusions in our letters, and without which I should really feel as if I had been guilty of an inexcusable omission.

My mother, who took a deep interest in all family matters, and was an infallible authority upon questions connected with county genealogy, always began her elucidation of any point relating to her mother's family with the following words: 'Once upon a time there were three Miss Palmers.' As nobody is at all likely to dispute this fact at the present day, I pause to remark that the Palmers were an old Kentish family, of Wingham, and the first baronet, Sir Thomas, was raised to that dignity in 1621. Of him says Hasted, 'He so constantly resided at Wingham that he is said to have kept sixty Christmases without intermission in this mansion with great hospitality.' Sir Thomas had three sons, each of whom was knighted, and from him descended the father of the three ladies whose doings I am about to

commemorate. Their names were Mary, Elizabeth, and Anne. Mary became the second wife of Daniel, seventh Earl of Winchilsea, by whom she had four daughters, of whom only one, Heneage, married, her husband being Sir George Osborn, of Chicksands Priory, Bedfordshire. Elizabeth Palmer married Edward Finch, fifth brother of the said Daniel, seventh Earl of Winchilsea, who took the name of Hatton under the will of his aunt, the widow of Viscount Hatton, and died in 1771, leaving a son George. Meanwhile, the second, third, and fourth brothers lived and died, and only the second brother, William, left a son. He accomplished this by marrying twice: first, Lady Anne Douglas, who had no children; secondly, Lady Charlotte Fermor, whose son George succeeded his uncle Daniel as eighth Earl of Winchilsea, but died unmarried in 1826.

Meanwhile, George Finch-Hatton, the son of Edward, and therefore first cousin to George, the eighth earl, had died, after having married Lady Elizabeth Mary Murray, daughter of the Earl of Mansfield, and left three children, of whom the eldest, George William, succeeded as ninth Earl of Winchilsea, in 1826. This is the 'George

Hatton' several times mentioned in the letters from Godmersham.

But, in following up the Finches and Hattons, I have left Anne, the third Miss Palmer, too long alone, and must hasten back to her, with many apologies. She was the lady who, as has been already mentioned, married the second Sir Brook Bridges; but, whether the honour of the alliance, or the responsibilities of the office of High Sheriff of the county, or some other cause, brought about the catastrophe, certain it is that Sir Brook left her a widow, as has already been stated, in 1733; and, in 1737, she took to herself a second husband, in the person of Charles Fielding, second son of Basil, fourth Earl of Denbigh, by whom she had two sons and two daughters before her death in 1743. This lady's second son Charles was a commodore in the navy; he married Sophia Finch, sister of George Finch, eighth Earl of Winchilsea, and daughter of William and Lady Charlotte Finch (*née* Fermor). Lady Charlotte was governess to the children of King George III., and her daughter, Mrs. Charles Fielding, lived with her at Windsor and St. James', so her children were brought up with the Royal Family. This will

explain the various references to members of the Fielding family which will be found in Jane Austen's letters ; and, though I feel rather ashamed of having inflicted upon my readers such a dull chapter of genealogy, those who care to do so will be able to identify by its aid many of the people who were her contemporaries, friends, and relations.

CHAPTER II.

AUSTENS AND KNIGHTS.

IN the preceding chapter I have dealt pretty fully with the relationships which accrued to Jane Austen through the marriage of her brother Edward to Elizabeth Bridges, and her consequent connection with Godmersham and Goodnestone.

Before, however, I come to speak of her non-Kentish relations, it may be as well to specify the children of that marriage, the elder of whom are constantly mentioned in the letters. The 'Fanny' whose name occurs so often, and to whom some of the later letters are addressed, is Fanny Catherine, the eldest child of the marriage, who was born on January 23, 1793. A son may be pardoned for saying (especially when it is simply and literally true) that never was a more exemplary life passed than that of his mother. Upon October 10, 1808, just before she had completed her sixteenth year,

her mother (the 'Elizabeth' of the letters) died very suddenly, leaving ten children besides herself, the youngest quite a baby. From that moment my mother took charge of the family, watched over her brothers and sisters, was her father's right hand and mainstay, and proved herself as admirable in that position as afterwards in her married life. She married my father, Sir Edward Knatchbull, as his second wife, on October 24, 1820, when she had nearly completed her twenty-eighth year, and died on Christmas morning, 1882, being within four weeks of completing her ninetieth year. Besides her, the children of my grandfather and grandmother consisted of six boys and four girls.

Edward, the eldest son, married twice, and left several children by both marriages. He lived at Chawton House during his father's lifetime, and after the latter's death, in November 1852, he spent a large sum in repairing and remodelling Godmersham, intending to live there, but never did so, sold a large portion of the property to Lord Sondes (whose Kentish estate of Lees Court was and is adjoining), and finally disposed of the rest, with the house, to Mr. Lister Kaye; and, at his death in 1878, left Chawton House and property

to his eldest son by his second wife, Adela, daughter of John Portal, Esq., of Freefolk, in the county of Hants. The second son, George Thomas, is the 'ittle Dordy' of the letters, and seems to have been a particular pet of Jane's. He was one of those men who are clever enough to do almost anything, but live to their lives' end very comfortably doing nothing. The most remarkable achievement of his which I am able to record was his winning a 50*l.* prize in the lottery in 1804, when quite a child, an event duly chronicled in her pocket-book of that year by my mother, who kept a regular journal of family events from very early childhood. Subsequently, my respected uncle was mighty at cricket, and one of the first, if not *the* first, who introduced the practice of 'round' bowling instead of the old-fashioned 'underhand.' He was very well informed, agreeable, a pleasant companion, and always popular with his nephews and nieces; but I know of nothing else which he did worthy of mention, except marry in 1837 as kind-hearted a woman as ever lived in the person of Hilare, daughter of Admiral Sir Robt. Barlow, and widow of the second Lord Nelson. They had no children, and passed a great deal of their time

on the Continent. She died in 1857, and he survived her ten years, dying in August 1867.

The next brother, Henry, married his first cousin, Sophia Cage, sister of Lady Bridges, and afterwards the daughter of the Rev. E. Northey, and died in 1843. He left two children, one by each wife, and the fourth brother, William, left several also, having married three times, and held the rectory of Steventon until his death in 1873.

But as he, together with the two younger sons, Charles Bridges and Brook John (the former of whom died unmarried in October 1867, and the latter left no children, and died in 1878), were too young to be more than casually mentioned in 'At. Jane's' correspondence, it is needless to give further particulars about them. All the sons of the marriage of Edward Austen and Elizabeth Bridges have passed away at the present time of writing, but two of the four younger daughters are still with us. I had written 'three,' but alas! even while these pages are passing through my hands, another has been taken—namely, Elizabeth, the 'Lizzie' of the letters, who married, in 1818, Edward Royd Rice, Esq., of Dane Court, near Sandwich, Kent, had a numerous family, and died

in April of the present year. Those who are left are Marianne, still unmarried, and Louisa, who married Lord George Hill, as his second wife, the first having been her sister Cassandra, who died in 1842.

This record will serve to explain many allusions in the letters, but I have still to deal with the 'inimitable Jane's' kith and kin in Hampshire and further abroad. Her own immediate family consisted of five brothers and the one sister, Cassandra, some three years older than herself, to whom most of 'the letters' are addressed.

I remember 'Great-Aunt Cassandra' very well, which is not extraordinary, considering that she only died in the spring of 1845, when I was nearly sixteen years old. All through her life she was a constant visitor at her brother's house at Godmersham, and it was to this circumstance, and to the consequent separation of the sisters, that we owe most of our letters. As the penny post had not been invented in those good old times, people wrote less frequently and took more pains with their letters than is now the general habit, and we shall find several allusions to the 'franks' which could at that time (and indeed up to 1840) be

given by members of Parliament, who were thus enabled to oblige their friends by saving them the heavy postage of their letters.

However, franks or no franks, it is very certain that the two sisters wrote to each other letters which may fairly be called voluminous, and my great regret is that, in presenting to the public so many of Jane's letters to Cassandra, I cannot add to their value by producing any of Cassandra's to Jane, of which the latter gives us sufficient hints to make us feel that they must have been of an amusing and interesting character. In all probability, however, when Jane Austen died in 1817, and all her papers and letters came into her sister's possession, the latter did not think her own letters worth preserving, and they were accordingly destroyed.

From my recollection of 'Great-Aunt Cassandra' in her latter days she must have been a very sensible, charming, and agreeable person. Of her earlier life I cannot tell more than is told in Mr. Austen Leigh's Memoir and may be gathered from her sister's letters. If the engagement to a young clergyman, who died in the West Indies before it could be fulfilled, was to her a lasting

sorrow, it was not one which interfered with her cheerful disposition and temperament, so far at least as we younger people could tell, and all my recollections of her are pleasant. The warmest affection doubtless existed between the two sisters; but indeed, so far as my experience goes of Austens and Knights, I should say that there has seldom been a family in which family affection and unity has existed in a stronger degree.

Jane Austen's eldest brother was James, the husband of the 'Mary' to whom such frequent allusions are made, who was Mary Lloyd before she married, the mother of Mr. Austen Leigh, the writer of the Memoir, and the sister of Elizabeth, who was Mrs. Fowle of Kintbury, and of Martha, who is so often mentioned, and who eventually married Sir Francis Austen, one of Jane's younger brothers, and died in 1843. Neither she, however, nor her sister Mary was the first wife of their respective husbands. James Austen first married Anne, daughter of General Mathew, who presented him with one only daughter before she shuffled off this mortal coil. This daughter, however, is of some importance to our present purpose, partly because, her name being Jane Anna Elizabeth, she is the

‘Anna’ frequently referred to in our letters, and partly because, in November 1814, she thought fit to marry the Rev. Benjamin Lefroy, afterwards Rector of Ashe (the ‘Ben’ of the letters, who died in 1829), and thus gives me a peg upon which to hang a few other Lefroys, and show how they come to be so often mentioned by ‘At. Jane.’ Mrs. B. Lefroy had one son and six daughters, and died in 1872.

Once upon a time there was a Thomas Lefroy, of Canterbury, who married a Phœbe Thomson of Kenfield (an estate not far from that cathedral city), and had a son Anthony, who lived some time at Leghorn, married Elizabeth Langlois, and begat two sons, the one of whom was named Anthony, while the other rejoiced in the appellation of Isaac Peter George. Now, Anthony attained to the position of Lieutenant-Colonel of the 9th Dragoons, which fully justified him in marrying Anne Gardiner in 1769, and subsequently dying in 1819. Before achieving the latter feat, however, he became the father of the ‘Tom Lefroy’ of our letters, who was eventually known to the world as the Right Hon. Thos. Lefroy, Lord Chief Justice of Ireland, and one of the ablest lawyers of his day.

Meanwhile Isaac Peter George Lefroy became Fellow of All Souls, Rector of Ashe, near Steventon, and Compton, in Surrey, husband of Anne Brydges, of Wotton, Kent (sister of Sir Egerton Brydges), and father of two sons, the younger of whom was the Benjamin who married our 'Anna,' whilst the elder was John Henry George, of Ewshott House, Farnham, who also became Rector of Ashe and Compton, married a Cottrell, and died in 1823, when his brother Benjamin succeeded him in the living of Ashe, the three presentations to which had been purchased by Mr. Langlois. He must have been immediately preceded in the rectory by Dr. Russell, the grandfather of Mary Russell Mitford, to whose family we shall also find allusions in the earlier letters. There was a great intimacy between the rectories of Ashe and Steventon, and Mrs. Lefroy was a valued friend of Jane's up to the time of her death, in 1804, which was occasioned by a fall from her horse.

After this little Lefroy interlude I must return to James Austen, who is keeping all the rest of his family waiting in the most unconscionable manner.

I have already said that his second wife was Mary Lloyd, who bare him two children, 'James Edward' and 'Caroline Mary Craven,' and died in 1843, having survived her husband twenty-four years. He only survived his sister Jane two years, and died at Steventon in December 1819. James Edward, the writer of the Memoir, married Emma, daughter of Charles Smith, Esq., of Suttons, and died in 1874, leaving a numerous family. He took the name of Leigh in addition to that of Austen, having inherited Scarlets, in Berkshire, under the will of the widow of his maternal uncle James Leigh Perrot, 'of whom more anon,' as the old chroniclers say. His widow died in 1876, and his sister Caroline, who never married, died in 1880.

Of Edward Austen I have told in the account of Godmersham, so I come next to Henry, of whom his nephew, Mr. Austen Leigh, tells us that he 'had great conversational powers, and inherited from his father an eager and sanguine disposition. He was a very entertaining companion, but had perhaps less steadiness of purpose, certainly less success in life, than his brothers.' This picture is doubtless drawn with fidelity, and the facts

seem to be, as far as I can discover them, that my worthy great-uncle's want of 'steadiness of purpose' was evinced by his trying various professions, one after the other, without achieving any particular success in any. I gather from the letters before us that his sister gauged his character pretty well, and did not anticipate much success for his career. He seems to have had a hankering after a soldier's life for some time; then he went into a bank in Alton. He afterwards became Receiver-General for Oxfordshire, and also a banker in London; and, whilst he lived there, helped his sister Jane with her publishing business. In 1816 his bank broke, upon which he became a clergyman, and went out as chaplain to Berlin in 1818. He married twice, which seems to have been the general habit of the family, his first wife being his first cousin Madame de Feuillade, *née* Eliza Hancock. Mr. Austen Leigh is mistaken in saying that his grandfather, George Austen, had only one sister. He had two, who rejoiced in the euphonious names of 'Philadelphia' and 'Leonora.' The latter died single, the former married Mr. Hancock, and her daughter married the Comte de Feuillade, and when he had been unlucky enough to be

guillotined in the French Revolution, took her cousin Henry *en secondes nocés*, died in 1813, and left him inconsolable until 1820, when he consoled himself with Eleanor, daughter of Henry Jackson, of London, by his wife, who was one of the Papillons of Acrise. He had no children, and died in 1850 at Tunbridge Wells, having, I believe, had no preferment except the living of Steventon, which, on the death of his brother James in 1819, he held for a short time, until his nephew, William Knight, was old enough to take it—a comfortable family arrangement.

I cannot leave Henry Austen without giving to my readers the only example of his ‘conversational powers’ with which I am acquainted, and which illustrates the dry, quaint humour which was a characteristic of some of the family. He is said to have been driving on one occasion with a relation in one of the rough country lanes near Steventon, when the pace at which the postchaise was advancing did not satisfy his eager temperament. Putting his head out of the window, he cried out to the postillion, ‘Get on, boy! get on, will you?’ The ‘boy’ turned round in his saddle, and replied: ‘I

do get on, sir, where I can!’ ‘You stupid fellow!’ was the rejoinder. ‘Any fool can do that. I want you to get on *where you can’t!*’

Of the two sailor brothers of Jane Austen—Francis and Charles—Mr. Austen Leigh gives a fuller history than of the others, because he thinks that ‘their honourable career accounts for Jane Austen’s partiality for the navy, as well as for the readiness and accuracy with which she wrote about it.’ However this may be, there can be no doubt that their career was most honourable, and that they were both of them as good examples of British sailors as could well be furnished. I believe that both of them were much loved in their profession, as they certainly were by their relations, old and young. The ‘Memoir’ tells us that Francis Austen was upon one occasion spoken of as ‘*the officer who kneeled at church,*’ which reminds me of an anecdote which my mother used to tell of one admiral having whispered to the other at the commencement of Divine Service, ‘Brother, what do you think it is that people mostly say into their hats when they come into church? For my part, I always say, “For what I am going to receive the Lord make me truly thankful.”’ And

I am not prepared to say that he could have improved on the petition.

As I am upon anecdotes, let me tell one also of Sir Francis Austen, since it shall never be said that I omitted that which I have heard of him all my life as one of the things *most like himself* that he ever did. He was exceedingly precise, and spoke always with due deliberation, let the occasion be what it might, never having been known to hurry himself in his speech for any conceivable reason. It so fell out, then, that whilst in some foreign seas where sharks and similar unpleasant creatures abound, a friend, or sub-officer of his (I know not which), was bathing from the ship. Presently Sir Francis called out to him in his usual tone and manner, ‘Mr. Pakenham, you are in danger of a shark—a shark of the blue species! You had better return to the ship.’ ‘Oh! Sir Francis; you are joking, are you not?’ ‘Mr. Pakenham, I am not given to joking. If you do not immediately return, soon will the shark eat you.’ Whereupon Pakenham, becoming alive to his danger, acted upon the advice thus deliberately given, and, says the story, saved himself ‘by the skin of his teeth’ from the shark.

Another anecdote of 'Uncle Frank' occurs to me, bearing upon the exact precision which was one of his characteristics. On one occasion he is said to have visited a well-known watchmaker, one of whose chronometers he had taken with him during an absence of five years, and which was still in excellent order. After looking carefully at it, the watchmaker remarked, with conscious pride, 'Well, Sir Francis, it seems to have varied none at all.' Very slowly, and very gravely, came the answer: 'Yes, it *has* varied—*eight seconds!*'

Sir Francis lived to be nearly ninety-three, and died at his house, Portsdown Lodge, in 1865, just twenty years after his sister Cassandra had died at the same place. He also was twice married, first to Mary Gibson, of Ramsgate, who died in 1823, and then to the Martha Lloyd of our letters. At the time of his death he was a G.C.B., and Senior Admiral of the Fleet, just before his attainment to which dignity he thus wrote to one of his nieces, in 1862:—

'And now with reference to my nomination as Rear Admiral of the United Kingdom. It is an appointment held by patent under the Great Seal; and, though honourable, is certainly in my

case not a lucrative office, as I am compelled, to qualify for holding it, to resign my good-service pension of 300*l.* a year. The salary is, I believe, about the same, but there are very heavy fees of office to be paid, which will absorb at least one quarter of the salary. This ought not to be so. It is a national reproach that an officer should have to pay for honours conferred on him by his sovereign, and which we may presume were fairly earned. It is true I had the opportunity of retaining the pension, and refusing the other ; but who, after reaching nearly the top of the list (I have only two above me), would like to refuse so distinguished an honour ?'

This private little expression of discontent, from a man of a contented and happy disposition, seems so just that I could not refrain from inserting it here, but will say no more of 'Uncle Frank,' save that he had twelve children by his first wife, and that his eldest son married his first cousin, the daughter of his brother Charles, Fanny by name.

The said Charles also served with distinction, and died of cholera in 1852, in a steam sloop on the Irrawaddy, literally at the post of duty. He, too, followed the family custom of marrying twice,

his first wife being Miss Fanny Palmer, of Bermuda, who had three daughters, and died young; and his second, her sister Harriet, by whom he had two boys. He was a man of a singularly sweet temper and disposition, and I cannot help quoting from Mr. Austen Leigh the record left of him by 'one who was with him at his death.' 'Our good admiral won the hearts of all by his gentleness and kindness while he was struggling with disease, and endeavouring to do his duty as Commander-in-Chief of the British naval forces in these waters. His death was a great grief to the whole fleet. I know that I cried bitterly when I found he was dead.'

A great many allusions to her sailor brothers will be found in Jane's letters, and in her delight at their promotion and interest in their profession one is forcibly reminded of 'Fanny Price' and her beloved brother William, although in the latter case the intervention of an ardent lover procured for young Price that which a proper family pride induces me to believe was obtained by my great-uncles by their own merits.

These, then, were the members of the family of Steventon Rectory; and between them all, as indeed

may be gathered from the letters before us, the warmest affection always existed. If proof of this were needed, it is afforded by the numerous and affectionate references to her brothers to which I have alluded, and by the sympathy for each other which crops up whenever we have an opportunity of observing it. How anxiously 'Frank's' promotion is expected; how welcome is the presence of 'our own particular little brother' Charles; how assiduous is Jane in her attendance upon Henry in his illness, and how promptly his brother Edward hurries to London when he is informed of it! All these are signs and tokens of the warmth of family feeling, the brotherly and sisterly affection, which, in the case of the Austens, certainly went to show that 'blood is thicker than water,' in some races at least; and which bound together the members of this family by bonds which time could never sever, distance never lessen, prosperity never diminish, and sorrow only tend to strengthen and cement.

Besides the brothers and sisters of whom we hear so much in her letters, Jane Austen had uncles and aunts whose individuality one must get well into one's head in order to understand her allusions.

I have already mentioned her father's two sisters, and her mother's brother, Mr. Leigh Perrot, who inherited from a great-uncle his additional name and a small property to justify the addition. He married a Lincolnshire Cholmeley (Jane by name—she died in 1836), and lived sometimes at Bath and sometimes at Scarlets. Bath was also patronised by Dr. Cooper, the Incumbent of Sonning, near Reading, which was very unkind of him, because, as he married Jane Austen's aunt—her mother's eldest sister, Jane Leigh—he could have taken no surer means to confuse a biographer who seeks to identify the 'Uncle' and 'Aunt' to whom Jane constantly alludes in her Bath letters. Had he foreseen the difficulty no doubt he would have lived somewhere else ; but, as matters stand at present, it is just possible that (although I have made every enquiry in order to prevent it) I may occasionally have mistaken the avuncular allusions in some of the letters, in which case I beg to apologize to the wronged uncle, and am thankful to reflect that it makes no great difference to anybody.

CHAPTER III.

STEVENTON AND CHAWTON, WINCHESTER.

SINCE it may very likely happen that these volumes may fall into the hands of persons who have not read Mr. Austen Leigh's 'Memoir,' it is but right that, with the assistance which it affords me, I should, without attempting a regular biography, give some brief account of an existence to which, in my humble judgment, the world is so much indebted. I have already described the relations by whom Jane was surrounded, and given such an account of her family as it seemed necessary to attach to her letters. I have not as yet, however, spoken of the home in which she was born or of the county in which the greater part of her life was passed.

Steventon—which is also written 'Stephington' in Warner's 'History of Hampshire,' and 'Stivertune' in Domesday Book—had the honour of being her birthplace; for in the rectory of that

quiet village she came into the world on December 16, 1775. Steventon, as Mr. Austen Leigh tells us, is situated 'upon the chalk hills of North Hants, in a winding valley about seven miles from Basingstoke.' The house, standing in the valley, was somewhat better than the ordinary parsonage-houses of the day; the old-fashioned hedgerows were beautiful, and the country around sufficiently picturesque for those who have the good taste to admire country scenery. As, however, the house has been pulled down for some sixty years, a new one built on the other side of the valley, and the church 'restored' (a word of somewhat equivocal meaning), it is useless to attempt a description of things which exist no longer. The living was in the gift of Mr. Knight, of Chawton (and Godmersham), to whom also nearly the whole parish belonged, and hence it was that Jane's father, the Rev. Geo. Austen, obtained the preferment, whilst the living of the adjacent parish of Deane came to him as the gift of his uncle, Francis Austen, his father's brother, who married a Motley, went to Sevenoaks, had a son Francis, who took his mother's name, bought Kippington, and established a branch of the Austens there. Mr. George Austen held these

two livings in 1764, and moved from Deane to Steventon in 1771, four years before the birth of his daughter Jane. In speaking of his marriage with Cassandra Leigh, Mr. Austen Leigh mentions her uncle, Dr. Theophilus Leigh, who lived to be ninety, and was Master of Balliol College for above half a century. The story is told of him that he was elected—being a ‘Corpus’ man—‘under the idea that he was in weak health and likely soon to cause another vacancy.’ This was the story always told of the venerable President of Magdalen, Dr. Routh, who died in his hundredth year, having, according to tradition, outlived several generations of men who, during their lifetimes, were considered to be certain to succeed him. But whilst, as an old Magdalen man, I cannot allow Dr. Theophilus Leigh to monopolise the position with which he is credited by this story, I am quite ready to believe that it has been told of him as well as of Dr. Routh, and probably also of every other head of a college who has attained to patriarchal age.

All the early part of Jane Austen’s life was passed at Steventon, save and except the time occupied in those visits of some of which our

letters speak. *How* it was passed, what were her habits and what her occupations, will be better gathered from the letters themselves than from any description which I could collect from the imperfect data before me or invent for myself. It is very clear, however, that Jane Austen was by no means averse to amusement, appreciated a ball as much as anybody, and got all the enjoyment she could out of life, as a sensible young woman might have been expected to do. I have been told that I might very well have left out all those parts of her letters which refer to the details of dress and the descriptions of her gowns and other raiment which she gives to her sister. I am, however, of a contrary opinion; that which does not interest one person may be precisely that which pleases another, and to alter or omit the apparently insignificant parts of a large picture may have a prejudicial effect upon the whole. Besides, it is something in the nature of a comfort to ordinary persons to find that so superior a being as Jane Austen concerned herself about such trifles as the 'fit' of a gown or the colour of a stocking, and I am glad to be in a position to afford the slightest comfort to anybody. Of the sweetness of her

temper, and the bright, 'sunshiny' character of her disposition, no one can doubt who has heard her spoken of by those who personally knew her, and I do not think these letters will alter the general opinion. Here and there, it is true, there may be sentences which hardly seem to be written in a kindly vein towards those to whom they refer ; but it must never be forgotten that these sentences were written only for the eyes of a sister who thoroughly knew and appreciated the spirit of fun in which they flowed from Jane's pen, and in which they were meant to be taken, and that they never would have been written or spoken so as to give pain to the people mentioned. Indeed, it should always be borne in mind during the perusal of these letters that, although, as I have before pointed out, a vein of good-natured satire might generally be found, alike in the letters and conversations of many of the Austen family, it always *was* good-natured, and no malice ever lurked beneath. No one, I imagine, was in reality ever more kind-hearted and considerate of the feelings of others than Jane Austen, and certainly no one was ever better loved or more sorrowfully lamented by the relations whom she left behind her.

Apart from the visits which I have mentioned, Jane's existence seems to have glided on in uninterrupted tranquillity in that old parsonage-house at Steventon, until the year 1800, when her father made up his mind to give up the active duties of his parish and retire to Bath, for which, as he was then some seventy years of age, he can scarcely be blamed. He accomplished his purpose in the following year, when he did not, as has been stated, resign his living to his son, but placed him in the house and parish as his *locum tenens*, in which capacity he continued to act during the rest of his father's lifetime.

There is little more to say about Steventon, save that one anecdote occurs to me which may be as well recorded. At one time the Rev. George Austen took pupils. It seems that a word which is pronounced 'rice' (though I will not vouch for the spelling) was formerly used in Hampshire to signify 'faggots' or 'underwood,' and upon one occasion a pupil was heard to observe to another, with a deep sigh, that he was afraid they would have nothing but rice puddings for some time to come, for he had heard Mrs. Austen say that 'a waggon-load of *rice*' had come in that morning.

When the death of Mr. Austen occurred early in 1805, the widow and daughters moved into lodgings in Gay Street, and remained in Bath for some months, and Mr. Austen Leigh gives us a letter of Jane's from Gay Street, written in April, in which occurs the following characteristic remark about an individual into whose identity I have not thought it necessary to enquire: 'Poor Mrs. Stent! it has been her lot to be always in the way; but we must be merciful, for perhaps in time we may come to be Mrs. Stents ourselves, unequal to anything, and unwelcome to everybody.'

I do not know why the family chose Southampton as their next residence, but so it was, and there they lived for the next four years, in a house with a pleasant garden attached, close to the old city walls, and in a locality which took its name, 'Castle Square,' from, or, at all events, was 'occupied by, a fantastic edifice,' says Mr. Austen Leigh, which was of a 'castellated style,' and had been built by the second Marquis of Lansdowne. Of Jane's life at Southampton there is little more to be learned than can be gathered from the letters written from Castle Square, and most of these are so occupied with family affairs,

and the death of her brother's wife at Godmersham, that they tell us less of her own doings than might otherwise have been the case. So far as we can judge, she seems to have had a certain amount of society at Southampton, and to have liked her life there as well as could have been expected. The change to Chawton in 1809, however, could not have been unwelcome. Mr. Knight was then able to offer to his mother and sisters the choice between a house on his Hampshire property and one upon his estate in Kent. The latter must have been either Eggarton or Bilting, both within easy distance of Godmersham; but I suppose that the associations connected with Hampshire caused the selection of Chawton Cottage, and there was passed the remainder of Jane's life; there were composed or completed most of her novels. 'Chawton Cottage' had formerly been the steward's house, enlarged and improved by Mr. Knight; there was nothing particular about it; the vicinity to the high road was somewhat inconvenient, but balanced by its proximity to the 'great house,' and it seems to have answered very well the purpose for which Mr. Knight had converted it into a habitable residence.

Mr. Austen Leigh gives a kindly warning to admirers of Jane Austen who might take it into their heads to make a pilgrimage to the place. There is nothing in it either beautiful or romantic, nothing to associate it with the memory of the immortal Jane. When Cassandra Austen died in 1845, it was turned into dwellings for labourers, and so altered that it cannot now be seen as it was in Jane's days. Very recently I paid a visit to it, whilst staying at Chawton House, in order that I might satisfy myself with my own eyes as to its present condition. As you come through the village of Chawton, along the road from Alton, the cottage is the last building upon your right hand, at the turning where the Winchester road branches off to the right, just before you reach the park in which stands Chawton House. It is built in rather a straggling, irregular style, and as you stand opposite it in the road, the first thing that strikes you is, that a large window between the door and the end of the cottage furthest from Alton has at some time or other been bricked up. This was, I believe, the window of the drawing-room of the house when Jane's family lived there, and this part

of the place has now been converted into a labourers' club—an excellent institution, of which it would be well if there were more in England. I entered this club, the windows of which look away from the road, and there, perhaps upon the very spot where Jane had often sat in old days, was a young labourer diligently perusing the 'Standard,' whilst opposite to him another was engaged on the 'Graphic,' and a third was contemplating with evident satisfaction the arrival of a foaming glass of beer, having, to judge from his appearance, just come from a hard day's work. There are three dwellings in the building besides the club; a low range of out-buildings, probably little touched since Jane's days, flanks the cottage on the Alton side, and behind it is a large garden, now divided among the cottagers, extending beyond the building, also on the further side, and altogether of sufficient size to have afforded plenty of space for the former occupants to indulge their taste for flowers and shrubs, and to have quiet walks therein when they wished for privacy. I pictured to myself the figure of Jane Austen walking up and down, intent upon deciding the fate of one of her heroes or heroines, or maturing

the plot of her next book. This, however, required a somewhat strong effort of imagination, inasmuch as no signs of shrubs or walks remain, the ground is all under cultivation, and the only living creatures which met my view were two worthy rustics engaged in ordinary agricultural work. After you pass the cottage, a few hundred yards further along the road, you arrive at a gate on your left, on entering which you face Chawton House, an old Elizabethan-mansion built on rising ground, which is about two hundred yards from the gate, the beautiful little church standing upon your right hand when you have advanced about half-way from the gate to the house. This place has long been the seat of the Knight family, one of whom (William) had a lease of it in 1525 from Sir Thomas West, Lord Delawarr, who had acquired it through his wife, Elizabeth, one of the three daughters and co-heiresses of Sir John Bonvile. This William Knight's son John bought the house, and left a son Nicholas, who purchased the manor, advowson, and other lands, since which time it has remained in the family. The present house was mostly built by John Knight, in 1588, but it seems to have been originally a much larger building,

although now quite large enough, and certainly comfortable enough, for any reasonable mortals. This John Knight appears as a subscriber of fifty pounds on the 27th May, 1588, among the 'names of persons in Hampshire who contributed to the funds raised by Queen Elizabeth to defray the expenses in resisting the Spanish Armada.' His descendants were devoted Royalists in the Civil Wars, and there is now at Chawton, among other interesting relics, a small ornament in the shape of a head of King Charles the First, said to have been given to his friends on the scaffold, which has come down from Sir Richard Knight, who was knighted for his services rendered to the Royal cause. This gentleman's name also appears among the list of those chosen by King Charles the Second at the restoration to be invested with the Order of the Royal Oak, which order was, after all, never established, the project being abandoned under the apprehension that it might perpetuate dissensions which were better consigned to oblivion. There is a handsome monument of white and black marble in a recess on the south side of the chancel in Chawton Church, whereon this Sir Richard Knight is represented by a full-length cumbent

figure of white marble, in armour, holding a staff of office in his right hand.

The near neighbourhood of Chawton House must have been a great advantage and pleasure to Jane during her life at the cottage from 1809 until 1817. About half a mile from her old home there is a very large beech wood, 'Chawton Park' by name, in which the trees are magnificent, and there is no underwood to prevent those who are privileged to do so from walking beneath their shade. The wood belongs to the owner of Chawton House, and one can imagine it to have been a favourite haunt of Jane's. Whether she indulged herself in roaming there or not, however, I imagine her life to have been altogether very happy, because she was all the time with her own people, occupied in the home pursuits in which she delighted, having always her literary resources to fall back upon, and being cheered from time to time by visits to and from the relations she loved. There are no strange or exciting events to relate, no adventures to chronicle; the even tenor of her life affords no materials from which a romantic story could be woven, and I can only once again refer to the letters to tell their own tale. Alas! it is not a long

one. Her health was evidently failing in the latter part of the year 1816, and in May of the following year the two sisters went together to Winchester, from which Jane was never to return. They took lodgings in the corner house of College Street, of which Jane writes that 'they are very comfortable. We have a neat little drawing-room, with a bow-window overlooking Dr. Gabell's garden.' During the next two months Cassandra nursed her beloved sister with unfailing tenderness and assiduity. She was assisted from time to time by her sister-in-law, Mrs. James Austen (the 'Mary' of the letters), and her brothers James and Henry were able to be frequently with her. Cassandra's letters, herewith published, tell all that is to be told of Jane Austen's last days on earth, and tell it in language at once simple and pathetic. On July 18th she died, and on the 24th she was buried in Winchester Cathedral, 'near the centre of the north aisle, almost opposite to the beautiful chantry tomb of William of Wykeham,' the place of burial being marked by a large slab of black marble in the pavement, bearing the following inscription:—

'In memory of JANE AUSTEN, youngest daughter of the late Revd. George Austen, formerly Rector

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

Mr. Austen Leigh, the writer of the memoir, subsequently inserted a brass in the north wall, near the grave, with an inscription denoting that it was to 'JANE AUSTEN, known to many by her writings, endeared to her family by the varied charms of her character, and ennobled by christian faith and piety.' This appropriate text is added—'She openeth her mouth with wisdom, and in her tongue is the law of kindness.'—Prov. xxxi. 26.

Such are the memorials which the pious affection of relatives has erected over the last resting-place of Jane Austen, but a memorial more enduring has

been created by her own hand. It is something to be able to say of any author or authoress that their works may be read without fear of harm; it is something more to be able to say, as we can truly say in this case, that, whilst in Jane Austen's books instruction and amusement are happily blended, the innate purity of her soul shines throughout each story and upon every page, and the mind of the reader is insensibly led to a love of all that is moral and virtuous and a distaste for anything that is the reverse. Jane did not live to enjoy the full knowledge of the popularity which was destined to be hers, but of it and of her it may be permitted to her relatives to be proud; and proud they are to believe that wherever the English language is read and spoken her works stand and will remain an everlasting memorial of genius turned to good account and talents exercised for the benefit and improvement of mankind.

CHAPTER IV.

THE NOVELS.

I WAS going to devote my next chapter entirely to Jane Austen's novels, when I recollected that such a chapter could by no means be made complete without referring to other novels and novelists at the same time. Such a chapter may be at once discarded by those who do not care for the subject, or who are satisfied to read and enjoy their novels without being troubled with my criticisms. But the theme is one too enticing for me to leave untouched, especially as I belong to the family which Jane Austen tells us were in her day 'great novel-readers,' and am not ashamed to confess that I have read as many as most people, and shall probably read a great many more. Novels are the sugar-plums of literature, and a library without novels would be as deficient as a childhood without sugar-plums, although neither the one nor

the other would be satisfactory if unsupplied with something of a more substantial character.

I think it is immensely interesting to read side by side and compare the different styles of the novels which have charmed successive generations, and, in discussing Jane Austen's works, to contrast those of other writers who wrote practically for the same generation.

Several passages in our letters show us that Jane Austen was well acquainted with some at least of Richardson's novels. Of the general popularity of these works at the time of their publication I imagine there can be no doubt; and, indeed, this need cause one no surprise, if one supposes the British public to have accepted as an accurate estimate of them all, that which their talented author gives of 'Pamela' in his preface to the edition of 1742, which is so deliciously modest that I cannot forbear to transcribe it:—

‘If to Divert and Entertain, and at the same time to Instruct and Improve, the Minds of the Youth of both sexes :

‘If to inculcate Religion and Morality in so easy and agreeable a manner, as shall render them equally delightful and profitable :

‘ If to set forth, in the most exemplary lights, the Parental, the Filial, and the Social Duties :

‘ If to paint Vice in its proper Colours, to make it deservedly Odious ; and to set Virtue in its own amiable Light, and to make it look Lovely :

‘ If to draw characters with Justness, and to support them distinctly : ’

And, after a few more ‘ ifs ’ of the same sort—

‘ If to effect all these good Ends, in so probable, so natural, so lively a manner, as shall engage the Passions of every sensible Reader, and attach their regard to the story :

‘ If these be laudable or worthy recommendations, the Editor of the following Letters *ventures to assert that all these ends are obtained here, together.*’

No doubt if all these desirable ends were thus secured, the popularity which the works of Samuel Richardson enjoyed, both at home and abroad, is accounted for without further trouble ; and, even if the panegyric be deemed somewhat too highly drawn for acceptance in its entirety, the fact that the novels have been translated and published in most other countries must be accepted as evidence of their intrinsic merit.

Nevertheless, whatever attractions English society once found in 'Pamela,' 'Clarissa,' and 'Sir Charles Grandison,' I fancy that in the present day there are few people who would not find them insufferably dull, and still fewer who would not raise more serious objections both to the matters of which they treat and to the manner of their treatment. Certainly there is in these books a great deal of plain-speaking; a spade is called a spade, and there is much from which that which we now call good taste and delicacy would recoil.

One must make allowance, I suppose, for the advance of time and improvement of manners; and as 'Sir Charles Grandison' (the last of the three) was published some fifty years before Jane Austen wrote, these works must be considered as belonging altogether to another generation. Moreover, if we allow that their general tendency, at least, was to decry vice and exalt virtue, I am afraid that this is more than we can say of many of the 'sensational' novels which are so largely read in the present day. Take any one of these, and you will find that, if crime is not actually made attractive, it is generally excused or extenuated; sympathy for the criminal is created or suggested,

the story teems with startling incidents, and the best praise which can probably be accorded to the book is the somewhat negative recommendation that it has no particular tendency at all.

It certainly was not books of such a character and complexion which Jane Austen had in view in that spirited defence of novels and novel-readers which we find at the end of the fifth chapter of 'Northanger Abbey,' where, after describing it as the habit of Catherine Morland and Isabella Thorpe upon a rainy morning 'to shut themselves up, and read novels together,' she goes on 'Yes, novels; for I will not adopt that ungenerous and impolitic custom so common with novel-writers, of degrading by their contemptuous censure the very performances to the number of which they are themselves adding,' 'there seems almost a general wish of decrying the capacity and undervaluing the labour of the novelist, and of slighting the performances which have only genius, wit, and taste to recommend them. "I am no novel-reader," such is the common cant. "And what are you reading, Miss?" "Oh, it is only a novel," replies the young lady; while she lays down her book with affected indifference or momentary shame. "It

is *only* ‘Cecilia,’ or ‘Camilla,’ or ‘Belinda,’” or, in short, *only* some work in which the greatest powers of the mind are displayed, in which the most thorough knowledge of human nature, the happiest delineation of its varieties, the liveliest effusions of wit and humour, are conveyed to the world in the best chosen language.’

The mention of Miss Burney’s novels in this passage reminds me of the frequent comparisons which have been instituted between her works and those of Jane Austen, and as I like to be in the fashion, I will add one more to the number of those who have compared the two.

My own taste for novel-reading commenced at a very early age; strange to say, such works of fiction had a greater attraction for me than the Latin grammar or even the Greek Testament, and having access to my father’s library, which contained, amid a multitude of other literature, most of the best novels which had been published for many years past, I was enabled to indulge my taste to the full, and probably read a great deal more than was good for me. I well remember how in those days I delighted in ‘Evelina,’ ‘Cecilia,’ and ‘Camilla,’ and I have little doubt that my verdict

would have then been given in favour of Miss Burney, if I had been obliged to give a preference to one authoress over the other. But, on looking back to-day, I can fairly say that, if I have read these three novels three times over since those days (which I rather doubt), I have certainly perused Jane Austen's books five or six times as often, and much more frequently my special favourites, which I give here in their order of merit: 'Pride and Prejudice,' 'Mansfield Park,' and 'Emma.' These rank, to my mind, among the few books which one can take up again and again, and recur to particular passages and scenes which never seem to tire one in the reading. Miss Brontë's 'Jane Eyre' and 'Villette' are of the same class; Charles Reade's 'It is Never too Late to Mend,' Blackmore's 'Lorna Doone,' and Henry Kingsley's 'Ravenshoe' also may be admitted, but I do not remember any more, excepting always those masterpieces with which Dickens and Thackeray have adorned English literature, and some of those works which have made the names of Walter Scott and Bulwer household words among their countrymen.

I own that I cannot place in the same rank any

one of Miss Burney's novels. As far as plot and incident are concerned, there is perhaps something more of both to be discovered than in Jane Austen's works ; but one of the principal merits of the latter is, that they excite a continuous interest in the mind of the reader, in spite of that absence of plot and incident which is really conspicuous on looking back at the conclusion of the book. Take, for instance, 'Sense and Sensibility': the whole story may be compressed into half-a-dozen sentences, and there is nothing exciting or sensational about it. But the characters of the two sisters, Elinor and Marianne, are sustained with wonderful fidelity throughout, and the reader is captivated by delineations of everyday life so simple and so true to nature as amply to supply the want of 'plot.' To this standard Miss Burney never seems to me to approach, or to come within a mile of Jane Austen, whilst in some instances she approximates both to the vulgar and the horrible, neither of which is to be found in the pages of the immortal Jane. The scenes in 'Evelina' in which the unfortunate Madame Duval is victimised by the French-hating Captain Mirvan (a character to read of which makes an Englishman blush for his nationality),

the courtship of Mr. Dubster, and the whole character of Mrs. Mittin in 'Camilla,' as well as the eccentricities of Mr. Briggs in 'Cecilia,' certainly savour of vulgarity, whilst the 'horrible' is exemplified by the suicide of Mr. Harrell in 'Cecilia,' the death of Bellamy in 'Camilla,' and sundry other harrowing passages which season Miss Burney's performances. It may be said, perhaps, that she wrote for an earlier generation than Jane Austen, but the novels of both were published within the same forty years—i.e. between 1778 and 1818—a proximity of publication which seems to render legitimate the comparison between the two. 'Evelina' was published in 1778, 'Cecilia' in 1782, 'Camilla' in 1796, and the 'Wanderer' in 1813; whilst Jane Austen's 'Sense and Sensibility' and 'Pride and Prejudice' were written, as we know, in 1796, although not published until 1811 and 1813; 'Northanger Abbey' was written in 1798, though not published until after the death of the authoress, in 1817; and 'Mansfield Park' and 'Emma' were published in 1814 and 1815.

I mention the 'Wanderer' with some hesitation, because I think it must be admitted to be so sadly inferior to Miss Burney's earlier novels, that her

reputation must stand upon those first three, without the 'prestige' of which I cannot think that the 'Wanderer' would ever have met with any public fame. But, even with regard to these three, there is another remark which occurs to me as being one justified by the facts of the case, and which appears to establish the superiority of the one writer over the other. There must be admitted to be originality in some of Miss Burney's characters, as well as skill in the manner of their introduction and the description of their conduct. But what one character can we fix upon to remember, as we cannot help remembering the creations of Jane Austen; who, throughout all Miss Burney's novels, can be held to rival the provokingly silly Mrs. Bennet, so delightful in her folly, the insufferable Mr. Collins, the detestable Mrs. Norris, the inimitable Miss Bates, and a score more of the figures which Miss Austen places upon the canvas, in such a manner as to make us all feel that they are not only real living people, but personal acquaintances of our own?

It must certainly be conceded that there is much more of excitement to be found in the novels of Miss Burney than in those of Jane Austen; her

heroines are placed in much more extraordinary situations ; like loadstones, wherever they appear, they attract lovers ; and the conduct of some of the latter is so violently extravagant as to have an appearance of unreality, which detracts from the interest of the story. Still it must be confessed that ‘Evelina,’ ‘Cecilia,’ and ‘Camilla’ are all pleasant reading, and in each novel the heroine always satisfactorily escapes from her troubles and trials, and marries the right person in the most desirable and orthodox manner. This is only right and proper. I have no patience with authors who excite in our hearts an interest, more or less kind, for their heroes and heroines, and then harrow our feelings by either killing them or leaving them in a state of misfortune and misery. That is the sole fault I find with Charlotte Brontë’s ‘Villette,’ wherein her ‘Professor’ is left in such a condition that we may suppose him either drowned in the Atlantic during a particularly stormy autumn, or happily rescued from that terrible fate, the probabilities all pointing to the catastrophe, and the possibility of the reverse being only insinuated in a gentle manner, which leads us to suppose that such good fortune can scarcely have occurred. It is said

that Miss Brontë had meant to have killed her hero without doubt, but, deterred by the remonstrances of her father, conceded so much as to leave his fate in uncertainty ; but, for my own part, I would rather have known the worst, and have read that last page again and again, with a feeling of disappointment and regret that there should have been any doubt left about the matter.

— I have lately been reading the ‘Diary and Letters’ of Madame D’Arblay (Miss Burney), and cannot help saying that I find as great a contrast between the letters of the two authoresses as between their novels. It may be said that it is hardly fair to compare the private letters of one sister to another, such as those which I now give to the world, with those which were probably written, if not with a view to publication, at least with an idea that they might some day be published. I cannot, however, admit the unfairness, and, if I did, I feel that I should be bringing a graver charge against Miss Burney than I intend to do—namely, the charge of having habitually ‘made up’ her letters for the public eye. Such letters are not really letters, in the sense in which we use the word as ordinarily applied to the written com-

munications between relations and friends, wherein they express to each other their thoughts and describe their actions, with no intention that these should be known beyond the immediate circle in which the person moves to whom the letters are written. I assume Miss Burney's letters to be genuine, according to this view, and I say that neither they nor her Diary could ever have been written by Jane Austen. They are the records of a life which was lived much more before the world than the life of Jane; and, without wishing in any degree to disparage the writer, I must say that they chronicle the praise and approval which she received both in public and in private, after a fashion, and to an extent from which the more sensitive and delicate nature of Jane Austen would have instinctively shrunk. It would have been impossible for her to have written—even for her own private perusal—the flattering words which it delighted Miss Burney to inscribe in her Diary as having been spoken of or to herself, and these letters are remarkable rather for the paucity than the frequency of allusions to her own writings. In fact, whilst Madame D'Arbly's 'Diary and Letters' tell us all about herself, who

and what she was, how she lived, and with whom she passed her time—all, in short, that we can possibly desire to know about her and her proceedings—Jane Austen's letters, on the contrary, leave us to find out all these things for ourselves, and to regret that no further or more minute record is in existence. Of course I may be accused of partiality for my own relative in arriving at this result of a comparison between two authoresses both of whom have deserved well of the public, and each of whom may be appreciated and admired without decrying the other. Still, considering that, as far as concerns education outside her own home, general intercourse with the world and opportunities of observation, the advantage was certainly rather on the side of Miss Burney, I think it is but due to Jane Austen to maintain, as I confidently do, the great superiority of her writings in point of correctness of tone and taste, purity of style and language, and fidelity of description.

It is a less easy matter to compare her, as she has been compared, with Charlotte Brontë, or with our still more modern novelists, George Eliot and Charlotte Yonge. All these three have achieved for themselves the honour of elevating and purifying

the aspirations of mankind, at the same time that in their several styles of fiction they have afforded to the world an infinite variety of intellectual amusement.

Of George Eliot and Charlotte Yonge I do not desire to write to-day. The one has been too recently taken from us to allow of the impartial discussion of her works, which, however meritorious, cannot be accurately gauged until further time has elapsed; for a book is, in this respect, like a beautiful landscape, and requires distance to develope it in its greater or smaller perfection. The other still lives to delight a large number of admiring readers, and, therefore, I prefer to say no more of her writings, except that I am quite sure that no one has ever been the worse, while very many have been greatly the better, for reading them.

With regard to Charlotte Brontë, who, like Jane Austen, was a clergyman's daughter, I would observe that her writings resemble Jane's in this one respect—that they take their complexion and character from the scenery and surroundings of her home—different altogether as were the two homes and the two writers. I have already con-

fessed my partiality for 'Jane Eyre' and 'Villette,' and for these books, as well as for their authoress, I again avow an immense admiration. But they are books which Jane Austen never could or would have written, and some of the most interesting characters are such as it would never have entered into her mind to conceive. It never would have occurred to her, for instance, to take for a hero such a man as Mr. Rochester, who, having been so unfortunate as to marry a mad wife, thinks it perfectly legitimate to take a second during the lifetime of the first, without a hint to the intended victim of the true state of the case. Nor, in all probability, would she ever have thought of representing the said victim as continuing to cherish such a devoted love for the man who had so proposed to wrong her, as to induce her to return, after a becoming interval, for a last look at the mansion in which the wrong had been so nearly perpetrated, and, finding that the mansion and mad wife had been conveniently burnt together, and the would-be bigamist crippled and blinded by the same happy event, to come lovingly back to him, and marry him as contentedly as if nothing particular had happened. These characters, however, *did*

occur to Charlotte Brontë, and her delineation of them is such as to make them attractive by their very defects, and to carry her readers along with them, in spite of all the moral considerations which ought, I suppose, to deter us from reading about, and still more from liking, such naughty people. The truth is, that the style of the two writers is so dissimilar, the scenes and characters of which they treat are so entirely different, that it is hardly possible to compare them without doing injustice to one or the other. Fortunately, it is both possible and permissible to delight at one and the same time in the novels of both, and to appreciate the one without in the smallest degree underrating the other. I can honestly say that this is so in my own case, and that, loving them both, I do not care to compare them.

Jane Austen did not rush hastily before the public, nor was she encouraged by any rapid or extraordinary success. Mr. Austen Leigh gives us a letter which her father wrote to Mr. Cadell, the publisher, in November 1797, evidently referring to 'Pride and Prejudice,' which, under the name of 'False Impressions,' had been her earliest production.

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

I am, Sir, your humble servant,

GEORGE AUSTEN.

Steventon, Overton, Hants,
November 1, 1797.

This proposal, we are told, was declined by return of post, which the publisher must have regretted in subsequent years, though not with a deeper sorrow than the publisher at Bath, who went so far as to buy 'Northanger Abbey' for 10*l.*, and having laid it aside as worthless, was subsequently induced to return it, which he gladly did, for the same money, and was afterwards informed that it was by the author of 'Pride and

Prejudice,' and other works which had then established the reputation of the authoress. It was Henry Austen who thus gained the manuscript, and disappointed the original purchaser by the subsequent disclosure of the state of the case.

Of the keen interest which Jane took in her books we have evidence in some of the letters in these volumes, and also in those which Mr. Austen Leigh has already given to the world. In one of the latter (January 29, 1813) she writes to her sister of 'Pride and Prejudice':—

'I want to tell you that I have got my own darling child from London. On Wednesday I received one copy sent down by Falkener, with three lines from Henry to say that he had given another to Charles, and sent a third by the coach to Godmersham.' She is particularly enamoured of that creation of her own brain who has doubtless inspired the same sentiment in many other people—'Elizabeth Darcy' (*née* Bennet)—and of my mother's views upon the same subject she writes that 'Fanny's praise is very gratifying. My hopes were tolerably strong of *her*, but nothing like a certainty. Her liking Darcy and Elizabeth is enough. She might hate all the others, if she would.'

Although I have said that Jane Austen would never have chronicled all the laudatory remarks which might have been made, of and to her, by the admirers of her books, it must not be thought that I intend to represent her by any means as insensible to their praise or careless of the approbation which she received. This would have been unnatural, and therefore inconsistent with Jane's character. She undoubtedly appreciated the approval of her friends and the world, although she probably never anticipated the extent to which that approval would ultimately reach. Indeed, during her lifetime it was by no means general, and some of the criticisms which she herself collected are of a very contrary character. 'Mansfield Park' is called 'a mere novel,' 'Sense and Sensibility' and 'Pride and Prejudice' are stigmatised as 'downright nonsense.' Jane's language is called 'poor,' 'Emma' is declared to be 'not interesting,' and sundry opinions of an unfavourable tendency are recorded, which at the present day would be scouted as heretical by the literary world, but which only show the entirely different views which people are able to take upon the same subject.

It is refreshing to turn to such a genuine instance of admiration as that which I find narrated in a letter from Lady George Hill to my mother (her sister) in 1856. Speaking of the widow of Sir Guy Campbell, she says:—

‘Lady Campbell is “Pamela’s” daughter and Lord Edwd. Fitzgerald’s, and a most ardent admirer and enthusiastic lover of Aunt Jane’s works. Aunt Cassandra herself would be satisfied at her appreciation of them—nothing ever like them before or since. When she heard I was her niece she was in extasies. “My dear, is it possible, are you Jane Austen’s niece? that I should never have known that before!—come and tell me about her—do you remember her? was she pretty? wasn’t she pretty? Oh, if I could but have seen her—Macaulay says she is second to Shakespeare. I was at Bowood when Lord Lansdowne heard of her death—you cannot think how grieved and affected he was—” I told her *you* were her great friend and used to correspond with her. “Oh! write and ask her if she can only send me one of her own real letters, and tell me any and every particular she may know about her life, self, everything, I should be so delighted! Pray do

write and ask her. The Archbishop of Dublin is another of her staunch admirers, and we have such long conversations about her." Then off she went, talking over and repeating parts of every one of the books, &c.'

This is by no means a solitary instance of the enthusiasm with which Jane's works are admired, and which has induced me to believe that anything connected with her which has not hitherto seen the light may not be unacceptable to those who, in a greater or less degree, share the opinions of Lady Campbell.

CHAPTER V.

THE NOVELS.

I HAVE spoken elsewhere of Miss Tytler's Life of Jane Austen as being little more than a reproduction of Mr. Austen Leigh's 'Memoir.' I have, I confess, a much greater objection to her manner of treating the novels; for, although she speaks of touching them 'with a reverent hand,' she appears to me to have done just the reverse, and to have given an account of each book, sometimes in Jane Austen's words, with a running commentary, but generally in her own words, paraphrasing the original in such a manner as to spoil the symmetry of the work and destroy much of the beauty of the literary structure. Jane Austen's works did not, and do not, require this kind of handling. They should be read just as they were written, and it may be truly said of them that no books are more suitable for reading aloud. If *well* read, by a person who can understand the characters,

and is in sympathy with the spirit of the book, they are admirably adapted for this purpose; but as a great number of people dislike anything of the kind, it is a comfort to be able to add that they are equally delightful to read to oneself. The reviews of these books which have already appeared, and the general knowledge of them which is possessed by the public, deter me from entering into any lengthy criticism of their peculiar excellences or occasional defects, nor do I think it either necessary or desirable to introduce quotations from novels which are so well known and appreciated by the great body of the readers of fiction. There are, however, some few remarks which occur to me which may not be out of place, when we are considering the life and character of the gifted authoress of these works, and the circumstances under which they were written.

My first observation, then, is to the effect, that in all her books the heroes are decidedly inferior to the heroines; their characters less vigorously drawn, and themselves less interesting to the reader. There they are; because every heroine requires a hero; but in every case it is *she* and not *he* who is the prominent figure in the play.

Let us take the six novels into view. 'Pride and Prejudice' gives us Darcy; 'Sense and Sensibility,' Edward Ferrars; 'Northanger Abbey,' Henry Tilney; 'Mansfield Park,' Edmund Bertram; 'Emma,' Mr. Knightley; and 'Persuasion,' Captain Wentworth. Then look at the six heroines to match—Elizabeth Bennet (she is sometimes spoken of in the novel as 'Eliza Bennet,' and it is noticeable in our letters that Jane constantly calls her Elizabeths 'Eliza'), Elinor Dashwood, Catherine Morland, Fanny Price, Emma Woodhouse, and Anne Elliot—how much more we seem to know and to sympathise with the women than with the men throughout!

Darcy is really the only one for whom I feel much regard. He was certainly proud—a fault with which his education and surroundings had much to do; and, after all, it is perhaps not a wholly inexcusable pride which causes a man to hesitate before seeking to ally himself to a family of which the mother is insufferably vulgar and silly, several of the daughters objectionable, and the connections of a rank in life inferior to his own. Before his own heart was touched, it was neither wrong nor unnatural that he should strive

to deter his friend Bingley from such a connection; and when he found himself vanquished by the charms of Elizabeth, he got rid of his pride with a rapidity as commendable as that with which the lady dismissed her 'prejudice.' I think that we are told more of Darcy than of most of Jane's other heroes, and the gradual alteration of Elizabeth's opinion of him as his character becomes better understood, and consequently better appreciated by her, is told and worked out in the most admirable manner. The gentleman's disposition was not one which made him likely to be the victim of a hasty attachment, and we watch with interest the struggle which goes on in his mind before he allows his growing love for Elizabeth to conquer his objections to her family. When this result has been accomplished, the lady is still perfectly unaware of the conquest which she has achieved, and his declaration to her at the parsonage, where she is on a visit to her friend, Charlotte Collins, takes her entirely by surprise. This is a very good scene in itself, and marks an epoch in the hero's life; for her contumelious rejection of his advances has a marvellous effect upon him, to the very great improvement of his character. He

accepts her decision in a manner which would have made it difficult for an ordinary writer to bring the two together again except by some strange and unusual method. Jane, however, manages it all in a most natural manner. Some words of Elizabeth regarding his two greatest offences—the abstracting of her sister's lover and the supposed wrongs of Wickham—induce him to write a long letter of explanation, which commences the change in the lady's heart, and from that moment Darcy only appears during the rest of the story in the most amiable light. I reject altogether the idea that the beauties of Pemberley had any effect in inducing Elizabeth to reconsider her refusal, and the sole doubt which remains upon my mind is the extent to which gratitude for his generous behaviour to her sister Lydia and her worthless husband really supplied the place of a warmer feeling in Elizabeth's heart. Gratitude, however, is a soil in which love readily grows and thrives, and in this instance the two may very well have existed and flourished side by side.

But, after Darcy, what hero have we in whom it is possible to feel any deep interest such as that which attaches us to several of the heroines?

Edward Ferrars scarcely inspires much respect. Whatever excuse there may be for his conduct, he certainly behaves in such a manner as to induce Elinor to believe him attached to herself, whilst all the time he was engaged to another woman; for, if this had not been the case, the discovery of the engagement would not have filled the sensible heroine with such astonishment and dismay. His engagement was a boyish entanglement from which a man of any strength of character would have freed himself as soon as he found how much he had mistaken his own feelings, and how unsuited he and the lady were to each other, whilst there is something ludicrous in the rapidity with which, the very moment that his fool of a brother has conveniently taken her off his hands, he hurries off to Elinor, to make her happy by the assurance that he had really been all the while false to the lady whom he had still proposed to marry, and had loved her and her alone, although perfectly prepared to sacrifice her to his absurd 'engagement.' His readiness, moreover, to become a clergyman because clerical preferment was found for him does not add to the attractiveness of his character; but Jane's picture of a clergyman is

generally that of a second son who enters the profession in order to hold a family living, an idea not unnatural in the daughter of one who was himself the possessor of one of those benefices.

Our two next heroes, Henry Tilney and Edmund Bertram, are to be classed in this category. Of the former, indeed, we know very little. A ball-room acquaintance at Bath, whose father, being deceived as to Catherine Morland's position and fortune, invites her to Northanger, and courts her on his son's behalf until he finds out the mistake, we really know nothing more of this hero than that he displays a certain amount of amiable good sense in his conversations with Catherine, and a creditable degree of firmness in refusing to give her up at his father's command, or to root out of his heart that love which had been fostered, if not absolutely planted therein, by the paternal hand. The best we can say of this hero is that, if we knew him more, we should probably like him better.

Of Edmund Bertram we know a good deal more, and he should perhaps rank next to Darcy in order of merit. His uniform kindness to his little cousin (which won her heart from the first),

his superiority to the other members of his family, and general good conduct throughout the story, entitle him to our respect, if not to something more. We cannot help feeling sorry that he did not show a little more firmness in the matter of the theatricals, but are pleased at his readiness to give Fanny Price (at a time when he was not the least in love with her) the full credit which she deserved for her conduct upon that trying occasion. He may be blamed for having been attracted by the fascinations of Miss Crawford, when Fanny was there to be compared with her, but this was one of the most natural things in the world. Miss Crawford undoubtedly *was* fascinating, and moreover had, and showed precisely that kind of predilection for Edmund which is so delightful to a young man when evinced by a pretty, clever, and agreeable person of the other sex. Besides, Fanny's perfections being before his eyes every day, naturally struck him less than those of her rival, and he went on comfortably considering his affection for his cousin to be of the most quiet and brotherly description, until the exigencies of the story compelled him to find out that it was something of a different nature. Take him all in all, I must own

Edmund Bertram to be, after all, a hero above the average of such people, and one less inferior to the heroine than any other of his class in the six novels, excepting always Darcy, to whom I remain faithful; inasmuch as I think there is more power in his character and more masterly touches in its delineation.

I frankly confess that I never could endure Mr. Knightley. He interfered too much, he judged other people rather too quickly and too harshly, he was too old for Emma, and being the elder brother of her elder sister's husband, there was something incongruous in the match which I could never bring myself to approve. To tell the truth, I always wanted Emma to marry Frank Churchill, and so did Mr. and Mrs. Weston. Mr. Knightley, however, is an eminently respectable hero—too respectable, in fact, to be a hero at all; he does not seem to rise above the standard of respectability into that of heroism; and I should have disputed his claim to the position had he not satisfactorily established it beyond all possible doubt by marrying the heroine. But I have never felt satisfied with the marriage, and feel very sure that Emma was not nearly so happy as she pretended.

I am certain that he frequently lectured her, was jealous of every agreeable man that ventured to say a civil word to her, and evinced his intellectual superiority by such a plethora of eminently sensible conversations, as either speedily hurried her to an untimely grave, or induced her to run away with somebody possessed of an inferior intellect, but more endearing qualities.

As to Captain Wentworth we are really told so little that there is nothing to say, except that he was a most faithful lover, but would have been wiser if he had not waited so long before letting the object of his affections know that such was the case. There is something pleasant about all Jane's sailors. Her sailor brothers were good examples of their class, and from them she probably drew her ideas. Not a word can be said against Captain Wentworth, and I sincerely hope that he and his Anne lived very happily all the rest of their lives.

But now let us turn from heroes to heroines, and I shall hardly know how to praise enough. Let Elizabeth Bennet stand forth; she is, to my mind, the most delightful character that ever condescended to display her perfections in a novel.

She is not so intensely sweet and amiable as Anne Elliot, so sternly sensible as Elinor Dashwood, so simple and grateful as Fanny Price, so 'superior' as Emma; but not one of them all can equal her as a heroine of romance, and that principally because there is nothing romantic about her. She is drawn with such an exquisite touch that she is far more like a personal acquaintance than one 'in a book;' one enters into her feelings, understands her thoughts, her hopes and her fears, and cannot help taking the same sort of interest in her proceedings as if she was one's own relation. How cleverly is the line drawn which separates her and Jane from the rest of the Bennet family, to whom they were as much superior as if they had been the children of other parents! How keenly we share her discomfort at the vulgarity of her mother and the folly of her younger sisters; how warmly we appreciate her solicitude for Jane, and her anger against those who had separated that beloved sister from the man for whom she cared; how well we understand the warmth of honest sympathetic indignation with which she received Wickham's account of his ill-treatment by Mr. Darcy, and the equally honest contrition she experienced when she discovered

how much that indignation had been misplaced ; with what interest do we watch the gradual change of her opinion of Darcy, as the mists which have enveloped his character are gradually cleared away ; and how heartily do we rejoice at her ultimate decision to accept the man who so well deserved her, and at the opportunity, created by the most bitter opponent of the marriage, which happily brought him a second time to her feet !

I do not know any character in any novel that ever was written whose career from first to last, throughout the whole book, one follows with such intense and continuous interest as that of this charming Elizabeth. There are several scenes to which I might call special attention, as illustrative of her character ; but I will be content with one, to my mind the most delicious and inimitable scene in the whole book—I mean the interview between Elizabeth and Lady Catherine de Burgh, when the latter, furious at the report that her nephew Mr. Darcy is about to marry Elizabeth, drives over, in all the dignity and grandeur which can be imparted by a chaise and four, to insist upon its being immediately contradicted. If it were possible that our admiration of Elizabeth could be increased,

her conduct and language during this trying interview would certainly accomplish such a result. The calmness and self-possession with which she encounters the arrogant insolence of her visitor, the courageous and undaunted spirit with which she refuses to be bullied and brow-beaten, and the acute but perfectly civil manner in which she holds her own, and puts her adversary entirely in the wrong throughout the whole of the conversation, are described with a rare talent, and the whole scene is one which, both in its conception and execution, is undoubtedly one of the most excellent that ever was written.

I could dwell with delight upon Elizabeth for a much longer time, but in my comparison of heroes and heroines I can only afford a short space to each, and therefore hurry on to 'Sense and Sensibility,' where Elinor and Marianne Dashwood are the two prominent figures, and I suppose that the former, being 'Sense,' has the best claim to the heroine's niche. She is certainly an excellent young woman, though, to my mind, less interesting than some of her sister heroines. It undoubtedly was a position the reverse of pleasant to be made the unwilling confidant of a girl so inferior to herself

in good-breeding and refinement as Lucy Steele, and to receive as the first great secret the news that her own lover was engaged to this obnoxious young woman. It was disagreeable, too, to have a sister whose 'sensibility' took the form of love-sick extravagances which must have constantly grated against Elinor's 'sense,' and who, by carrying her hysterical sentimentality so far as nearly to die of it, caused a disagreeable interruption to the tranquillity of their domestic life. But, under all these circumstances, Elinor evinced a fortitude and self-control which must command our respect if it does not attract our admiration; she takes a common-sense view of everything which occurs, submits with proper resignation to things which appear inevitable, condoles with and comforts her sister in her love disappointment without disclosing her own much greater reason to be heart-broken, and contentedly accepts and settles down with her lover when time and the vagaries of Miss Lucy Steele have enabled him to declare himself in his true colours. Altogether she is an admirably-drawn character, and the contrast between her 'sense' and the 'sensibility' of Marianne, so well depicted and sustained, elevates her, at her sister's

expense, to a very creditable place among the list of heroines.

Upon the whole, I think Catherine Morland the least interesting of the aforesaid list, and yet she is the heroine of such an interesting story, that I feel sorry as soon as I have written the words. I am consoled, however, by the reflection that the authoress begins her book by the remark that in her early youth nobody would ever have supposed Catherine born to be a heroine. She was the daughter of a clergyman, one of a large family, rather uninformed, very romantic, and, for the rest of it, a good-tempered, well-disposed, and good-looking girl, with no very marked characteristic or striking ability, or anything else to distinguish her from the common herd of girls. She is made interesting by the story, and as she generally takes a right view of things, is grateful for any kindness shown to her, shrinks from vulgarity, takes naturally to good things and people, and behaves with great propriety in the different positions in which she is placed, one can forgive her too great fondness for romances replete with horrors, and the readiness with which she harbours the suspicion that General Tilney had made away with his wife.

We are able, upon the whole, to take her to our affections as a commendable specimen of the heroine tribe, although certainly eclipsed by other creations of the same fertile brain.

Fanny Price is altogether of a different calibre, and, according to my opinion, contests with Emma Woodhouse the second place after Elizabeth Bennet. They are, of course, very different people in many respects, but as a matter of taste I am inclined to give the preference to Fanny. She is so gentle, so grateful, so ready to do a kindness to any and everybody, so submissive to Aunt Norris, so thoughtful for Lady Bertram, so good a daughter, so loving a sister, such an affectionate cousin, such a true and faithful friend, that one is inclined to wonder how a character can have been drawn with so few faults as to be near perfection, and yet so natural that it is impossible not to recognize it as a true picture. From her first entry into Mansfield Park down to the very end of the story, our hearts go out to Fanny Price, and we love her with a steady and unvarying love. She wins our sympathy from the moment we make her acquaintance, and keeps it throughout her whole career. She had something to bear, too, during her sojourn in her

uncle's house. There are few things more difficult to endure than injustice, and of this Aunt Norris inflicted a perpetual and unlimited amount upon the devoted head of her long-suffering niece. But there are worse things to endure in life than even the injustice of an ill-conditioned old aunt. It must have been a sore trial to Fanny to see Mary Crawford stealing from her that which she prized beyond everything else—her cousin Edmund's affection—and a sorer trial still to see him bestowing that affection upon a woman who, with all her beauty and other attractions, did not come up to Fanny's standard, and whom she could not deem worthy of her cousin. Very trying, too, must have been those conversations with Edmund, wherein, doubtful of himself and of Miss Crawford, he spoke of the latter to Fanny, evidently seeking to be strengthened and encouraged by her in his affection for her rival; and trying, too, and in no ordinary degree, must have been the friendship of that rival for herself, especially when it took the form of endeavouring to secure her acceptance of Henry Crawford for her husband. But Fanny came well and nobly out of every ordeal. The same simple, quiet, honest determination to do

what her conscience told her to be right, which sustained her in that severe trial in the matter of the theatricals in the absence of Sir Thomas, stood her equally in good stead throughout all her other troubles and trials. If we admire Elizabeth Bennet most, I really think that, upon the whole, we love Fanny Price best. It is impossible not to love such a thoroughly unselfish character, and I think she must be admitted to be one of the best of heroines and most charming of people.

The partisans of 'Emma' must forgive me for placing her only third on the list. She is a very charming creature, and all the more so for not having been drawn faultless, but with just enough imperfection to set her off, without taking her out of the category of ordinary mortals, to whom absolute perfection is an impossibility. Her propensity for match-making was decidedly objectionable, but as she failed so signally in this respect, it was probably its own punishment. Left the mistress of her father's house at an early age by the marriage of her sister, Emma ran a good chance of being spoiled, and such would probably have been her fate but for the excellent governess provided for her in the person of Miss Taylor, who became an

equally excellent wife for Mr. Weston just before the commencement of the story. Still, Miss Emma seems to have been tolerably self-willed, and to have been possessed of an independent spirit of her own, and a confidence in her own judgment which the adulation of her neighbours must have considerably increased. One does not exactly see *why* Emma Woodhouse should have been regarded as a little goddess in her own neighbourhood, but such appears to have been the case, and she is depicted throughout the story as the intellectual superior of everybody else, except Mr. Knightley, who treats her more like an elder brother than a lover, administers to her a well-deserved rebuke upon the occasion of her making an unkindly satirical remark to poor Miss Bates, and graciously marries her when he finds that he has been mistaken in supposing her attached to Frank Churchill. 'Emma' is undoubtedly a well-drawn character, and one that enjoys a deserved popularity; but I confess that she is not my favourite heroine, as she is the favourite of many admirers of 'Jane Austen's' novels, and had I been the hero of the piece, I am by no means sure that I should not have preferred to marry Jane Fairfax, who, despite her

mistake in entering into a secret engagement with Frank Churchill, is a sweet and womanly character, and would have required less looking after and management than the 'superior' Emma.

I have but little to say of 'Anne Elliot,' the heroine of 'Persuasion,' but that little is good. With a worldly father and unsympathetic elder sister, her early life, after the loss of her mother, was not of the happiest description, nor had its happiness been increased by the breaking off of her engagement with Lieutenant Wentworth, their mutual attachment having been thwarted by that want of pecuniary resources which so often operates as a barrier in similar cases. Anne Elliot, taking after her mother rather than her father, was of a sweet disposition, amiable in every relation of life, and so faithful to her first love as to have been quite ready to 'take up' with him again when he came home eight years later with the rank of Captain, and his sister's husband, Admiral Crofts, had taken Kellynch, Sir Walter Elliot's family place. The gentleman, however, from timidity, doubt of her affection, and afterwards from the report that she was to marry her rich but profligate cousin, Mr. Elliot, held aloof, and

did not renew his former suit. Sweet, modest, tender-hearted, womanly Anne Elliot behaved just as she should have done under such a condition of affairs. Of course she never obtruded herself upon her lover in the slightest degree, or took any steps to let him know the unchanged state of her affections. She remained true to him throughout all temptations to the contrary, refused her cousin, kept her secret with proper reserve until the right moment and opportunity arrived, and then without hesitation forgave Captain Wentworth his doubts and delay, owned her continued affection without any pretence of concealment, and obtained the husband for whom she had so long waited, and whom she so well deserved. We do not hear so much of Anne Elliot as of some of Jane's other heroines, but we hear enough to sympathise with her from first to last, to appreciate the sweetness of her character, and to wish her every possible happiness in her married life.

At the conclusion of my list of heroines I retain my opinion of their superiority to the heroes of these novels, with the additional remark that perhaps this may result from the fact that they are created by the hand of a woman, who might be

better able to understand and describe the feelings and actions of her own than those of the other sex. Still, it must be allowed that she shows a marvellous knowledge of both, and that few, if any, men who have attempted novel-writing have equalled either the male or female creations of the 'inimitable Jane.'

It would occupy more time and space than I can afford if I were to criticize in detail one half or one quarter of the prominent characters in these novels. I have spoken elsewhere of a certain want of 'plot' and 'incident,' but this I say in praise rather than blame, the wonder being at the manner in which the books are made so intensely interesting with so little of either. Perhaps the truth lies in the fact that, whilst a weak or imperfectly drawn character requires some exciting events to make it interesting, Jane's characters are so well drawn as to be interesting under the most trivial and ordinary circumstances.

Take one instance from 'Pride and Prejudice.' There is nothing very remarkable in a man having married a silly wife, although one is inclined to wonder that a person with such a keen sense of humour and lively appreciation of the folly of

other people as Mr. Bennet should have been caught by a pretty face when handicapped by such intense and silly vulgarity as that which his wife displayed. Such things *did* happen in Jane Austen's days, and probably happen still; but for all that one may wonder on, consoling oneself with the reflection that the man must always be punished for the rest of his life. But the remarkable thing is, that out of this somewhat ordinary couple Jane manages to create two very amusing characters, whose daily conversations required no stirring events of any kind to make them so interesting as to cause the reader always to wish they were longer. Mr. Bennet bore his fate with more equanimity than many men would have done, and his quaint, dry remarks are irresistibly comic, and almost as amusing as the absurdities of his better-half.

Mr. Collins, again, is really only a not uncommon character slightly exaggerated. But the exaggeration is carried out after a fashion so delightfully clever that Mr. Collins becomes one of the very best characters in the book, and his letters are not to be equalled. The announcement of his intention to visit Longbourn House, with the

scarcely-concealed view of marrying one of his cousins by way of atonement for being next in the entail, and, therefore, the future possessor of their home upon their father's death, is our first introduction to this worthy individual, and we are at once led to expect amusement from such a character. The reality, however, even surpasses our anticipations. His conversations are charming; the self-assurance with which he proposes to Elizabeth, the readiness with which he consoles himself with her friend, Charlotte Lucas; above all, the grateful servility with which he accepts the crumbs which fall from Lady Catherine de Burgh's table, and magnifies her with continuous adoration—all combine to enhance our admiration of the skill which could draw such a character with a touch which makes it amusingly ridiculous without being unnaturally absurd. But perhaps the letter in which he condoles with Mr. Bennet on the occasion of Lydia's elopement, and that in which he warns Elizabeth against marrying Lady Catherine's nephew without the consent of that august potentate, are two of the finest pieces of composition in the book. The first is simply inimitable, and the second falls little short of it.

The Collins episode in this book suggests a comparison with that of Mr. Elton in 'Emma.' In each case the gentleman is refused by the heroine, and in each marries somebody else with very little delay. Mr. Collins, however, has the advantage both in the wife he selects and the behaviour which he adopts. He cheerfully accepts the situation, receives Elizabeth at the parsonage, and only revenges himself by parading before her eyes as much as possible the inestimable advantages conferred upon him by the vicinity of Rosings.

Mr. Elton, a man equally conceited but of greater ability, shows himself to be more little-minded in a similar situation, for he evidently resents his refusal to the end of the chapter, and both he and his disagreeable wife lose no opportunity of sneering at and decrying Emma, who had not only been guilty of the unpardonable offence of rejecting his advances, but had bitterly wounded his vanity by believing them to have been intended for Harriet Smith. Perhaps Mr. Collins's innate and intense satisfaction with himself and all that belonged to him may have had some share in inducing him to forgive Elizabeth when he had secured Charlotte; but at all events he shines in

comparison with Mr. Elton, and should have all the credit he deserves.

The character of Lady Catherine de Burgh has sometimes been deemed exaggerated; but in Jane Austen's days the deference paid to rank and position was far greater than at present, and an arrogant woman, accustomed to have her own way and impatient of contradiction, is, I suppose, pretty much the same kind of being in all ages of the world. If there is any criticism which may fairly be made, it is the total want of good-breeding which Lady Catherine, supposed to be a well-bred woman, exhibits in her conversations with those whom she deems her inferiors, whose feelings she apparently seeks to outrage every minute in the most unnecessary manner, and to whom she speaks after a fashion utterly at variance with the present usages of society. Some allowance must of course be made for the change in times and manners which has taken place, but in this one particular it is difficult not to incline to the opinion that the character is a little exaggerated. She is splendid, however, in the interview with Elizabeth, to which I have already alluded, and, as a set-off to the heroine, as well as to Mr. Collins, is perfec-

tion. Indeed, one of the most delicious things in the whole book is the way in which her arrogant interference is made to punish itself, and causes her to impart to Darcy that which he might not otherwise have discovered—namely, that change in Elizabeth's feelings which encourages him to approach her once more. The way in which he does this is very natural, and exceedingly well told, and, in fact, there is hardly a page in this book which does not excite our wonder that it should have been written by a girl of twenty-one, ignorant of the world outside her own family circle.

There is more 'finish' about 'Emma,' and, perhaps, also about 'Mansfield Park,' but, take it all in all, 'Pride and Prejudice' is the most wonderful production of the authoress.

One comfort in Jane's novels lies in the fact that, as I have already observed of Miss Burney's works, they all end in the happy marriage of her heroines, so that we are left in no sad uncertainty as to their respective fates. An elopement or two on the part of their relatives (Lydia Bennet and Julia Bertram to wit) only adds to their own respectability by the contrast, and they themselves are always people of the greatest propriety and most

unblemished character. This is just as it should be, for we are bound to take a more or less tender interest in the heroine of a book, and it is decidedly preferable to experience this feeling for a well-conducted and respectable young woman than for the doubtful and sometimes really disreputable heroines whom we encounter too often in more modern novels. Jane's heroines never transgress the bounds of conventional good-behaviour. They enjoy their dancing, their novel-reading, their innocent flirtations, and other similar amusements which enlivened the society of their day; but they indulge in no extravagances, do nothing out of the common way, and are a model set of heroines whom nobody but Jane could have made so entertaining and interesting as she has certainly done. They all deserve to marry comfortably—which seems to have been Jane's idea of the true object of a girl's life—and it is impossible to grudge their deserts to such meritorious people.

This leads me to another observation upon the drift and tendency of these novels. I think they really do all that the author of 'Pamela' declares that he does in the self-laudatory preface which I have quoted. They make virtue lovely, and vice

the reverse ; they show how the one brings its own reward, the other its own punishment, and without ever preaching to us, they continually impress upon our minds lessons of a purifying and elevating tendency. The different motives which influence men and women in various circumstances of life—the special faults which beset certain natures—the effects which those faults produce upon others, the opposite results of a religious training and of a mere worldly education ; all these are drawn by the master-hand of a great artist, and are brought before us with a fidelity of description which can hardly fail to impress the reader.

There is very little direct mention of religion, as a mainspring of action, in any of Jane Austen's books. In the 'religious novels' of which the literary world has had a copious supply during the last fifty years, religion is often introduced in such a manner as doubtless to satisfy the godly reader, but effectually to deter the worldling from the perusal of the work. People are represented as so habitually pious, so fond of church-going and church-restoring, and so very much better than the common run of men, that the book does not

attract those whose lives are less exemplary, and who feel that the narrative is of worlds outside and apart from their own. There is nothing of this in Jane's books. So far from any parade of religion, there is so little allusion to anything of the kind that it would be a misnomer to apply the term 'religious novel' to any of her works. But yet, throughout them all, the moral and virtuous thoughts and actions, which can spring only from a mind imbued with the principles of religion, are constantly brought before us, in such a manner as to command our respect, and to afford us, at the same time, an example of the way in which such thoughts can be cherished, and such actions performed, without any separation from the world, or the necessity of conducting ourselves differently from other people. There is a purity of thought as well as of style, an undercurrent of refinement, and an imperceptible suggestion of good which have not improbably had more salutary effects than any 'religious' novels that have ever been written. But I will indulge myself in no further criticism. Popular approbation has already stamped these books as among the greatest of English novels. I am glad of the opportunity

of throwing such further light upon the life of the writer as can be afforded by those of her letters which remain to us, and I only regret that I have not more materials from which to furnish the lovers of her works still further details of the life of Jane Austen.



LETTERS.

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 '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 nega-

tives 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, and was not recognized 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 from its former possessors. Close to Deane is Ashe, of which Mr. Lefroy was rector, and Ashe Parke, 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! 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 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 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, 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 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 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 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 Conynghams; 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 Wyndham 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). 1796

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 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 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 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 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 unpleasantly; and if you are not able to return till after that day, it will hardly be possible for us to send for you before Saturday, though for my own part I care so little about the ball that it would be no sacrifice to me to give it up for the sake of seeing you two days earlier. We are extremely sorry for poor Eliza's illness. I trust, however, that she has continued to recover since you wrote, and that you will none of you be the worse for your attendance on her. What a good-for-nothing fellow Charles is to bespeak the stockings! I hope he will be too hot all the rest of his life for it!

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

like Dr. Cooper, and the little girl is to resemble Jane, they say.

Our party to Ashe to-morrow night will consist of Edward Cooper, James (for a ball is nothing without *him*), Buller, who is now staying with us, and I. I look forward with great impatience to it, as I rather expect to receive an offer from my friend in the course of the evening. I shall refuse him, however, unless he promises to give away his white coat.

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

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

How impertinent you are to write to me about 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 Many-down, and are to be at Ashe to-morrow. I intended to call on the Miss Biggs yesterday had the weather been tolerable. Caroline, Anna, and I have just been devouring some cold souse, and it would be difficult to say which enjoyed it most.

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

Friday.—At length the day is come on which I am to flirt my last with Tom Lefroy, and when you receive this it will be over. My tears flow as I write at the melancholy idea. Wm. Chute called here yesterday. I wonder what he means by being so civil. There is a report that Tom is 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.

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. 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 surprize. I am sorry 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 as glad to see me as anybody, and enquired 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 enquired at all about them hitherto.

We are very busy making Edward's shirts, 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. Limpley 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 acci-

dent will not prevent his attending the ball, as you will otherwise be obliged to dance with Mr. Tincton the whole evening. Let me know how J. Harwood deports himself without the Miss Biggs, and which of the Marys will carry the day with my brother James.

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

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

To-day the Goodnestone party begins to disperse

and spread itself abroad. Mr. and Mrs. Cage and George repair to Hythe. Lady Waltham, Miss Bridges, and Miss Mary Finch to Dover, for the health of the two former. I have never seen Marianne at all. On Thursday Mr. and Mrs. Bridges return to Danbury; Miss Harriet Hales accompanies them to London on her way to Dorsetshire.

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

We have just got some venison from Godmersham, which the two Mr. Harveys are to dine on to-morrow, and on Friday or Saturday the Goodnestone people are to finish their scraps. Henry went away on Friday, as he purposed, *without fayl*. You will hear from him soon, I imagine, as he talked of writing to Steventon shortly. Mr. Richard Harvey is going to be married; but as it is a great secret, and only known to half the 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 enquire after me ; those who do, remember me without bidding. Give my love to Mary Harrison, and tell her I wish, whenever she is attached to a young man, some *respectable* Dr. Marchmont may keep them apart for five volumes. . . .

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-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 enquired in tender strains

after you, and I took an opportunity of assuring Mr. J. T. that neither he nor his father need longer keep themselves single for you.

We went in our two carriages to Nackington ; but how we divided I shall leave you to surmise, merely observing that, as Elizabeth and I were without either hat or bonnet, it would not have been very convenient for us to go in the chaise. We went by Bifrons, and I contemplated with a melancholy pleasure the abode of him on whom I once fondly doated. We dine to-day at Goodnestone, to meet my Aunt Fielding from Margate and a Mr. Clayton, her professed admirer—at least so I imagine. Lady Bridges has received very good accounts of Marianne, who is already certainly the better for her bathing.

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

I sent a message to Mr. Digweed from Edward in a letter to Mary Lloyd which she ought to receive to-day ; but as I know that the Harwoods are not very exact as to their letters, I may as well repeat it to you. Mr. Digweed is to be informed

that illness has prevented Seward's coming over to look at the repairs intended at the farm, but that he will come as soon as he can. Mr. Digweed may also be informed, if you think proper, that Mr. and Mrs. Milles are to dine here to-morrow, and that Mrs. Joan Knatchbull is to be asked to meet them. Mr. Richard Harvey's match is put off till he has got a better Christian name, of which he has great hopes.

Mr. Children's two sons are both going to be married, John and George. They are to have one wife between them, a Miss Holwell, who belongs to the Black Hole at Calcutta. I depend on hearing from James very soon ; he promised me an account of the ball, and by this time he must have collected his ideas enough after the fatigue of dancing to give me one.

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

Friday.—Your letter and one from Henry are just come, and the contents of both accord with

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

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

As to the mode of our travelling to town, *I* want to go in a stage-coach, but Frank will not let 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 uncertainty of the Pearsons being at home, as I should not have a place to go to in case they were from home.

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

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.

The 'Triton' is a new 32 frigate just launched 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 twenty-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-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 to-day, 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 no secret from her family. It is singular that it should have 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 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 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 *Car.*

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 beef-steaks and a boiled fowl, but no oyster sauce.

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*l.*, 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 after-

wards 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 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 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 Steven-ton 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 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 'Battleridge' 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 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 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!

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.

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 enquiries; 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.

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.

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 to-morrow. 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

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 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 enquired 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 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 Oxford-

shire 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 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 3*s.* 6*d.* 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 pur-

chase 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 internal 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.* a piece 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 enquiry; 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 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 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, 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.

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 interest 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 dairy, 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 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 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 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 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;

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. Lefroy 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 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 mentioned 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 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 Worting 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 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 enquired 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 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 Tuesday, 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 Harriet 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 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 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.

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 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 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 Elizabeth'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 mama. 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 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 moveable 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 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.

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 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 far as Ospringe 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?

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 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. Briggs, 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 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 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 fort-

night. 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.

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 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 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 acquaintance 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 ; so far we are safe, and who knows what may not happen to procure a farther delay ?

I put Mary's letter into the post-office 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.

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 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 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 her, 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 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 tomorrow, 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. 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

Martha'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 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. Every-

body 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 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 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 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 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.

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 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 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 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.

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.

1800, 1801

THESE are all addressed to Godmersham, where Cassandra was staying with her brother Edward. ‘Heathcote and Chute for ever,’ 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 em-
perour’s time, rather for shade than fruit. For,
hee permitted the Britaines to have vines. 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.

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, 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 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 perfectly 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. 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 for ever.' Mrs. William Heathcote and Mrs. Chute—the first of whom took a long ride yesterday morning with Mrs. Harwood into Lord Car-

narvon'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.

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'nnight 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.

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 fire-place 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 for ever. 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 particularly 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 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 than I expected, but I suppose it is the proper size. *We* find no fault with your manner of per-

forming 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 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 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 Terrys 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. 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,

¹ Mr. Coulthard rented Chawton House at this time.

and my father buried him on Thursday. A deaf Miss Fonnereau is at Ashe, which has prevented Mrs. Lefroy's going to Worting or Basingstoke during the absence of Mr. Lefroy.

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.

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 conscience 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 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 statues, 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 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' pamphlet 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 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, 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 tomorrow, 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 off in a *come-cá* 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 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.

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.

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 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 certainly on the decline, there is something interesting in the bustle of going away, and the prospect of spending future summers by the sea or in Wales is very delightful. For a time we shall now possess many of the advantages which I have often thought of with envy in the wives of sailors or soldiers. It must not be generally known, however, that I am not sacrificing a great deal in quitting the country, or I can expect to inspire no tenderness, no interest, in those we leave behind.

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.

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 goodwill, 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; 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.

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 it's 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 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 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 you 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.

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.

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 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 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.

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 com-

fort 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 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. Lambould on the occasion. I am rather surprised at the revival of the London visit; but Mr. Doricourt 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.

Well, and so Frank's letter 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 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 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 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.

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 for ever.

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.

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 salutary relief from the dreadfully 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. Hoïder 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 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 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 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 Steventon while you are there, and pray note down how many full courses of exquisite dishes M. Halavant converts it into.

I cannot write any closer. Neither my affection for you nor for letter-writing can stand out against a Kentish visit. For a three months' absence I can be a very loving relation and a very excellent correspondent, but beyond that I degenerate 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 Assembly.

Nanny's husband is decidedly against her quitting service in such times as these, and I believe 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 different 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 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 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 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; 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.* 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 form , 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 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

¹ Francis Motley-Austen, who bought Kippington from Sir Chas. Farnaby.

to give; sixty-one guineas and a-half for the three cows gives 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 toi-

lette and ball with a thought; I dressed myself as well as I could, and had all my finery much admired at home. By nine o'clock my uncle, aunt, and I entered the rooms, and linked Miss Winstone on to us. Before tea it was rather a dull affair; but then the before tea did not last long, for there was only one dance, danced by four couple. Think of four couple, surrounded by about 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 sister's, 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 women 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 Evelyngs returned our visit on Saturday; 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 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.

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 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 *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 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 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 Mapleton'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 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 Winchilsea (ninth earl, who succeeded his cousin in 1826), and his brother, who subsequently married 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 Haliburton (Sam Slick) once used to me in the 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 all her life, and died unmarried in 1811.

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 every one, 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's 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 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 Palmerstone!' If little Lizzy used the same language she would, I daresay, 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 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 Ospringe, with no inconsiderable booty. He charged Elizabeth 5s. for every time of dressing her hair, and

5s. 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 2s. 6d. for cutting 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.

¹ The Godmersham housekeeper and lady's-maid.

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 Ospringe in one of the coaches.

Miss Austen, Goodnestone Farm, Wingham.

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's 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 accept 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's 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.

We had a very agreeable evening, and here I am before breakfast writing to you, having got up between six and seven; Lady Brydges's 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's book-case 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 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.

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.

It gives us great pleasure to hear of little Edward's being better, and we imagine, from his mama'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 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 Rowing 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 Monday. 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's 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.

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 rela-

tions 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 event would be delayed until her own brother Frank sought the lady's affection many years later.

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 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 dumpings, 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 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 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.

'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 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.

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 recognised lately by Admiral Bertie, and a few days since arrived the Admiral and his daughter Catherine to wait upon us. There was nothing 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 piano-forte 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 ~~see~~ 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 ; 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.

XXXVII.

Southampton : February 8.

My DEAREST CASSANDRA,

My expectation of having nothing to say to you after the conclusion of my last seems nearer truth than I thought it would be, for I feel to have

but little. I need not, therefore, be above acknowledging the receipt of yours this morning, or of replying to every part of it which is capable of an answer, and you may accordingly prepare for my ringing the changes of the glads and sorrys for the rest of the page.

Unluckily, however, I see nothing to be glad of, unless I make it a matter of joy that Mrs. Wylmot has another son, and that Lord Lucan has taken a mistress, both of which events are, of course, joyful to the actors; but to be sorry I find many occasions. The first is, that your return is to be delayed, and whether I ever get beyond the first is doubtful. It is no use to lament. I never heard that even Queen Mary's lamentation did her any good, and I could not, therefore, expect benefit from mine. We are all sorry, and now that subject is exhausted.

I heard from Martha yesterday. She spends this week with the Harwoods, goes afterwards with James and Mary for a few days to see Peter Debary and two of his sisters at Eversley, the living of which he has gained on the death of Sir R. Cope, and means to be here on the 24th, which will be Tuesday fortnight. I shall be truly glad if she can keep to her day, but dare not depend on it, and am

so apprehensive of farther detention, that, if nothing else occurs to create it, I cannot help thinking she will marry Peter Debary.

It vexed me that I could not get any fish for Kintbury while their family was large, but so it was; and till last Tuesday I could procure none. I then sent them four pair of small soles, and should be glad to be certain of their arriving in good time, but I have heard nothing about them since, and had rather hear nothing than evil. They cost six shillings, and as they travelled in a basket which came from Kintbury a few days before with poultry, &c., I insist upon treating you with the booking, *whatever it may be*. You are only eighteen pence in my debt.

Mrs. E. Leigh did not make the slightest allusion to my uncle's business, as I remember telling you at the time, but you shall have it as often as you like. My mother wrote to her a week ago.

Martha's rug is just finished, and looks well, though not quite so well as I had hoped. I see no fault in the border, but the middle is dingy. My mother desires me to say that she will knit one for you as soon as you return to choose the colours and pattern.

I am sorry I have affronted you on the subject

of Mr. Moore, but I do not mean ever to like him; and as to pitying a young woman merely because she cannot live in two places at the same time, and at once enjoy the comforts of being married and single, I shall not attempt it, even for Harriet. You see I have a spirit as well as yourself.

Frank and Mary cannot at all approve of your not being at home in time to help them in their finishing purchases, and desire me to say that, if you are not, they will be as spiteful as possible, and choose everything in the style most likely to vex you—knives that will not cut, glasses that will not hold, a sofa without a seat, and a bookcase without shelves.

Our garden is putting in order by a man who bears a remarkably good character, has a very fine complexion, and asks something less than the first. The shrubs which border the gravel walk, he says, are only sweetbriar and roses, and the latter of an indifferent sort; we mean to get a few of a better kind, therefore, and at my own particular desire he procures us some syringas. I could not do without a syringa, for the sake of Cowper's line. We talk also of a laburnum. The border under the terrace wall is clearing away to receive currants and goose-

berry bushes, and a spot is found very proper for raspberries.

The alterations and improvements within doors, too, advance very properly, and the offices will be made very convenient indeed. Our dressing table is constructing on the spot, out of a large kitchen table belonging to the house, for doing which we have the permission of Mr. Husket, Lord Lansdown's painter—domestic painter, I should call him, for he lives in the castle. Domestic chaplains have given way to this more necessary office, and I suppose whenever the walls want no touching up he is employed about my lady's face.

The morning was so wet that I was afraid we should not be able to see our little visitor, but Frank, who alone could go to church, called for her after service, and she is now talking away at my side and examining the treasures of my writing-desk drawers—very happy, I believe. Not at all shy, of course. Her name is Catherine, and her sister's Caroline. She is something like her brother, and as short for her age, but not so well-looking.

What is become of all the shyness in the world? Moral as well as natural diseases disappear in the progress of time, and new ones take their place.

Shyness and the sweating sickness have given way to confidence and paralytic complaints.

I am sorry to hear of Mrs. Whitfield's increasing illness, and of poor Marianne Bridges having suffered so much; these are some of my sorrows; and that Mrs. Deedes is to have another child I suppose I may lament.

The death of Mrs. W. K. we had seen. I had no idea that anybody liked her, and therefore felt nothing for any survivor, but I am now feeling away on her husband's account, and think he had better marry Miss Sharpe.

I have this instant made my present, and have the pleasure of seeing it smiled over with genuine satisfaction. I am sure I may, on this occasion, call Kitty Foote, as Hastings did H. Egerton, my 'very valuable friend.'

Evening.—Our little visitor has just left us, and left us highly pleased with her; she is a nice, natural, open-hearted, affectionate girl, with all the ready civility which one sees in the best children in the present day; so unlike anything that I was myself at her age, that I am often all astonishment and shame. Half her time was spent at spillikins, which I consider as a very valuable part of our household furniture, and as not the least important

benefaction from the family of Knight to that of Austen.

But I must tell you a story. Mary has for some time had notice from Mrs. Dickson of the intended arrival of a certain Miss Fowler in this place. Miss F. is an intimate friend of Mrs. D., and a good deal known as such to Mary. On Thursday last she called here while we were out. Mary found, on our return, her card with only her name on it, and she had left word that she would call again. The particularity of this made us talk, and, among other conjectures, Frank said in joke, 'I dāre say she is staying with the Pearsons.' The connection of the names struck Mary, and she immediately recollected Miss Fowler's having been very intimate with persons so called, and, upon putting everything together, we have scarcely a doubt of her being actually staying with the only family in the place whom we cannot visit.

What a *contretemps*! in the language of France. What an unluckiness! in that of Madame Duval. The black gentleman has certainly employed one of his menial imps to bring about this complete, though trifling, mischief. Miss F. has never called again, but we are in daily expectation of it. Miss P. has, of course, given her

a proper understanding of the business. It is evident that Miss F. did not expect or wish to have the visit returned, and Frank is quite as much on his guard for his wife as we could desire for her sake or our own.

We shall rejoice in being so near Winchester when Edward belongs to it, and can never have our spare bed filled more to our satisfaction than by him. Does he leave Eltham at Easter?

We are reading 'Clarentine,' and are surprised to find how foolish it is. I remember liking it much less on a second reading than at the first, and it does not bear a third at all. It is full of unnatural conduct and forced difficulties, without striking merit of any kind.

Miss Harrison is going into Devonshire, to attend Mrs. Dusantoy, as usual. Miss J. is married to young Mr. G., and is to be very unhappy. He swears, drinks, is cross, jealous, selfish, and brutal. The match makes her family miserable, and has occasioned *his* being disinherited.

The Browns are added to our list of acquaintance. He commands the Sea Fencibles here, under Sir Thomas, and was introduced at his own desire by the latter when we saw him last week. As yet the gentlemen only have visited, as Mrs. B. is ill,

but she is a nice-looking woman, and wears one of the prettiest straw bonnets in the place.

Monday.—The garret beds are made, and ours will be finished to-day. I had hoped it would be finished on Saturday, but neither Mrs. Hall nor Jenny was able to give help enough for that, and I have as yet done very little, and Mary nothing at all. This week we shall do more, and I should like to have all the five beds completed by the end of it. There will then be the window curtains, sofa-cover, and a carpet to be altered.

I should not be surprised if we were to be visited by James again this week; he gave us reason to expect him soon, and if they go to Eversley he cannot come next week.

There, I flatter myself I have constructed you a smartish letter, considering my want of materials, but, like my dear Dr. Johnson, I believe I have dealt more in notions than facts.

I hope your cough is gone and that you are otherwise well, and remain, with love,

Yours affectionately,

J. A.

Miss Austen, Godmersham Park,
Faversham, Kent.

XXXVIII.

Southampton: Friday (February 20).

MY DEAR CASSANDRA,

We have at last heard something of Mr. Austen's will. It is believed at Tunbridge that he has left everything after the death of his widow to Mr. M. Austen's third son John; and, as the said John was the only one of the family who attended the funeral, it seems likely to be true. Such ill-gotten wealth can never prosper.

I really have very little to say *this* week, and do not feel as if I should spread that little into the show of much. I am inclined for short sentences.

Mary will be obliged to you to take notice how often Elizabeth nurses her baby in the course of twenty-four hours, how often it is fed, and with what; you need not trouble yourself to *write* the result of your observations, your return will be early enough for the communication of them. You are recommended to bring away some flower-seeds from Godmersham, particularly mignonette seed.

My mother has heard this morning from Paragon. My aunt talks much of the violent colds prevailing in Bath, from which my uncle has suf-

ferred ever since their return, and she has herself a cough much worse than any she ever had before, subject as she has always been to bad ones. She writes in good humour and cheerful spirits, however. The negotiation between them and Adlestrop so happily over, indeed, what can have power to vex her materially?

Elliston, she tells us, has just succeeded to a considerable fortune on the death of an uncle. I would not have it enough to take *him* from the stage; *she* should quit her business, and live with him in London.

We could not pay our visit on Monday; the weather altered just too soon, and we have since had a touch of almost everything in the weather way; two of the severest frosts since the winter began, preceded by rain, hail, and snow. Now we are smiling again.

Saturday.—I have received your letter, but I suppose you do not expect me to be gratified by its contents. I confess myself much disappointed by this repeated delay of your return, for though I had pretty well given up all idea of your being with us before our removal, I felt sure that March would not pass quite away without bringing you. Before April comes, of course something else will

occur to detain you. But as *you* are happy, all this is selfishness, of which here is enough for one page.

Pray tell Lizzy that if I had imagined her teeth to be really out, I should have said before what I say now, that it was a very unlucky fall indeed, that I am afraid it must have given her a great deal of pain, and that I dare say her mouth looks very comical.

I am obliged to Fanny for the list of Mrs. Coleman's children, whose names I had not, however, quite forgot; the new one I am sure will be Caroline. I have got Mr. Bowen's recipe for you; it came in my aunt's letter.

You must have had more snow at Godmersham than we had here; on Wednesday morning there was a thin covering of it over the fields and roofs of the houses, but I do not think there was any left the next day. Everybody used to Southampton says that snow never lies more than twenty-four hours near it, and, from what we have observed ourselves, it is very true.

Frank's going into Kent depends, of course, upon his being unemployed; but as the First Lord, after promising Lord Moira that Captain A. should have the first good frigate that was vacant, has

since given away two or three fine ones, he has no particular reason to expect an appointment now. *He*, however, has scarcely spoken about the Kentish journey. I have my information chiefly from her, and she considers her own going thither as more certain if he should be at sea than if not.

Frank has got a very bad cough, for an Austen ; but it does not disable him from making very nice fringe for the drawing-room curtains.

Mrs. Day has now got the carpet in hand, and Monday I hope will be the last day of her employment here. A fortnight afterwards she is to be called again from the shades of her red-checked bed in an alley near the end of the High Street, to clean the new house and air the bedding.

We hear that we are envied our house by many people, and that the garden is the best in the town. There will be green baize enough for Martha's room and ours, not to cover them, but to lie over the part where it is most wanted, under the dressing table. Mary is to have a piece of carpeting for the same purpose ; my mother says *she* does not want any, and it may certainly be better done without in her rooms than in Martha's and ours, from the difference of their aspect.

I recommend Mrs. Grant's letters, as a present

to the latter ; what they are about, and how many volumes they form, I do not know, having never heard of them but from Miss Irvine, who speaks of them as a new and much-admired work, and as one which has pleased her highly. I have inquired for the book here, but find it quite unknown.

I believe I put five breadths of linsey also into my flounce ; I know I found it wanted more than I had expected, and that I should have been distressed if I had not bought more than I believed myself to need for the sake of the even measure, on which we think so differently. A light morning gown will be a very necessary purchase for you, and I wish you a pretty one. I shall buy such things whenever I am tempted, but as yet there is nothing of the sort to be seen.

We are reading Barretti's other book, and find him dreadfully abusive of poor Mrs. Sharpe. I can no longer take his part against you, as I did nine years ago.

Sunday.—This post has brought our Martha's own assurance of her coming on Tuesday evening, which nothing is now to prevent except William should send her word that there is no *remedy* on that day. Her letter was put into the post at

Basingstoke on their return from Eversley, where she says they have spent their time very pleasantly. She does not own herself in any danger of being tempted back again, however, and as she signs by her maiden name, we are at least to suppose her not married yet.

They must have had a cold visit, but as she found it agreeable I suppose there was no want of blankets, and we may trust to her sister's taking care that her love of many should be known. She sends me no particulars, having time only to write the needful.

I wish you a pleasant party to-morrow, and not more than you like of Miss Hatton's neck. Lady B. must have been a shameless woman if she named H. Hales as within her husband's reach. It is a piece of impertinence, indeed, in a woman to pretend to fix on any one, as if she supposed it could be only ask and have. A widower with three children has no right to look higher than his daughter's governess.

I am forced to be abusive for want of subject, having really nothing to say. When Martha comes she will supply me with matter ; I shall have to tell you how she likes the house, and what she thinks of Mary.

You must be very cold to-day at Godmersham. We are cold here. I expect a severe March, a wet April, and a sharp May. And with this prophecy I must conclude.

My love to everybody.

Yours affectionately, J. AUSTEN.

Miss Austen, Godmersham Park,
Faversham, Kent.

1808

THESE letters were written during a visit which Jane and her brother James and his wife paid to Godmersham at this time. There is a graphic description of the arrival of the two ladies and their reception by their relations, and a pleasant account of the life at Godmersham, which Edward Austen had greatly improved, inside and out, since his accession to the property in 1798. 'Bentigh' and 'the Temple plantations' deserve a word of notice. The former was once a ploughed field, but when my grandfather first came to Godmersham he planted it with underwood, and made gravel walks through it, planted an avenue of

trees on each side of the principal walk, and added it to the shrubberies. The family always walked through it on their way to church, leaving the shrubberies by a little door in the wall, at the end of the private grounds, which brought them out just opposite the church. The same improving hand planted also a great deal on the other (east) side of the river, where was a pretty sort of summer-house called 'The Temple,' built by one of the preceding owners of the place. The road at that time ran nearer to the house than the present turnpike road; it formerly divided the river from the park, and the hill called 'the Canterbury Hill' was also planted by my grandfather, and is the plantation to which reference is here made.

'Edward and Caroline' are James and Mary Austen's children—the writer of the 'Memoir,' who was now nearly ten years old, and his little sister.

The fortieth letter commences with an account of a visit to Canterbury, wherein is a kindly mention of Mrs. Knight (Catherine Knatchbull) and a criticism on Mr. Moore (Harriet Bridges' husband), who does not seem to have been a favourite of Jane's, although she never varies in her affectionate

mention of his wife. Mrs. Knight seems to have been very generously disposed towards other members of the Austen family besides her husband's heir, for her 'very agreeable present' is here gratefully acknowledged, and both Cassandra and Jane stayed with her at different times at the White Friars house.

'Buckwell' is an old-fashioned farmhouse, belonging to the Godmersham property, and situate on the Ashford road, within an easy drive. The 'dragging' of the fish-pond does not seem to have tempted Jane, but it is a kind of sport which has a peculiar fascination of its own, though scarcely so great as that of 'letting the water off' from a well-stocked pond. There are few more delightful pastimes than this to schoolboys who have the good fortune to have pond-owning fathers; the patience which has to be exercised whilst the water slowly drains away is amply rewarded when the depth has become sufficiently reduced to allow of the sight of the carp and tench splashing about in evident astonishment at the extraordinary change which is taking place in their usually quiet home. Then, when enough water has been drained off to allow it, how gloriously exciting is the plunge into the

mud, and the capture of the fish in small landing nets, varied by the eager chase after the eels, whose twistings and windings are enough to baffle the most experienced holder of eel-tongs, and whose capture is the climax of the sport. This, however, is not strictly germane to Jane Austen, whom I do not suspect of having ever waded after eels in her life, and who upon the occasion of the present less exciting amusement stayed quietly at home. In the same letter the expression: 'I initiated her into the mysteries of Inmanism' requires explanation. Mrs. Inman was the aged widow of a former clergyman at Godmersham, who lived at the park-keeper's house ('Old Hills'), and it was one of the 'treats' of the Godmersham children to walk up to her with fruit after dessert. She was blind, and used to walk about the park with a gold-headed walking-stick, and leaning on the arm of her faithful servant Nanny Part. She died in September 1815.

'John Bridges,' who had grown 'old and black,' was Brook John, younger brother of the reigning Sir Brook. Strange to say, he married the sister of his eldest brother's second wife, Miss Hawley—as Edward married the sister of the first wife,

Miss Foote—a rare example of confidence in a fraternal selection of a family from which to choose a partner for life. John Bridges had the curacy of Moldash (which was attached to the living of Godmersham), and lived some time with his sister and brother-in-law, with whose children he was a great favourite. He hunted (which was a common qualification with clergymen in those days), had delicate health, and died in 1812, leaving no children. His widow afterwards married Mr. Bramston, of Skreens, in Essex. She was the ‘Aunt Charlotte’ of the Godmersham family, and died in 1848.

The forty-first letter mentions ‘Mr. Knatchbull of Provender’ as being at the White Friars. This was my father, afterwards the Right Hon. Sir Edward Knatchbull, who subsequently represented Kent from the death of his father in 1819 to 1830, and East Kent from 1832 to 1845. At this time he had been two years married to his first wife, Annabella-Christiana, daughter of Sir John Honeywood. Provender had been the property of the two Hugessen co-heiresses, Mary (Lady Knatchbull) and Dorothy (Lady Banks), wife of the Right Hon. Sir Joseph Banks, and through this

channel came into my father's and, ultimately, into my possession. 'Charles Graham,' rector of Barham, and brother to my grandfather Sir E. Knatchbull's second wife, was always intimate at Hatch, as was, in after years, his only son, a most popular young man, who was unhappily drowned at Oxford whilst an undergraduate of Trinity College in that University. The 'Lady Knatchbull' here mentioned was my grandfather's third wife Mary Hawkins, co-heiress of Nash Court, near Faversham. Curiously enough this property, which was sold, has come back to a descendant of this lady, one of whose daughters, Eleanor Knatchbull, married the fourth Lord Sondes, and the late owner of Nash Court, Mr. Ladd, lately bequeathed it (subject to the life interest of his wife) to one of the younger sons of the fifth Lord (now the first Earl) Sondes—his neighbour at Lees Court, which adjoins it.

The Knatchbulls who 'returned into Somersetshire' were the branch of the Hatch family already mentioned in the sixth division of letters.

The Lady Bridges mentioned in the forty-second letter was not the then baronet's wife, Miss Foote, who had died two years before, but his

mother, 'Fanny Fowler,' who at this time was living at Goodnestone Farm at the Dower-house.

XXXIX.

Godmersham: Wednesday (June 15).

MY DEAR CASSANDRA,

Where shall I begin? Which of all my important nothings shall I tell you first? At half after seven yesterday morning Henry saw us into our own carriage, and we drove away from the Bath Hotel; which, by-the-bye, had been found most uncomfortable quarters—very dirty, very noisy, and very ill-provided. James began his journey by the coach at five. Our first eight miles were hot; Deptford Hill brought to my mind our hot journey into Kent fourteen years ago; but after Blackheath we suffered nothing, and as the day advanced it grew quite cool. At Dartford, which we reached within the two hours and three-quarters, we went to the Bull, the same inn at which we breakfasted in that said journey, and on the present occasion had about the same bad butter.

At half-past ten we were again off, and, travelling on without any adventure reached Sitting-

bourne by three. Daniel was watching for us at the door of the George, and I was acknowledged very kindly by Mr. and Mrs. Marshall, to the latter of whom I devoted my conversation, while Mary went out to buy some gloves. A few minutes, of course, did for Sittingbourne; and so off we drove, drove, drove, and by six o'clock were at Godmersham.

Our two brothers were walking before the house as we approached, as natural as life. Fanny and Lizzy met us in the Hall with a great deal of pleasant joy; we went for a few minutes into the breakfast parlour, and then proceeded to our rooms. Mary has the Hall chamber. I am in the Yellow room—very literally—for I am writing in it at this moment. It seems odd to me to have such a great place all to myself, and to be at Godmersham without you is also odd.

You are wished for, I assure you: Fanny, who came to me as soon as she had seen her Aunt James to her room, and stayed while I dressed, was as energetic as usual in her longings for you. She is grown both in height and size since last year, but not immoderately, looks very well, and seems as to conduct and manner just what she was and what one could wish her to continue.

Elizabeth, who was dressing when we arrived, came to me for a minute attended by Marianne, Charles, and Louisa, and, you will not doubt, gave me a very affectionate welcome. That I had received such from Edward also I need not mention; but I do, you see, because it is a pleasure. I never saw him look in better health, and Fanny says he is perfectly well. I cannot praise Elizabeth's looks, but they are probably affected by a cold. Her little namesake has gained in beauty in the last three years, though not all that Marianne has lost. Charles is not quite so lovely as he was. Louisa is much as I expected, and Cassandra I find handsomer than I expected, though at present disguised by such a violent breaking-out that she does not come down after dinner. She has charming eyes and a nice open countenance, and seems likely to be very lovable. Her size is magnificent.

I was agreeably surprised to find Louisa Bridges still here. She looks remarkably well (legacies are very wholesome diet), and is just what she always was. John is at Sandling. You may fancy our dinner party therefore; Fanny, of course, belonging to it, and little Edward, for that day. He was almost too happy, his happiness at least made him too talkative.

It has struck ten; I must go to breakfast.

Since breakfast I have had a *tête-à-tête* with Edward in his room; he wanted to know James's plans and mine, and from what his own now are I think it already nearly certain that I shall return when they do, though not with them. Edward will be going about the same time to Alton, where he has business with Mr. Trimmer, and where he means his son should join him; and I shall probably be his companion to that place, and get on afterwards somehow or other.

I should have preferred a rather longer stay here certainly, but there is no prospect of any later conveyance for me, as he does not mean to accompany Edward on his return to Winchester, from a very natural unwillingness to leave Elizabeth at that time. I shall at any rate be glad not to be obliged to be an incumbrance on those who have brought me here, for, as James has no horse, I must feel in their carriage that I am taking his place. We were rather crowded yesterday, though it does not become me to say so, as I and my boy were of the party, and it is not to be supposed but that a child of three years of age was fidgety.

I need scarcely beg you to keep all this to yourself, lest it should get round by Anna's means.

She is very kindly inquired after by her friends here, who all regret her not coming with her father and mother.

I left Henry, I hope, free from his tiresome complaint, in other respects well, and thinking with great pleasure of Cheltenham and Stoneleigh.

The brewery scheme is quite at an end: at a meeting of the subscribers last week it was by general, and I believe very hearty, consent dissolved.

The country is very beautiful. I saw as much as ever to admire in my yesterday's journey.

Thursday.—I am glad to find that Anna was pleased with going to Southampton, and hope with all my heart that the visit may be satisfactory to everybody. Tell her that she will hear in a few days from her mamma, who would have written to her now but for this letter.

Yesterday passed quite *à la* Godmersham: the gentlemen rode about Edward's farm, and returned in time to saunter along Bentigh with us; and after dinner we visited the Temple Plantations, which, to be sure, is a Chevalier Bayard of a plantation. James and Mary are much struck with the beauty of the place. To-day the spirit of the

thing is kept up by the two brothers being gone to Canterbury in the chair.

I cannot discover, even through Fanny, that her mother is fatigued by her attendance on the children. I have, of course, tendered my services, and when Louisa is gone, who sometimes hears the little girls read, will try to be accepted in her stead. She will not be here many days longer. The Moores are partly expected to dine here to-morrow or Saturday.

I feel rather languid and solitary—perhaps because I have a cold ; but three years ago we were more animated with you and Harriot and Miss Sharpe. We shall improve, I dare say, as we go on.

I have not yet told you how the new carriage is liked—very well, very much indeed, except the lining, which does look rather shabby.

I hear a very bad account of Mrs. Whitefield ; a very good one of Mrs. Knight, who goes to Broadstairs next month. Miss Sharpe is going with Miss Bailey to Tenby. The Widow Kennet succeeds to the post of laundress.

Would you believe it my trunk is come already ; and, what completes the wondrous happiness, nothing is damaged. I unpacked it all before

I went to bed last night, and when I went down to breakfast this morning presented the rug, which was received most gratefully, and met with universal admiration. My frock is also given, and kindly accepted.

Friday.—I have received your letter, and I think it gives me nothing to be sorry for but Mary's cold, which I hope is by this time better. Her approbation of her child's hat makes me very happy. Mrs. J. A. bought one at Gayleard's for Caroline, of the same shape, but brown and with a feather.

I hope Huxham is a comfort to you; I am glad you are taking it. I shall probably have an opportunity of giving Harriot your message tomorrow; she does not come here, they have not a day to spare, but Louisa and I are to go to her in the morning. I send your thanks to Eliza by this post in a letter to Henry.

Lady Catherine is Lord Portmore's daughter. I have read Mr. Jefferson's case to Edward, and he desires to have his name set down for a guinea and his wife's for another; but does not wish for more than one copy of the work. Your account of Anna gives me pleasure. Tell her, with my love, that I like her for liking the quay. Mrs. J. A.

seems rather surprised at the Maitlands drinking tea with you, but that does not prevent my approving it. I hope you had not a disagreeable evening with Miss Austen and her niece. You know how interesting the purchase of a sponge-cake is to me.

I am now just returned from Eggerton ; Louisa and I walked together and found Miss Maria at home. Her sister we met on our way back. *She* had been to pay her compliments to Mrs. Inman, whose chaise was seen to cross the park while we were at dinner yesterday.

I told Sackree that you desired to be remembered to her, which pleased her ; and she sends her duty, and wishes you to know that she has been into the great world. She went on to town after taking William to Eltham, and, as well as myself, saw the ladies go to Court on the 4th. She had the advantage indeed of me in being in the Palace.

Louisa is not so handsome as I expected, but she is not quite well. Edward and Caroline seem very happy here ; he has nice playfellows in Lizzy and Charles. They and their attendant have the boys' attic. Anna will not be surprised that the cutting off her hair is very much regretted by several of the party in this house ; I am tolerably reconciled

to it by considering that two or three years may restore it again.

You are very important with your Captain Bulmore and Hotel Master, and I trust, if your trouble overbalances your dignity on the occasion, it will be amply repaid by Mrs. Craven's approbation, and a pleasant scheme to see her.

Mrs. Cooke has written to my brother James to invite him and his wife to Bookham in their way back, which, as I learn through Edward's means, they are not disinclined to accept, but that my being with them would render it impracticable, the nature of the road affording no conveyance to James. I shall therefore make them easy on that head as soon as I can.

I have a great deal of love to give from everybody.

Yours most affectionately, JANE.

My mother will be glad to be assured that the size of the rug does perfectly well. It is not to be used till winter.

Miss Austen, Castle Square, Southampton.

XL.

Godmersham : Monday (June 20).

MY DEAR CASSANDRA,

I will first talk of my visit to Canterbury, as Mrs. J. A.'s letter to Anna cannot have given you every particular of it which you are likely to wish for. I had a most affectionate welcome from Harriot, and was happy to see her looking almost as well as ever. She walked with me to call on Mrs. Brydges, when Elizabeth and Louisa went to Mrs. Milles'. Mrs. B. was dressing, and could not see us, and we proceeded to the White Friars, where Mrs. K. was alone in her drawing room, as gentle, and kind, and friendly as usual. She inquired after everybody, especially my mother and yourself. We were with her a quarter of an hour before Elizabeth and Louisa, hot from Mrs. Baskerville's shop, walked in; they were soon followed by the carriage, and another five minutes brought Mr. Moore himself, just returned from his morning ride.

Well, and what do I think of Mr. Moore? I will not pretend in one meeting to *dislike* him, whatever Mary may say, but I can honestly assure her that I saw nothing in him to admire. His

manners, as you have always said, are gentleman-like, but by no means winning. He made one formal inquiry after you.

I saw their little girl, and very small and very pretty she is. Her features are as delicate as Mary Jane's, with nice dark eyes; and if she had Mary Jane's fine colour she would be quite complete. Harriot's fondness for her seems just what is amiable and natural, and not foolish. I saw Caroline also, and thought her very plain.

Edward's plan for Hampshire does not vary; he only improves it with the kind intention of taking me on to Southampton, and spending one whole day with you; and, if it is found practicable, Edward, jun., will be added to our party for that one day also, which is to be Sunday, the 10th of July. I hope you may have beds for them. We are to begin our journey on the 8th, and reach you late on the 9th.

This morning brought me a letter from Mrs. Knight, containing the usual fee, and all the usual kindness. She asks me to spend a day or two with her this week, to meet Mrs. C. Knatchbull, who, with her husband, comes to the White Friars today, and I believe I shall go. I have consulted Edward, and think it will be arranged for Mrs.

J. A.'s going with me one morning, my staying the night, and Edward's driving me home the next evening. Her very agreeable present will make my circumstances quite easy. I shall reserve half for my pelisse. I hope by this early return I am sure of seeing Catherine and Alethea ; and I propose that, either with or without them, you and I and Martha shall have a snug fortnight while my mother is at Steventon.

We go on very well here. Mary finds the children less troublesome than she expected, and, independent of them, there is certainly not much to try the patience or hurt the spirits at Godmersham. I initiated her yesterday into the mysteries of Inman-ism. The poor old lady is as thin and cheerful as ever, and very thankful for a new acquaintance. I had called on her before with Elizabeth and Louisa.

I find John Bridges grown very old and black, but his manners are not altered ; he is very pleasing, and talks of Hampshire with great admiration.

Pray let Anna have the pleasure of knowing that she is remembered with kindness, both by Mrs. Cooke and Miss Sharpe. Her manners must be very much worsted by your description of them, but I hope they will improve by this visit.

Mrs. Knight finished her letter with, 'Give my best love to Cassandra when you write to her.' I shall like spending a day at the White Friars very much.

We breakfasted in the library this morning for the first time, and most of the party have been complaining all day of the heat; but Louisa and I feel alike as to weather, and are cool and comfortable.

Wednesday.—The Moores came yesterday in their curricule, between one and two o'clock, and immediately after the noonshine which succeeded their arrival a party set off for Buckwell, to see the pond dragged—Mr. Moore, James, Edward, and James; Edward on horseback, John Bridges driving Mary in his gig. The rest of us remained quietly and comfortably at home.

We had a very pleasant dinner, at the lower end of the table at least; the merriment was chiefly between Edward, Louisa, Harriot, and myself. Mr. Moore did not talk so much as I expected, and I understand from Fanny that I did not see him at all as he is in general. Our being strangers made him so much more silent and quiet. Had I had no reason for observing what he said and did, I should scarcely have thought about

him. His manners to her want tenderness, and he was a little violent at last about the impossibility of her going to Eastwell. I cannot see any unhappiness in her, however, and as to kind-heartedness, &c., she is quite unaltered. Mary was disappointed in *her* beauty, and thought *him* very disagreeable; James admires *her*, and finds *him* conversable and pleasant.

I sent my answer by them to Mrs. Knight, my double acceptance of her note and her invitation, which I wrote without much effort, for I was rich, and the rich are always respectable, whatever be their style of writing.

I am to meet Harriot at dinner to-morrow. It is one of the audit days, and Mr. M. dines with the Dean, who is just come to Canterbury. On Tuesday there is to be a family meeting at Mrs. C. Milles's: Lady Bridges and Louisa from Goodnestone, the Moores, and a party from this house—Elizabeth, John Bridges, and myself. It will give me pleasure to see Lady B.; she is now quite well. Louisa goes home on Friday, and John with her, but he returns the next day. These are our engagements; make the most of them.

Mr. Waller is dead, I see. I cannot grieve about it, nor, perhaps, can his widow very much.

Edward began cutting sanfoin on Saturday, and, I hope, is likely to have favourable weather. The crop is good.

There has been a cold and sore-throat prevailing very much in this house lately; the children have almost all been ill with it, and we were afraid Lizzy was going to be very ill one day. She had specks and a great deal of fever. It went off, however, and they are all pretty well now.

I want to hear of your gathering strawberries; we have had them three times here. I suppose you have been obliged to have in some white wine, and must visit the store closet a little oftener than when you were quite by yourselves.

One begins really to expect the St. Albans now, and I wish she may come before Henry goes to Cheltenham, it will be so much more convenient to him. He will be very glad if Frank can come to him in London, as his own time is likely to be very precious, but does not depend on it. I shall not forget Charles next week.

So much did I write before breakfast, and now, to my agreeable surprise, I have to acknowledge another letter from you. I had not the least notion of hearing before to-morrow, and heard of Russell's being about to pass the windows without

any anxiety. You are very amiable and very clever to write such long letters ; every page of yours has more lines than this, and every line more words than the average of mine. I am quite ashamed ; but you have certainly more little events than we have. Mr. Lyford supplies you with a great deal of interesting matter (matter intellectual, not physical), but I have nothing to say of Mr. Scudamore.¹

And now, that is such a sad, stupid attempt at wit about matter that nobody can smile at it, and I am quite out of heart. I am sick of myself and my bad pens. I have no other complaint, however ; my languor is entirely removed.

Ought I to be very much pleased with ‘Marmion’? As yet I am not. James reads it aloud in the evening—the short evening, beginning at about 10, and broken by supper.

Happy Mrs. Harrison and Miss Austen! You seem to be always calling on them. I am glad your various civilities have turned out so well, and most heartily wish you success and pleasure in your present engagement. I shall think of you to-night as at Netley, and to-morrow too, that

¹ The doctor who attended the Godmersham family. He lived at Wye.

I may be quite sure of being right, and therefore I guess you will not go to Netley at all.

This is a sad story about Mrs. P. I should not have suspected her of such a thing. She stayed the Sacrament, I remember, the last time that you and I did. A hint of it, with initials, was in yesterday's 'Courier,' and Mr. Moore guessed it to be Lord S., believing there was no other Viscount S. in the peerage, and so it proved, Lord Viscount S. not being there.

Yes, I enjoy my apartment very much, and always spend two or three hours in it after breakfast. The change from Brompton quarters to these is material as to space. I catch myself going on to the hall chamber now and then.

Little Caroline looks very plain among her cousins; and though she is not so headstrong or humoursome as they are, I do not think her at all more engaging. Her brother is to go with us to Canterbury to-morrow, and Fanny completes the party. I fancy Mrs. K. feels less interest in that branch of the family than any other. I dare say she will do her *duty*, however, by the boy. His uncle Edward talks nonsense to him delightfully; more than he can always understand. The two Morrisises are come to dine and spend the day with him.

Mary wishes my mother to buy whatever she thinks necessary for Anna's shifts, and hopes to see her at Steventon soon after the 9th of July, if that time is as convenient to my mother as any other. I have hardly done justice to what she means on the subject, as her intention is that my mother should come at whatever time she likes best. They will be at home on the 9th.

I always come in for a morning visit from Crundale, and Mr. and Mrs. Filmer have just given me my due. He and I talked away gaily of Southampton, the Harrisons, Wallers, &c.

Fanny sends her best love to you all, and will write to Anna very soon.

Yours very affectionately, JANE.

I want some news from Paragon.

I am almost sorry that Rose Hill Cottage should be so near suiting us, as it does not quite.

Miss Austen, Castle Square, Southampton.

XLI.

Godmersham: Sunday (June 26).

MY DEAR CASSANDRA,

I am very much obliged to you for writing to me on Thursday, and very glad that I owe the

pleasure of hearing from you again so soon to such an agreeable cause; but you will not be surprised, nor perhaps so angry as I should be, to find that Frank's history had reached me before in a letter from Henry. We are all very happy to hear of his health and safety; he wants nothing but a good prize to be a perfect character.

This scheme to the island is an admirable thing for his wife; she will not feel the delay of his return in such variety. How very kind of Mrs. Craven to ask her! I think I quite understand the whole island arrangements, and shall be very ready to perform my part in them. I hope my mother will go, and I trust it is certain that there will be Martha's bed for Edward when he brings me home. What can you do with Anna? for her bed will probably be wanted for young Edward. His father writes to Dr. Goddard to-day to ask leave, and we have the pupil's authority for thinking it will be granted.

I have been so kindly pressed to stay longer here, in consequence of an offer of Henry's to take me back some time in September, that, not being able to detail all my objections to such a plan, I have felt myself obliged to give Edward and Elizabeth one private reason for my wishing to be

at home in July. They feel the strength of it and say no more, and one can rely on their secrecy. After this I hope we shall not be disappointed of our friend's visit; my honour as well as my affection will be concerned in it.¹

Elizabeth has a very sweet scheme of our accompanying Edward into Kent next Christmas. A legacy might make it very feasible—a legacy is our sovereign good. In the meanwhile, let me remember that I have now some money to spare, and that I wish to have my name put down as a subscriber to Mr. Jefferson's works. My last letter was closed before it occurred to me how possible, how right, and how gratifying such a measure would be.

Your account of your visitors' good journey, voyage, and satisfaction in everything gave me the greatest pleasure. They have nice weather for their introduction to the island, and I hope, with such a disposition to be pleased, their general enjoyment is as certain as it will be just. Anna's being interested in the embarkation shows a taste that one values. Mary Jane's delight in the water is quite ridiculous. Elizabeth supposes Mrs. Hall will

¹ I have no clue to this reason.

account for it by the child's knowledge of her father's being at sea.

Mrs. J. A. hopes, as I said in my last, to see my mother soon after her return home, and will meet her at Winchester on any day she will appoint.

And now I believe I have made all the needful replies and communications, and may disport myself as I can on my Canterbury visit.

It was a very agreeable visit. There was everything to make it so—kindness, conversation, variety, without care or cost. Mr. Knatchbull, from Provender, was at the W. Friars when we arrived, and stayed dinner, which, with Harriot, who came, as you may suppose, in a great hurry, ten minutes after the time, made our number six. Mr. K. went away early ; Mr. Moore succeeded him, and we sat quietly working and talking till 10, when he ordered his wife away, and we adjourned to the dressing-room to eat our tart and jelly. Mr. M. was not unagreeable, though nothing seemed to go right with him. He is a sensible man and tells a story well.

Mrs. C. Knatchbull and I breakfasted *tête-à-tête* the next day, for her husband was gone to Mr.

Toke's, and Mrs. Knight had a sad headache which kept her in bed. She had had too much company the day before. After my coming, which was not till past two, she had Mrs. Milles, of Nackington, a Mrs. and Miss Gregory, and Charles Graham; and she told me it had been so all the morning.

Very soon after breakfast on Friday, Mrs. C. K., who is just what we have always seen her, went with me to Mrs. Brydges, and Mrs. Moore's, paid some other visits while I remained with the latter, and we finished with Mrs. C. Milles, who luckily was not at home, and whose new house is a very convenient short cut from the Oaks to the W. Friars.

We found Mrs. Knight up and better; but early as it was—only 12 o'clock—we had scarcely taken off our bonnets before company came—Ly. Knatchbull and her mother; and after them succeeded Mrs. White, Mrs. Hughes and her two children, Mr. Moore, Harriot and Louisa, and John Bridges, with such short intervals between any as to make it a matter of wonder to me that Mrs. K. and I should ever have been ten minutes alone or have had any leisure for comfortable talk, yet we had time to say a little of everything. Edward came to dinner, and at 8 o'clock

he and I got into the chair, and the pleasures of my visit concluded with a delightful drive home.

Mrs. and Miss Brydges seemed very glad to see me. The poor old lady looks much as she did three years ago, and was very particular in her enquiries after my mother. And from her and from the Knatchbulls I have all manner of kind compliments to give you both.

As Fanny writes to Anna by this post I had intended to keep my letter for another day, but, recollecting that I must keep it two, I have resolved rather to finish and send it now. The two letters will not interfere, I dare say; on the contrary, they may throw light on each other.

Mary begins to fancy, because she has received no message on the subject, that Anna does not mean to answer her letter, but it must be for the pleasure of fancying it. I think Elizabeth better and looking better than when we came.

Yesterday I introduced James to Mrs. Inman; in the evening John Bridges returned from Goodnestone, and this morning, before we had left the breakfast table, we had a visit from Mr. Whitfield, whose object, I imagine, was principally to thank my eldest brother for his assistance. Poor man! he has now a little intermission of his excessive

solicitude on his wife's account, as she is rather better. James does duty at Godmersham to-day.

The Knatchbulls had intended coming here next week, but the rent-day makes it impossible for them to be received, and I do not think there will be any spare time afterwards. They return into Somersetshire by way of Sussex and Hants, and are to be at Fareham and, perhaps, may be in Southampton, on which possibility I said all that I thought right, and, if they are in the place, Mrs. K. has promised to call in Castle Square; it will be about the end of July. She seems to have a prospect, however, of being in that county again in the spring for a longer period, and will spend a day with us if she is.

You and I need not tell each other how glad we shall be to receive attention from, or pay it to anyone connected with, Mrs. Knight. I cannot help regretting that now, when I feel enough her equal to relish her society, I see so little of the latter.

The Milles of Nackington dine here on Friday, and perhaps the Hattons. It is a compliment as much due to me as a call from the Filmers.

When you write to the island, Mary will be glad to have Mrs. Craven informed, with her love,

that she is now sure it will not be in her power to visit Mrs. Craven during her stay there, but that if Mrs. Craven can take Steventon in her way back it will be giving my brother and herself great pleasure. She also congratulates her namesake on hearing from her husband. That said namesake is rising in the world ; she was thought excessively improved in her late visit. Mrs. Knight thought her so last year. Henry sends us the welcome information of his having had no face-ache since I left them.

You are very kind in mentioning old Mrs. Williams so often. Poor creature ! I cannot help hoping that each letter may tell of her sufferings being over. If she wants sugar I should like to supply her with it.

The Moores went yesterday to Goodnestone, but return to-morrow. After Tuesday we shall see them no more, though Harriot is very earnest with Edward to take Wrotham in his journey, but we shall be in too great a hurry to get nearer to it than Wrotham Gate. He wishes to reach Guildford on Friday night, that we may have a couple of hours to spare for Alton. I shall be sorry to pass the door at Seale without calling, but it must be so ; and I shall be nearer to Bookham than

I could wish in going from Dorking to Guildford ; but till I have a travelling purse of my own I must submit to such things.

The Moores leave Canterbury on Friday, and go for a day or two to Sandling. I really hope Harriot is altogether very happy, but she cannot feel quite so much at her ease with her husband as the wives she has been used to.

Good-bye. I hope you have been long recovered from your worry on Thursday morning, and that you do not much mind not going to the Newbury races. I am withstanding those of Canterbury. Let that strengthen you.

Yours very sincerely,

JANE.

Miss Austen, Castle Square, Southampton.

XLII.

Godmersham : Thursday (June 20).

MY DEAR CASSANDRA,

I give you all joy of Frank's return, which happens in the true sailor way, just after our being told not to expect him for some weeks. The wind has been very much against him, but I suppose he must be in our neighbourhood by this time Fanny is in hourly expectation of him here.

Mary's visit in the island is probably shortened by this event. Make our kind love and congratulations to her.

What cold disagreeable weather, ever since Sunday! I dare say you have fires every day. My kerseymere spencer is quite the comfort of our evening walks.

Mary thanks Anna for her letter, and wishes her to buy enough of her new coloured frock to make a shirt handkerchief. I am glad to hear of her Aunt Maitland's kind present. We want you to send us Anna's height, that we may know whether she is as tall as Fanny; and pray can you tell me of any little thing that would be probably acceptable to Mrs. F. A.? I wish to bring her something: has she a silver knife, or would you recommend a brooch? I shall not spend more than half a guinea about it.

Our Tuesday's engagement went off very pleasantly; we called first on Mrs. Knight, and found her very well; and at dinner had only the Milles' of Nackington, in addition to Goodnestone and Godmersham, and Mrs. Moore. Lady Bridges looked very well, and would have been very agreeable, I am sure, had there been time enough for her to talk to me; but as it was, she could only

be kind and amiable, give one good-humoured smiles, and make friendly enquiries. Her son Edward was also looking very well, and with manners as unaltered as hers. In the evening came Mr. Moore, Mr. Toke, Dr. and Mrs. Walsby, and others. One card-table was formed, the rest of us sat and talked, and at half after nine we came away.

Yesterday my two brothers went to Canterbury, and J. Bridges left us for London in his way to Cambridge, where he is to take his master's degree.

Edward and Caroline and their mamma have all had the Godmersham cold, the former with sore-throat and fever, which his looks are still suffering from. *He* is very happy here, however, but I believe the little girl will be glad to go home; her cousins are too much for her. We are to have Edward, I find, at Southampton, while his mother is in Berkshire for the races, and are very likely to have his father too. If circumstances are favourable, that will be a good time for our scheme to Beaulieu.

Lady E. Hatton called here a few mornings ago, her daughter Elizth. with her, who says as little as ever, but holds up her head and smiles,

and is to be at the races. Annamaria was there with Mrs. Hope, but we are to see her here to-morrow.

So much was written before breakfast ; it is now half-past twelve, and, having heard Lizzy read, I am moved down into the library for the sake of fire, which agreeably surprised us when we assembled at ten, and here in warm and happy solitude proceed to acknowledge this day's letter.

We give you credit for your spirited voyage, and are very glad it was accomplished so pleasantly, and that Anna enjoyed it so much. I hope you are not the worse for the fatigue ; but to embark at four you must have got up at three, and most likely had no sleep at all. Mary's not choosing to be at home occasions a general small surprise. As to Martha, she has not the least chance in the world of hearing from me again, and I wonder at her impudence in proposing it. I assure you I am as tired of writing long letters as you can be. What a pity that one should still be so fond of receiving them !

Fanny Austen's match is quite news, and I am sorry she has behaved so ill. There is some comfort to us in her misconduct, that we have not a congratulatory letter to write.

James and Edward are gone to Sandling to-day—a nice scheme for James, as it will show him a new and fine country. Edward certainly excels in doing the honours to his visitors, and providing for their amusement. They come back this evening.

Elizabeth talks of going with her three girls to Wrotham while her husband is in Hampshire ; she is improved in looks since we first came, and, excepting a cold, does not seem at all unwell. She is considered, indeed, as more than usually active for her situation and size. I have tried to give James pleasure by telling him of his daughter's taste, but if he felt he did not express it. I rejoice in it very sincerely.

Henry talks, or rather writes, of going to the Downes, if the 'St. Albans' continues there, but I hope it will be settled otherwise. I had everybody's congratulations on her arrival at Canterbury. It is pleasant to be among people who know one's connections and care about them, and it amuses me to hear John Bridges talk of 'Frank.' I have thought a little of writing to the Downs, but I shall not, it is so very certain that he would be somewhere else when my letter got there.

Mr. Tho. Leigh is again in town, or was very

lately. Henry met with him last Sunday in St. James's Church. He owned being come up unexpectedly on business, which we of course think can be only *one* business, and he came post from Adlestrop in one day, which, if it could be doubted before, convinces Henry that he will live for ever.

Mrs. Knight is kindly anxious for our good, and thinks Mr. L. P.¹ *must* be desirous for *his family's* sake to have everything settled. Indeed I do not know where we are to get our legacy, but we will keep a sharp look-out. Lady B. was all in prosperous black the other day.

A letter from Jenny Smalbone to her daughter brings intelligence which is to be forwarded to my mother—the calving of a cow at Steventon. I am also to give her mamma's love to Anna, and say that as her papa talks of writing her a letter of comfort she will *not* write, because she knows it would certainly prevent his doing so.

When are calculations ever right? I could have sworn that Mary must have heard of the 'St. Albans' return, and would have been wild to come home or to be doing something. Nobody ever feels or acts, suffers or enjoys, as one expects.

¹ Leigh Perrot.

I do not at all regard Martha's disappointment in the island ; she will like it the better in the end. I cannot help thinking and re-thinking of your going to the island so heroically. It puts me in mind of Mrs. Hastings' voyage down the Ganges, and, if we had but a room to retire into to eat our fruit, we would have a picture of it hung there.

Friday, July 1.—The weather is mended, which I attribute to my writing about it ; and I am in hopes, as you make no complaint, though on the water and at four in the morning, that it has not been so cold with you.

It will be two years to-morrow since we left Bath for Clifton, with what happy feelings of escape !

This post has brought me a few lines from the amiable Frank, but he gives us no hope of seeing him here. We are not unlikely to have a peep at Henry, who, unless the 'St. Albans' moves quickly, will be going to the Downs, and who will not be able to be in Kent without giving a day or two to Godmersham.

James has heard this morning from Mrs. Cooke, in reply to his offer of taking Bookham in his way home, which is kindly accepted ; and Edwd. has had a less agreeable answer from Dr. Goddard,

who actually refuses the petition. Being once fool enough to make a rule of never letting a boy go away an hour before the breaking-up hour, he is now fool enough to keep it. We are all disappointed. His letter brings a double disappointment, for he has no room for George this summer.

My brothers returned last night at ten, having spent a very agreeable day in the usual routine. They found Mrs. D.¹ at home, and Mr. D. returned from business abroad to dinner. James admires the place very much, and thinks the two eldest girls handsome, but Mary's beauty has the preference. The number of children struck him a good deal, for not only are their own eleven all at home, but the three little Bridgeses are also with them.

James means to go once more to Canty. to see his friend Dr. Marlowe, who is coming about this time. *I* shall hardly have another opportunity of going there. In another week *I* shall be at home, and there, my having been at Godmersham will seem like a dream, as my visit at Brompton seems already.

The orange wine will want our care soon. But in the meantime, for elegance and ease and luxury,

¹ Deedes.

the Hattons and Milles' dine here to-day, and I shall eat ice and drink French wine, and be above vulgar economy. Luckily the pleasures of friendship, of unreserved conversation, of similarity of taste and opinions, will make good amends for orange wine.

Little Edwd. is quite well again.

Yours affectionately, with love from all,

J. A.

Miss Austen, Castle Square, Southampton.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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