Jane Austen Society of North America

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"JANE AUSTEN DAY" SUCCESS

"...the exquisite feelings of delight and entertainment" (Emma)

A real "celebration" of Jane Austen took place at the first annual "Jane Austen Day" on March 12th. In the elegant surroundings of Brock House, an enthusiastic audience listened to learned talks, viewed interesting slides, savoured a delicious lunch, coveted beautiful gowns, and joined in the chorus of rousing sea shanties, for a thoroughly enjoyable day.

Dr. Christine Liotta easily caught everyone's interest - even first thing in the morning - with her discussion of the seducers in Jane Austen's novels, tracing the lineage of this literary convention of the "charming villain", from Milton's Satan in Paradise Lost, through the rakes of Jane Austen's immediate predecessors and contemporaries, to Willoughby, Wickham, Henry Crawford, et al.

Mr. Abraham Rogatnick, calling on his wide experience in architecture, led us through time, showing slides of Bath from pre-Roman days to the elegance of the fashionable spa town in Georgian times.

After a relaxing lunch, the audience was instructed, impressed and delighted by Ivan Sayers' profound knowledge of the dress of the period, illustrated with slides, beautiful examples of gowns, robes, pelisses and accessories, and delightful anecdotes of the original owners and the vicissitudes of collecting period costume.

Mike Absalom, a well-known folk singer and children's entertainer, led the group in rousing choruses of sea shanties, forming an appropriate nautical introduction to Commander Bill Paull's depiction of life in Nelson's navy, where a captain, like Captain Wentworth, with an annual salary of £200 could make £66,000 with the prize money from the capture of one enemy vessel.

When the day was over, we could say, with Mrs. Norris, that it had been "Nothing but pleasure from beginning to end!"

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HAYDN'S SYMPHONIES

"What a happy day for book-sellers, music-sellers and print-shops!" (S&S)

Franz Joseph Haydn, the 18th c. Austrian composer, visited London between 1791 and 1795, and while there, wrote the scores of his last 12 symphonies, numbers 93 to 104, regarded as the greatest of Haydn's symphonic output. These works have recently been purchased by the British Library for $1.35 million.

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ILLUSTRATORS OF JANE AUSTEN

"We can all begin freely - a slight preference is natural". (P&P)

Jane Austen gives us only a few clues about what her characters actually look like. Our own imaginations, sometimes helped by illustrations in various editions, supply the details. Most of the early editions of her works were not illustrated, or only had a single picture, as frontispiece, often a copy of the sketch drawn by Cassandra. When the novels gained popularity towards the end of the 19th c., they were issued with illustrations by well-known artists. The two illustrators whose work has proved to be most popular, reprinted in editions ever since, were Hugh Thomson and C.E.Brock. Some readers have a decided preference for one over the other.

Starting a series in the Newsletter, at the suggestion of Keiko Parker who will supply copies of the illustrations, we will show the work of the two artists, where they have illustrated the same scene in Pride and Prejudice, so you will have an opportunity to compare the different drawing techniques and ideas.

HUGH THOMSON, 1860-1920, born and brought up in a farming community in Ireland, had a love of nature, a keen eye and a good visual memory. He began to draw at an early age, working by himself with little formal training. He was apprenticed to a linen manufacturer and then to a printer. He moved to London and gradually gained recognition.

Thomson was commissioned to illustrate Days With Sir Roger de Coverley in 1886, Cranford in 1891 and all six of Jane Austen's novels in 1894-96. He had a sensitive and sympathetic feeling for the text. In The Illustrator and the Book in England, Gordon Ray writes: "Thomson emphasizes, not the profound and unsparing study of human relationships which has led one critic to refer to Jane Austen's 'regulated hatred', but the Cranfordian elements in her work. If Emma herself is simply one more pretty young woman and Mr. Kinghtley is presented chiefly in terms of his 'tall, firm, upright figure', Thomson is adroit in showing the surface peculiarities of the novels' shallower personages". Thomson is at his best when he is depicting comic, middle-aged or eccentric characters. His heroines have the "dainty charm" of the Victorian and Edwardian ages.

"She is tolerable," Darcy said of Elizabeth.

"She is tolerable; but not handsome enough to tempt me."

CHARLES EDMUND BROCK, 1870-1938, was born in London, the eldest of four artist brothers who worked together at their home in Cambridge. Brock's father was a specialist in Mediæval and Oriental languages; his mother came from a family of artists and sculptors. He studied art under a sculptor and became a well-known book illustrator and portrait painter, exhibiting at the Royal Academy and the Royal Institute of Painters.

Some of Brock's early work was shown to the Macmillan staff and by his early 20's he was well established as a book illustrator. In 1895, he illustrated Pride and Prejudice; he and his brother Henry M. Brock did the drawings for ten volumes of the novels, edited by Richard Brimley Johnson in 1898. Later C.E.Brock illustrated all Jane Austen's novels at various times from 1907 to 1928.

To young students, Brock advised, "...the cultivation of the powers of observation seems very important...To keep your drawing fresh should be a constant aim, though I know full well how hard it is to avoid the little hackneyed tricks that save time and thought, but gradually reduce work to a monotonous level.... The pen is rather an exacting tool, and I find it advisable to lay down a fairly firm pencil foundation before beginning with the pen." He had a strong feeling for historical accuracy, as did Hugh Thomson.

For further reading, see these two biographies:

Kelly, C.M., The Brocks, A Family of Cambridge Artists and Illustrators (1975).

Jerrold, Walter and Marion H. Spielmann, Hugh Thomson, His Art, His Letters, His Humour and His Charm (1931).

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JASNA VANCOUVER LIBRARY

"I cannot comprehend the neglect of a ...library". (P&P)

Our own private library is growing, albeit slowly. We now have one book, the Vox edition of Sanditon, The Watsons, Lady Susan, etcetera; and three of the novels on audio tape, unabridged: Pride and Prejudice (10 cassettes), Emma (12 cassettes) and Persuasion (6 cassettes) - these are all beautifully read. We now also have the delightful Our Own Particular Jane (1 cassette), as performed at the Vancouver Conference. Any member who would like to borrow any of these works, please let me know.

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SAVANNAH...IS THAT THE RIGHT QUESTION? by Dianne Kerr.

"...in some small degree to resist such high authority". (NA)

As a relatively new member of JASNA, it has just recently been my pleasure to enjoy a hearing of the Savannah Conference tape. What joy to be among so many friends, while driving twenty-five miles to a Duplicate Bridge Tournament, wrapped alone in the warm cocoon of one's car, along a dark highway!

But, Friends, the concluding conversation baffled me: the unresolved queries concern Jane Austen's interment in Winchester Cathedral. Half a dozen different voices can be distinguished on the tape, each expressing great puzzlement concerning the reason for the interment; each offering argument against all possible explanations.

Surely this cannot be in question. Surely there can be only one answer. Cathedrals constructed of stone and concrete are not excavated at whim or chance or request. Earnest entreaty by family cannot obtain such advantage -- even entreaty by a family including two Naval Commanders made, both Admirals in the making. Likewise, even a petition, circulated and signed by every member of a parish, is not sufficient to obtain such hallowing honour, even for the most saintly remains -- prelates in authority are not amenable to popular demand.

So who does command such extrordinarily honourable interment? It has to have been the House of Hanover. The Prince Regent may not have actually held the title "Defender of the Faith" and "Head of the Church of England" while he acted for his father, but he certainly had the pertinent authority. Reportedly, he kept a copy of all six novels in each one of his residences; as a matter of record, we know for certain that he invited Jane Austen to dedicate one of them to him. He was one of us!! He must have been as eagerly waiting for the next novel as any one of us would have been, had we been he. And he certainly would not have lacked the temerity to enquire as to when it was coming! He must have learned the bad news somewhat in advance of her death.

Has no-one ever examined the Royal Correspondence of 1817? Has it not been retained? How about the records of Winchester Cathedral itself? If the Bishop received Royal Command, which he must have done, would he not have retained so significant a Document? Evidently, the Bishop was not a Janeite; otherwise he could have neither composed nor permitted that incredibly irrelevant Marker.

It has been suggested to me that the Bishop probably told the family to compose the Inscription -- a highly probable assumption. But Jane Austen's brother Henry didn't respect her request for anonymity in life; why should he do so in death? Were Jane Austen's family not proud of her? Were they really so envious of her grreat talent that they could not bring themselves to credit her, even in death?

An Epitaph fit for an unknown pygmy marks the grave of a Universal Giant -- is not this the real mystery of Winchester Cathedral?

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Oh! my sins, my sins! (*Emma*)

Mansfield Park is Jane Austen's deepest, most complex novel, and it can be read in any number of ways. At a recent discussion, one person said she felt the whole work was pervaded by religious feeling. Another called it an allegory, with the two pilgrims, Edmund and Fanny, striving against evil (the Crawfords, Mrs. Norris, etc.) in their search for self-awareness, grace - whatever. Another view was that the novel reflected Spenser's Faerie Queene: Edmund was the Red Cross Knight, Fanny was Una; they were surrounded by the Seven Deadly Sins - Gluttony, Lechery, Sloth, and so on. This idea intrigued me, and I looked up the poem to see what resemblance there was.

The Seven Deadly Sins were formulated in the Middle Ages. Mediæval morality plays introduced them in character, and Spenser, in his poem The Faerie Queene in 1590, gave a masterly description of them, riding in procession on their appropriate steeds (Gluttony on a swine, Lechery on a goat, Wrath on a lion, and so on) and drawing a coach with Satan as the coachman.

Spenser described Idleness or Sloth as the leader, but what a leader! *The way was very evil led When such a one had the guiding of the way.* Does this describe Lady Bertram's "guidance" of her daughters?

Gluttony, the next, is *not meet to be of counsel to a king, whose mind in meat and drink was drowned so.* Was Dr. Grant, the incumbent of Mansfield Parsonage, much of a counsellor to his parishioners?

The description of Lechery is most suitable for Henry Crawford: *For he was false, and fraught with fickleness, and learned to love with secret looks And well could dance, and sing with ruefulness; And fortunes tell, and read in loving books And thousand other ways to bait his fleshly hooks.* And later, *joyed weak women's hearts to tempt, and prove, If from their loyal loves he might them move.*

Avarice could only be Mrs. Norris: *through daily care To get, and nightly fear to lose his own, he led a wretched life, unto himself unknown,* or, *who had enough, yet wished ever more.*

The parallels are not always exact. Spenser's Envy is too strong a depiction for Julia Bertram: *grudged at the great felicity of proud Lucifera,* or *for death it was, when any good he saw...but when he heard of harm he waxed wondrous glad.*

Sir Thomas Bertram may have been very angry at the theatricals, or at Fanny's refusal to marry Henry Crawford, but he was not the picture of Wrath as Spenser saw him: *For of his hands he had no government, Nor cared for blood in his avengement: But, when the furious fit was overpast, His cruel facts he often would repent.*

Pride, the seventh sin, is not of this group in Spenser, but these are the "six sage counsellors" of Proserpine, the Queen of Hell: *proud Lucifera men did her call That made herself a Queen, and crowned to be; Yet rightful kingdom had she none at all Nor heritage of native sovereignty; But did usurp with wrong and tyranny Upon the sceptre which she now did hold.* Was this Mary Crawford, usurping the place in Edmund's heart which belonged to Fanny?

Jane Austen probably had read Spenser's Faerie Queene, but that she intentionally modelled her characters on his is unlikely. It is sometimes fun, as Jane Austen herself says, to "speculate and wonder".

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FURTHER THOUGHTS ON THE SECRET ENGAGEMENTS IN "EMMA" - by Keiko Parker

"...so admirably adapted for secret discourses and unlimited confidence". (NA)

Diana Birchall presented her argument regarding the significance of the legality of the Churchill/Fairfax engagement in the February 1988 Newsletter, No. 21, but I question how valid it really is. I would like to bring up three points.

Firstly, it has been the custom throughout the ages for any young man to come to an understanding with his beloved before he seeks approval of his parents/guardians and his would-be fiancée's parents/guardians. Even the mighty Mr. Darcy sounds out Elizabeth Bennet (for the second time, bless him!) before he seeks Mr. Bennet in his library to ask for his daughter's hand in marriage.

In spite of the concern for an adequate income expressed in her novels, Jane Austen firmly believed that marrying without love is wrong. Thus Frank Churchill may be excused for asking Jane Fairfax to marry him when they fell in love. He cannot be faulted for this.

Having stated that, I come to my second point -- Frank Churchill's legal status. I find this passage in Chapter 2 of Emma (Chapman, p.17):

> ...as to Frank, it was more than being tacitly brought up as his uncle's heir, it had become so avowed an adoption as to have him assume the name of Churchill on coming of age (italics are mine).

Having come of age in fact, Frank Churchill was legally his own man and it was within his legal right to ask anyone to marry him, except that he had constantly to bow to the haughty Mrs. Churchill's wishes. And there's the rub! He took no steps to formalize the engagement, afraid that Mrs. Churchill would not approve and that he would risk losing his inheritance. That Frank Churchill could have married Jane Fairfax at once if he so wished, is proved in an earlier passage in Chapter 2 where:

> Miss Churchill [Frank's own mother],...being of age, and with the full command of her fortune...was not to be dissuaded from the marriage [to Mr. Weston], and it took place...[and] Mr. and Mrs. Churchill...threw her off with due decorun (italics are mine).

What stopped Frank Churchill from formalizing his engagement was of course his unwillingness to risk losing the considerable "family estate", of which - at this juncture - he was probably not in "full command".

And for her part, Jane Fairfax did nothing to persuade Frank Churchill to make their engagement public, nor did she herself confide in the Campbells or in Mrs. or Miss Bates. It is this secrecy and the underhanded dealings that make the engagement morally wrong.

Thirdly, if Jane Austen had intended us to consider the Churchill/Fairfax engagement from a legal point of view, she would have dropped a hint of it somewhere in her novel. Being the subtle artist she was, a word would suffice to make her point, as evidenced in her use of the world "dilapidations" in MP, Chapter 6, Chapman p.55 (which has been explained by High McKellar in Persuasions No.7).

In my reading to date,I have discovered no reference to the legality of the Churchill/Fairfax engagement. What I do find is an overwhelming condemnation of its secrecy and of Frank Churchill's flirtation with Emma for the purpose of camouflaging his real situation. (I refrain from repeating extensive quotes here).

It is a truth universally acknowledged that when studying and discussing a work of literature, one must remain faithful to the text itself. I could do no better than to follow this principle, and have merely written down what I have deduced from reading Emma. I submit that Jane Austen's disapprobation of the Churchill/Fairfax engagement is based on disapproval of their motives and behaviour. As for my defense of the Knightley/Woodhouse engagement, my opinions remain as stated in our Newsletter NO. 20 of November 1987.

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A BUSY TIME IN CHICAGO

"The table between the windows was covered with work-boxes..." (MP)

The Chicago members have been busy for many months duplicating a quilt made by Jane Austen and her mother, with chintz patterns as nearly exact as possible. The final stage has now been reached: during the Sundays of May, members will have quilting bees joining the batting and backing to the completed and gorgeous top! Following a well established Austen tradition, they will be read to while they work. The finished quilt will be on display at the 1988 conference in Chicago, and will be well worth seeing.

Conference registration forms and the initial information is in the mail. The cost is going to be reasonable, and the programme sounds varied and interesting.

The annual Gala Day in Chicago was on Saturday, April 30th. The programme included talks on Emma, "Each time we read the book our perception of the heroine changes"; Jane Austen as a writer of comedy, "concentrating on P&P and A Midsummer Night's Dream"; and "Trivial Details or Significant Clues?" - why did General Tilney grow pineapples? who cut Mr. Woodhouse's hair? etc. Besides that, there was a demonstration - with samples for tasting - of a "typical English afternoon tea, and a baffling quiz! Sounds like a good day.

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HARP MUSIC

"A young woman, pretty, lively, with a harp as elegant as herself". (MP)

I wonder what music Mary Crawford played to Edmund, "with the greatest obligingness, with an expression and taste which were peculiarly becoming" and with "something clever to be said at the close of every air". Her music, which she speaks of as "a pretty piece", or "my most plaintive airs", may well have been taken from one of the three volumes produced by Edward Bunting (1773-1843), a pioneer collector of Irish folktunes. His collections of tunes were the basis of the great upsurge of renewed interest in traditional Irish and Scottish harp music, airs and reels, hornpipes, jigs and other dances - with titles such as The Lilting Banshee, Great High Wind, The Wild Geese, The Morning Dew, or Give Me Your Hand. Played with Mary Crawford's "superior tone and expression", these airs could well charm Edmund "sitting in that room again and again...listening with constant delight to the favourite air".

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SUMMER READING

"Two lines more prized had never...more completely blessed the researches of the fondest biographer". (MP)

Life of Jane Austen (John Halperin): ..."relentlessly unsympathetic reading of Austen's character...he quotes all the favourite examples of Austen's crabbiness from the letters...he suspects ill nature in scores of harmless quips - for it is one of the peculiarities of this writer on Austen that he seems to have no way of telling when she's joking...Mr. Halperin isn't so much a biographer as a polemicist, and his book will stand or fall on its revision of Austen's personality." - Marilyn Butler.

Jane Austen: Her Life (Park Honan): "He knows he has not produced any startling new evidence but his point is that since Jane Austen cared more for her family than for the outside world, every scrap about every member of that family must add to our knowledge of her...He is at his best when describing how Jane Austen felt about her books - her satisfaction at her own success, her remarkable ability to thrive without the spur of fame, and above all her faith in the form the the novel itself". - Margaret Forster.

Jane Austen (Elizabeth Jenkins): "Not seeking far into family manuscript material but assessing with fine tact and insight what she saw, Elizabeth Jenkins...writes the best of the modern biographies on the subject. Scanty on family background, she offers a detailed and convincing portrait of Jane Austen in her Georgian and Regency settings, with intelligent insight into her family and friends, in a narrative fairly alert to persons". (Park Honan).

Portrait of Jane Austen (Lord David Cecil): "[This biography] though not deeply researched, offers a mild and affectionate portrait of the novelist with due attention to her milieux...Lacking here is a probing assessment of her ideas, contradictions, or motivations..." (Park Honan).

Double Life of Jane Austen (Jane Aiken Hodge): "...based on the logical thesis that Jane Austen in private life was a more conventional figure than the woman who, with so much intelligence and art, managed to write the novels".(Park Honan).

It's hard to please everyone.

These are quotations from biographies of Jane Austen which have come out in recent years. Here is your HOLIDAY TASK: read one or more of these biographies over the summer, and see if you enjoy them, hate them, think they could be improved, find aspects of JA's life that they fail to discuss, or distort -- the September meeting will be a discussion of Jane Austen's biographies, and biographers.

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LONG SERMON

Sunday, April 4, 1819 - "The vicar was three hours at Church - to the great weariness of the Congregation whose dinners were spoiled". From: "A Year With the Ladies of Llangollen" - Elizabeth Mavor.

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OPIUM

"...potions to be procured, like rhubarb, from every druggist" (NA)

Mrs. Austen, "suffering from the exercise and fatigue of travelling", was advised by her doctor to "take twelve drops of laudanum when she went to bed as a composer". Jane Austen reported this in a letter to her sister, and later boasts, "I am very grand indeed; I had the dignity of dropping out my mother's laudanum last night."

The main use of opium was to relieve pain, but a secondary effect was the state of euphoria, a sensation of tranquillity and pleasure. Classical references to the use of "the plant of joy" occur in writing from Mesopotamia, Persia and Egypt, as well as other regions of the East. In Homer's Odyssey, Helen brought a drink to Telemachus and Menelaus in Sparta which brought about "forgetfulness of evil". Roman accounts speak of opium as being so popular in Rome it was sold by ordinary shop-keepers. Opium use was brought to Europe by the Mohammedans, and the returning Crusaders, and by the 16th century was well established in Western European medicine.

The soporific and narcotic qualities of the drug were mentioned by Chaucer and Shakespeare: "Not poppy, nor mandragora, Nor all the drowsy syrups of the world, Shall ever medicine thee to that sweet sleep". Paracelsus, the 16th century German physician, was the first to use the term laudanum, but his was probably in the form of pills. The English physician Thomas Sydenham, who originated the alcoholic tincture in the 1660's, had great praise for it: "Medicine would be a cripple without it; and whosoever understands it well, will do more with it alone than he could well hope to do from any single medicine".

Addiction was seldom discussed in medical literature of the time, and was accepted calmly with no moral condemnation. By the time of Jane Austen, laudanum and other opium mixtures were basic and highly useful medicines found in every home, and openly sold; regular users of opium were accepted in society. Although Jane Austen doesn't use the words laudanum or opium in the novels, "lavender drops" calmed Marianne's hysteria when Willoughby abandoned her, and later, when she was very ill, "cordials" were administered by Elinor. In Sanditon, one of the sisters in a notably hypochondriac family, "sat with salts in her hand, took Drops two or three times from one out of the several Phials already at home on the Mantelpiece".

Opium was imported into England through regular channels, and the only concern was with quality and profit. In the 18th and 19th centuries, most of the opium came from Turkey, mainly through London where the Turkey merchants sold it through drug brokers. Bad harvests, varying rates of import duty and the quality of the product caused considerable fluctuations in price and the same speculation by traders as in any other commodity.

An interesting aspect of the "improving" of estates in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, was the increased productivity brought about by crop-rotation, improved agricultural techniques, and the introduction of new crops such as turnips and rhubarb. Also included in these innovative crops was opium. The white opium poppy was indigenous in the Fen country and other areas, and poppy-head tea and fomentations had long been among folk remedies. "I make no doubt that it may be brought to the greatest perfection in this country, and rendered at one half the price at which we have it from the East", was written in 1796 to the Society of Arts, which encouraged experiments in growing new medicinal plants, and offered gold medals and monetary rewards for those producing extensive amounts of opium.

Experimentation and production of opium lasted from the late 1790's for about thirty years. It was a labour-intensive crop, and children were often employed, at a few pence a day, to incise the poppy-head and scrape off the juice which ran out. There was a ready market, and the product was considered more effective and purer than the imported drug, but it did not prove to be a successful crop -- the uncertainties of the English climate, the attractions of other more easily grown and harvested crops, and "marauding hares" all contributed to the lack of success. The contemporary discussions of the agricultural possibilities, the various potential sources of cheap labour, and the calculations of profits and losses all emphasize society's matter of fact acceptance of opium use at this period.

In Eccentric Travellers, John Keay writes of the explorer Captain Philip Thicknesse in 1776: "From his days as an apothecary's apprentice, Thicknesse knew that most patent medicines were useless. The agony of gallstones merited something stronger and only opium, taken in alarming quantities, fitted the bill. The fact that it was addictive need not cause alarm. 'By having been compelled to make use of opium in my youth, I now find it necessary in age and seldom miss it a single day...It gives me spirits by day and by night a kind of quiet repose rather than sleep'."

Wholesale drug firms marketed opium along with their other medicines, sometimes as many as a dozen or two different opium preparations: opium pills (opium mixed with soap or lead), lozenges, powders, confections, plasters, enemas, liniments, vinegars and wines, all with an opium base. Those with the most widespread use were laudanum (opium dissolved in alcohol) and paregoric (a camphorated tincture). At small corner shops anyone could buy nationally famous preparations like Dover's Powder, a mixture of ipecacuanha and powdered opium originally prescribed for gout, and various patent medicines made from opium mixed with various amounts of sherry, alcohol, saltpetre, tartar, liquorice, ipecacuanha or calcium hydrate, with suggestive names like Godfrey's Cordial, Soothing Syrup, Infants' Preservative, or Infants' Quietness. Many of these were favourite family mixtures, and were used for a whole range of complaints -- whooping-cough, head and stomach pains, rheumatism, nervous diseases, and fatigue and depression. Accidental overdosing, often leading to death, was all too common under such conditions of casual sale and self-administration.

Dr. Samuel Johnson, in his Dictionary, gives a thorough (and very interesting) account of opium, where it comes from, what it looks like at various stages, how it is harvested, its medicinal uses, and its effects when used externally and internally. He ends up with the warning: "An immoderate dose of opium brings on drunkenness, cheerfulness and loud laughter at first, and, after many terrible symptoms, death itself. Those who have accustomed themselves to an immoderate use of opium are apt to be faint, idle and thoughtless; they lose their appetite, and grow old before their time".

He knew from personal experience -- his friend Mrs. Hester Lynch Thrale, writing about Johnson's wife, said "The intelligence I gained of her from Levett, was only perpetual illness and perpetual opium".

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"I know the summer will pass happily away" (S&S)...filled with *"summer finery and summer engagements"* (P&P), and when Autumn comes, may you all be able to say, *"I never spent so happy a summer"*. (MP).

-- Eileen Sutherland