

VANCOUVER REGION NEWSLETTER No. 43 August 1993

SUMMER JOURNEYS - Eileen Sutherland.

In the summer of 1813, Jane Austen wrote to her sister Cassandra of a journey to London: putting up the "head" of the curricule occasionally to avoid "trifling showers", escorted by her brother Henry, strolling around looking at views whilst waiting to rest the horses, purchasing inexpensive gloves, dining upon veal cutlets and cold ham, enjoying extensive views of the countryside, and finally arriving at her destination - "a twelve hours' business, and the horses did not appear more than reasonably tired. I was very tired too, and very glad to get to bed early, but am quite well today. Upon the whole it was an excellent journey & very thoroughly enjoyed by me".

If Laura Secord, almost exactly the same age as Jane Austen (one born in September and the other in December, 1775) had the time or the inclination to write that summer, what a different journey she would have told about!

Laura's father, Thomas Ingersoll, was a captain in the Massachusetts militia, but hard times after the Revolution decided him to move to Upper Canada, where he received a grant of land on the Thames River. Laura was the eldest of his ten children. James Secord was still a child when his United Empire Loyalist family settled on a land grant in the Niagara Peninsula. He and Laura were married about 1797, and settled near Queenston, where they cleared land, built a cabin and raised their young family of four girls and a boy.

"War" for Jane Austen was danger for her sailor brothers, bloody battles in the far-off Peninsula and in France, and the threat of invasion. But it could seem far away and of no immediate concern - news of a battle came several months after the event.

But for Laura Secord, "war" was invading American forces in her own village, houses of her neighbours burned and looted, and the immediate threat of death to the men defending Upper Canada and to their wives and children, sometimes behind the enemy lines. In 1812, at the battle of Queenston Heights, when the American forces crossed the Niagara River at night and attacked the British and Canadians, James Secord was badly wounded in his shoulder and knee. Laura found him later on the battlefield and took him home to nurse him.

By the middle of June, 1813, neither the British nor the Americans had control of the whole of the Niagara Peninsula. The Americans at Fort George controlled the entrance to the Niagara River and dominated the road to Queenston. The British were on the south side of Lake Ontario, with various other outposts. Lieutenant James FitzGibbon and 50 hand-picked men took up a position at DeCew's (pronounced De Koo) house near Beaver Dams, to observe the enemy and harass American troops as much as possible.

The Americans determined to capture FitzGibbon. Just how the Secords learned of their plans is not known. The tradition in the family is that several officers were billeted in their home, or (another version) came and demanded food. While they were eating and drinking - the Secords could not resist these demands - they spoke of their plans. Laura Secord heard, and determined to warn FitzGibbon. There was no one else to go - James could not.



Laura Secord in old age

At dawn on June 22nd, accompanied by her niece, Elizabeth, Laura set out. She is traditionally pictured wearing a dress of brown cotton print with little orange flowers, with a long, straight skirt almost to the ground, gathered at the back and with a high waistline. She had a white muslin kerchief around her neck and a white cotton bonnet. On her feet she wore house slippers of light kid with low heels and ties at the instep.

The story that Laura Secord drove a cow through the woods to disguise her errand is complete fable (of 1864). She expected to have to avoid American outposts or sentries, but as a matter of fact, she met none.

The two women avoided the direct road, and took a longer way by Shipman's Corners. This would bring them sooner into British-held territory, and perhaps they would meet British officers on the way. Through swamps and woods along muddy roads, plagued by heat, humidity and swarms of mosquitoes, with slippers coming off in the mud, and gowns torn on branches, they trudged along. Elizabeth, never strong (she died the next year), gave up, blistered and exhausted, but Laura was determined to continue. Avoiding roads, travelling over fields and through woods, uncertain of the way, afraid of wild animals and expecting to meet American soldiers, she trudged on. Night fell before she completed the 19 miles and came to DeCew Falls, crossed the swift Twelve Mile Creek, and climbed the last high hill.

Suddenly she was surrounded by yelling Indians. She mustered her courage, stood firm and resolute, and demanded to be taken to Captain FitzGibbon. After some nerve-racking hesitation, the Indians took her to FitzGibbon.

FitzGibbon was amazed at her story. But the flushed, tattered, exhausted woman finally convinced him. She was escorted to a nearby farm for safety, and he made his plans. He had only 50 men, but over 400 friendly Indians had lately encamped nearby.

The American Colonel Boerstler set out with 500 men on June 24th from Fort George to Queenston, taking great care to keep their whereabouts from the British. FitzGibbon's Indian scouts detected the advancing troops the next day and took the news to the Captain. The Indians were placed hidden in the woods rather than in the regular formation for attack. The American troops - mounted militiamen, foot soldiers, artillery with field guns, and cavalrymen - were hot and tired from their march. When they entered the woods they were taken completely by surprise and forced to fight at both front and rear. Trained to battle in orderly lines, they had no experience dealing with an enemy firing and hidden by trees, and had no idea of the number of Indians opposing them. They thought the British regular troops were being kept in reserve to attack them later. The two senior American officers were wounded but continued to fight bravely. However, their troops were exhausted, and no provision had been made for reinforcements. They had no choice but to surrender. Over 400 American soldiers, including 22 officers, became prisoners of war.

The Montreal Gazette of July 6, 1813, reported the battle in glowing terms, referring to the "little band of heroes" gaining a bloodless victory. The Indian viewpoint was quite different: "The Caughnawagas fought the battle, the Mohawks got the plunder, and Lieutenant FitzGibbon got the credit". In any case, Laura Secord seemed to have been forgotten.

This battle of Beaver Dams presented a serious reverse to the Americans. They completely lost the initiative in the Niagara Peninsula. Before the end of the year they abandoned Fort George and withdrew across the Niagara River. If they had not been stopped at Beaver Dams, if they had captured FitzGibbon and his men, they would probably have followed up this victory by attacking the other British strongholds and kept the initiative in the Niagara frontier.

The Secord home was behind enemy lines at the time. For anyone to know what Laura Secord had done would have been extremely dangerous to her and her family. She and James took up their lives again, and managed to scrape by in the hard years following the war. James received a small belated pension and minor government appointments. He died in 1841, but Laura lived on until October 17th, 1868, aged 93.

Later historians questioned the story of Laura Secord's desperate journey, but found it confirmed in testimonials by FitzGibbon. Fame came slowly, but gradually the story of Laura Secord has become part of Canada's history.

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A LOUSY STORY - Mary Millard, Ontario.

Several books and articles on JA's life state that, when at school in Southampton, Jane, Cassandra, and their cousin Jane Cooper, became dangerously ill "of a putrid fever", which the authors define as typhus.

This must be wrong, and I think that I know how such an insulting mistake has come about. The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary (two huge heavy volumes in my edition) says so. The eminent lexicographers did not check their information with an epidemiologist.

Ordinary typhus fever is almost always transmitted by LICE. Are we supposed to believe that JA was lousy? Unthinkable -- and that goes for Marianne Dashwood, too. Lice affect the filthy. Surely Jane Austen and her relations, as well as the characters in her novels (don't forget Harriet Smith), had clean sheets and underwear, vigorously washed and ironed.

Thousands of years before Jane Austen's time some diseases were known to be infectious, although germs were yet to be discovered. A "putrid" ailment produced a nasty goo (pus), which might be smelly. What did the girls have? Perhaps it was streptococcus sore throat, which can be followed by scarlet fever or rheumatic fever, and, as a result, there may be damage to the heart. Diphtheria is another possibility. You don't have to be dirty to get those diseases.

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HONOURS

Our member, Irene Howard, received a singular honour this Spring. Her recent book, The Struggle for Social Justice in British Columbia: Helena Gutteridge, the Unknown Reformer, was short-listed (one of three) for the Hubert Evans Prize for non-fiction among B.C. books. Our sincere congratulations to Irene.

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MARRIAGE LICENCES

Ten thousand a year, and very likely more! 'Tis as good as a Lord! And a special licence. You must and shall be married by a special licence.

A question was raised at one of our meetings, asking what Mrs. Bennet meant by her reference to "a special licence". Dr. Bursewicz supplied some more details:

There were three types of marriage licences. In the ordinary way, banns were read in the parish church, and the marriage took place between the hours of 8 a.m. and noon. By obtaining a Bishop's Licence, probably at a price, the marriage could be performed at any hour and in any church in the diocese. By Special Licence, however, the couple could be married at any hour, in any parish, and by any priest in England. The cost for this privilege was 50 guineas. Thus the prestige was great.

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NAMES AND TITLES

Some time ago Libba Faison queried the North Carolina Newsletter: "Why did Jane and Emma call each other 'Miss'? They had always known each other and were presumed to be friends. The Musgroves and Elliots, the Bennets and Lucases all used Christian names with each other. So why the departure here? And, again, why have Janes's manners always been 'so cold and artificial'; why had she 'always a part to act'; and why had she always led 'a life of deceit'? Jane did not know Frank Churchill at the age of 10 or even 15. So why 'always'?"

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THE LIBRARIAN'S DILEMMA - Dianne Kerr.

Those of you present at our meeting last March will recall that mention was made of an essay entitled "Poor Emma" [in: There are no Ghosts in the Soviet Union, by Reginald Hill]. Joan Austen-Leigh responded to some curiosity about it; evidently motivated only by thoughts of a generous nature, she has sent me her copy, stating that we need not return it to her.

But, your faithful Librarian happens to have read it some time ago, and considers it to be the most scurrilous travesty of anything she has ever had the misfortune to read. She cannot bring herself to re-read it. The story line, with the foregoing proviso, runs somewhat as follows:

George Knightley becomes very fat, very ugly, very pompous, very dishonest and dishonourable...not to mention rude and abusive. He gambles wildly (I take it this is poking fun at P&P: "A gamester", cried Jane in horror, "I had not an idea of it"). He cannot, or simply does not, manage either Hartfield or Donwell, and goes heavily into debt. So he moves to London to take his seat in Parliament, and he keeps at least one or two mistresses while there.

John Knightley is ruined financially because he steals and gambles away, or simply fritters away, money which his clients have left in Trust with him. Penniless, he and Isabella move into Donwell, whence he immediately initiates schemes to deprive the George Knightleys of ownership. A legal battle see-saws back and forth through many pages of garbage, ending in triumph for the John Knightleys, due in some way to the fact that the George Knightleys have no issue, and anyway all their money has been eaten up by the lawyers, i.e. Mr. Coxe, representing the George Knightleys, while John Knightley loses nothing, since he represents himself, and also has the income from Donwell.

Mr. Weston dies, and Frank Churchill rushes in to grab the spoils. (I can't remember what happened to Enscombe). Mrs. Weston then becomes a Roman Catholic, a fanatic catholic who is regarded as a fruitcake by all of Highbury.

Emma is having not-so-secret sex with Frank Churchill. (I believe that she is not keen, but that he somehow blackmails her into it).

Eventually George Knightley strangles to death, or is strangled by an unknown person, by means of a cold meat pie. (Recollection here is unclear - Emma herself may be the murderer).

Emma then declares herself to be with child; it is Frank Churchill's child; nevertheless this seems to nullify the triumph of the John Knightleys with regard to Donwell. Ownership reverts to Emma, and she ends up as she began, "handsome, clever and rich", etc. etc. Mr. Woodhouse keeps having attack after attack of something, but he never does succumb.

Possibly your Librarian simply does not have a sense of humour. In any case she really does not want to dignify this THING by according it a place on our shelves. She realizes that she is appointing herself Cato the Censor, and she really has no right to do that.

Our President has agreed to place the matter on the Agenda for the next meeting. "Tuum est" as UBC might say: "It's up to you" to decide. So agree to have it if you choose. Don't feel intimidated by threats from your friendly Librarian, who happens to have possession of all the books. As Clint Eastwood might say: "Go ahead. Make My Day!!!"

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...a narrower passage...and symptoms of a winding stair-case...

Catherine Morland, surprised at Henry Tilney's appearance while she was clandestinely exploring Northanger Abbey, "exclaimed in a voice of more than common astonishment ... 'Good God!...how came you up that stair-case?' "

You, too, reading the novel, may feel a little lost and turned around, wondering about the location of rooms and staircases. But now your doubts and misgivings can be resolved - a new addition to our JASNA Vancouver library is Literary Houses, by Rosalind Ashe. Using every little clue in the stories themselves, and a dash of astute conjecture, Ashe writes about a dozen or so houses in literature, giving pictures, floor plans, and descriptions, so the reader will no longer feel bewildered trying to go from room to room along with the characters.

Northanger Abbey is one of the houses selected for discussion, and the accompanying floor plan will make it easy to visualize the movements of Catherine, Henry and General Tilney as they move around the house.

Thanks to Viviane McClelland for donating this book to our library.

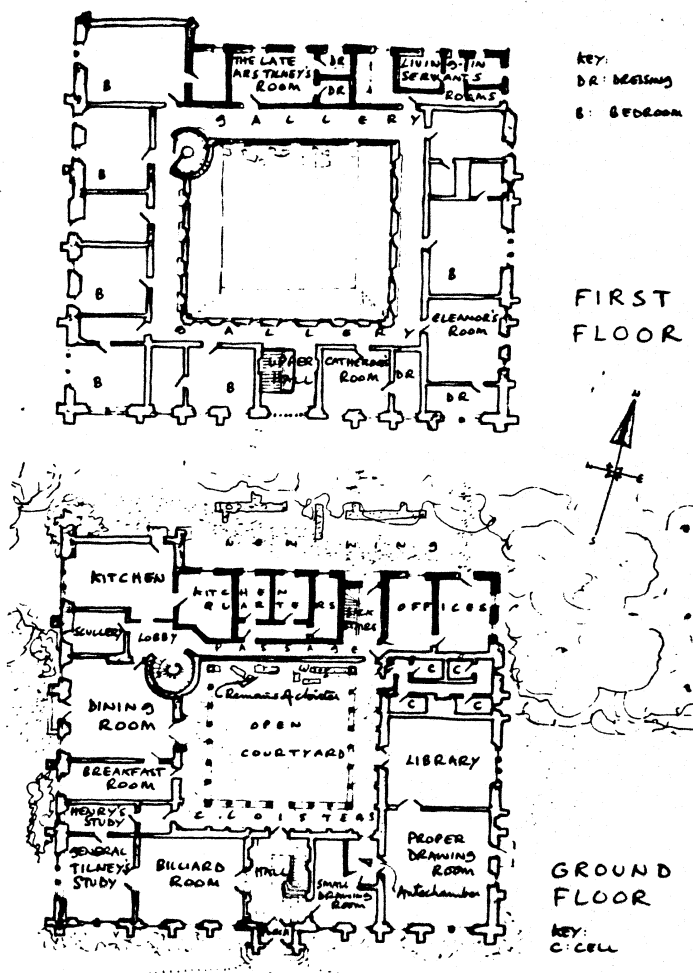
...the agreeableness, the compliance are expected from him, while she furnishes the fan and the lavender water.

By JA's lifetime, fans had become less common as everyday articles of use, but were still in vogue at formal parties and balls. Catherine Morland studies the fan in her lap at the Assembly Rooms, to avoid meeting John Thorpe's eyes as she hopes for Henry Tilney to come to ask her to dance. Fanny, at the ball in her honour at Mansfield Park is vigorously fanned by her brother William when she sits down between dances, hot and weary.

In northern Europe, fans were never carried by men - or at least only by a few fops aping effeminate French customs in the 16th century and later. Ladies, however, were not considered correctly dressed unless they carried fans. Fans did have a practical use - they were held up to keep the heat of the fire off one's face, lest the reddening be confused with a blush; to cool oneself and prevent perspiration; and to keep off the rays of the sun and protect the desirable pale complexion. But the most important use was social: young ladies were taught how to make the most advantageous use of the fan as part of the "body language" of social occasions.

A fan could be used as concealment - the fair owner could see through the gaps between the sticks, or if the fan was made of lace it would screen the face while the lady could see through the mesh. Some fans were printed with mottoes or inscriptions, perhaps the Lord's Prayer or the Ten Commandments for church use, or with coats of arms, or paintings. Most depicted flowers or picturesque scenes. Some were specially made for mourning.

You can learn more about fans in another addition to the library, The Indispensable Fan, thanks to Kathleen Glancy, who sent this booklet from Edinburgh.



GOOSEBERRY FOOL

A tansy, a cream, a curde, a fool: a pudding by any other name is just as delicious! Gooseberries were once grown in every cottage garden, or found wild in hedgerows. In a letter of February 1807 from Southampton, where the Austen ladies were living with Jane's brother Frank and his family, Jane Austen wrote to Cassandra: "Our Garden is putting in order...The Border under the Terrace Wall, is clearing away to receive Currants & Gooseberry Bushes, & a spot is found very proper for raspberries."

Peggy Hickman (A Jane Austen Household Book) includes Martha Lloyd's recipe for Gooseberry Vinegar and Mrs. Craven's for Gooseberry Cheese, but the most common use for the plump green berries was in some sort of tart or pudding. The young, tired and homesick Fanny Price, arriving at Mansfield Park at the end of a long journey with only Mrs. Norris for company, could not be comforted with "even the sight of a gooseberry tart".

The Oxford English Dictionary defines a fool as "a dish composed of fruit, stewed, crushed and mixed with milk, cream, or custard. Often gooseberry fool." An early 18th century recipe is a little more specific: "A Foole is a kind of Custard, but more crudelly; being made of Cream, Yolkes of Eggs, Cinamon, Mace boiled: and served on Sippets [toast fingers] with sliced Dates, Sugar and white and red Comfits, strawed thereon".



In the days when lemons were a luxury, gooseberries often replaced them, their sharp flavour offsetting fatty foods like mackerel, goose or mutton. Sweeter varieties were more favoured in early English cookery, until the onerous tax on sugar was removed.

The first berries were ready to eat around Whitsuntide (mid-May), and provided tarts, pies, puddings and piquant sauces until well into November. An Elizabethan recipe called for a pieshell filled with gooseberries stewed in white wine with sugar and bread-crumbs. Later recipes added eggs and cream. Hannah Glasse in the middle of the 18th century used a combination of half fruit purée and half cream or custard.

Spinach juice was often used to give the pudding a refreshing green colour.

Gooseberries are no longer a fashionable fruit, and will seldom be found in supermarkets on this continent. But if you are lucky enough to find some, you cannot do better than make a Gooseberry Fool for a delicious summer dessert.

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BASEBALL SEASON AGAIN

It was not very wonderful that Catherine, who had by nature nothing heroic about her, should prefer cricket, base ball, riding on horseback, and running about the country... (N.A.)

Whether or not you are one of the millions of fans of this game all over the world, it is interesting that Jane Austen is credited with the first use of the term "base ball" in English. No doubt what she referred to was very different from the sport we know today, but this proves that the history of the game goes back a long way.

Baseball is thought to have originated in an old English game called "Rounders", in which one player would hit a ball with a bat and run around a number of bases. If an opposing player threw the ball and hit him when he was off a base, he was "out".

The early colonists brought the sport to North America and gradually refined the rules. But don't listen to anyone who tries to tell you that the game was first given the name "baseball" by Abner Doubleday in 1839 - Jane Austen knew it long before that.

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MR. DARCY'S HAT & OTHER INTERESTING OBJECTS

It's a long way from JA's Hampshire to Fort Langley, and a vastly different life in an English rectory from that on the edge of the wilderness, but touring the Fort in June we found tenuous ties between them.

After a ten-minute video describing the history of the fort, we met in an upper room of the Big House, the room where Governor James Douglas read the proclamation of the founding of the Colony of British Columbia, and where the B.C. Cabinet still meets on the anniversary of that day. A short business meeting was followed by interesting readings: Margaret Howell read from the latest issue of the Byron Society Journal, speculating whether or not Byron had read any of JA's works (probably not, there is no mention in any of his letters, and he would have been sure to comment - favourably! - if he had). Irene Howard compared the description of Fanny's East Room in MP - "a little nest of comforts" - with a passage from Witold Rybczynski's Home, where he describes the changing perception of the need for "comfort" in houses. Keiko Parker cited a review of the book Keepers of the Flame, by Ian Hamilton, deploring the tendency of literary executors to destroy the works left in their care - as Cassandra is thought to have done with many of JA's letters.

Our member-guide Helena Lyman then gave us a tour of the main rooms of the Big House, the home of the two "gentlemen" at the fort - the other 23 were "servants" and shared much smaller and more spartan quarters. The Hudson's Bay Company supplied their forts with a dinner service for 12 in Spode earthenware, much less elegant than Edward Knight's Wedgwood china, or even General Tilney's new breakfast set, but nevertheless in a fashionable blue and white "Chinese" pattern. Original pieces included a cup without a handle, and a large deep saucer - considered old-fashioned even then.

In one of the rooms was a beautiful black top hat, and we learned how they were made from beaver pelts: the skin itself was not used; the long coarse guard hairs were pulled out by child workers; the soft fine under-fur is barbed, and when it is removed from the hide the fur fibres stick together and form a felt-like material, which just needed to be blocked and shaped, and which could stand up almost indefinitely to bad weather. Mercury was used to make it easier to remove the fur from the skin, and one of the early symptoms of mercury poisoning is mental deterioration - hence, the Mad Hatter of Alice in Wonderland. Beaver skins were an important item from the beginnings of the HBC, and beaver hats remained the only correct wear for gentlemen for several hundred years. Mr. Darcy would have worn one for all formal occasions, especially when he ordered his carriage to take Miss Bates and Jane to the ball. Recently, Wellington's beaver hat, said to have been found on the field at Waterloo, was auctioned in Germany. It, too, was like the one we saw at the Fort.



MUNICH AUCTION HOUSE employee
wears a hat once worn by the Duke of
Wellington. The hat, which was found at
Waterloo, will be auctioned off.

In another room was the pianoforte belonging to the wife of one of the early clerks. We were told it was a Broadwood, and we all nodded knowingly, and thought of Jane Fairfax playing a similar pianoforte by the light of the candles in the sconces on either side, and reading just such hand-transcribed music as we were shown. The two ladies took no part in the daily work of the fort. Like their counterparts in England, they had their music, their painting and their needlework to occupy their time. Workboxes and painting supplies were on a table in the centre of the room.

Our tour continued through the working areas of the fort - the carpenter's shop, the cooperage - where we saw the process of making air- and water-tight barrels for shipping salmon in brine to Hawaii - and the shop and storage areas, full of trading goods and bundles of furs. Then we wended our way to lunch in a heritage building up the street.

From the balmy weather, the interesting tour of the old fort, to the delicious luncheon, it was a thoroughly delightful day, seeing another side of "life in JA's time".

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THE CRAWFORD COLOUR: SENSE AND NONSENSE: Dianne Kerr.

In our November, 1992 Newsletter (#40) Ron Sutherland reported on Daniel Segal's presentation in Santa Monica, repeating the latter's conclusion that Henry and Mary Crawford are creole whites or mulattos.

In Mansfield Park, Mary is described as having a "clear brown complexion" and Henry as being "absolutely plain, black and plain". In S&S Austen does not describe the Dashwood sisters until chapter 10: "Miss Dashwood had a delicate complexion... Marianne was still handsomer... Her skin was very BROWN..." Surely no-one would care to infer that Marianne is creole white or mulatto simply because her skin is BROWN like Mary Crawford's.

In a letter to Cassandra dated November, 1800, Jane Austen writes: "The Miss Maitlands [are] prettyish... with BROWN skins". This letter about the Miss Maitlands, without any ancestral distinguishing for Cassandra, would seem to confirm the fact that Austen generally made a broad Caucasian distinction between people with fair skins and people with dark - people with whitish skins and those with brownish.

In chapter 3 of Persuasion, Sir Walter Elliot describes a certain Admiral Baldwin as having a "face the colour of MAHOGANY...", and later, speaking of Admiral Croft, takes it for granted "that his face is about as ORANGE as the cuffs and capes of my livery". Sir Walter's fulminations we may dismiss as the hyperbole he felt necessary to make clear his contempt. Nevertheless, they do seem to indicate that we ought not to take Austen too literally when she assigns skin colour.

Chapter 6 of Northanger Abbey has the following "colourful" exchange between Isabella and Catherine: "...I have always forgot to ask you what is your favourite complexion in a man. Do you like them best dark or fair?" "I hardly know. I never much thought about it. Something between both, I think. BROWN - not fair, and not very dark." "Very well, Catherine. That is exactly he. I have not forgot your description of Mr. Tilney; - "a BROWN skin, with dark eyes, and rather dark hair." (Surely Catherine's distinction: a man who is brown but not very dark, is merely a variation on "a man who is brown but not very black").

Again, it is most unlikely that Henry Tilney is either creole white or mulatto; it seems a bit unreasonable to so infer concerning the Crawfords, simply because they are from a "family of seafaring people" about whom we know little more, simply because one of them has a blackish complexion, the other a brownish.

In P&P chapter 45, Miss Bingley addresses Mr. Darcy: "How very ill Eliza Bennet looks this morning... she is grown so BROWN and coarse". Again, no reason to think Elizabeth is non-caucasian.

It seems to me that we ought also reflect on the context of the time.

Certainly, in Shakespeare's day black-skinned people were not reviled solely on account of their skin colour. Othello is proof enough of that. Desdemona's father hates Othello, and Iago does, but their reasons for so doing have nothing to do with the colour of his skin, and everybody else in the play likes Othello; in fact, the other characters all admire and respect Othello.

But by Austen's day black-skinned people were a significant barter commodity: slaves in North America, in South America, in the East and West Indies, and other places. We know that Austen was well aware of this. In Emma, chapter 35, Mrs. Philip Elton, (Augusta Hawkins that was) simpers: "...If you mean a fling at the slave-trade, I assure you Mr. Suckling was always rather a friend to the abolition." Surely we may safely infer that black slave-trade was a well-established fact, with only SOME right-thinking people objecting; and also infer that the OTHERS, those who didn't object, held black-skinned people in contempt... just as they did in 1851, and in 1951, and still do in 1993, regreably, and despite all our progress in education.

Considering the context, it seems to be highly improbable that Mary and Henry Crawford could possibly have moved in upper-class English circles with the ease and comfort and respect which they quite evidently enjoy, had they been black or creole or mulatto. Even being very rich would not have insulated them from the stigma. Fashionable London, at that time, did not tolerate hob-nobbing with the kin of slaves.

Is it not probable that Mr. Segal, with the best intentions in the world, is nevertheless trying to impose late 20th century values on the world of the early 19th century?

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GOWNS AND JEWELS

Whether or not you are going to the annual conference at Lake Louise this October, you may be interested in some unique offers for JASNA members.

The Dayton, OH, region offers JA's portrait on glazed white porcelain set into 18K gold plated antique finished brooches which can be worn on a ribbon as a pendant or as a pin. The cost is \$25 US, plus \$2 shipping. A group order will be discussed at the September meeting - let us know if you are interested.

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Regency Re-Creations, of Trotwood, OH, will make ball gowns, with or without a train, in time for the conference (contemporary dress is optional), if orders are received soon. The cost ranges from about \$80 US to \$115, depending on the style and fabric, plus \$14 shipping. A brochure will be circulated at the September meeting.

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ELECTIONS

JASNA BY-LAWS, Article V, Section 6:

"Regional Groups shall hold elections for Regional Co-ordinator/President at least every two years, this officer to be the director of the region's activities and the representative of the region to JASNA. Such Regional Co-ordinator/President may be re-elected to subsequent terms of office unless the local group chooses to limit the number of consecutive terms".

Vancouver elections will be held at the September meeting. Nominations may be sent to Eileen Sutherland.

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*Since they have learnt to read, to write, to spell,
Since some of them have wit - and use it well;
Let us not force them back with brow severe
Within the pale of ignorance and fear
Confined entirely to domestic arts
Producing only children, pies and tarts...*

(Everyone Has His Fault:
Elizabeth Inchbould, 1793)



DIVORCE: Kathleen Glancy, Edinburgh

As a footnote to the excellent article on divorce in Newsletter No.34, we now know that the gloss that Joan Aiken put on Henry Crawford's actions in Mansfield Revisited will not stick. She had it that Henry was blameless, having turned Maria away when she arrived unasked on his doorstep, but she made a false confession of adultery. In these circumstances, Mr. Rushworth simply could not have got his divorce. Henry would have had every reason to defend an action for "crim-con" with vigour, had he been innocent. Not only would a guilty verdict lose Fanny forever, but it would have social consequences. As Mary Crawford points out, even if Henry and Maria married there were some circles where she would never be received. He would not face quite the same degree of ostracism, being a man (it wasn't fair, but that was the way it was), but if he didn't marry Maria there would be a lot of houses closed to him, too. Those of men with unmarried daughters of marriageable age and men with pretty wives, to name but two avenues.

You might argue Maria's confession would do the trick. It wouldn't. The laws were framed to prevent a couple who both wanted a divorce from simply agreeing to have one, therefore it wasn't enough to say you had committed adultery, a witness to prove you had must be produced. A nosy official called the King's Proctor (or Queen's, depending on the Monarch's sex) could intervene in cases of collusion or attempts to trump up charges against an innocent wife. In fact, Mr. Rushworth has his witness in the shape of his mother's maid. "The servant of Mrs. Rushworth, the mother, had exposure in her power and, supported by her mistress, was not to be silenced". In other words, she had seen Henry in some place and at some time when he could have had no honest business. Maria had been found out before she ran away, and most likely ran away because she had been found out. She would have been divorced whether she went or stayed.

Of course, if Henry had been blameless he would not have been emerging from Maria's room in the small hours, the maid could have disclosed nothing, the false confession would have been exposed as soon as Maria was required to give times and places, never knowing for which Henry would have cast-iron alibis, and the "crim-con" action would have failed. Maria and Mr. Rushworth would have remained married and if Henry chose to sue for slander Mr. Rushworth, who in law was responsible for all Maria's actions (about the only advantage in being a man's legal property), would have had to pay him whopping damages.

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A QUESTION OF HORSES

"...the following thought on Queen Mab, the horse offered to Marianne Dashwood by Willoughby in S&S: Is she the brown mare Colonel Brandon refused to buy? In Ch.10 Willoughby opens his mouth for the first time, in a diatribe against Brandon, closing with, 'I have three unanswerable reasons for disliking Colonel Brandon: he has threatened me with rain when I wanted it to be fine; he has found fault with the hanging of my curricule, and I cannot persuade him to buy my brown mare.' (Was the threatened rain that which sent Marianne 'running with all possible speed' down the steep side of the hill?) Only two chapters later, Marianne reveals 'that Willoughby had given her a horse, Queen Mab, exactly calculated to carry a woman'. To be sure, the horse is back at Combe Magna in Somersetshire, but wouldn't it be like Willoughby to turn an unmarketable commodity into a lover's gift?"

- Quoted from Anne Krause, Editor, the Northern California Newsletter.

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