L. Yearwood

The Jane Austen Society of North America

JASNA Vancouver

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MRS. PALMER LAUGHED - E.Sutherland.

"More to be pitied than condemned?" - what are we to think of Mrs. Palmer, née Charlotte Jennings? Janis P. Stout (Strategies of Reticence, 1990) considers her story one of the "shadows" in Jane Austen's novels - stories which Jane Austen, writing comedy, chose not to tell, but also refused to evade: "the plight of the woman as a victim of man, even within the marriage relationship that is the goal of the primary plot, the supposed happy ending."

Is Charlotte Palmer just silly, or should we look below the surface? Consider her parentage - The late Mr. Jennings, whoever he was, had enough business acumen to provide reasonable dowries for his daughters and to leave his widow more than comfortably well off. Mrs. Jennings is not silly. She lacks a good education, and any refinement or polish of gentility. Her joie de vivre grates on Marianne's sensibilities, but Marianne is very "nice" in her tastes. Mrs. Jennings seems to be welcomed in a wide circle of friends, and most people would find her good, if not intellectually stimulating, company.

How did her daughters become what they are? Their education - no doubt the best that money could buy, in many ways - would have consisted of fashionable accomplishments: music, drawing, dancing, a little arithmetic, the "use of the globes", and perhaps not much else. Both young women made "good" marriages, but neither saw more than a superficial attraction in the man she chose. Lady Middleton wrapped herself up in her children - so will Charlotte Lucas Collins [P&P] in the future - to avoid much association with a husband with whom she has almost nothing in common. But Charlotte Collins has the intelligence and good sense to appreciate the rational conversation of visiting friends. Lady Middleton seems to be immune to the stimulation of music, art, books, landscape. In company she remains remote, mute, dignified and bored.

Charlotte Palmer, at least superficially, enjoys people around her. She laughs, chats, tells funny stories, interacts with her companions. Is there anything in her mind behind this façade of good humour and gaiety? Is it indeed a "front" to cover the disillusion of girlish dreams faded, of ambitions thwarted, and of promised companionship fallen through? Stout calls her "a Mrs. Bennet not so much seen from the inside as seen with sympathy." Are we meant to look behind appearances, and see the restraints suffered by women in Jane Austen's world? Does Jane Austen expect us to read deeply into these comic novels and see the dark shadows within?

Each of the novels has such dark stories if we look for them - women who are completely dependent, who marry in desperation to leave an uncomfortable home situation, who have neither means nor opportunities to better their conditions, whose minds are stifled by the commonplaces of the life and people around them. Is Mrs. Palmer happy, as she laughs so gayly at her husband and her life, or, below the smiles, is her heart breaking? Jane Austen doesn't tell us; she leaves us to find for ourselves the real person behind the caricature.

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A GENTLEWOMAN IN UPPER CANADA: THE JOURNALS OF ANNE LANGTON - H.H.Langton, ed. (1950).

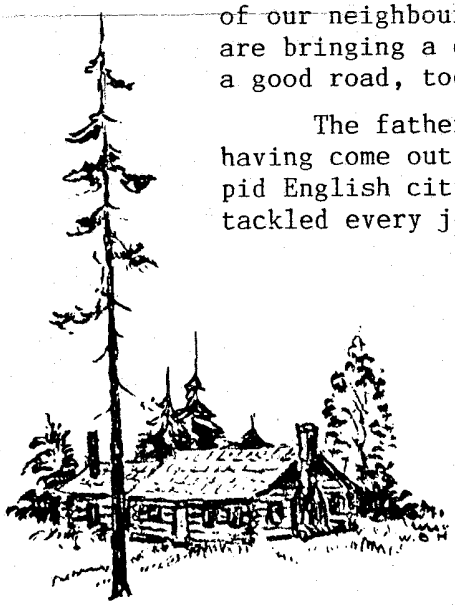
Homesteading in Upper Canada in the early 19th century, and living in a small Hampshire village at the same period, would seem to have little in common. But these letters and journal entries sent back to England from an early settler describe a life in a log shanty in the Canadian bush which has some surprising similarities to the life of Jane Austen in her country parsonage.

John Langton had homesteaded north of Peterborough in Upper Canada early in the 1800s, and a few years later his father, mother, aunt and sister were considering joining him. He had his "shanty" built, his land partly cleared, and he felt confident he could provide his family with a home which would be "comfortable in the coldest winter weather". John warned them of the temperature extremes, the monotonous food, the lack of congenial companionship of their own age. The parents were elderly - in their 70s - and not in very good health. It was a risky undertaking; but they determined to join him, feeling that he, rather than the married son they left in England, needed their help.

The journey out was rigorous, uncomfortable and dangerous. Mrs. Langton kept a journal. (They were a literate family, whenever they had time to spare from chores. How many other homesteaders needed to build shelves for about 1,200 books? and received in one batch 18 newspapers?). When they reached the end of the journey, however, she tore it up, lest it prove too harrowing reading for the family back home.

Their letters to England, and excerpts from a journal kept by Anne, compare this present life with their past. When they got settled in John's house, they were delighted to report that "Our room looked exceedingly snug and English,with its Turkey carpet [brought from home], its crimson curtains, and its [plastered] ceiling, even notwithstanding its log walls." Announcing the arrival of a blacksmith, Anne wrote: "As you have never sent a horse five-and-twenty miles to be shod, or waited three or four months for some trifling yet perhaps essential performance of the furnace, I cannot expect you to understand what an advancement in the settlement we consider the establishment of this worthy amongst us." In another letter, "I daresay our lakes, waterfalls, rapids, canoes, forests, Indian encampments, sound very well to you dwellers in the suburbs of a manufacturing town; nevertheless I assure you there cannot well be a more unpoetical and anti-romantic existence than ours."

The house John built for them needed much improvement to make them really comfortable. Some of the work had to depend on outside labour - not easy to find. Gradually, however the walls and floors were re-done and made proof against the worst of the cold weather. They hoped soon that "our rooms will be warmer, although the sun will not shine so brightly through the walls as it used to do, and we shall not need to go round stuffing with cotton wool, and pasting brown paper over the holes as we did last winter." Again: "Hitherto I fancy we have more English elegancies about us than most of our neighbours, but the Dunsfords...will quite eclipse us, for they... are bringing a carriage out with them. I hope they do not forget to bring a good road, too."



The father, Thomas Langton, died within a year, but the three women, having come out as help and company for John, stayed with him. These intrepid English city ladies made the best of things, seldom complained, and tackled every job that needed to be done, often doing it for the first time in their lives, and learning as they went along.

Candle-making was an important job, and Anne struggled to find the best way. She wrote to her sister-in-law: "I wish I could have an hour's conversation with a tallow-chandler. Can you procure me some hints concerning the business, as to the temperature of the room, temperature of the tallow, etc." Later, she could write: "I look with much complacency at my performance." She preferred another regular chore: "Soap-boiling approaches nearer to creating than anything I know. You put into

your pot the veriest dirt and rubbish, and take out the most useful article."

The older ladies did their share of the household work. "Whilst the workmen were at dinner my mother possessed herself of the plasterer's trowel, and proved that she understood the trade by performing a neat repair about the living-room fireplace;" "My mother and aunt I left very busy melting lead to solder a broken candlestick, and evidently enjoying an occupation associated with many youthful reminiscences." Jane Austen wrote in one of her letters, "My mother has undertaken to cure six Hams for Frank;- at first it was a distress but now it is a pleasure." [Letter 55]. In Canada, "A pig was slaughtered to-day and my mother and I discovered that we are not quite perfect in our business yet, for the blood puddings, which have rested with us for the first time, gave evidence of our inexperience. I am going to exercise my skill in shaping ham tonight. That I consider my special province. My mother shines in rolled pig's head, and Aunt Alice in pork pies."

Food was a constant consideration. John had promised "salt cod" as the staple diet. But even the first year, Anne was writing: "As for provisions, bread, potatoes, and pork, with the produce of the dairy, are the unfailing ones, but they have been varied here by beef, venison, pigeon pies, and vegetables, of which there are, or may be, plenty in their season. There is very little in the way of fruit." Their garden was rewarding, supplying them with vegetables and salad greens. Meat could only be kept in cold weather. When there was an unexpected thaw, they struggled not to waste anything.

It was a society, in the early years, almost entirely of men. At one point in her journal, Anne mentions that they had been "more than nine months without seeing a single lady." The Langton ladies did their best, however, to maintain the standards of gentility they had been used to. They wore "printed gowns" in the mornings while they did their work; but changed to "best" dresses for tea and dinner. Men at a ploughing match were fed in an out-building, the women were entertained in the house. When John returned from a journey at dinner time, he was "allowed" to sit with the ladies of his family without changing his clothes. At another time, a group of men preparing to leave for Peterboro, "declined joining us for tea, being, I suppose, in travelling costume." Company dinners were always two courses, with the dishes arranged on the table in the formal à la Russe style: "As we were pondering upon the best method of manufacturing a top, bottom, and four corners out of pork and poultry, arrived a present of veal, unseen here for two years."

Anne had abandoned her music, but with a better reason than Mrs. Elton. She wrote to her brother in England: "Do not send me out any portable musical instrument. There has been time and money enough already spent on me. The day may come when the first of these at least may be of less consequence than at present, and then I can make the experiment of how much music there is left in my soul." But she kept up other "accomplishments." In Sense and Sensibility, "Elinor had painted a very pretty pair of screens for her sister-in-law" [p.234], and Anne also was accomplished in this art: "I have just finished a pair of screens as a wedding present to Mr. Wallis...They are in wood, in the old style, but a little more brilliant in colour than former ones."

The women were concerned with making warm flannel petticoats and cloaks for those in need, and clothing for new babies: "It had rather weighed on my mother's mind that she had so few opportunities for the exercise of charity." They taught nearby children their ABCs, and developed a small subscription library. They maintained a supply of quinine for malaria in little phials: "I wonder how many doses of medicine I have weighed up in the last four months! I think almost as many as some village apothecaries." And, like Emma, they kept a stock of sticking plaster ("Court plaister") for the "pretty frequent" cuts and accidents.

Anne looked at the countryside around her new home with an artist's eye, and sent sketches and vivid word-pictures back to England. "We had the 'burn' a few days ago, rather an exciting proceeding, and at times exceedingly picturesque and beautiful...The brush heaps are immense piles, and blaze up furiously. There was a little wind in a favourable

direction, which carried the smoke into the wood, where it mingled with the trees very beautifully. The main part of the conflagration was over before night, but the scene was very pretty when the darkness came on."

In the winter, John took Anne to make some visits in the sleigh: "The snow was quite too soft for very good sleighing, [but] he gave me an abstract of a sleigh drive, including in our eighteen miles more adventures than he had ever had in one journey before. Iron and leather gave way many times in the jerks they got, but the sleigh-driver on a bad road is accustomed to patching and piecing his harness. I have heard that it is positive pleasure to be thrown into the deep snow, and John also gratified me with an upset. I must say that the fall was soft and easy, but I was so enveloped in my long fur cloak that I scarcely knew how to get up again." Sometimes driving on the ice was dangerous: "John broke through on his trip, and how his horses scrambled out he scarcely knows. Their hind legs were drawn in up to the rump, and he himself thrown upon their heels, but the sleigh never actually stopped. Its impetus, I suppose, materially assisted the horses in extricating themselves." Their view of the common upsets was very like that of the Crofts - "My sister makes nothing of it - she would as lieve be tossed out as not." [p.84].

Jane and Cassandra Austen spent many hours making and remodelling gowns and bonnets. The Langton ladies plied their needles equally assiduously. Anne wrote: "I have been trying to manufacture myself a winter bonnet today, for I am getting tired of my cap. It is rather guess-work, as I am ignorant concerning shapes." Another day, "My chief occu- occupation was rigging myself up a morning gown out of an old one of my mother's, and making a collar to it out of superfluous sleeves." Again, "I set about reducing the cape and sleeves of a gown to modern dimensions. Perhaps you may think this an unnecessary labour in the backwoods of Canada."

As time went by, the settlement was increased by new arrivals. Women, especially, were welcome on the frontier. In a reversal of the beginning of Pride and Prejudice, Anne writes of the expected arrival of one family: "Five young ladies all grown up! What a commotion they may make amongst us!"

A church was eventually built, down the lake. Like Mrs. Elton, a new bride was first seen at church: "She was dressed in a rich drab silk, with fancy straw, or chip bonnet, and white ribbons." Whenever the weather made it possible, the Langtons went to Sunday service. "We had an excellent sermon on evil-speaking, and by way of showing how much we had profited by it, we began talking over the weak points of our several neighbours immediately afterwards."

Malaria - "ague" - from the rotting vegetation and undrained swamps, was always present, but some years the illness was epidemic. Even when Anne herself was sick, she could write with wry humour about John frantically looking for a woman servant: "John had made up his mind that nothing could be done on the farm, but no bread! no butter! no clean clothes! - this is another matter.

One bleak year, however, Mrs. Langton fell ill with the fever, and died. Only six weeks later, her sister, Aunt Alice, succumbed also. As soon as they could get away, Anne and John took a much needed holiday trip back to England, but soon returned to Canada. John married and had a family. He sold the farm and moved first to Quebec, then to Toronto and finally to Ottawa, where he became a Member of Parliament, and eventually Auditor-General. Anne never married, but lived out her long life in John's home, becoming, like Jane Austen, a beloved aunt to her many nieces and nephews.

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Highways and Byways in Jane Austen's Life - No. 1 - by Keiko Parker

Reading the article "Hampshire Churches" in the JASNA Vancouver Newsletter No. 60, I was reminded that I have in my library a series of books entitled "Highways and Byways" (in Devon and Cornwall, North Wales, etc.), dating from the late 1890's. I should like to share some of the sights featured in these books with you in the next few issues. The majority of the books were illustrated by Hugh Thomson whom I prize highly. I believe that these sketches from the end of the nineteenth century must surely be closer to what Jane Austen actually saw in her lifetime than what we can hope to see at the end of the twentieth century.

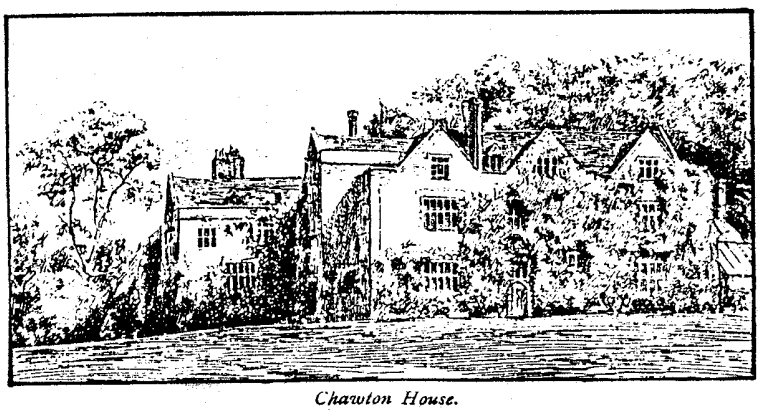
I begin this month with Chawton, a happy place and a sad place: happy because it is here that Jane Austen found a measure of calm after the "wilderness years" in Bath to produce almost all her novels; and sad because it proved to be her last home before her untimely death. D. H. Moutray Read in *Highways and Byways in Hampshire* (with illustrations by Arthur B. Connor. London: Macmillan, 1908, Rep. 1928) describes the Chawton environs thus:

"If there is a nearly three mile pull up the hill between Ropely and Chawton, there is a compensatory three miles down the other side . . . ; and . . . the road is excellent and the views well worth the climb. On the Alton side the first mile or so down runs by wood and hedge, in themselves a delight; . . . and beyond lies Chawton Park Wood . . . . [T]he broad road curves down till . . . it joins the Gosport road at Chawton. That wooded hillside is one of the most charming bits on all the road from Winchester to London.

"By the corner where the highways meet, with low lintelled door that opens on the road, stands a square, unpretentious house . . . . A hundred years ago its roof sheltered the hand which limned portraits in prose of homely English life reckoned among our classics. . . . [T]his cottage at Chawton was one of Jane Austen's Hampshire homes. Here she revised her masterpieces *Sense and Sensibility*, *Pride and Prejudice*; within these walls the bright and gentle lady penned the tales of *Emma* and *Persuasion* . . . ; and here commenced the illness that all too soon cut short her brilliant work and led to the last journey down the white road to Winchester from whence she should never return."

As to the Chawton Manor House which belonged to Jane's brother Edward, Moutray Read states: "Chawton, or Celtone . . . had been held by Oda de Wincestre before the coming of the Normans. . . . The fine house standing above the grassy lawn is Elizabethan, but the church, which lies off the drive between the lawn and the roadway, was almost entirely rebuilt after a fire in 1871. . . . The body of the building is delightfully smothered in ivy. . . . The Knights of Chawton were connections of the Austens, and Jane's second brother succeeded to the property on the death of his cousin, who . . . had adopted young Austen as his heir."

The illustration shows the Chawton Manor House. On the lawn in front of the house the Jane Austen Society (of England) holds its annual meeting in the summer under a series of tents. I was privileged to attend the 1990 meeting which featured Margaret Drabble as the key-note speaker. Before the meeting I found a few moments to go uphill to the right of the illustration to a little clearing behind the house and lawn, and stood silent under the bright but not oppressive sun, wondering, "What if *she* had not died so young?"



Chawton House.

FASHIONS

In a chapter called "Hemlines of History" [Wry Martinis, 1997] Christopher Buckley gives a tongue-in-cheek analysis of fashions in France during the Revolution:

1789: A French mob storms the Bastille. Royalist-style knee breeches are out. For *le mob*, the sans-culottes look is out, long pants are in. French painter Jacques Louis David, no tool, honors the Revolutionary need to justify political assassination with his painting *Brutus*. Brutus is seen off in the corner shadows in his toga, while the focus is a quartet of grieving women wearing skimpy, clinging gowns.

1789: Neoclassicism becomes all the rage, and women start wearing thin, draped gowns in an attempt to look like Greek statuary. In an effort to *really* look like Greek statuary, women mist each other with water before they go out so that the gowns will stick to them, anticipating the wet T-shirt contests in America during the 1970s.

1792: Fashion frenzy continues as breeches-wearing aristocratic fashion victims are guillotined.

1800s: The concept of comfort is introduced by people who have been uncomfortable for three hundred years.

[Thanks to Barbara Meredith for pointing this out].

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HEALTHY LIFESTYLE GUIDE FOR BOOKWORMS - Ylva Van Buuren.(Readers Showcase, Jan.Feb. 1998)

The term "bookworm" conjures up images of someone lying around, muscles languid, occasionally sighing or taking a sip of tea. But this doesn't have to be the true picture - and for many people, it's not!

While it's hard to put down a good book, it's easy to make even voracious reading a part of a healthy lifestyle. Here are some ideas on making regular activity, healthy food choices, and stress management fit into a bookworm's day....

Healthy Activity Guide

1. Read while exercising. Take a book to the health club and read it while riding a stationary bike. Be sure to warm up and cool down.
2. Read in bed when you'd be lying down anyway.
3. Overlap activities. Listen to an audio book while driving.
4. Share your book with a spouse or good driend. Take turns reading to each other.
5. Turn off the TV. Read instead.
6. Combine reading with an activity. Walk or ride your bike to a nearby park and read.
7. Balance the activities in your day. If you must read for two hours straight, be sure to counter the physical inactivity with a long walk.

Good Posture Guide

Keep your shoulders back with your head centred over them. Knees should be higher than your hips with feet flat on the floor or up on a stool. Cross your legs at the ankles, not at the knees.

Choose a chair that firmly supports your lower back. Prop up books if possible.

Sitting for long periods - even with the very best posture - can become uncomfortable. Be sure to stand up every once in a while and do some stretches.

Avoid reading with your chin on your chest or your neck tilted backwards. Intense concentration combined with hunched shoulders, tends to cause tight neck muscles.

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"GIVE HIM A BOOK AND HE WILL READ ALL DAY LONG" [Persuasion]

A page by Pat Latkin in the latest JASNA News gave members' answers to the question 'What book would you give a Janeite for Christmas?'

Here is a personal list, from the Writing Desk, Toronto, by Ellen Moody, for your winter reading list:

"There is not a single book which can be called definitive and enjoyable...Elizabeth Jenkins [Jane Austen] is pleasing and excellent on some aspects of the novels, life and letters...But she is complacent about the 18th century...determinedly upbeat.

I would say...after one has read all six novels, begin with Ivor Morris's Mr. Collins Considered. It's $10, and when you have finished it, you have had a marvellous time.

Then I'd recommend Maggie Lane's Jane Austen's England; it's wonderfully well written; it takes you through the landscapes of Austen's novels. Then I'd recommend Tony Tanner on the novels [see Introductions to each novel]...Tanner has done more to help people understand Austen in our time than any other writer.

Austen's novels will teach you more about her life - and her - than a book by anyone else. I'd say it doesn't matter all that much which life one chooses - they all depend upon the same slender set of facts and single volume of letters and scattered documents... If names are wanted, well Jenkins for style, taste, tact, and remarkable insight; for information, [Park] Honan or Irene Collins's sterling book, Jane Austen and the Clergy or the Hubbard's book on Jane Austen's Sailor Brothers or Caroline Austen or James Edward [Austen-Leigh's] 1870 Memoir, or even Halperin...I really think David Cecil's Jane Austen and Nigel Nicolson's World of Jane Austen are superior [to Tucker or Honan] in depicting Austen's world; and they have pictures and write with panache.

And every two years or so, one should read Mary Lascelle's Jane Austen and her Art. It's a book whose value only comes upon you after you have studied Austen for years, and yet it teaches so much if you read it at the start. It has aged better than Jenkins because the subject is the books rather than the life: the richness of its colours deepen as the years go by...Each and every one of Lascelles' pages contains subtle insights and information which have yet to be really applied - mined and explored - by people who write on Austen's novels.

As to the letters and Juvenilia, I found the former hard to understand the first time around. So much has been destroyed; the references are to obscure people one only gets to know after reading a few of the biographies. The latter are often very funny; maybe one should start there if one wants to be cheered up, exhilarated. Before I bought either I'd get Margaret Drabble's Penguin of Austen's three fragments. I recently read The Watsons and Sanditon...and they are gems, the opening phases of little masterpieces in their own right.

Well there's my suggestion of a relatively inexpensive essential Jane Austen library (most of the above books are available in paper for under $20 - no need to spend $35 a book)."

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BAUME a l'ANTIQUE (This is a very fine cure for chopped lips)

Take four ounces of the oil of roses, half an ounce of white wax, and half an ounce of spermaceti; melt them in a glass vessel, and stir them with a wooden spoon, pour it out into glass-cups for use. [Regency Etiquette. The Mirror of Graces (1811)].

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JANE AUSTEN AND NARRATIVE AUTHORITY: Tara Ghoshal Wallace (NY: St. Martin's Press, 1995)

Tara Ghoshal Wallace has a knack for looking at the other side of the question, for pointing out something you hadn't thought of, for discussing controversial issues. In Jane Austen and Narrative Authority, each chapter deals with one of Jane Austen's novels, and Wallace finds a different way to view it.

Jane Austen invites readers of Northanger Abbey to "join in a collaborative effort to debunk the conventions of sentimental novels." At the same time, Wallace continues, "Jane Austen mocks and undermines her own parody - both narrative and reader are kept off balance."

At first, Henry Tilney seems to speak for the author, the serious narrative voice. His mockery of Bath conventions, however, makes the reader uneasy when it becomes clear that Catherine does not feel quite sure of the humour of his remarks. "Parody evokes mirth, but the laughter is not wholehearted unless the audience shares the narrator's contempt for the parodied subject." Eleanor and Catherine later enjoy the trivial threadbare dialogue that Henry has mocked, but Austen clearly states her approval - "spoken with sincerity and truth, and without personal conceit", thus undermining in retrospect Henry's authority.

As he objects to Catherine's language, e.g. her use of "nice" which actually is merely ordinary colloquial speech, he sounds officious and pedantic, as Eleanor says, "more nice than wise."

Considering General Tilney, Wallace offers instances to show how similar he is to John Thorpe. His style of discourse resembles that of the Thorpes. He indulges in hyperbole. "Can you be prevailed upon to quit this scene of public triumph?" The General's conceit and pride in his possessions - china to fruit trees - are akin to John Thorpe's boasts about his horses and curricle. He "loved his garden" compares with Isabella's "My attachments are always excessively strong." His selfishness - he walks when and where he wants, regardless of Catherine's wishes - can be compared to the Thorpes' insistence that Catherine drive with them, whether it is convenient for her or not.

Sense and Sensibility, according to Wallace, is not only about the distinctions between sense and feeling, but even more about the struggles and tensions of female authority and power. "It is Austen's most anti-feminist book, a book inhabited by monstrous women and victimized men." In almost all male/female relationships, Austen diverts our attention from the sins of the man, towards the actions of the woman involved. Mr. Palmer's rudeness is more than offset by Austen's concentration on Mrs. Palmer's silliness. The actions and feelings of John Dashwood and his great uncle are set aside by Fanny Dashwood's aggressive manipulation of her husband. Sir John Middleton's insensitivity in foisting two unknown Steele sisters on his wife as house-guests is overshadowed by Lady Middleton's vengeance of nagging: "A gentle reprimand on the subject five or six times every day." Edward is presented as the passive victim of his mother, his sister, and Lucy Steele, whose ambitions and mercenary motives leave him aimlessly doing nothing with his life. Elinor, too, condemns their "evil machinations," and absolves Edward of any blame. Willoughby's despicable behaviour was the result, not of his own wrong-doings, but of his relation who "exercised the privilege of riches upon a poor dependent cousin", and his cruel, malicious future wife.

Wallace sums up: "No other novel by Austen is so replete with demonic, wilful women."

Pride and Prejudice's ending may be considered serene, balanced and coherent, but Wallace finds "three puzzling moments not adequately explained." When Elizabeth remarks on how much people change and afford interest to their neighbours, Mrs. Bennet insists "there is quite as much of that going on in the country as in town." The narrator describes the instant reaction: everybody was surprised, Darcy turned contemptuously away, Mrs. Bennet looked triumphant. Why, Wallace asks, did this innocuous inanity cause so much surprise, silence and triumph?

Secondly, why did not the Gardiners stay with their children in London for Christmas, or bring them to Longbourn when they came to visit? And third, Wallace questions the last statement about Lydia: "In spite of her youth and her manners, she retained all the claims to reputation which her marriage had given her" - how ironic is this meant to be?

Wallace answers her questions with discussions about themes in P&P - the irresolute attitude to silences in the text; apparent inconsistencies of character; and the subversion of the absolute closure of the ending.

Most readers agree with Fanny's view of Mansfield Park as the epitome of peace, principle and order. Wallace, on the contrary, looks at it as the home of a family rife with sibling rivalry, jealousy and competitiveness. These feelings, already exemplified in the three Ward sisters, come to the fore in the lives of Maria and Julia, not because they especially desire Henry Crawford, but to score off each other. Julia's pleasure is "a perpetual source of irritation" to Maria. Maria, for her part, "felt her triumph." Julia knew that "Maria could not be happy but at her expense" - Wallace calls this "powerful hostility."

At the same time, Tom and Edmund struggle for power. Edmund takes his father's place at Mansfield - he "talks to the steward, writes to the attorney, deals with the servants," but has no real power. He cannot add a horse to the stables for Fanny, he cannot influence the others against acting. Tom shows his jealousy of his prerogatives: "I know my father as well as you do...I have quite as great an interest in being careful of his house as you can have." The theatricals merely bring into the open the long-standing frustration and jealousy between the siblings.

"Emma is a story about reading and misreading", Wallace writes. Emma misreads the other characters most of the time, and in turn many of the other characters misread Emma much of the time. Austen herself usually renounces any authorial voice in this novel, and leaves readers to read or misread for themselves.

Anne Elliot seems to speak with the author's strong, explicit and infallible authority, but no Austen character entirely escapes her irony. Anne's romanticism is gently and openly mocked: "Prettier musings of high-wrought love..." Wallace, however, contends that the "irony directed against Anne is wider and deeper" than these often-noted incidents.

Anne, for example, believes the early love between herself and Wentworth was a match made in heaven: "no hearts so open, no tastes so similar, no feelings so in unison." But the narrator explicitly describes the intimacy: "Half the sum of attraction on either side, might have been enough, for he had nothing to do, and she had hardly any body to love" - in other words, it was a match exactly like the one between Louisa and Benwick: "where could have been the attraction?...They had been thrown together several weeks."

Anne and Wentworth both claim eternal constancy. It is easy to refute that in the case of Wentworth - he enters the story with "a heart for any pleasing young woman who came in his way." Anne thinks she has been constant in her love, but we are told that "no second attachemnt...had been possible" in the narrow society of her home. When she moves away from Kellynch, however, we see her enjoying the attention of the (unknown) Mr. Elliot, and would "like to know who he was." She was even more responsive to Benwick: she "gladly gives him all her attention" and thinks Louisa's accident might be "the occasion of continuing their acquaintance," and eagerly anticipates a visit from him. As for Mr. Elliot, Anne acknowledges "a possibility of having been induced to marry him." Anne's "alertness to other men, to potential admirers," Wallace believes,"demonstrates a receptivity which argues against an absolutely committed heart."

In each case, Wallace makes her points concisely and clearly, and ably defends her position with apt quotations from the novels. You may not always see eye-to-eye with her, but her book will give you enjoyable reading and lots to think about.

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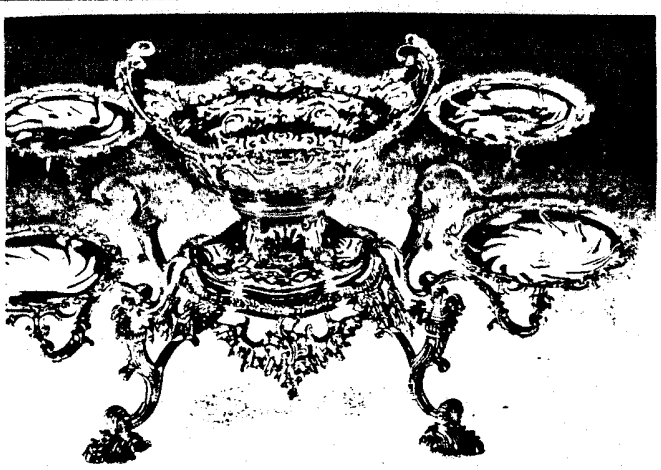
"WHAT HAVE WEALTH OR GRANDEUR TO DO WITH HAPPINESS?" [S&S]

The December issue of Country Life had a gorgeous, glittering whole-page advertisement from Asprey's - goldsmiths, silversmiths and jewellers, of London and New York - illustrating a magnificent silver epergne.



The fine print at the bottom says: "A very fine George II silver Epergne bearing the coat of arms of Austen impaling another; those of Austen relate to the family of the writer, Jane Austen. By William Cripps, London, 1758."

Jane Austen belonged to a more modestly-endowed branch of the family.

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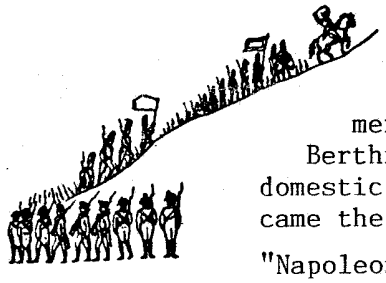
THE EDUCATED OFFICER

Some time ago questions were raised in Parliament concerning the education of the officers in Canada's Armed Forces - only 53% have university degrees, compared, for instance, to more than 80% in the US Army. In an article in the Sun, Paul St. Pierre suggested that such education didn't mean much in this connection.

He examined the officers in Napoleon's army "Fighting with numerically inferior forces against the armies of almost every nation in Europe...he crushed them all with a regularity which became monotonous." Even his defeat at Waterloo was called by Wellington "a damn near thing."

"How did he choose his officers to oppose the well-educated aristocrats of his opponents?" St. Pierre lists them, and their educational qualifications:

"Marshal Ney, 'bravest of the brave,' was a barrel cooper's apprentice. Marshal Murat began his working life...in the stables of his father's inn...he ran away to join the army and spent five years in the ranks before becoming an officer. Marshal Massena, orphaned at age 4, went to sea as a cabin boy at age 13. He served in the army as a sergeant, quit to become a smuggler and then re-entered the army to become one of the Emperor's best-known marshals.



"Marshal Soult joined the army at 16...Jean Bernadotte... enlisted at 17, became a sergeant, rose to Marshal of the Army and then became king of Sweden...Marshal Lannes,a farmer's son, was a dyer's apprentice before his army career; Marshal Berthier joined as a boy at 13; Marshal Augereau, whose father was a domestic servant, started military life at 17 and so did Oudinet,who became the most often wounded marshal.

"Napoleon chose these men, of course, because of that quality - easy to see but hard to teach - leadership. He seems to have relied on that quality much more than upon education."

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This Newsletter, the publication of the Vancouver Region of the Jane Austen Society of North America, comes out four times a year: February, May, August and November. All submissions on the subject of Jane Austen, her life, her works and her times, are welcome. Mail to the Editor: Eileen Sutherland, 4169 Lions Avenue, North Vancouver, B.C., Canada, V7R 3S2. Price to non-members: $4.00 per year.