



# The Jane Austen Society of North America

JASNA Vancouver

NEWSLETTER NO. 62

MAY 1998

## SPLENDOUR REVIVED

There is much I envy about Jane Austen's life: living in small Hampshire villages like Steventon and Chawton, visiting neighbouring stately country houses, spending five years in Bath - these would be pretty easy to take. But what I would give almost anything for was her chance to see the interior of Carlton House, even if she had to accept James Stanier Clarke as her tour-guide.

No matter what one feels about the Prince Regent's morals and behaviour, he had magnificent artistic taste, a little flamboyant sometimes, perhaps, but after all he was a Prince - the "First Gentleman of Europe" - and his homes should look the part.

Jane Austen's viewpoint may have been biased by her extreme dislike of its owner, but surely she would have been impressed by Carlton House's magnificence and splendour. Unfortunately, the building was destroyed shortly after her death.

Much of the contents, however, and the ideas for the decoration of the rooms, have been preserved, and have now been on show to the public in the newly renovated rooms of Windsor Castle. An article from Country Life (Jan.29, 1998) describes them:

"If only it were possible still to experience those unequalled masterpieces of Late-Georgian decoration and the applied arts in more than the imagination. The restoration... of the semi-state rooms at Windsor Castle now ensures that it is. The rooms contain all the colour, francophile richness and opulent finesse[of Carlton House].



[The conservatory was decorated in gold and pale green - an effect almost of being under water - for special occasions with "thousands of lights" and festoons of flowers.]



[Imagine this "Rose Satin Drawing Room" with its deep rose-coloured draperies, wall coverings, upholstered furniture; pale blue and gold carpet, glittering crystal chandelier, and gilded decoration in ceiling, fringes, pillars and picture frames.]

One of the major benefits of the repair of [Windsor Castle], following the fire of 1992, has been the informed and assured reinstatement of the 1820s decorative finishes in the damaged areas, not least the strong colours, rich gilding and extravagant upholstery which played such a large role in George IV's concept. During the century and a half since the creation of this magnificent ensemble, the periodic renewal of textiles and paint had led to a gradual attrition of the original vibrancy of effect, as each change repeated a more faded version of the last. The deep hues of the silk had drained away, original patterns vanished, the paint changed from a subtle stone to a strange biscuity pink, key objects had been moved, and - not least - the curtains had been drastically simplified. All these slip-pages have now been spectacularly reversed.

As a result, the semi-state apartments at Windsor Castle...can now be fully appreciated, not just as the most magnificent late-Georgian interiors in England, but also as some of the most exciting palace rooms of their date in Europe. They form a remarkably personal, even idiosyncratic, but unified ensemble; full of life and variety, with none of the ennui which so often pervades gilded enfilades. This is not only because they are still used, or even because their contents are of superlative quality. The extraordinary personality and passionate artistic discrimination of George IV breathes through every detail. This is seen in the unconventional juxtaposition of Gothic dining rooms and neo-Classical drawing rooms... It is also visible in such aspects of the rooms as the unusually dominant role played by curtains and upholstery, a fashion which the king himself pioneered.

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#### A JANE AUSTEN JOKE

"For centuries in Europe, fruit was regarded as no more than a laxative or, at best, a condiment. So strawberries, if picked at all, were picked wild. Then, in the sixteenth century, strawberries became a fad in England. It became a kind of hobby - or craze - in the "great houses" to cultivate them, which meant that strawberries to buy were expensive, and a real symbol of wealth. Hautboys - also called "hotboys" - were difficult to garden, and the most popular variety. It seems significant that the pre-eminent hybridizer of the early nineteenth century, when *Emma* was written, was named Knight, and his hybrids famously the "Elton seedling" and "Elton pine". It is possible that for Austen's knowledgeable contemporaries, the strawberry scene's crucial place in the drama would have been telegraphed long since by the characters' names, and would constitute a little extratextual joke." [p.25]

- A Feast of Words. For Lovers of Food and Fiction: Anna Shapire (1996).

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*"...Jane Austen. Hers is the drawing-room, and people talking, and by the many mirrors of their talk revealing their characters."* [p.283]

The Common Reader II: Virginia Woolf (1932)

*"I have sometimes dreamt...that when the Day of Judgment dawns and the great conquerors and lawyers and statesmen come to receive their rewards - their crowns, their laurels, their names carved indelibly upon imperishable marble - the Almighty will turn to Peter and will say, not without a certain envy when He sees us coming with our books under our arms, 'Look, these need no reward. We have nothing to give them here. They have loved reading.'" [p.295]*

The Common Reader II: Virginia Woolf (1932)

#### WELCOME

We want to express a very warm welcome to new members in 1998:

Lesley Davidson - Burnaby

Emily Lee - Victoria

Steffany Lovick - Vancouver

Rachele Oriente - Vancouver

Katherine Parker - Vancouver

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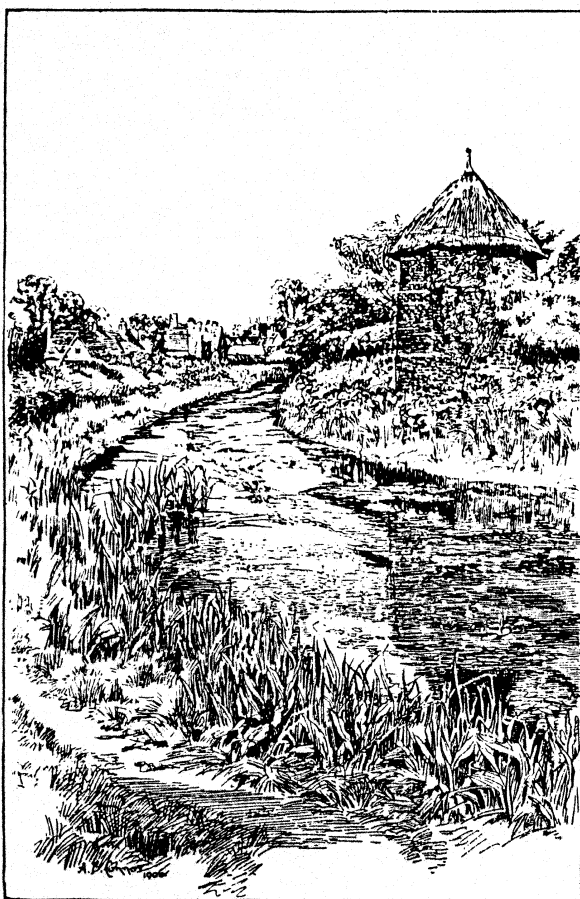
## Highways and Byways in Jane Austen's Life - No. 2

- by Keiko Parker -

For my second installment I remain in Jane Austen's native shire. The drawing from *Highways and Byways in Hampshire* by D. H. Moutray Read with illustrations by Arthur B. Connor (London: MacMillan, 1928), is entitled "The Dove-cot by the Basingstoke Canal."

Not two miles away from Basingstoke is Basing Castle, which witnessed fierce battles between the Royalist forces and those of Parliament during the Civil War. William Paulet, the first Marquis of Winchester, had renovated the old castle of the St. Johns into a fortified Tudor mansion, which was the envy of Queen Elizabeth I herself. But because the fifth Marquis had sided with the King, the building was subjected to a two year's siege and razed to the ground. Basingstoke Canal runs by the old wall of Basing Castle, or Basing House, and the octagonal dove-cot of the illustration.

Basingstoke, several miles from Steventon, was the nearest "big town" for Jane Austen. There were assemblies to go to and purchases to be made at Basingstoke. On November 1, 1800 Jane wrote to Cassandra: "Did you think of our Ball on thursday evening, & did you suppose me at it?—You might very safely, for there I was. . . . It was a pleasant Ball, & still more good than pleasant, for there were nearly 60 people, & sometimes we had 17 couple. . . . I danced nine dances out of ten . . . . (Letter 24)



*The Dove-cot by the Basingstoke Canal.*

It was also at Basingstoke on December 5, 1794 that Jane Austen's father bought "a Small Mahogany Writing Desk with 1 Long Drawer and Glass Ink Stand Compleat," which is the Jane Austen's desk handed down to the Austen-Leigh family.

Most likely Jane Austen walked by the canal and watched the dove-cot. One is reminded of the passage in *Sense and Sensibility* in which Mrs. Jennings has learned the news that Willoughby is to wed Miss Grey. Ever optimistic, she thinks it "all the better for Colonel Brandon. He will have her [Marianne] at last." She then describes Delaford, seat of Colonel Brandon, thus:

great garden walls that are covered with the best fruit-trees in the country . . . . Then, there is a dove-cote, some delightful stewponds, and a very pretty canal . . . . (SS, 196-97).

Who can say for certain that Jane Austen did not have this scene of the illustration in mind when she penned the above passage? I read that the dovecotes are still in working order, the remains of the Norman castle still stand, and a Tudor garden still exists—reminders of the past glory and struggles associated with Basing Castle.

## READING ALOUD

Reading a book about reading can be very interesting if the book is as authoritative and entertaining as A History of Reading, by Alberto Manguel (1996).

Manguel begins by recalling his own earliest reading, then discusses the physiology of the act of reading, the theories of the ancient Greeks, the Egyptians, the Mediaeval world and up to the present. Knowledgeable and enthusiastic, Manguel gives us an account of all aspects of reading and readers - a book for bookworms.

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"When he read, his eyes scanned the page and his heart sought out the meaning, but his voice was silent and his tongue was still." This is a comment by Saint Augustine about Bishop Ambrose of Milan in the 5th century AD. The implication is that this silent method of reading was out of the ordinary - normal reading was performed out loud. One can imagine the noise of readers in one of the large ancient libraries; but there is no record of a reader complaining of the din: they didn't know it was possible to read in any other way.

The classic phrase scripta manet, verba volat, translated today as 'what is written remains, what is spoken vanishes into the air,' was originally used to express the opposite: "it was coined in praise of the word said out loud, which has wings and can fly, as compared to the silent word on the page, which is motionless, dead." The original languages of the Bible - Aramaic and Hebrew - do not differentiate between the acts of reading and speaking; the same word is used for both.

Until well into the Middle Ages, since comparatively few people could read, writers assumed that their "readers" would hear rather than merely see the text. Public readings were common. Mediaeval texts call upon their readers to "lend their ears". Some of our phrases today may echo that attitude: we speak of "hearing" from a friend when we receive a letter; "Jane Austen says..." when we mean she wrote this.

Scribes in the scriptoriums of monasteries were not required to be silent until about the 9th century. They wrote either from dictation or by reading aloud to themselves the text they were copying. One scribe wrote at the end of his copy: "Three fingers write, two eyes see, one tongue speaks."

Although silent reading has become the norm today, some books can be better appreciated by hearing them read aloud. In Jane Austen's time it was customary for members of a family group to sit together in the evening while one read aloud to the others. Some critics feel that Jane Austen wrote her own books to be read out loud in this way.

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Jane Austen's letters contain many references to family reading: from Godmersham, she wrote to Cassandra that she and Fanny were reading "Modern Europe" together (p.333); in another letter she mentions that "My father reads Cowper to us in the evening," (p.39); when Martha Lloyd suggested that Jane bring books at her next visit, the reply was: "I come to you to be talked to, not to read or hear reading. I can do that at home." (p.89).

In the novels, Mr. Collins is invited to read to the Bennets, and chose a book of sermons, with disastrous results. Henry Tilney promised to read Udolpho aloud to his sister, and Robert Martin sometimes read the Elegant Extracts aloud to his family when Harriet was visiting. But the reading which was most favourably received was that of Henry Crawford, who picked up the Shakespeare which Fanny had been reading to her aunt, and proceeded to read the scene aloud. "His reading was capital, and her pleasure in good reading extreme. To good reading, however, she had been long used; her uncle read well - her cousins all - Edmund very well; but in Mr. Crawford's reading there was a variety of excellence beyond what she had ever met with."

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## THE WEATHER IN "EMMA"

[This intriguing article comes from Letter From Chicago, the Newsletter of the Illinois/Indiana Region of JASNA. It is a reprint of "In retrospect" by Euan Nisbet, Department of Geology, Royal Holloway College, University of London, and was originally printed in *Nature*, July 10, 1997]

Why choose *Emma*? *Emma* is weather. Meteorology shapes the novel. This is a work of Science, seamlessly woven into art. *Emma* is perfect. The slightest change would disrupt the book. How did Jane Austen create a work without flaw? Literati will have their explanations and doubtless many learned theses. But, to this illiterate from the numerati the science perfects the art. *Emma* herself is in full bloom, lovely, ready for marriage, as the spring of life passes to high summer. Day by day, the plot twists with the weather report. Is it bright? All is cheerful. Is it drizzling? Misery abounds. Or, beware, is it hot and sultry? Romance and danger loom. No doubt there is a learned tome on this somewhere, but it is a fascinating game to read *Emma* alongside one of the founding texts of meteorology, Luke Howard's *The Climate of London*.

*Emma* is set not far from London, near Cobham in Surrey, perhaps at Painshill, where the eccentric Mr Hamilton, related by marriage to Admiral Nelson's Emma, had created an experimental garden-farm, a ruined 'abbey' and artistic 'mill'. There was "a sweet view, sweet to the eye and the mind". The gardens are now modernized by electricity pylons so obtrusive that the observer may be permitted to suspect the hand of a planner.

Howard a chemist and close friend of John Dalton, named the clouds: stratus, cumulus, cirrus, nimbus. He helped to lead the Bible Society and the fight against slavery. After the devastation of the Napoleonic wars, Howard and his friends in the United Kingdom and United States collected a vast sum, equal to many millions today—and took it to help the distressed people of Germany. Even Goethe, who wrote *In Honour of Howard*, addressed him as 'master'.

On the warm evening of 22 July 1813, Howard records his visit to Alton, Hampshire. As he traveled through Chawton, just before Alton, he would have passed before Austen's dining room window, the outlook of one who was his equal in meticulous observation. Whether they met that day we do not know but it seems possible. Howard was a campaigning celebrity with links to the Lloyd and Barclay families, Quaker bankers. There were Barclays in Alton, and Austen's brother was a banker. After this time, Austen's letters seem full of weather.

Austen wrote *Emma* in 1814-15. It is nice to imagine that the crux of the book, the trip to Box Hill, dates from summer 1814. The lesser details may have been filled in as she wrote. Suppose then that the book records the weather of summer 1814 and winter 1814-15, day by day as she wrote, although the calendar maybe 1813-14, when she began the plotting. With these assumptions, the course of the book fits beautifully with the weather recorded in *The Climate of London*. If so, the story may begin on 25 September, pass through autumn to snow at Christmas (now a rare event, but it did occur at Christmas 1814), then to a post-Christmas period between frost and thaw (32-41 °F in Howard's record), and the late winter weather of early 1815.

The crisis in the book occurs just before midsummer's day. Austen makes the fascinating observation of an "orchard in blossom" her famous 'error'. What are apple trees doing in flower in mid-June? But is this error—or clue? The weather was unusual in 1814. The annual mean temperature was one of the coldest in Howard's record, and in May and June the means were colder than 1816, the 'year without a summer' after the eruption of the Tambora volcano in what is now Indonesia. In the cool spring of 1996, mild in comparison to 1814, apple trees flowered as late as early June.

Perhaps Austen herself saw apple blossom on two hot days, 14 June (85 °F) and 15 June (78 °F), at Painshill and Box Hill. Then the weather broke. On 21-23 June, Howard notes that a "fire in the grate has been again acceptable" an observation worthy of Mr Woodhouse himself. Only as June ended did summer reappear. In July came clouds of uncommon beauty. In *Emma* "it cleared; the wind changed into a softer quarter; the clouds were carried off, the sun appeared; it was summer again". Did Mr Knightley come to call on Wednesday 6 July 1814?

Is it presumptuous to attempt to match the weather to the novel? Possibly—an author has the right of imagination. But Austen is accurate. If she says the orchard was in bloom, then it surely was in bloom. Her meteorological sense is acute, accurately recording the passage of fronts. The perfection of the book comes from the quality of the observation; the science makes the art.

"FASHIONS" MISTAKES - René Goldman.

A couple of mistakes crept into the paragraph Fashions [quoted from Wry Martinis, by Christopher Buckley] page 6 of the latest Newsletter.

Line 3: The French word for mob is la plèbe (from the Latin plebs) or la populace (which has a pejorative meaning, not present in the English word spelled the same way).

Please, don't allow an English noun to be preceded by a French article - that looks unbecoming.

Line 4: sans-culottes means without breeches: therefore it is the culotte look which is "out"; the sans-culotte look (i.e., the wearing of trousers) is "in".

By the time of la Terreur in 1792-4, breeches-wearing aristocrats and "sans-culottes" alike were being guillotined (as was Dr. Guillotin, the inventor of that contraption!) Even people who were among the initiators of the revolution in 1789 (e.g. Danton, Camille Desmoulins, Mme. Rolland, et al) went to the scaffold. When, after the overthrow of the sanguinary tyrant Robespierre, the Abbé Siéyès was asked how he managed in those terrible years, he laconically answered: "J'ai vécu" (I have lived).

[ Thank you, René, for setting us straight: E.S.]

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THE BOOK FOOL

In the early 15th century a small volume of allegorical verse was published in Germany by Sebastian Brant, called The Ship of Fools. Almost immediately it was plagiarized, enlarged, rearranged, translated into Latin, finding a larger and larger readership. The book surveyed the follies or sins of society, and became increasingly popular until well into the 17th century. It began with the Book Fool, who buries himself in books of which he understands nothing.

In the 16th century, a scholar preached a sermon, dividing this topic into seven types:

The Fool who collects books for the sake of glory, as if they were costly furniture,... he who wants books to bring him fame must learn something from them; he must store them not in his library but in his head...

The Fool who wants to grow wise through the consumption of too many books...[He is like] a stomach upset by too much food...[He] should select those that are useful...and make use of them at the right moment.

The Fool who collects books without truly reading them, merely flicking through them to satisfy his idle curiosity.

The Fool who loves sumptuously illuminated books...this love of painted images is an insult to wisdom.

The Fool who binds his books in rich cloth...making a library an essential ornament of a rich house.

The Fool who writes and produces badly written books without having read the classics, and without any knowledge of spelling, grammar or rhetoric...the reader turned writer, tempted to add his scribbled thoughts to stand beside the works of the great.

Finally, the seventh and last Fool is he who despises books entirely and scorns the wisdom that can be obtained from them."

- A History of Reading: Alberto Manguel (p.299)



Jane Austen introduces us to Colonel Brandon through the perceptions of the other characters: Sir John Middleton thinks him "neither very young nor very gay" [p.33], and the young Dashwoods find that "his countenance was sensible, and his address was particularly gentlemanlike" [34]. He wins Marianne's respect by paying "the compliment of attention" [35], to her piano playing although she considers him an "old bachelor," an object of "age and infirmity." [37].

Before we can get to know Colonel Brandon any better, Willoughby comes impetuously on the scene, saying "too much what he thought on every occasion...hastily forming and giving his opinion of other people" [49]. He "slighted" Colonel Brandon, was "prejudiced against him...and resolved to undervalue his merits." [50]. Like Marianne, whose opinions have become echoes of Willoughby's - "Everything he did, was right. Every thing he said, was clever" [54] - we readers are charmed and seduced into thinking that Willoughby is the arbiter of good taste and judgment, that he is correct in his assessments of other men, that he is a man-of-the-world to be followed wherever he leads.

We are unconvinced when Jane Austen tells us about Colonel Brandon: he is a polite and gracious guest, welcomed by Lady Middleton; he is a good neighbour and friend, treating Sir John with easy tolerance and good humour; his self-control is superb - Mrs. Jennings can buzz around him like a mosquito, with her sly innuendoes, insensitive comments, and obnoxious questions, and he loses neither his temper nor his manners.

Gradually we learn more about him. As a young man, Colonel Brandon suffered an unhappy love affair. In the army since he was about 17, he served in the East Indies - jungle fighting against rebels armed and aided by the French, in brigand-infested territories, rife with disease, and an almost unbearable climate. He gives information in answer to questions, but never boasts of his exploits.

Colonel Brandon is a prudent and judicious estate manager. He inherited the family estate, formerly "much encumbered" [205] and with affairs "sadly involved" [70], but now described in glowing terms by Mrs. Jennings as well-managed, orderly, productive, having "every thing, in short, that one could wish for" [197] and providing the Colonel with an income of £2,000 a year. John Dashwood recognizes the value of Delaford: "His property here, his place, his house, every thing in such respectable and excellent condition! - and his woods! - I have not seen such timber any where in Dorsetshire, as there is now standing in Delaford Hanger!" [375]

Brandon has a high sense of justice and honour: when his ward is seduced and abandoned, he challenges Willoughby to a duel, but with his usual dignity and reticence, merely tells Elinor, "One meeting was unavoidable...We met by appointment, he to defend, I to punish his conduct. We returned unwounded." [211]

Ironically, it is Willoughby himself who inadvertently tells us quite a lot about Colonel Brandon's abilities. The Colonel has a good eye for weather conditions: "he has threatened me with rain when I wanted it to be fine"; he is knowledgeable about sporting vehicles: "he has found fault with the hanging of my curricle"; and he is a good judge of horseflesh: "I cannot persuade him to buy my brown mare." [52]

Colonel Brandon employs competent servants. He brings Mrs. Dashwood to Marianne's sickbed almost an hour before Elinor dares to expect them: his coachman drives well and the Colonel cannot be fobbed off with poor horses at the posting inns.

Elinor, who has leaned to know him best, finds him "a sensible man, well-bred, well-informed, of gentle address and...possessing an amiable heart" [51] - no insignificant virtues. If we read carefully and stop looking at him through the eyes of a silly sentimental girl and an insecure and unprincipled man-about-town, we would realize that Colonel Brandon would make a fine husband and a very good friend, and Jane Austen has distinctly told us so.

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## MEMORIES OF THE GEORGIA.

When the Devonshire Hotel was demolished in 1991 - too small, too old, not economical to run - it seemed that the Georgia would soon be next to fall. But now we can sigh with relief: the stately, elegant old building has been reprieved - City Hall has given the hotel a heritage designation that will save it from destruction.

Recently, in a column in the Sun, Denny Boyd reviewed some personal and public memories of what the Georgia has meant to Vancouver. From its opening in 1927 the hotel was in the news and in the hearts of the people - the Prince of Wales was a guest; jobless victims of the Depression camped out in the lobby; under-age UBC students drank in the downstairs pub; a Howe Street character was shot in the coffee shop; and hundreds of ordinary people have wonderful memories of meals, anniversaries, honeymoons, and many other events which took place in the popular Georgia Street hotel.

For some of us, the most pleasant memory is of the Eighth Annual JASNA Conference held September 26-28 1986, at the Hotel Georgia. We had a small group in those days, but we were enthusiastic and we worked hard. With 200 attendees it was the largest conference for JASNA to date; the theme was The Watsons; members had to choose two break-out sessions out of five offered; dances were taught and card games explained. A kilted bagpipe player piped in the dinner guests, and Joan Austen-Leigh's Our Own Particular Jane was performed after the banquet Saturday evening. The Sunday brunch was served on the Malibu Princess cruising out of the harbour, around Stanley Park and to the Expo site. Bus tours of the city were arranged and walking tours of Gastown and Chinatown proved popular. We had a letter of good wishes for an "entertaining and successful meeting" from the Queen, and the Mayor proclaimed September 27th to be Jane Austen Day.

It was definitely an exhilarating occasion, and those of us who arranged it all had as much pleasure as the guests said they did.

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## ADOLESCENT LOVE

Harriet's "most precious treasures" - the bit of court plaister and "the end of an old pencil" - are not very different from the things modern young people treasure.

Some examples (from The Lived Experience of Adolescent Love: Wendy Austin) --

"I slept with his glove under my pillow. I loved knowing that he had touched it, worn it"; "I kept a gum wrapper that he discarded"; "I normally find tooth marks on a pencil disgusting, but hers were sacred, her wonderful mouth had been there."

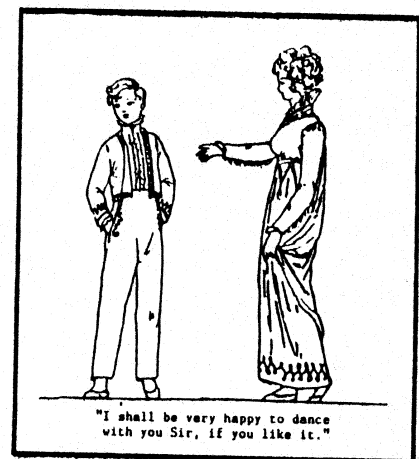
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*HUSH! my dear, lie still and slumber,  
Holy angels guard thy bed!  
Heavenly blessings without number  
Gently falling on thy head.*

Celebrated Cradle Hymns  
Isaac Watts, 1812.

## JANE AUSTEN SOCIETY OF NORTH AMERICA

### EIGHTH ANNUAL CONFERENCE



GEORGIA HOTEL  
VANCOUVER, B.C.

SEPT. 26-28, 1986



"PERFECTING A SUDDEN INTIMACY BETWEEN TWO YOUNG LADIES" (NA)

At the top of the notice of the March meeting, I put a quotation from NA: "Oh! I am delighted with the book! I should like to spend my whole life reading it..." and attributed the expressions to Catherine Morland.

One of our members queried this, saying it sounded much more like Isabella Thorpe than Catherine. Struck with sudden doubt, I looked it up. Whew! it really was Catherine who spoke this. Then I read the whole passage over several times. It was interesting.

Catherine grew up a tomboy - she was the eldest girl, and her role models were three older brothers. Her favourite pastimes were boys' games. She was "very kind to the little ones", and although the next oldest daughter Sarah "must from situation be... the intimate friend and confidante of her sister", Jane Austen doesn't give any account of this shared intimacy.

When Catherine, at seventeen, arrives in Bath, she is perfectly ripe for being seduced into intimacy with the first suitable female she meets. When she makes the acquaintance of Isabella, any feelings of awe and respect for the older young woman's powers of discernment, her additional years of experience, her cleverness in sizing up the rest of the company, are allayed by "the easy gaiety of Miss Thorpe's manners, and her frequent expression of delight on this acquaintance." Catherine - immature, naive and trusting - falls completely under the sway of this sophisticated woman-of-the-world, who offers her "tender" friendship. Rapidly and unwittingly, Catherine allows herself to be molded into a mirror-image of her new bosom friend; they meet every day, do everything together, think alike on all subjects of conversation.

At the beginning of Chapter VI, Jane Austen gives us a sample of this conversation, as the two young women discuss novels. Isabella leads the talk, full of terms of endearment, exclamations, exaggerations and innuendos. And Catherine takes up her share of the duet, quickly adapting herself to Isabella's pattern. [Just for fun, I counted exclamation points in the first four pages: Isabella 15, Catherine 9.]

Catherine has proved herself a promising pupil, although she makes some annoying lapses of good judgement - she doesn't ask the meaning of Isabella's sighs, or pick up on insinuations as quickly as she should. But she is learning rapidly - in that quoted conversation, it is difficult to tell one speaker from the other.

It will take better acquaintance with Henry and Eleanor Tilney, and some shocks from Isabella herself, before Catherine is jolted back into her own forthright and sincere self, and her language will echo the change.

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LACOCK EQUALS MERYTON

It has now been confirmed: this lovely village of Lacock, in Wiltshire, was used as the model for Meryton in the movie P&P.



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## DON'T WASTE TIME

In Northanger Abbey, Catherine Morland suffered the tedium of waiting for General Tilney's horses to be rested enough to go on another stage of their journey to the Abbey: "there was nothing to be done but to eat without being hungry, and loiter about without any thing to see."

Today, we often have the tedium of a long wait at an airport before our modern "carriage" is ready to fly us on our way. What is there to do during this enforced wait?

One travel writer found herself with three hours to wait for a plane in Manchester, and made the most of the delay. She heard about an old mill-turned-museum just outside the city, and was able to join a tour group from a local school. The Quarry Bank Mill, a 200-year-old working cotton mill at Styal, is now a National Trust property. The old water-powered mill transports visitors back to the days of the Industrial Revolution. It was built in 1784 to spin cotton, and later to weave cloth.

Caroline Jackson described the tour: "A costumed guide took us to the Apprentice House where nearly 100 pauper children used to live. We were told that because of unsanitary conditions, half the children born in Manchester died before they were 17 years old. However, life expectancy at the mill was longer because the children received three meals a day and a mill doctor was always in attendance. The ratio of girls to boys was 70 to 30, because the mill owner found girls to be 'less truculent.'

Education of the young workers was mandatory and every evening after working ten and a half hours, the children gathered for lessons at 8 p.m. Reading, writing and arithmetic were taught on slate boards and sand trays, a marked contrast to today's word processors and calculators.

Our next stop was the kitchen where dried herbs hung from the ceiling and tallow candles sat atop a heavily scored wooden table. Sacks of potatoes were stacked on the uneven stone-flagged floor and a smell of soot permeated the air. Nearby was the boys' dormitory and on the top floor, a medical treatment room which displayed medicines for wind in the stomach, a cure for worms, and a jar of leeches...

The adjacent working mill dates back to 1784 and was well worth a longer visit than I could afford. Historical information about the Spinning Jenny abounds with lots to interest trivia buffs. My favorite was the display of mantraps which were used to catch people stealing cloth laid out for bleaching beside their crofts."

There must be lots of such places to while away a few hours, within reach of many airports. It would be well worth the trouble to search for them and enjoy the interval before your next flight - but don't forget you have a plane to catch!

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*After a disappointment, Noel Coward wrote: "I am comforting myself with Sense and Sensibility and the gentle, acid good manners of Miss Austen."*

*- The Life of Noel Coward: Cole Lesley.*

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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. V7R 3S2. Price to non-members: \$4.00 per year.*