



## Another Lady's Proposal: "Sea-Bathing at Sanditon"

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WHEN *SANDITON* BY "Jane Austen and Another Lady"<sup>1</sup> was published in 1975, "An Apology from the Collaborator" mentions the publication of Austen's fragment by Chapman in 1925 and begins, "Another fifty years have now passed, nobody has yet attempted to finish the story and the general public has tended to ignore it" (310). She was mistaken. Such an attempt was proposed in 1948.

Five years after the 1975 completion of *Sanditon*, "Another Lady" performed the same service for *Emma*. This was not Austen's *Emma*, of course, but Charlotte Brontë's, and this time "Another Lady" was Constance Savery, whose story was accepted by J. M. Dent & Sons on first reading, published separately in Great Britain and the United States, and subsequently translated into Dutch, Spanish, and Russian. Although she wrote nearly fifty other books, together with numerous short stories, articles, and poems (Schonblum), a curious consequence of *Emma's* wide distribution is that the Savery title found most often in libraries does not bear her name.

From 1930 to 1977 Savery lived less than three miles from the sea in Suffolk at Southwold, where she did most of her writing, and she playfully inserted a reference to Southwold into her *Sanditon* proposal.

Savery died in 1999, and seven years later the bulk of her papers were deposited in the manuscript collection of the Knight Library at the University of Oregon. Among them was the outline of a proposed completion to *Sanditon* together with a sample chapter, "Sea-Bathing at Sanditon." Savery's address

has been omitted; otherwise, both outline and chapter are provided in their entirety:

OUTLINE OF "SANDITON"

By Constance Savery

Sanditon was begun at a time of deepening religious fervour in England, and shortly after the ordination of Jane Austen's favourite brother Henry, an earnest evangelical. In the Austen family the fragment was called The Brothers. Bearing these facts in mind, I conclude that SIDNEY PARKER, a man of strong common sense, judgment and foresight, saves Sanditon from the consequences of TOM PARKER's impetuosity, LUCY DENHAM's arrogance, and DIANA PARKER's meddling.

Seconded by his friend JOHN BRERETON (distantly related to LADY DENHAM and CLARA BRERETON), SIDNEY chooses elegant literature for the Library; ejects the quack doctor introduced by DIANA; extricates ARTHUR from a love-affair with the half-mulatto; settles a threatened lawsuit over Waterloo Crescent; and unmasks a plot against CLARA, who has been banished from the home of her patroness by the machinations of SIR EDWARD and MISS ESTHER DENHAM, rival claimants for the old lady's favour. The champion of oppressed innocence then bestows on Old Sanditon a new incumbent in JOHN BRERETON, a disciple of Charles Simeon.

Though at first prejudiced against his religious views, CHARLOTTE HEYWOOD has learnt BRERETON's worth. The bells of Old Sanditon peal merrily for CLARA and SIDNEY, CHARLOTTE and JOHN.

When Savery describes Miss Lambe she uses Austen's own description, "half Mulatto" (*Minor Works* 421). Persons concerned with Savery's views about race are referred to *The Royal Caravan* (1963), a children's book in which an English family sacrifices their vacation to help strangers visiting from Africa. Her numerous stories and books from the 1920s and 1930s are notably free of the anti-Semitism and racism that was rampant in the popular literature of those times.

Savery's historical details were usually correct, and her reference to Charles Simeon confirms this. Charles Simeon was an evangelical preacher at Trinity Church near Cambridge University from 1782 to 1836, during which period he advanced from persecution to prestige (Kimbrough).

In introducing John Brereton, who is not mentioned in Austen's frag-

ment, as Charlotte's suitor, Savery challenges conventional opinion, but others, particularly David Bell, have pointed out that although Sidney Parker is the only bachelor in the fragment who is not a caricature, he more strongly resembles the Austen seducers, Willoughby, Wickham, and Crawford than her less fascinating eventual husbands, of whom the wittiest, Henry Tilney, happens to be a clergyman.

Savery's typescripts are not dated, but there is a 1948 entry in her journal that reads "Wrote article about *Sanditon*" (Aug. 30-Sept. 5). Neither the outline nor the chapter is an article, but Savery rarely discarded anything she had written, and no other mention of *Sanditon* appears among her numerous papers. The date is consistent with both Savery's address and the typeface of the typewriter she was using at that time; however, neither of these factors is compelling since she used the same typewriter at the same address for many years.

A handwritten note by Savery on the "Outline" refers to what follows as an "imaginary chapter." It is briefer than most chapters:

SEA-BATHING AT SANDITON

By Constance Savery

It had long been debated whether the introduction of bathing-machines would impair the prospect of the beach at Sanditon. Mr Parker thought that, although the machines were not objects on which the eye could rest with any sensible degree of pleasure, yet the benefits expected to be derived from sea-bathing might very well induce residents and visitors to pardon the inelegance of their shape. He was therefore prepared to lend an ear to an application made by a respectable fisherman, who begged leave to place machines below the cliff for the use of gentlemen between the hours of six and eight in the morning and for the use of ladies between eleven o'clock and half an hour after twelve, at which latter period it was supposed the water, warmed by the sun's rays, would have no injurious effects on female constitutions. George Shoreman further assured Mr Parker that the machines would be drawn into the sea by a steady horse, and that he would be in attendance on the gentlemen every morning with his boat. His wife and daughter would wait upon the ladies, both wearing straw bonnets with "Sanditon Bathing-Machines" printed large on a ribbon above the crown.

As Lady Denham was known to be opposed to the practice of sea-bathing, her friends did not disturb her peace of mind by allusions



*A Calm*, by James Gillray (1810). © Trustees of the British Museum.

to the impending arrival of the machines. When she had recovered from the dismay of finding them already snugly established immediately below the Terrace, she drove, accompanied by her nephew, as fast as she could to Sanditon House to expostulate. “This will never do!” said she. “Bathing machines on the beach! I cannot countenance them, Mr Parker, I cannot indeed. Persons of taste will never endure to see the natural beauties of shore and ocean intruded upon by frightful striped boxes on wheels. As for making use of them!—is it conceivable that any one with the smallest pretensions to breeding would consent to enter the water under the gaze of idle onlookers who will without doubt be attracted in considerable numbers to the spot. We shall lose the patronage of those whom it is most desirable to bring to Sanditon, ladies and gentlemen of cultivated minds.”

Mr. Parker, disturbed by her vehemence, endeavoured to pacify her by assurances that George Shoreman knew his duty better than to permit idlers on the part of the beach given over to

aquatic pursuits. He added that experience had happily falsified her ladyship's predictions that only the vulgar would flock to a seaside resort defiled by bathing-boxes. His brother Sidney had asserted that the pleasant little town of Southwold in Suffolk possessed machines for the accommodation of the public.

"Southwold!—I never heard of Southwold before!" exclaimed Lady Dedham. "Pray, is the conduct of Sanditon in Sussex to be regulated by the burgesses of Southwold in Suffolk?"

There could be no answer to this question; but Charlotte good-naturedly came to the rescue of Mr Parker with a frank declaration that she found the bathing-machines so delightfully droll as to add to, rather than detract from, the advantages of the beach. "I must put in a good word for their huge wheels and their blue and red stripes," she said. "What memories of toy wagons and streaked peppermints do they not call up! Moreover," added Charlotte, perceiving that her appeal to sentiment had not met with favour, "you should consider that sea-bathing is highly recommended by many leading physicians. They tell us that it invigorates the lungs, gives firmness and elasticity to the muscles, restores bloom to the cheek of ill-health, and renews the vital spirits. You perceive, Lady Denham, that we cannot yield to you on this point. George Shoreman must be allowed to rumble into the sea twice daily with his cargoes of precious souls all agog to dash into snowy foam and sparkling waves."

Since there are bathing-machines on the sands when Charlotte first arrives at the end of Chapter Four in Austen's fragment (384), the Savery chapter could not be incorporated without altering Austen's original, and Savery's submission was prior to the 1958 completion of *The Watsons* (Coates) in which a fragment was considerably altered. Times change. With the current spate of continuations and sequels, a careful attention to Austen antecedents is honored more in the breach than in the observance. Had Savery received the commission to continue the fragment, she may have elected—or been directed by the publisher—to omit this first draft. She made no changes to Brontë's fragment when she completed *Emma*.

Savery's interest in Austen was of long standing. When she moved to a nursing home in 1991 and was permitted only a bookcase after leaving a house with books on every horizontal surface, those shelves included "The Jane Austen Quiz and Puzzle Book" (Lane), which poses challenges for anyone who

doesn't care about Jane. Fifty years earlier, her uncle, Sir Servington Savery, M.P., bequeathed each of his nieces twenty-five books from his large library. After visiting the cluttered house, Savery wrote to a sister: "It was difficult to choose my twenty-five books. Very few are novels. *Life of Macauley*; *Memorials of Burne Jones*; . . . two gardening books; two Trollopes; *Persuasion*; Austey's *Wit & Humour* . . ." A fourth novel was her own *Tenthragon*, because, she explained, she needed a spare copy to lend to friends. If *Persuasion* was that important to Savery in 1939, we can be sure she would have treated the *Sanditon* fragment with respectful consideration.

#### NOTE

1. This article is not concerned with the identity of *Sanditon's* "Another Lady." That said, *Persuasions* 19 features several papers about *Sanditon*, and those that refer to the 1975 completion identify "Another Lady" as Marie Dobbs. The British Library does the same for the 1997 edition of *Sanditon* published in London by Mandarin, and the 1998 Scribner reprint ascribes the 1975 copyright to her as well. On the other hand, when "Marie Dobbs" is entered into the catalog of the Library of Congress as an author, one is taken to books by "Anne Telscombe." The anonymous "Bibliography of Jane Austen Sequels" (Item 58) identifies "Marie Dobbs" with "Anne Telscombe" and adds the further clarification that either or both may be pseudonyms. "Another Lady" is also identified on the Internet with Georgette Heyer, but these attributions are anonymous and do not cite their sources, so I mention them only in passing. Adrian Room, the source appearing most authoritative, states that Telscombe is the pen-name and opts for Marie Dobbs, née Catton (28).

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