

FANNY KNIGHT'S DIARIES: JANE AUSTEN THROUGH HER NIECE'S EYES

by Deirdre Le Faye

When the first Lord Brabourne published those of Jane Austen's letters that had been in the possession of his mother Lady Knatchbull (née Fanny Knight of Godmersham), he made several references to the additional information relating to Jane that he had gained from Fanny's diaries, which she had kept ever since childhood.¹ It seems that these diaries have never been subsequently studied by any other biographer, not even by the Austen-Leighs in their definitive work, as they only refer to or repeat Lord Brabourne's statements without in any way adding to them.² In 1962 the diaries were deposited in the Kent Archives Office, and from them the writer has been able to extract a great deal of fresh information regarding Jane's life and that of her immediate family during the period 1804-1817. The Archives Office also holds another group of documents, not mentioned at all by Lord Brabourne, consisting of letters from Fanny Knight to her ex-governess Miss Dorothy Chapman. These too yield new information on Jane Austen, sometimes expanding entries in the diaries and sometimes providing further details.³

The diaries run from 1804, when Fanny was eleven, until 1872, when she became too frail to continue writing.⁴ They are all kept in *The Ladies Complete Pocket Book*, little leather-bound volumes with pages approximately 3" x 4½". These open to give a week at a spread; the left-hand page is divided into seven sections and the right-hand page has a cash ruling. Sometimes Fanny writes straight across both pages of the spread from left to right ignoring the cash columns, and sometimes she crams as many as seven lines of tiny writing into the daily section alone. Her ink is usually thick and black and shows through to blur the verso of the page - this, combined with crabbed writing and close-packed lines, makes the diaries fairly difficult to decipher. In addition, she uses so many abbreviations, both of names and common words, that her entries even when transcribed look more like mathematical formulae than continuous text. For ease of comprehension, therefore, all quotations from the diaries given in this article will be fully expanded.

At first Fanny does not always make daily entries, but it quickly becomes a habit with her to fill in something every day, even if only a few words. As is to be expected, her first few months dwell much on lessons, childish games and birthday treats, but she matures rapidly and her diary soon settles into a pattern that never changes. She notes the weather conditions, letters written and received, visits paid, visitors entertained and Kentish social events, but never gives any introspective musings. There are some references to contemporary events of the Napoleonic wars, but fewer than might be expected. She uses the page headed *Memorable Events* for a summary at the end of each year, and here occasionally makes some personal comments on the griefs or pleasures of the recent past.

The letters to Miss Chapman the ex-governess run from 1803 to 1857, when the lady's nephew wrote to say his aunt was moribund and unable to respond further. Miss Chapman had evidently cherished all Fanny's letters (over 150 in number) and it was presumably the nephew who returned them after his aunt's death. They are mostly written on two leaves of quarto, but a few are hasty notes on smaller sheets. Fanny usually gives only the day and month by way of dating; another hand, probably Miss Chapman's, has sometimes added in the year either on the recto of the first page or as an endorsement on the verso of the second. The letters are written at irregular intervals, and Fanny several times apologizes for her

long silences and untidy handwriting. Their content is very similar to that of the diaries - a factual record of family events and the development of Fanny's younger brothers and sisters - but in them Fanny does express her opinions and preferences, which enlarge the brief notes in the diaries. In later years the letters become fewer and shorter and deal mostly with illnesses and deaths amongst the Knatchbull family.

To comprehend fully the information given in the diaries and letters, one needs some knowledge of Fanny's family circle, and of the pattern that emerges as the years pass. Jane Austen's third brother Edward (1767-1852) had been adopted in his teens by his childless cousins the Knights of Godmersham, and in 1791 had married Elizabeth Bridges of Goodnestone (1773-1808). Fanny was their first child, born in January 1793, and ten more followed her within a few years. Elizabeth Bridges was herself one of a large family, most of whom married and produced large families of their own, so that Fanny is surrounded not only by her siblings but also by numerous aunts and uncles and innumerable cousins of all ages. Her closest contemporaries and correspondents among the latter are Sophia, Isabella and Mary Deedes, and Sophia and Fanny Cage. The two last are orphans, living with the Dowager Lady Bridges at Goodnestone, where Fanny is always delighted to call and to stay. Most of these maternal relations live in Kent and contact with them is close and frequent, as the diaries show. Her father's adoptive mother, the widowed Mrs. Knight, had retired to Canterbury after handing over the Godmersham estate to him, so visits to her are often noted.

Contact with the Hampshire Austens is intermittent, and varies very noticeably according to the family member in question. The two young sailors, Frank and Charles, always rush to Godmersham whenever their naval duties permit, and in 1806 Frank spends his honeymoon there. The two spinster aunts, Cassandra and Jane, are welcomed for long visits, either together or separately, and sometimes old Mrs. Austen comes with them. Henry is in the habit of visiting at regular intervals every year - early January for Twelfth Night entertainments, spring, summer, and then autumn shooting parties - but his wife Eliza de Feuillide rarely accompanies him. Likewise, James Austen and his wife Mary Lloyd visit Kent only twice in ten years - ca. 1798 and again in 1808 - facts which Fanny notes without comment. Fanny's only contemporary cousin on the Austen side is Anna, James's daughter, who is sometimes allowed to visit Godmersham on her own.

Once Edward Austen inherits the Chawton estate in 1812 - at which time he changes his name to Knight - he develops the custom of taking his family to Hampshire for some months every year, and contact with the Austen brothers and sisters becomes closer, as he enjoys entertaining them all together at the Great House. Also, as Fanny's brothers grow up, they go one by one from a prep school at Eltham to Winchester and so on to Oxford; at first the boys travel from Kent to Winchester via Henry Austen in London and the James Austen family in Steventon, but as soon as the Austen ladies settle in Chawton Cottage in 1809, this becomes their staging post and letters and parcels are exchanged by their hands at the beginning and end of every term. Cassandra acts as scribe for the Cottage, and she and Fanny write to each other about every three weeks with general domestic news. It is only in her late teens that Fanny writes privately to her aunt Jane for advice on the problems of first love, after confidences have been given during the Godmersham family's visits to Chawton.

When the letters to Miss Chapman begin in 1803, Fanny is just ten years old. Her next three brothers - Edward (1794), George (1795) and Henry (1797) - are away at school; William (1798), Lizzy (1800) and Marianne (1801) are the "little ones" in the nursery under the care of Sackree the head nursemaid (known affectionately

as "Caky"), and Charles is the latest new baby, born in March, 1803. Miss Chapman has evidently left Godmersham only quite recently and no new governess has yet arrived to succeed her, so Fanny's schoolroom tasks are considerably relaxed and she spends a lot of time playing with the toddlers while her mother nurses Charles. In September she tells Miss Chapman that "we expect Grandpapa and Grandmama [Austen], Saturday, & from that time our House will be full. . . ." ⁵ There is no suggestion that Jane was also of the house-party, but if Sir Egerton Brydges was correct in remembering that he last saw her in Ramsgate in 1803, ⁶ it is hardly likely that she would not have visited Godmersham as well during such a trip into Kent.

In 1804 Fanny's mother gives her the first of her pocket books, and in mid-January the new governess appears: "I am happy to tell you that Miss Sharpe is come at last I say happy and mean so . . . I find [her] even more good-natured than I expected; . . . I think Miss Sharpe pretty but not strikingly so; she is in mourning & I think it becomes her." ⁷ Fanny continues to enjoy Miss Sharpe's tuition and company, and is too absorbed in her schoolroom world to note in her diary that her grandmother falls sick in the spring. In mid-March, however, she is able to tell Miss Chapman: "Grandmama Bridges is perfectly well & so is Grandmama Austen now, but she has been very ill." ⁸ It must have been upon her recovery from this illness that Mrs. Austen wrote the verses in praise of Dr. Bowen's skill, to which no date has been affixed but which refer to the Austens' residence at No. 4 Sydney Place, Bath, an address they left in the summer of 1804. ⁹

Later in 1804 Fanny is delighted when her three Austen uncles Henry, Frank and Charles all stay at Godmersham together during September and October for the shooting. Frank's fiancée Mary Gibson comes from Ramsgate to be welcomed into the family circle, and Fanny duly notes that she and Frank "rode out together" or "walked about together all day," until on 10th October "Uncle Frank went away early viz at 4 o'clock in the morning. Mary was very low all day." The very next day "Uncle Charles was sent for by the horrible abominable beastly Admiralty and was away at half past 2." After this, the next happy event is the birth of another little sister, Louisa, on 13th November, and "Uncle Francis & Aunt Jane Austen, with Miss Gibson, are to be the Sponsors" ¹⁰ - presumably by proxy, as none of them was staying at Godmersham at the time.

Eighteen hundred and five opens with Henry paying his usual New Year visit to Godmersham, but on 23rd January the news of Revd. George Austen's death in Bath is received, and Henry leaves at once; on 27th January the family goes into "deeper mourning for Grandpapa Austen."

In mid-June comes the first appearance of Aunt Jane in the diary, when she, Mrs. Austen and Cassandra arrive at Godmersham bringing young Anna with them. The children have a whole holiday for the occasion, and on 26th June even more amusement follows: "Aunts and Grandmama played at school with us. Aunt Cassandra was Mrs. Teachum the Governess Aunt Jane, Miss Popham the Teacher Aunt Harriet, Sally the Housemaid, Miss Sharpe, the Dancing master the Apothecary and the Serjeant, Grandmama Betty Jones the Pie woman, and Mama the Bathing woman. They dressed in Character and we had a most delightful day - After dessert we acted a Play called 'Virtue Rewarded.' Anna was Duchess St. Albans, I was the Fairy Serena and Fanny Cage a Sheperdess 'Mona.' We had a Bowl of Syllabub in the evening." Unfortunately Fanny is unwell during early July and is too taken up recording the state of her own small stomach and consequent inability to do her usual lessons to comment on the activities of her aunts and grandmother. When she recovers, however, she writes a long letter to Miss Chapman: "We have had my Grandmama Austen, & two Aunts here for the last six weeks, & my cousin

Anna, she has just got another little Sister, who, determined not *to be outdone* by her in *names*, has likewise 3, they are Caroline, Mary, Craven! Miss Gibson who I believe you have heard me speak of is likewise here, but goes very soon; Grandmama and Anna, go on Wednesday, but my Aunts will stay some time longer. [P.S.] Aunt Jane desires her compliments to you."¹¹ The postscript shows that Jane had met Miss Chapman at some time prior to 1803, but no other reference is available to fix the date. The Miss Chapman she mentions in 1813 is obviously not the same person.¹² There is another happy day for the children on 30th July: "Aunt Cassandra and Jane, Anna, Edward, George Henry William and myself acted 'The spoilt child' and 'Innocence Rewarded,' afterwards we danced and had a most delightful evening." Mrs. Austen and Anna leave Godmersham the next day; Anna presumably returns to Steventon but Mrs. Austen goes to Worthing where she is joined by Martha Lloyd.¹³ Cassandra and Jane stay on at Godmersham, dining out frequently and going to the balls in Canterbury during the mid-August Race Week Henry pays a flying visit to join in these latter festivities. Later in August Cassandra goes for a few days to Goodnestone, and Jane writes to her there on 24th August.¹⁴ The domestic events mentioned are confirmed by Fanny's diary entries, and the references to Henry's picture of Rowling, which rather puzzled Dr. Chapman,¹⁵ is borne out by Fanny's entry for 27th May 1805, that Aunt Harriet Bridges comes to Godmersham to take drawing lessons from Uncle Henry Austen. As planned, Cassandra and Jane change places at Goodnestone on 26th August,¹⁶ and Edward brings Jane back on 3rd September. Fanny records also on that day that "Aunt Cassandra took my likeness." This is no doubt the sketch of Fanny, absorbed with her paintbox, which was presented to the Jane Austen Society by Lady Knatchbull-Hugessen in recent years.¹⁷

On 7th September Cassandra and Jane go to stay with the Deedes family at Sandling for a week, while the elder members of the Godmersham family go to London. The three boys are left at the Eltham boarding school, and Fanny and her parents spend a few days shopping, sight-seeing, theatre-going and dining with Henry and Eliza in their house at Brompton. By mid-September the group is assembled again at Godmersham, and on 17th September the four adults, plus Fanny and Miss Sharpe, set off for Worthing, arriving the next day after travelling via Battle, Horsebridge and Brighton. Mrs. Austen and Martha Lloyd are already in lodgings there, and on 19th September Fanny goes "with Grandmama in the morning to buy fish on the Beach and afterwards with Mama and Miss Sharpe to Bathe where I had a most delicious dip. . . . We dined at 4 and went to a Raffle in the evening, where Aunt Jane won and it amounted to 17s." Fanny and her parents return to Kent on 23rd September, but Miss Sharpe, who has been much troubled by bad eyesight, stays on a little longer, presumably in company with the Austen ladies. Fanny does not record when her grandmother and aunts leave Worthing, but probably Henry meets them there to escort them back to Bath.¹⁸ Jane's acquaintance this year with Miss Sharpe begins a friendship that continues until the former's death, and her name occurs often in Jane's letters from now on.¹⁹

There is little news of the Austen ladies during 1806, as they are no doubt too busy leaving Bath, visiting Clifton, Adlestrop, Stoneleigh and Hamstal Ridware and seeking lodgings in Southampton, to include a visit to Kent as well.²⁰ On 13th April Fanny writes to Aunt Jane, and notes receiving letters from her on 5th June, 24th and 29th July. Henry visits at New Year, midsummer and autumn; word comes on 26th April of Charles's engagement to Fanny Palmer in the West Indies; and following Frank's marriage to Mary Gibson in Ramsgate on 24th July the young couple come to Godmersham for a prolonged honeymoon. During the year Fanny writes several times to Miss Chapman, passing on news that she knows will have a

professional interest for her. Miss Sharpe's trip to Worthing the previous year has not improved her headaches and bad eyes, and she feels unable to continue teaching, so leaves Godmersham at the end of January. A tall, pretty Scots girl, Miss Wilhelmina Charlotte Maitland, is engaged in February as Fanny's next governess, but unfortunately proves to know too little French herself to be able to teach it, and so has to be dismissed within a few weeks. Her successor is the better-qualified Mrs. Morris, a short, fat, fair, cheerful widow, who settles down well with the Godmersham family. Miss Sharpe, after some time under medical care, takes a post with a Mrs. Raikes where she has only one little girl to teach; but even this is too much for her strength, and she volunteers instead to be companion to Mrs. Raikes's crippled sister, Miss Bailey, in Leicestershire, which will give her eyes a complete rest.²¹ On 16th November Fanny's youngest sister Cassandra Jane is born, and just before Christmas: "Aunt Cassandra comes down with the boys, on Monday next, which will be very comfortable, as she has not been staying here by herself for some time."²²

Cassandra stays on at Godmersham until mid-March 1807, visiting Mrs. Knight in Canterbury for Twelfth Night, and on Fanny's fourteenth birthday gives her "a pair of Agate bracelets in imitation of white Cornelian."²³ Henry does not pay his usual New Year visit, which may mean he was otherwise occupied in helping his mother and Jane settle into the Southampton lodgings shared with Frank and his now pregnant Mary. He comes to Godmersham early in March: "Aunt Cassandra . . . leaves us tomorrow, together with Uncle Henry (who came last Sunday), which is very disagreeable as we shall miss her amazingly"²⁴ - and takes his sister back via London to the house in Castle Square, Southampton, which has been got ready in her absence by the other members of the family.²⁵

In mid-April Edward goes to Chawton to inspect the Great House, now vacated by the latest tenant, and decides to take his family there later in the year.²⁶ On 27th April Frank's wife gives birth in Southampton to her first child, Mary Jane, conceived during the Godmersham honeymoon the previous year, and is "most alarmingly ill" for several days, but recovers rapidly thereafter and travels to Ramsgate later in the summer.²⁷ Charles gets married in Bermuda on 18th May, and on 13th August Fanny is pleased to note she has a new aunt for whom to make presents.

On June 9th Edward leaves "at ½ past 6 in the morning to London from whence he will go to Portsmouth to see Uncle Frank and to Chawton, and bring the dear boys home at his return." He returns ten days later, bringing Fanny "a packet from Southampton containing a letter from Aunt Cassandra and a note and long strip of beautiful work as a present from Aunt Jane"; but this trip has shown some reason for delay in the expedition to Chawton.²⁸ There is time for Mary Gibson and her baby to pay a short visit to Godmersham in the first half of August before the family move to Hampshire begins. The menservants are sent off ahead on 23rd August; Mrs. Morris stays behind with the younger children; and on 24th August Fanny and her parents and the four elder boys set off for London. George and Henry are left at Eltham en route; William, who has some eye-trouble, and Edward, who has now left prep school, continue with their parents to meet Uncle Henry and dine with him in Jermyn Street. The next day is spent in the usual London business of shopping and playgoing, with a call on Eliza de Feuillide in Brompton, and on 26th August they depart for Chawton, as Fanny tells Miss Chapman: "At 10 the next morning we left London, & arrived after a pleasant journey, at Chawton, where being tired & hungry, we were not sorry to eat, & go to bed. This is a fine large *old* house, built long before Queen Elizabeth I believe, & here are such a number of old irregular passages &c &c that it is very entertaining to explore

them, & often when I think myself miles away from one part of the house I find a passage or entrance close to it, & I don't know when I shall be quite mistress of all the intricate, & different ways. It is very curious to trace the genealogy of the Knights & all the old families that have possessed this estate, from the pictures of which there are quantities, & some descriptions of them have been routed out, so that we are not at a loss for amusement. There are quantities of Trees about the house (especially Beech) which always makes a place pretty, I think."²⁹

Edward now arranges a family reunion - the Austen ladies come from Southampton, and James Austen brings Mary Lloyd, James-Edward and Caroline from Steventon. For ten days the family call on neighbours, shop in Alton, and explore the house and estate, and young Edward is taken to Winchester to start his first term. The day after Mrs. Austen and her daughters return to Southampton, Edward and Elizabeth follow them there, taking Fanny and little William as well, and stay with them for a week before returning to Chawton. Henry pays another of his flying visits to join in the sightseeing, which includes trips to Hythe and Netley Abbey and a drive in the New Forest.³⁰ The Godmersham family stay at Chawton till the end of September, still accompanied by Henry, and return to Kent early in October via London, where as usual they dine with Eliza de Feuillide.

In the spring of 1808 all the children succumb to measles. Mrs. Morris leaves in April to go as governess with Sir James Gambier's family to America, a job so well-paid she cannot refuse, and Fanny, now fifteen, ceases most of her lessons and helps her mother - once again pregnant - to teach the younger children.³¹

In mid-June the James Austens come to stay "for the first time these 10 years," bringing Jane with them, and Fanny's daily entries confirm the information on Godmersham doings that Jane sends home to Cassandra.³² Henry of course manages to drop in for the first week of July to join the gathering. James takes his family back to Steventon on 7th July, and the following day Edward escorts Jane back to Southampton.³³

Elizabeth's baby is due at the end of September, and Fanny anticipates: "Aunt Cassandra I am happy to say is coming to stay here some time, it will be a great comfort to me to have her assistance in the lessons during Mama's confinement, as well as her company."³⁴ Cassandra duly arrives on 28th September, just a few hours too late to be present at the actual birth of Brook John, and at first Elizabeth seems to be making a normal recovery,³⁵ - until on 10th October: "Oh! the miserable events of this day! My mother, my beloved mother torn from us! After eating a hearty dinner, she was taken *violently* ill and *expired* (my God have mercy upon us) in ½ an hour!!!!"

The affectionate Henry comes at once for a week to join in the mourning, and Cassandra stays on until the spring of 1809 to help Fanny shoulder the responsibilities so suddenly thrust upon her: "Aunt Cassandra, who you most likely know to have been with us, ever since the day poor little John was born, has been the greatest comfort to us all in this time of affliction & will not leave us yet I hope. . . ."³⁶ During these sad months Edward forms the plan of settling his mother and sisters at Chawton, and of spending more time there himself in the future.³⁷

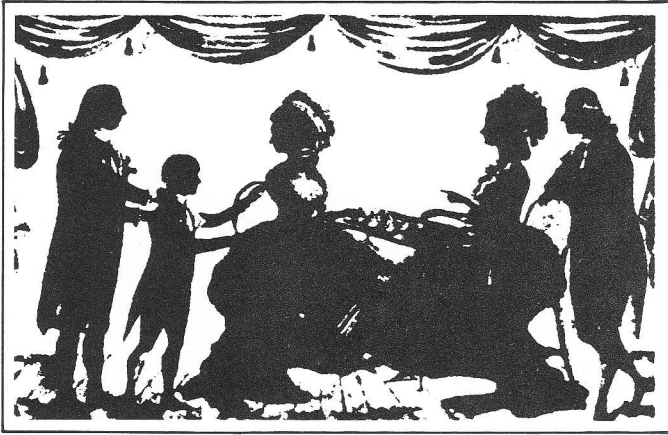
By January 1809 Cassandra is beginning to think of returning to Hampshire in order to help wind up the Castle Square house, as Mrs. Austen plans to leave Southampton for good on 3rd April and come to Godmersham while the Chawton cottage is being prepared for them.³⁸ Lizzy and Marianne are sent to a boarding school at Wanstead on 30th January,³⁹ which leaves only the four youngest children at home under the care of Fanny and Sackree, so Edward takes Cassandra back to Southampton on 13th February and returns from there three weeks later.

Almost immediately afterwards Fanny receives "a very bad account of Grandmama Austen" on 12th March, although by 14th March Cassandra is able to report that she is rather better. The proposed visit in early April is therefore delayed for a fortnight, and is postponed yet again at the last minute on 20th April: "Expected the Austens but had a letter to say they were stopped by illness at Alton." Fanny tells Miss Chapman of these problems: "We expected to have had our Hampshire party long before this, but Grandmama has been delayed at Alton from illness; however she is now recovering, & able to move from the Inn to a cottage of Mrs. F. Austens close to the town (where she is settled for the two years her husband expects to be absent. He is gone to China, & she is to be confined in June.) but it is very uncertain whether she will be well enough to continue her journey, before their future residence at Chawton will be ready for them, & then I conclude they will not come at all, which will be a great disappointment for all parties"⁴⁰ - and is very pleased when they eventually arrive on 15th May. Mrs. Austen is possibly still feeling weak, as she seems to take no part in the social round, but Cassandra and Jane join as usual in the family parties, trips to Canterbury and Goodnestone, and neighbourhood visiting, including an unfortunate episode at Wye on 12th June: "Aunt Cassandra, Charles, Louisa & myself formed the party & getting out of the carriage at Mrs. Cuthberts a gust of wind caught her (Aunt Cassandra's) white Pelisse & dashed it against the wheels in such a manner that she was covered with black mud. . . ."⁴¹

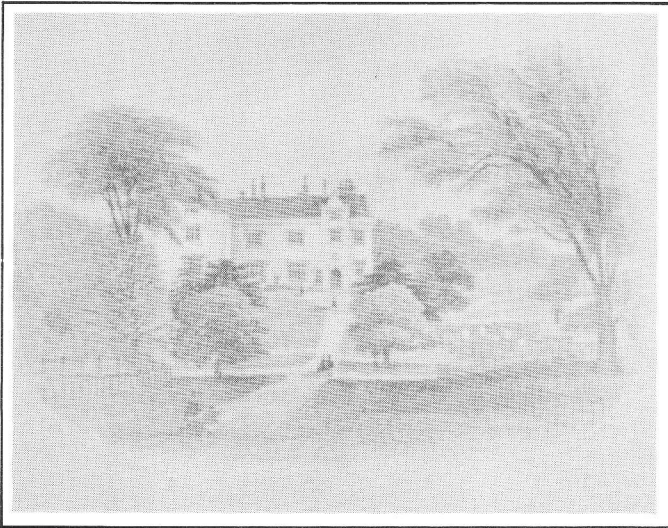
In view of the fact that during April Jane had been enquiring of the publishing firm Crosby & Co. as to the fate of the manuscript of her novel *Susan* (the prototype of *Northanger Abbey*) which they had purchased in 1803,⁴² it is interesting to note another of Fanny's comments in this same letter to Miss Chapman, when, apropos suitable names for babies, she says: "Robert is too hideous to be born except by my two Aunts, Cassandra & Jane, who are very fond of both *Robert* & *Susan* !! did you ever hear of such a depraved taste? however it is not my fault."

The Godmersham houseparty is increased by an unfamiliar guest when Eliza de Feuillide arrives from London on 22nd June. Fanny cannot even remember when she last visited them, which is not surprising, as Eliza's own correspondence shows that it was as long ago as November 1801.⁴³ Henry follows his wife a week later, and at the end of June Mrs. Austen and Jane leave, presumably to settle into the refurbished Chawton Cottage. Cassandra stays on another week, until Edward escorts her to Hampshire on 6th July, leaving Fanny as hostess to Henry and Eliza. The latter's Parisian culture evidently makes a strong impression, as the diary entry for 15th July reads: "Uncle & Aunt Henry Austen went away early ce matin. Quel horreur!! Un lettre de ma tante Cassandra - announcing the birth of Mrs. Frank Austen's petit garçon." This baby is Frank's first son, whose arrival Jane celebrates by a letter in verse to his father.⁴⁴

Having settled his female dependants in Chawton Cottage, Edward decides to visit them there, and on 18th October sets off for Hampshire with Fanny and little Charles, travelling as usual via London to call on Henry and Eliza at their new house in Sloane Street. As Chawton Great House is now tenanted by a Mr. Middleton and family, Edward and his children stay at the Cottage with the Austen ladies for three weeks. Frank's wife Mary Gibson, with her children, is lodging in Alton, so contact between the families is frequent. However, the two Winchester boys, young Edward and George, fall ill at school and have to be brought to the Cottage for nursing. This, plus cold wet weather, detracts considerably from the pleasure of the visit as far as Fanny is concerned, and an even colder week at Steventon to follow makes her only too glad to reach home again on 23rd November. Anna returns with them from Steventon and stays on at Godmersham



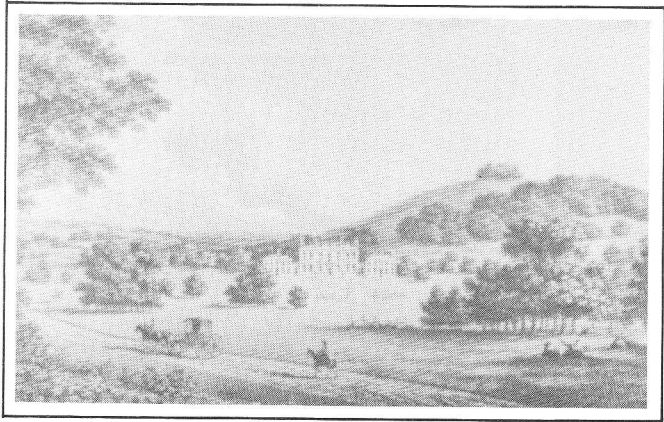
The Austen-Knight group, made to commemorate Edward Austen's adoption by Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Knight. Painted in 1783 by William Wellings.



Chawton House in the 19th Century.



Chawton Cottage



Godmersham Park

until the following spring.

No letters of Jane's for 1810 exist, and there are no definite statements as to her movements at this time. Fanny's diary shows that none of the Austen ladies visits Godmersham during the year, and her record of letters carried by the Winchester boys to and from Cassandra means that she at least is at the Cottage during the first half of 1810. This in turn implies that Jane is there as well, since the sisters exchanged letters every three or four days when they were apart - had any correspondence existed for 1810 some at least would probably have survived. Family tradition suggests that Jane spent the first year of her residence at Chawton in revising *Sense and Sensibility* and *Pride and Prejudice* and preparing them for publication.⁴⁵

As the spring of 1810 passes under Fanny's busy pen, it becomes clear that Anna's visit to Godmersham has been to seek refuge from emotional problems at Steventon. During the autumn of 1809 she had engaged herself to a neighbour, Revd. Michael Terry, but her parents refused to countenance this, perhaps because Mr. Terry had been in some way inept in his handling of the affair. On 13th February Fanny notes: "Anna heard from Charlotte Terry explaining her brother's conduct more satisfactorily. An interview has taken place between him and her father" - and on 17th February Fanny tries to help the situation: "I wrote to Aunt Cassandra (explaining *Anna's* conduct in the late affair) . . ." At first matters improve, when on 20th February: "Joy! Joy! Papa heard from Uncle James! An account of another interview with Mr. Michael Terry, in which he has consented to his addressing Anna - she had a letter from Mr. Terry who proposes coming here" -and he duly arrives on 2nd March. Fanny is rather disappointed: "Mr. Michael Terry absolutely arrived! The meeting was awkward, but went off better than I expected. He is much younger looking and more shy than I had an idea of. I should not like him, but if Anna does, that does not signify." After a few days, however, she considers that "He improves amazingly upon acquaintance and I like him *very* much. We left the *Lovers* as much together as possible that they might take leave properly."

Following this reconciliation, Edward takes Anna back to Steventon at the end of March, and Fanny hastens to inform Miss Chapman: ". . . it must interest *anybody* to hear of such a *very* young person as *Anna* going to take so important a step, for she is not more than 17. The Gentleman is turned of 30, & is a Clergyman in Hampshire, a Mr. Terry a very respectable agreeable Man. He came to Godmersham for a few days, & I liked him very much."⁴⁶ But on 1st May Fanny records a bombshell: "Heard from Anna, she is actually wishing to break off her engagement!!! What a girl!!!! Wrote to her" - and on 4th May: "Heard from Anna, and *all is over*, she has no longer anything to do with Mr. Michael Terry. Heavens! What will she do next? Wrote to Aunt Cassandra."

Throughout this year Fanny and Cassandra exchange letters very frequently, but there is only one letter from Jane mentioned on 15th June, and one written to her on 13th July. Henry pays his usual New Year, spring and midsummer visits, but in the autumn goes to Southend instead of coming to Godmersham. This may have been due to the fact that Edward plans another trip to Hampshire for October/November; he and Fanny this time go first to Steventon, arriving there on 20th October. The week spent here is evidently not enjoyable, as on 26th October "Papa and I left Steventon to our infinite satisfaction . . ." For the next three weeks Edward and Fanny stay at Chawton Cottage, and see a great deal of Frank and his family lodging at Rose Cottage in Alton. Frank had returned from naval duties the previous September, but until this visit to Chawton Fanny had not seen him for four years, as she notes. Early in November Fanny makes some specific

references to being in Aunt Jane's company, which confirm the latter's presence in Chawton at this time. Once again the visit is marred by illness, when news comes from Winchester that young Henry has fallen sick of a fever. Edward and Cassandra go at once to the College and take him into lodgings for nursing until he is well enough to be brought back to the Cottage in mid-November. On 21st November Edward and Fanny depart for London, taking the convalescent Henry with them, and Fanny is overjoyed to return to Godmersham on 24th November.

Jane does not visit Kent in 1811, and there is no record of Fanny's receiving any letters from her. This perhaps indicates that she was working on *Mansfield Park* or finalizing *Sense and Sensibility* for publication, and so left the transmission of Chawton news to Cassandra, the receipt of whose letters is frequently noted. This year is a busy one for Fanny, as she now enters fully into Kentish society. She becomes very friendly with some other debutantes of the season - Mary Oxenden, Mary and Emma Plumtre - and their names, together with those of her favourite Deedes and Cage cousins, recur constantly in the diary. The first sign of an interest in the opposite sex occurs in April, when Fanny and her friends are all struck by the charms of young Mr. George Hatton. They nickname him "Jupiter," "the Planet," or the "brilliant object," and Fanny carefully records every sight and mention of him. Later in April Edward goes to Hampshire and brings back Cassandra for a two-months' visit; after a few weeks she evidently considers this girlish giggling about "bright conversation and very brilliant threadpaper verses" has gone beyond the bounds of decorum. Just as fifteen years before she had reproved the young Jane for flirting too openly with Tom Lefroy,⁴⁷ so now on 12th June Fanny gets "A lecture from Aunt Cassandra on *Astronomy*" - after which the references to Mr. Hatton noticeably diminish.

At this time Fanny has the terrifying adult task of engaging a governess for the younger children, and on 27th April: "Miss Allen actually arrived just as we had done dinner! I almost died of fright, and she seemed nearly as bad. Dull evening - she will not talk." Cassandra reports Miss Allen's arrival to Jane, then staying with Henry in Sloane Street correcting the proofs of *Sense and Sensibility*, who responds: "I like your opinion of Miss Allen much better than I expected, & have now hopes of her staying a whole twelve-month. - By this time I suppose she is hard at it, governing away - poor creature! I pity her, tho' they *are* my neices."⁴⁸

Jane returns from London to Chawton during May and writes several more letters to Cassandra before the latter leaves Godmersham on 20th June; these are concerned more with Hampshire news than with Cassandra's doings in Kent, but Jane's reference to the Dowager Lady Bridges' illness⁴⁹ is confirmed by Fanny's entry for 1st June that "dearest Grand Mama has the Gout, and cannot come Monday! How vile!!"

After Cassandra returns to Hampshire, the next visitor is Henry in mid-June, and in early September he returns accompanied by Eliza de Feuillide. Fanny is no longer appreciative of Eliza's Frenchified manners, and on 9th September makes the cool comment: "Mrs. Henry Austen and I got on a little, but we never *shall* be intimate" - and there is no word of regret when she leaves later in the month.

One of Cassandra's many letters is received on 27th September, and on the next day is the entry: "Another letter from Aunt Cassandra to beg we would not mention that Aunt Jane Austen wrote 'Sense & Sensibility'." Several more letters from Cassandra are recorded during the rest of the year, but there is no hint that any of these contains the news of the publication of *Sense and Sensibility* during November.

The year 1812 opens with Fanny writing to Jane on 10th January, but for the rest of the year no other correspondence with her seems to occur, and Jane does not

visit Godmersham at all. The exchange of news is as usual carried out between Fanny and Cassandra. The silence suggests Jane was working on *Mansfield Park* and possibly revising *Pride and Prejudice* if this had not been done earlier.⁵⁰ Henry's normal quarterly pattern of visiting Godmersham is broken, and he comes for only a few odd days here and there; this probably means that Eliza has entered upon her "long and dreadful" terminal illness from which she dies in 1813.⁵¹ Fanny's brothers are growing up - this year Edward goes to Oxford, William to join George and Henry at Winchester, and little Charles to the Eltham prep school. Fanny herself begins to suffer with a first romance, in the person of Mr. John Pemberton Plumptre, the brother of her great friends Mary and Emma Plumptre, through whom she met him in the summer of 1811. His name appears in the diary with increasing frequency, and although no engagement ever occurs he exercises her heart and thoughts for several years to come.

In April Edward takes Fanny and her favourite cousin, Fanny Cage, to stay at Chawton Cottage for a fortnight, but the weather is bad and a proposed visit to Alton Fair on 25th April has to be called off. The following week the party move on to Steventon and the weather improves, so the visit there is more enjoyable than usual. From Hampshire they spend a few days in Oxford, seeing young Edward at his college, and reach London in mid-May to "dine quietly in Sloane Street" - perhaps the last time Eliza was able to entertain guests - before returning to Godmersham, with relief on Fanny's part, on 15th May.

Mary Gibson and her children come in mid-June to stay a month, and Henry brings Cassandra to join the houseparty on 18th June, but cannot himself stay for more than a day. Fanny is much taken up at this time by her increasing social contacts with John Plumptre, but records that Cassandra comes to a Canterbury ball with her and also spends some days with old Mrs. Knight, now very unwell. On 4th July Cassandra is taken by Edward to visit Charles and his family on board HMS *Namur*, the guardship at the Nore. Charles had returned from the West Indies the previous autumn, and had introduced his Bermudan wife and two little girls at Chawton before taking up his next posting at Sheerness.⁵² Cassandra seems only to have stayed a short time at the Nore, because on 21st July Charles brings his family on their first visit to Godmersham, and she does not return with them. It is perhaps possible that she goes on to Deal to rejoin the Frank Austen family now lodging there, but no record of her subsequent movements or return to Hampshire is given by Fanny. Several letters must have been exchanged with Jane during this separation, but it seems that none escaped Cassandra's censorship in later years.

On 14th October old Mrs. Knight dies and Edward officially inherits the Godmersham and Chawton estates and with them the obligation to change his name to Knight. Jane's only surviving letter of 1812, addressed to Martha Lloyd, refers to this change,⁵³ but Fanny, in early December, makes a much more emphatic comment in her diary: "Papa changed his name about this time in compliance with the will of the late Mr. Knight and we are therefore all *Knights* instead of dear old *Austens* How I hate it!!!!!"

On 9th November a domestic crisis occurs - the tongue-tied Miss Allen engaged as governess last year has "after much vile behaviour treated Lizzy so ill that it was resolved she should go away on Wednesday next." Fanny cannot stay to see her out of the house, as once again a journey into Hampshire has been arranged. This time Edward includes Lizzy, now nearly thirteen, in the party, and cousin Mary Deedes is invited as Fanny's companion. After a cross-country journey via Godstone Green they reach Chawton Cottage on 13th November and stay until the 25th, leaving for a day in Winchester to take the schoolboys out for a treat. The

usual week at Steventon follows, a duty rather than a pleasure, as Jane knows,⁵⁴ and on 2nd December they return to London where Henry dines with them at their hotel. The next day the party go to Covent Garden for Lizzy's first thrilling visit to the theatre, and are back at Godmersham on 5th December in time for Fanny to start looking for a new governess before Christmas. At the year's end she notes: "I became acquainted with . . ." but at some later date has heavily cancelled out the name and her following comments.

The year 1813 opens excitingly for Jane, with the publication of *Pride and Prejudice* late in January. Henry sends a pre-publication copy to Godmersham,⁵⁵ where it is eagerly read by Fanny and her friend Mary Oxenden; the latter seizes Fanny's diary and scribbles wildly across the end-of-January page: "This morning we finished 'Pride & Prejudice' - I will resolve on [three words illegible] perfection!!!" Fanny writes to Jane on 7th February with more controlled but no less warm praise,⁵⁶ and during the year about a dozen more letters pass between them, none of which unfortunately has survived. Miss Clewes the new governess comes early in February, and proves so satisfactory that she remains with the family for nearly eight years.⁵⁷ Some mentions of her occur in Jane's letters, but she seems to be a colourless young woman and no such friendship develops between them as in the case of Miss Sharpe.⁵⁸

In April a great upheaval takes place: "This house is going to be painted, & as the Tenant has just quitted Papa's house in Hampshire we are all on the point of removing there for 3 or 4 months"⁵⁹ - and on 19th April the exodus begins. The servants and three youngest children are sent ahead, and Fanny and her father follow with young Edward, Lizzy, Marianne and Miss Clewes. One of Fanny's maternal aunts, the unmarried Miss Louisa Bridges, comes from Goodstone to accompany them. By 21st April they have all reached Chawton, and are "half-frozen at the cold uninhabited appearance of the old House." The very next day, while Fanny is still trying to get the family comfortably settled, "Edward went to Town with Aunt Jane as we had a very bad account of poor Mrs. Henry Austen" - who dies two days later with Jane in attendance. Jane returns to the Cottage on 1st May, escorted by Henry's housekeeper, Mrs. Perigord, but on 14th May Henry arrives and takes Jane back with him to London a few days later.⁶⁰ On 21st May Fanny writes to her in the guise of "Miss Darcy," a letter for which Jane passes on amused thanks via Cassandra, but has no time to answer as it deserves.⁶¹

Eliza's death does not prevent the hospitable Edward from entertaining all summer through. Charles and his family come to Chawton during May, as do Anna, Mary Lloyd and Caroline, and in July James and James-Edward stay for a few days. Henry and Jane return from London on 1st June, and on 7th June the former sets off with Edward, Miss Bridges and Fanny for a five-day tour to Portsmouth, the Isle of Wight, and back via the New Forest and Southampton. After the first weeks of reunion, the party is decreased by the departure of Henry, the Charles Austens and the "Steventonites," as Fanny calls the James Austens, and for the rest of the summer Fanny's diary dwells on the close daily contacts with the Austen ladies at the Cottage, and in particular on the time spent exclusively in Aunt Jane's company:

5th June - "Aunt Jane spent the morning with me and read *Pride and Prejudice* to me as Papa and Aunt Louisa rode out."

6th June - "Aunt Jane and I had a very *interesting* conversation. Alas! Alas! why have I so little resolution?" (This conversation may have been apropos Fanny's uncertainty as to her feelings for Mr. Plumptre, whose attentions towards her seem to have diminished recently.)

21st June - "Aunt Jane spent the morning with me. . . ."

24th June - "Aunt Jane and I had a delicious morning together" - and indeed

almost every day Jane and Fanny have private moments together.⁶²

On 18th July Jane begins a bout of neuralgia, or perhaps sinusitis: "Aunt Jane confined to the house with a bad face ache in the evening. I staid with her, the others walked" - made worse on July 24th: "Aunt Jane came to see me and caught fresh cold in her face" - and lingering on until August 1st and 2nd: "Aunt Jane's face very indifferent all this week. I spent the evening with her. . . . Aunts Cassandra and Jane dined here. The latter slept here and suffered sadly with her face."

Anna's engagement to Ben Lefroy is formally announced on 17th August, but it is noticeable that he does not visit the Great House at any time during the summer, possibly because the elders of the family feel doubtful as to the constancy of the affair.⁶³

On 14th September the Chawton houseparty breaks up and Edward takes Jane, Lizzy and Marianne to London with him to call on Henry, who has now given up the Sloane Street house and is living over his banking premises in Henrietta Street. Fanny's entries for 14th, 15th and 16th September summarize the contents of Jane's letters to Cassandra.⁶⁴

The party reach Godmersham on 17th September, and on the 23rd Fanny is shattered: "Mr. John Plumtre called in his way to Eastwell!! and half annihilated me with the surprize!! he *is* unchanged!" Jane, writing to Cassandra the same day, records her introduction to him: "A handsome young Man certainly, with quiet, gentlemanlike manners. - I set him down as sensible rather than Brilliant" - and the rest of her letter is confirmed by Fanny's entries for the preceding week.⁶⁵

As Jane reminds Frank a few days later, this visit to Godmersham is her first since 1809; and, as events proved, it was to be her last.⁶⁶ Some letters to Cassandra must be missing for the period 24th September - 10th October, but Fanny's diary shows that the days pass in the usual round of neighbourly entertaining. Mr. Plumtre stays from 5th to 9th October, ostensibly to go shooting with Fanny's brothers but also to renew his courtship of her over billiards, battledore and parlour-games in the evenings. Jane tells Cassandra: "I like him very much. - He gives me the idea of a very amiable young Man, only too diffident to be so agreeable as he might be."⁶⁷

The Charles Austen family come on 14th October and stay until the 22nd; Fanny is much more enthusiastic about Mr. Lushington, MP, than Jane is,⁶⁸ and on 14th and 15th October describes him as "a darling! . . . has a lovely voice and is quite delightful!" - and on 25th October the charming Mr. George Hatton calls. Fanny notes his appearance now without any excitement, and Jane views him with her usual amused clarity: "I saw him, saw him for ten minutes; sat in the same room with him, heard him talk, saw him bow, and was not in raptures. I discerned nothing extraordinary. I should speak of him as a gentlemanlike young man. . . ."⁶⁹

This autumn young Mr. James Wildman of Chilham Castle starts to take an admiring interest in Fanny, and the dinner party there on 4th November is rather better than usual, she considers. Jane is "very well entertained by bits & scraps" of the evening.⁷⁰ The Canterbury Ball is held on 11th November, and Jane plans to wear her "China Crape" for it.⁷¹ Fanny records that there was "good company but no dancing - officers idle and a scarcity of County Beaux - Sophia and I only danced the two second, and her partner was an Officer - mine William Hammond - White sarsnet, and silver, silver in my hair." Unfortunately the letter that Jane must have sent to Cassandra describing the evening has not survived. On 13th November Edward takes Jane to London, staying two nights at Wrotham en route, and during the rest of the year Fanny receives another five letters from her, none of which has been preserved.

In February 1814 Edward and Fanny pay a brief visit to the Cottage en route to Bath, where they join the Dowager Lady Bridges for a fortnight. They return via Newbury to London and stay four nights with Henry in Henrietta Street. Jane is already there, preparing the manuscript of *Mansfield Park* for publication by T. Egerton of Whitehall, and her letters to Cassandra record the addition of Mr. John Plumptre to the family theatre parties on 7th and 8th March.⁷² Fanny is still much fluttered by his attentions, as her diary shows.

On 20th April the Godmersham family return to Chawton Great House and stay for two months. On this occasion, however, a party of Bridges relations is invited, headed by the Dowager Lady Bridges, Fanny's "dearest Grand Mama" (a description which, perhaps significantly, is never applied to Mrs. Austen), and after their departure on 4th May life at Chawton seems very dull to Fanny. She renews her daily contacts with Cassandra and Jane, but although *Mansfield Park* is first advertised for publication on 9th May, no mention of this is made in the diary. It must be while the Godmersham family are close at hand in the Great House that Jane takes down opinions on her latest work from Edward, Miss Clewes, Fanny, young Edward and George.⁷³ Now that Henry has no domestic ties, he is able to pay frequent short visits to Hampshire and to Kent during the year, and on 13th June takes Cassandra to London with him. On 17th June the Godmersham party walk into Alton to see the illuminations, and the next evening go there again to see the Poor sitting down to a civic supper - both these events are to celebrate the cessation of hostilities with France. On 20th June Edward takes his family to London to join Henry and Cassandra in Henrietta Street, and they all "see the procession going to proclaim Peace. Uncle Henry Austen went to Whites Fete at Burlington House."⁷⁴

Fanny is once again happy to return home to Godmersham on 24th June, and exchanges several letters with Cassandra and Jane thereafter; no doubt these include the further opinions on *Mansfield Park* gathered from Fanny Cage and Mr. Plumptre.⁷⁵ Henry comes to join the Canterbury Race Week festivities in mid-August, and passes local news back to Jane.⁷⁶

An unexpected bereavement occurs on 6th September, when Charles's young wife Fanny Palmer dies after the birth of her fourth child, which does not long survive her. Edward at once sets off to Sheerness to comfort his brother. A happier event is the wedding of Anna and Ben Lefroy at Steventon on 8th November; it may be the arrival of this news which focuses Fanny's attention on the uncertainty of her own feelings towards Mr. Plumptre. On 14th November she writes a formal letter of congratulation to Grandmama Austen upon the marriage and a long private one to Jane, asking for her views about the young man. In response Jane writes her sympathetic letter of 18th November discussing the pros and cons of a marriage with Mr. Plumptre, and on 22nd November Fanny records its arrival: "A letter from . . . Aunt Jane Austen full of advice &c &c."⁷⁷ Fanny replies on 27th November, evidently saying she will be guided by Jane's opinion, for on 30th November Jane writes again advising her to abide solely by her own feelings, and agreeing that the "sort of tacit engagement" presently existing is an unsatisfactory situation.⁷⁸ Jane looks forward to getting a reply by return - "I shall hope to find your pleasant, little, flowing scrawl on the Table" - but when Fanny receives this letter on 3rd December, she sends it and its predecessor on to Fanny Cage for her opinion, so the reply was probably not sent until she notes writing to Jane on 21st December. Her decision must have been to discourage Mr. Plumptre's attentions in the future, a decision not taken without long-lingering qualms.

There is very much less contact between Hampshire and Kent in 1815, because the Godmersham family stay at home to arrange domestic festivities for young

Edward's coming-of-age. The elder Edward goes to Chawton for a week in March and again in April, but neither Cassandra nor Jane returns with him. Fanny exchanges frequent letters with Cassandra, but records receiving only five from Jane during the first nine months of the year. This may, as on previous occasions, indicate that Jane is too busy finishing *Emma* and starting *Persuasion* to spare time for correspondence. Early in October she goes to London to discuss the publication of *Emma* with John Murray, but in the midst of this business has to tell Cassandra and Fanny that Henry is unwell.⁷⁹ On 23rd October Fanny records: "An Express from Aunt Jane Austen to Papa by 10 o'clock this morning with a bad account of poor Uncle Henry. Papa set off to Town directly." Henry remains dangerously ill for three days, but "better accounts" are received during the remainder of October, followed by a "comfortable letter from Papa" on 2nd November, and Edward's return home the next day. On 15th November Edward takes Fanny to join Cassandra, Jane and the convalescent Henry in Hans Place, and a few days later is able to take Cassandra back to Chawton and leave Henry to be tended by Jane and Fanny. The details of Henry's recovery given by Jane in her three letters to Cassandra⁸⁰ are confirmed by Fanny's diary, in which also the name of "delightful clever musical" Mr. Haden, Henry's apothecary, features prominently during these weeks. Edward returns to London from Chawton and takes Fanny back to Godmersham on 8th December. Two further letters from Jane follow during the remainder of the year, which may have given news of the publication of *Emma* on 23rd December.

Henry is so thoroughly recovered that on 3rd January 1816 he rushes down from London in his old impetuous way to join the Godmersham party at the Ashford Ball, and stays in Kent until the end of February. Fanny as usual writes more to Cassandra than to Jane, but notes receiving letters from the latter in January and March. Fanny's letters in the spring notably retain the opinions of *Emma* collected from the Kentish friends and relations.⁸¹

On 17th March comes the news that Henry's banking partnership has failed, meaning the collapse of the Henrietta Street head office and the Alton and Petersfield branches. Three weeks later, presumably after arranging the liquidation of his remaining assets, he comes to Godmersham and stays a fortnight. Edward and Fanny pick him up again in London at the end of April, and all three come to Chawton Cottage, as the Frank Austen family are now borrowing the Great House. Fanny is happy to go on to Wyards, near Alton, to stay with Anna and Ben Lefroy and their first baby, and evidently finds their company more congenial than that of her elders, no doubt anxiously assessing the family's financial losses due to the bankruptcy. Edward takes Fanny home to Kent at the end of May, and this short visit is the last time she ever sees her aunt. The insidious decline in Jane's health has already started this year, and after the Godmersham party leave she and Cassandra go to Cheltenham for a fortnight in the hope of finding a tonic in the spa waters.⁸² The letters Fanny receives on 1st and 11th June were probably written from there. No further letters from Jane are recorded until the end of August, when two arrive in quick succession. This may be due to the combination of the facts that Jane had finished *Persuasion* on 6th August, and that Cassandra had gone again to Cheltenham, this time accompanying Mary Lloyd - Jane would therefore have the time and the obligation to transmit Chawton news in Cassandra's stead. Following Cassandra's return to Hampshire, Fanny renews regular correspondence with her, and no further letters arrive from Jane. Edward pays a short visit to Chawton in November, but this time Fanny does not accompany him, and neither Cassandra nor Jane visits Godmersham during the year.

In the summer of 1816 Henry escorts Fanny's middle brothers, young Henry

and William, on a tour of France and Switzerland,⁸³ and by the time he returns at the end of August has decided to enter upon a new career in Holy Orders.⁸⁴ In December he is already writing "very superior Sermons"⁸⁵ and at Godmersham on Sunday 5th January 1817 Fanny records: "Evening Church. Uncle Henry Austen did duty for the first time here, the third in his life." On 19th January she notes critically: "Uncle Henry did duty - much improved" - and writes to Cassandra on 21st January with the encouraging news of Henry's efficiency in his latest profession.⁸⁶

Early in 1817 Fanny hears that Mr. John Plumptre is courting another lady, and this news evidently makes her think that at the age of 24 she is in danger of being left on the shelf. Her cousin Anna and her debutante friends are now married and mothers, and although Mr. Wildman of Chilham Castle still seems to be interested in her, she wonders if she made a mistake in dismissing Mr. Plumptre instead of marrying him when she had the chance. These doubts she puts to Jane, probably in the letter she records sending on 27th January. On that same day Jane starts writing *Sanditon*,⁸⁷ which no doubt accounts for the fact that it is not until 20th February that she replies to Fanny with a sympathetic but gently teasing letter, assuring her that she need have no regrets as they would never have been truly compatible.⁸⁸ Fanny then writes another screed asking her opinion on Mr. Wildman's courtship, but Jane considers he is not really serious in his attentions and assures Fanny she need have no fear of being left single.⁸⁹ Perhaps by way of testing Mr. Wildman for compatibility, Fanny lends him her aunt's works and seeks his opinion on them without letting him into the secret of authorship. Edward thinks this is taking an unfair advantage of the young man, and so does Jane, though she is nevertheless amused and interested to have these unbiased comments transmitted to her by Fanny.⁹⁰

On 16th April Fanny notes that "Mr. Wildman called to bring back 'Pride and Prejudice,'" and no doubt his views on that novel were included in Fanny's letter to Jane of 18th April; but no response comes, for by now Jane is too ill ever to write to her niece again. In mid-May Edward takes Fanny to Paris for her first trip abroad, and at the same time Henry and young William, both staying at Chawton Cottage, escort Jane and Cassandra to Winchester on the last journey in search of medical assistance. Fanny writes from Paris and again upon her return home in early June, but now it is Henry who replies on behalf of his sisters:

"12th June: A bad account of Aunt Jane Austen from Uncle Henry from Winchester."

"14th June: A letter to me from Uncle Henry Austen - a sad account of my poor dear Aunt Jane."

"15th June: Another hopeless account from Winchester."

"17th June: A better account of dear Aunt Jane."

The improvement in June is only temporary, and in mid-July Edward sets off alone for Chawton. Fanny writes her last letter to Jane on 15th July, and on Sunday 20th comes the entry: "Evening Church. Lizzy Marianne and I did not go, in consequence of a letter from Papa announcing my poor dear Aunt Jane Austen's death at 4 on Friday morning." On that same Sunday Cassandra writes from Winchester with the details of Jane's last hours;⁹¹ which Fanny receives on 22 July: "A long letter from dear Aunt Cassandra with many affecting particulars" - and answers the next day: "I wrote great part of a letter to Aunt Cassandra and was miserable." On 31st July Fanny receives Cassandra's letter describing the funeral,⁹² and confirms the published news to Miss Chapman a few days later: "The papers will have informed you of the sad loss we have lately sustained & you will I am sure have felt for us; & will be glad to hear that my Grandmama & Aunt Cassandra bear their

loss with great fortitude & that their health is not affected by the anxiety they have undergone.”⁹³ After this, life in Kent, at least, returns to normality, and the regular exchange of correspondence with Cassandra is resumed. It is not until 15th November that Fanny really feels the emptiness of bereavement: “Papa, Edward, Lizzy and I came to Chawton. A melancholy meeting! and everything looking so sad!” - a grief summed up in her final entry for 1817: “. . . I had the misery of losing my dear Aunt Jane Austen after a lingering illness”

There is a sadly ironic postscript to this record of thirteen years’ affection from Jane towards her youthful niece, whom she had come to regard as “almost another Sister.” Even as Fanny was anxiously seeking her aunt’s approval and reassurance that she would not die an old maid, she was already acquainted with Sir Edward Knatchbull of Provender, near Faversham, whom she eventually married in 1820.⁹⁴ Sir Edward was MP for Kent and had a long career as a statesman during the first half of the nineteenth century; after many years as a political hostess Fanny grew into a rank-conscious Victorian dowager and became ashamed of what she then believed to be the humble background of her Austen antecedents. On 23rd August of an unspecified year towards the end of her long life she wrote to one of her sisters: “Yes my love it is very true that Aunt Jane from various circumstances was not so *refined* as she ought to have been from her *talent*, & if she had lived 50 years later she would have been in many respects more suitable to *our* more refined tastes” - with more in the same vein.⁹⁵ This letter has now become well-known to Austenian biographers, but three points have hitherto remained uncertain - the address from which it was written (which the editor of *The Cornhill* could not decipher), its precise date, and its recipient. Thanks to the kindness of the present owner, Mr. Henry Rice, the writer has been able to read the text of the letter in full (only the first page was published), and the information contained in the second page, when taken in conjunction with Fanny’s diaries, enables these uncertainties to be resolved. The letter was sent from Fanny’s married home of Provender, and in it reference is made to a recent visit by Reginald and Maria and their baby. These are Fanny’s second son and his wife, married in 1866, whose first surviving child was born in June 1868. A check of the diaries from 1867-1872 inclusive shows that the young family stayed at Provender from 9th-21st August 1869, and the entry for Monday 23rd August 1869 tallies with the other family news Fanny mentions in her letter. The diary entry finishes with: “I wrote to Marianne at Chawton.” Marianne Knight was the only one of Fanny’s sisters who never married, but who lived on at Chawton Great House to become the “Aunt May” of later generations.⁹⁶ No doubt it was at her death in 1896 that this letter passed to the Rice family, descendants of her sister Lizzy.

FOOTNOTES

- ¹ Edward, Lord Brabourne, ed., *Letters of Jane Austen* (London: Richard Bentley & Son, 1884), I, p. 26; II, pp. 116-38, 218-22, 245-49, 268-72, 329-31. (Hereafter referred to as Brabourne.)
- ² William and Richard Arthur Austen-Leigh, *Jane Austen: Her Life and Letters* (London: Smith Elder & Co., 1913), pp. 212, 254, 256, 269, 291, 341. (Hereafter referred to as *Life*.)
- ³ Kent Archives Office, Maidstone. The catalogue mark for the diaries is U951 F24/1-69; the letters to Miss Chapman are U951 C.102-C.109, numbered individually within the groupings. The writer is deeply indebted to the present Lord Brabourne and to the Kent County Archivist for permission to study and publish these documents.
- ⁴ Brabourne, II, p. 116.
- ⁵ Letter C. 102/6, of 9.9.1803.
- ⁶ *Life*, p. 174.
- ⁷ Letter C.103/3 of 25.1.1804.
- ⁸ Letter C.103/4 of 18.3.1804.
- ⁹ *Life*, pp. 172-3.
- ¹⁰ Letter C.103/13 of December 1804.
- ¹¹ Letter C.104/4, of 28.7.1805.
- ¹² R.W. Chapman, ed., *Jane Austen's Letters to her sister Cassandra and others*, 2nd ed. rep. 1964 (London: Oxford University Press), p. 348 No. 87. (Hereafter referred to as *Letters*)
- ¹³ *Letters*, No. 47, pp. 169-170.
- ¹⁴ *Letters*, No. 45, pp. 160-163.
- ¹⁵ *Letters*, note to No. 45, p. 163.
- ¹⁶ *Letters*, Nos. 46 and 47, pp. 163-166 and 167-170.
- ¹⁷ Jane Austen Society, *Report* for 1971, p. 151.
- ¹⁸ *Letters*, No. 43, p. 153.
- ¹⁹ *Letters*, No. 45, p. 161; No. 47, p. 169; No. 49, p. 179; No. 51, p. 190; No. 52, p. 194; No. 55, p. 212; No. 58, p. 224; No. 66, p. 261; No. 72, p. 281; No. 73, p. 284; No. 74, p. 288; No. 82, p. 321; No. 90, p. 368; No. 97, p. 392; No. 133, pp. 465-6; No. 145, pp. 493-495, addressed to Miss Sharpe.
- ²⁰ R.A. Austen-Leigh, *Austen Papers, 1704-1856*. Privately printed (London, 1942), pp. 244-7. Hereafter referred to as *AP*; *Life*, pp. 191, 194, 197; *Letters*, No. 54, p. 208.
- ²¹ Letters C.104/6 of 15.9.1805; C.105/10 of 12.1.1806; C.105/1 of 16.2.1806; C.105/3 of 22.2.1806; C.105/2 of 15.3.1806; C.105/4 of 23.4.1806; C.105/5 of 27.5.1806. (Due to Fanny's habit of not putting a full date on her letters, these have been numbered and bound up out of chronological order.)
Miss Sharpe's engagement with Miss Bailey is also referred to in *Letters*, No. 51, pp.186-92; No. 55, pp. 209-14; No. 58, pp. 221-4; and No. 66, pp. 259-62.

- ²² Letter C.105/12 of 20.12.1806.
- ²³ Letter C.106/1 of 8.2.1807.
- ²⁴ Letter C.106/2 of 15.3.1807.
- ²⁵ *Letters*, No. 48, pp. 170-175; No. 49, pp. 176-181; No. 50, pp. 182-186.
- ²⁶ Letter C.106/3 of 26.4.1807.
- ²⁷ Letter C.106/4 of 6.5.1807.
- ²⁸ Letter C.106/5 of July 1807.
- ²⁹ Letter C.106/7 of 30.8.1807.
- ³⁰ Letter C.106/8 of 25.10.1807.
- ³¹ Letter C.108/5 of 29.5.1808.
- ³² *Letters*, No. 51, pp. 186-192; No. 52, pp. 192-198; No. 53, pp. 198-204; No. 54, pp. 204-209.
- ³³ Letter C.108/7 of 4.8.1808.
- ³⁴ Letter C.108/9 of 24.9.1808.
- ³⁵ *Letters*, No. 55, pp. 209-214; No. 56, pp. 214-219.
- ³⁶ Letter C.108/13 of 23.11.1808.
- ³⁷ *Letters*, No. 59, pp. 225-230; No. 60, pp. 230-234; No. 61, pp. 234-239; No. 62, pp. 239-244; No. 64, pp. 249-254; No. 65, pp. 254-258.
- ³⁸ *Letters*, No. 63, pp. 244-249.
- ³⁹ *Letters*, No. 66, pp. 259-262.
- ⁴⁰ Letter C.107/4 of 6.5.1809.
- ⁴¹ Letter C107/7 of 17.6.1809.
- ⁴² *Letters*, No. 67, p. 263.
- ⁴³ *AP*, pp. 175-176.
- ⁴⁴ *Letters*, No. 68, pp. 264-266.
- ⁴⁵ J.E. Austen-Leigh, *Memoir of Jane Austen* (London: Oxford University Press, 1951), p. 101.
- ⁴⁶ Letter C.107/15 of 22.3.1810.
- ⁴⁷ *Letters*, No. 1, pp. 1-2.
- ⁴⁸ *Letters*, No. 71, p. 278.
- ⁴⁹ *Letters*, No. 74, pp. 288-289.
- ⁵⁰ Dr. Chapman pointed out that the chronology of *Pride and Prejudice* fits the calendars for 1811-1812, and postulated a final revision at this time.
Pride and Prejudice, ed. R.W. Chapman, 3rd ed. (London: Oxford University Press, rep. 1967), pp. 400-408.

- ⁵¹ *Letters*, No. 81, p. 315.
- ⁵² *AP*, p. 249.
- ⁵³ *Letters*, No. 74.1, p. 500.
- ⁵⁴ *Letters*, No. 74.1, pp. 500-502.
- ⁵⁵ *Letters*, No. 76, p. 297.
- ⁵⁶ *Letters*, No. 78, p. 303.
- ⁵⁷ Brabourne, II, pp. 122-3.
- ⁵⁸ *Letters*, No. 78, p. 303; No. 80, p. 312; No. 84, pp. 333-335; No. 88, p. 357; No. 90, pp. 365-368; No. 91, pp. 370-371.
- ⁵⁹ Letter C.109/1 of 18.4.1813.
- ⁶⁰ *Letters*, No. 79, pp. 305-309.
- ⁶¹ *Letters*, No. 80, p. 312.
- ⁶² *Letters*, No. 81, pp. 313-318.
- ⁶³ *Letters*, No. 85, pp. 340-341.
- ⁶⁴ *Letters*, No. 82, pp. 318-325; No. 83, pp. 325-328.
- ⁶⁵ *Letters*, No. 84, pp. 329-335.
- ⁶⁶ *Letters*, No. 85, pp. 336-341.
- ⁶⁷ *Letters*, No. 86, pp. 341-347.
- ⁶⁸ *Letters*, No. 87, p. 353.
- ⁶⁹ *Letters*, No. 89, pp. 359-363.
- ⁷⁰ *Letters*, No. 91, p. 370.
- ⁷¹ *Letters*, No. 91, p. 371.
- ⁷² *Letters*, No. 93, pp. 379-384; No. 94, pp. 385-387.
- ⁷³ R.W. Chapman, ed., *Minor Works* (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), pp. 431-432. (Hereafter referred to as MW.)
- ⁷⁴ *Letters*, No. 96, pp. 388-389; No. 97, pp. 390-392.
- ⁷⁵ *MW*, pp. 432-434.
- ⁷⁶ *Letters*, No. 99, pp. 396-399.
- ⁷⁷ *Letters*, No. 103, pp. 407-412.
- ⁷⁸ *Letters*, No. 106, pp. 416-420.
- ⁷⁹ *Letters*, No. 111, pp. 424-427; diary entries 17th and 21st October.
- ⁸⁰ *Letters*, No. 116, pp. 432-435; No. 117, pp. 435-439; No. 118, pp. 439-441.

⁸¹ *MW*, pp. 436-439.

⁸² *Life*, p. 334.

⁸³ Letter C.109/8 of 4.3.1817.

⁸⁴ *Letters*, No. 132, p. 461.

⁸⁵ *Letters*, No. 134, p. 468.

⁸⁶ *Letters*, No. 139, p. 476.

⁸⁷ *MW*, p. 363.

⁸⁸ *Letters*, No. 140, pp. 478-482.

⁸⁹ *Letters*, No. 141, pp. 482-486.

⁹⁰ *Letters*, No. 142, pp. 486-489.

⁹¹ *Letters*, Appendix, pp. 513-516.

⁹² *Letters*, Appendix, pp. 517-519.

⁹³ Letter C. 109/9 of 18.8.1817.

⁹⁴ Sir Edward Knatchbull (20.12.1781-24.5.1849), 9th baronet, of Provender, Kent. In 1806 he had married Annabella Christiana Honeywood, who died in 1814 leaving him with six young children. By his marriage to Fanny he had a further nine children.

⁹⁵ *The Cornhill Magazine*, Vol. 163 (1947-49), pp. 72-73.

⁹⁶ Braboume, II, p. 118.

Acknowledgments:

Thanks to the Kent Archives for permission to reprint *Memorandum* photographs.

Thanks to the Jane Austen Society of England for permission to reprint the *Chawton House* photograph.

MEMORANDUMS and OBSERVATIONS
IN JUNE, 1805.

Monday
Dad & Aunt H. went
to town with
the
Tuesday
Mrs. H. & Mr. H. from
called here, it was
Diana wrote a letter to
Friday
The night made a happy
of present of a new
Grand man a pin to
Wednesday
P. on a & Jane
& J. on a & Jane
of 6 in the evening.
Thursday
We had a whole holiday
Mr. J. & Mrs. J. came
Friday
"Eliza". He gave a
entertainment in honor
Saturday
Miss H. & Mr. J.
called here a lot of
Sunday
of 6 in the evening.
Monday
Mrs. H. & Mr. H.
called here a lot of
Tuesday
of 6 in the evening.
Wednesday
of 6 in the evening.
Thursday
of 6 in the evening.
Friday
of 6 in the evening.
Saturday
of 6 in the evening.
Sunday
of 6 in the evening.

JUNE, 4th Month, xxx Days. (Week 10)

Account of Cash. (Account of Cash)
Money in hand 100
Gave away 2
For our great joy
of 6
Mrs. Philpot came for the
first time before the holiday
of the Christmas
We heard that about
gave about the
safely brought to
bed of a daughter
whose name is
the Caroline Mary
Lester
- 100 - 2 -

MEMORANDUMS and OBSERVATIONS
IN JUNE, 1805.

Monday
My hen laid another egg
& began sitting under
them.
Tuesday
Something new has happened
today. It is a
Wednesday
The hen has a
Thursday
Friday
Saturday
Sunday
Morning Church.

JUNE, 6th Month, xxx Days. (Week 11)

Account of Cash. (Account of Cash)
Money in hand 100
Gave away 6
Gave to
of 6
- 100 - 6 - 9 -