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INTRODUCTION

This book is written from Jane Austen's House in Chawton – one of the most important places in the history of English literature and the development of the novel.

Here, in this inspiring Hampshire cottage, Jane Austen lived for the last eight years of her life. Here, her genius flourished and she wrote, revised and had published all six of her globally beloved novels: *Sense and Sensibility*, *Pride and Prejudice*, *Mansfield Park*, *Emma*, *Northanger Abbey* and *Persuasion*.

Today, Jane Austen's House is a cherished museum with an unparalleled collection of Austen treasures, including items of furniture, paintings

and household objects. Visitors can discover Jane's personal letters and first editions of her novels, items of jewellery, portraits of her friends and family, and the tiny writing table at which she wrote.

This book brings together some of the precious fragments of Jane Austen's life story, along with world events that shaped her life and understanding, extracts from her novels and letters, and a range of extraordinary objects held here in the museum's collection. Dip into it as you will, or go through month by month and enjoy a full year of Jane Austen: her life and writings, people and objects she knew and, of course, her beautiful, inspiring home.

‘Hitherto the weather has been just what we could wish;—the continuance of the dry Season is very necessary to our comfort.’

JANE TO CASSANDRA,
FRIDAY 14 SEPTEMBER 1804





JANUARY

In January 1776, when Jane was just a few weeks old, the Hampshire naturalist Gilbert White described the winter weather in his diary:

‘January 7th. — Snow driving all day, which was followed by frost, sleet, and some snow, till the 12th, when a prodigious mass overwhelmed all the works of men, drifting over the tops of the gates and filling the hollow lanes.’



A TRIP TO LONDON

*Jane Austen is famously precise about dates in her novels. In *Sense and Sensibility*, the Dashwood sisters' trip to London takes place 'in the first week in January' – just at the start of the London Season.*

They were three days on their journey, and Marianne's behaviour as they travelled was a happy specimen of what future complaisance and companionableness to Mrs. Jennings might be expected to be. She sat in silence almost all the way, wrapt in her own meditations, and scarcely ever voluntarily speaking, except when any object of picturesque beauty within their view drew from her an exclamation of delight exclusively addressed to her sister. To atone for this conduct therefore, Elinor took immediate possession of the post of civility which she had assigned herself, behaved with the greatest attention to Mrs. Jennings, talked with her, laughed with her, and listened to her whenever she could; and Mrs. Jennings on her side treated them both with all possible kindness, was solicitous on every occasion for their ease and enjoyment, and only disturbed that she could not make them choose their own dinners at the inn, nor extort a confession of their preferring salmon to cod, or boiled fowls to veal cutlets. They reached town by three o'clock the third day, glad to be released, after such a journey, from the confinement of a carriage, and ready to enjoy all the luxury of a good fire.

The house was handsome, and handsomely fitted up, and the young ladies were immediately put in possession of a very comfortable apartment. It had formerly been Charlotte's, and over the mantelpiece still hung a landscape in

coloured silks of her performance, in proof of her having spent seven years at a great school in town to some effect.

As dinner was not to be ready in less than two hours from their arrival, Elinor determined to employ the interval in writing to her mother, and sat down for that purpose. In a few moments Marianne did the same. 'I am writing home, Marianne,' said Elinor; 'had not you better defer your letter for a day or two?'

'I am not going to write to my mother,' replied Marianne, hastily, and as if wishing to avoid any farther inquiry. Elinor said no more; it immediately struck her that she must then be writing to Willoughby; and the conclusion which as instantly followed was, that, however mysteriously they might wish to conduct the affair, they must be engaged. This conviction, though not entirely satisfactory, gave her pleasure, and she continued her letter with greater alacrity. Marianne's was finished in a very few minutes; in length it could be no more than a note; it was then folded up, sealed, and directed with eager rapidity. Elinor thought she could distinguish a large W in the direction; and no sooner was it complete than Marianne, ringing the bell, requested the footman who answered it to get that letter conveyed for her to the two-penny post. This decided the matter at once.

SENSE AND SENSIBILITY, VOLUME II, CHAPTER 4

Illustration by
Hugh Thomson
for *Sense and
Sensibility*
(MacMillan & Co,
1896).



**‘To be fond of dancing
was a certain step
towards falling in love.’**

PRIDE AND PREJUDICE,
VOLUME I, CHAPTER 3



Portrait miniature
of Tom Lefroy
by George
Engleheart, 1798.

DANCING WITH TOM LEFROY

In January 1796, when she had just turned 20, Jane Austen met Tom Lefroy, a clever young Irishman who had moved to London to study the law. He was staying with his uncle and aunt for the Christmas holidays, near to the Austen’s home in Steventon, Hampshire.

Jane and Tom met frequently at Christmas balls and parties, where they danced, chatted and flirted. Jane described their behaviour in a letter to her sister Cassandra as ‘everything most profligate and shocking in the way of dancing and sitting down together.’

They certainly enjoyed each other’s company, but if Jane had hopes of marriage she was to be disappointed. Tom went back to London to resume his studies and Jane wrote to her sister:

**‘At length the Day is come
on which I am to flirt my last
with Tom Lefroy, & when you
receive this it will be over—
My tears flow as I write, at
the melancholy idea.’**

Some biographers have taken this at face value and assumed that she was really heartbroken, but it seems more likely that she was teasing Cassandra, in her usual style, and that the tears she mentions were no more than a twinkle in her eye.

After all, Jane was a realist. She might be a romantic in her novels, arguing for mutual love in marriage, but she was also practical and knew how essential a good income was to domestic happiness. Neither Tom nor Jane had the money to make a match possible.

And while Tom went back to work, Jane did too – in the autumn of 1796 she began writing *First Impressions*, published years later as *Pride and Prejudice*. It has been suggested that her romance with Tom may have inspired her to create the character of Mr Darcy, but again this doesn’t seem right. Darcy is cold, arrogant and aloof – Tom Lefroy was amiable and fun – more like Mr Bingley than his proud friend.

PUBLICATION OF *PRIDE AND PREJUDICE*

Jane first drafted *Pride and Prejudice* in 1796, at her childhood home of Steventon Rectory. At this time the novel was called *First Impressions* and is thought to have been written as a series of letters.

When Jane arrived in Chawton in 1809, she took out her early manuscripts and set to work rewriting them for publication. First, she revised *Sense and Sensibility* and then she turned her attention to *First Impressions*, revising the manuscript extensively and giving it a new title.

Encouraged by the success of *Sense and Sensibility*, Jane's publisher Thomas Egerton, agreed to publish *Pride and Prejudice* at his own risk, by purchasing the copyright. Jane wrote to her friend Martha Lloyd:

'P. & P. is sold.—Egerton gives £110 for it.—I would rather have had £150, but we could not both be pleased, & I am not at all surprised that he should not chuse to hazard, so much.'

Pride and Prejudice was published on 28 January 1813. It sold well – the first edition (probably around 1500 copies) sold out quickly and became one of the most fashionable novels of the season.

According to Jane's brother Henry, the playwright Richard Sheridan called it 'one of the cleverest things he ever read', while another literary acquaintance assured Henry that it was 'much too clever to have been written by a woman'.

Jane herself was more critical, writing to Cassandra:

'The work is rather too light & bright & sparkling;—it wants shade;—it wants to be stretched out here & there with a long Chapter—of sense if it could be had, if not of solemn specious nonsense—about something unconnected with the story; an Essay on Writing, a critique on Walter Scott, or the history of Buonaparté—or anything that would form a contrast & bring the reader with increased delight to the playfulness & Epigrammatism of the general stile...'

JANE TO CASSANDRA,
THURSDAY 4 FEBRUARY 1813

Title page for the first edition of *Pride and Prejudice*, 1813.

PRIDE
AND
PREJUDICE:
A NOVEL.
IN THREE VOLUMES.
BY THE
AUTHOR OF "SENSE AND SENSIBILITY."
VOL. I.

ORANGE WINE

The Austens enjoyed all sorts of home-brewed wines and beers, but one of Jane's favourites seems to have been orange wine. On 24 January 1817 she wrote to her friend Alethea Bigg requesting a recipe, while another recipe appears in *Martha Lloyd's Household Book* – a notebook of recipes collected by Jane and Cassandra's friend who lived with them here in Chawton.

This recipe is perfect for January, when Seville oranges are in season.

To make Orange Wine

Take 2 Gallons of Water let it boil an hour, when it is cold have ready a hundred & twelve pd of Malagoe Raisons picked, & choped small; when the water is quite cold put it on the raisons let it stand a fortnight stirring it twice every day, then strain the liquor from the raison squeeze them very hard, let the liquor run through a hair sive then have ready a Civil Oranges upon pare'd very thin squeeze the juice of the Oranges upon the Peels & put that and the liquor into the Vesel and when it has done working stop it up you may stop it bottle it when fine which will be in about two Months –



I hope you received my little parcel by J. Bond on Wednesday evening, my dear Cassandra, & that you will be ready to hear from me again on Sunday, for I feel that I must write to you to day. Your parcel is safely arrived & everything shall be delivered as it ought. Thank you for your note. As you had not heard from me at that time, it was very good in you to write, but I shall not be so much your debtor soon. I want to tell you that I have got my own darling Child from London; on Wednesday I received one Copy, sent down by Falknor, with three lines from Henry to say that he had given another to Charles & sent a 3^d by the Coach to Godmersham, just the two Sets which I was least eager for the disposal of. I wrote to him immediately to beg for my two other Sets, unless he would take the trouble of forwarding them at once to Steventon & Portsmouth. Not having an idea of his leaving Town before to day; - by your account however he was gone before my Letter was written. The only evil is the Delay, nothing more can be done till his return. Tell James & Mary so, with my Love. - For your sake I am as well pleased that it sh^d be so, as it might be unpleasant to you to be in the Neighbourhood at the first burst of the business. - The Advertisement is in our paper to day for the first time; - 10^s. - He shall ask £1-1- for my two next, & £1-8- for my stupidest of all. - I shall write to Frank, that he may not think himself neglected. Miss Benn dined with us on the very day of the Books coming, & in the evening we set fairly at it & read half the 1st vol.

JANE TO CASSANDRA, FRIDAY 29 JANUARY 1813

Chawton Friday Jan^y 29.

I hope you received my little parcel by J. Bond on Wednesday evening, my dear Cassandra, & that you will be ready to hear from me again on Sunday, for I feel that I must write to you to day. Your parcel is safely arrived & everything shall be delivered as it ought. Thank you for your note. As you had not heard from me at that time it was very good in you to write, but I shall not be so much your debtor soon. - I want to tell you that I have got my own darling Child from London; - on Wednesday I received one Copy, sent down by Falknor, with three lines from Henry to say that he had given another to Charles & sent a 3^d by the Coach to Godmersham; just the two Sets which I was least eager for the disposal of. I wrote to him immediately to beg for my two other Sets, unless he would take the trouble of forwarding them at once to Steventon & Portsmouth - not having an idea of his leaving Town before to day; - by your account however he was gone before my Letter was written. The only evil is the delay, nothing more

can be done till his return. Tell James & Mary so, with my Love. - For your sake I am as well pleased that it sh^d be so, as it might be unpleasant to you to be in the Neighbourhood at the first burst of the business. - The Advertisement is in our paper to day for the first time; - 10^s. - He shall ask £1-1- for my two next, & £1-8- for my stupidest of all. - I shall write to Frank, that he may not think himself neglected. Miss Benn dined with us on the very day of the Books coming, & in the evening we set fairly at it & read half the 1st vol. to her - prefacing that having intelligence from Henry that such a work w^d soon appear we had desired him to send it whenever it came out - & I believe it passed with her unsuspected. - She was amused, poor soul! that she c^d not help you know, with two such people to lead the way; but she really does seem to admire Elizabeth. I must confess that I think her as delightful a creature as ever appeared in print, & how I shall be able to tolerate those who do not like her at least, I do not know.

JANE AUSTEN'S MUSIC BOOKS

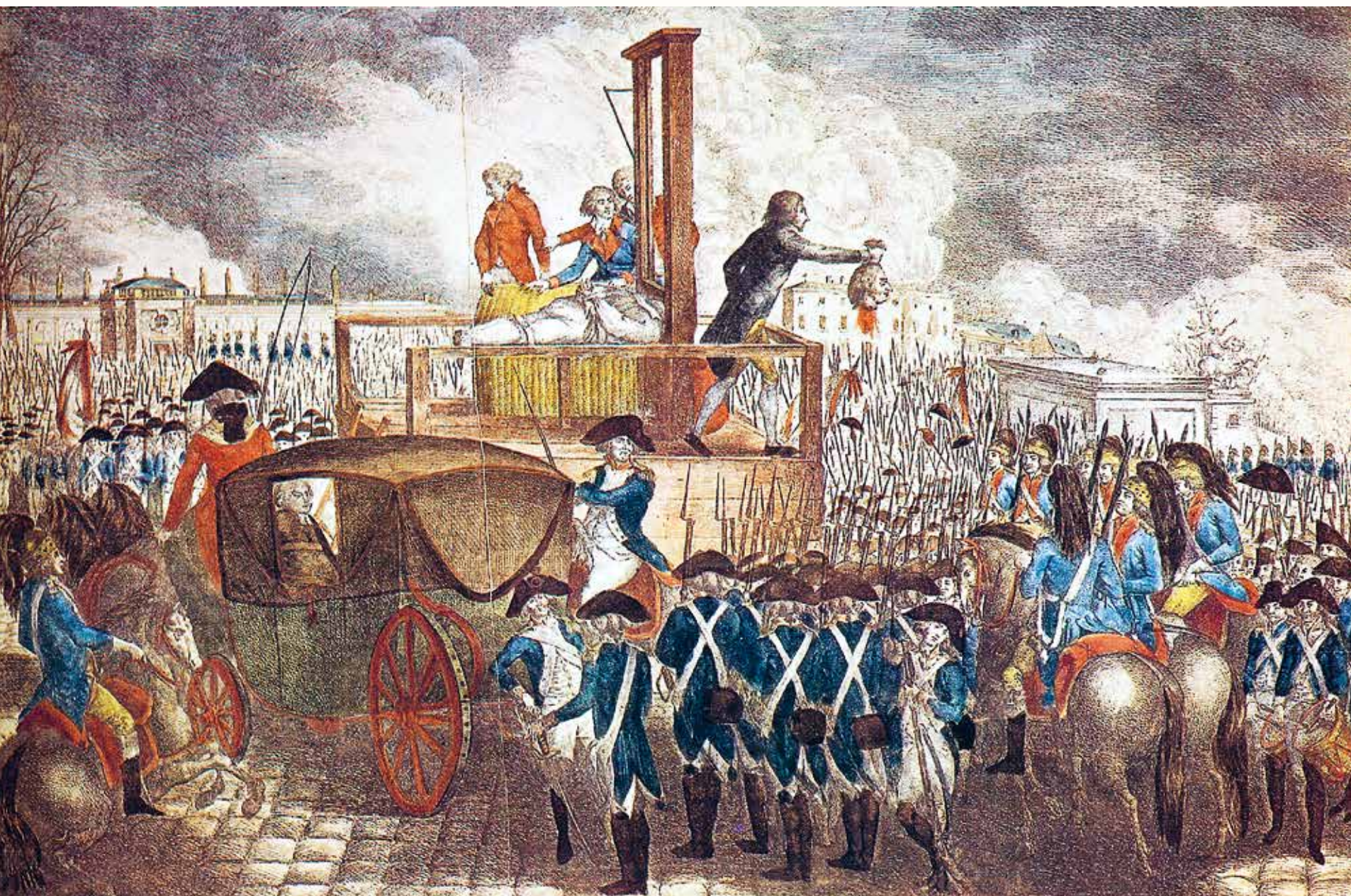
In the eighteenth century, sheet music was expensive to buy. Instead, it was common for young ladies to borrow or hire their favourite music and then copy it out into books of pre-ruled manuscript paper. Jane Austen's House holds two such books of sheet music, copied out by Jane Austen between 1790 and 1810.

This arrangement of *Nos Galan*, or 'New Year's Eve', is a traditional Welsh winter carol. Today, it is instantly recognizable as the popular Christmas carol *Deck the Halls* – albeit with a few unexpected twists and turns. It is a bright, warming melody that suits cold weather and dark evenings.

The Clementi square piano at Jane Austen's House dates from 1813, the year that *Pride and Prejudice* was first published.



THE FRENCH REVOLUTION



The French Revolution raged throughout Jane Austen's teenage years, from 1789 until 1799, striking terror into British society and sending France into a state of violent chaos. The French monarchy was overthrown and a Republic put in its place, based on the revolutionary ideals of '*Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité*' (Liberty, Equality, Fraternity).

In 1791 a new constitution was completed, giving power to an elected assembly. In June, the French King Louis XVI tried to escape France, but was caught and returned to Paris. He was brought to trial for treason and executed by guillotine on 21 January 1793. His wife, the infamous Marie Antoinette, was executed nine months later.

The Revolution continued to rage, with Robespierre and the Committee of Public Safety taking over political power. Between 1793 and 1794, the Reign of Terror saw 16,000 'counter-revolutionaries' executed in a bloodbath that shocked the world.

For the Austens, the French Revolution was closer to home than one might think. Jane's cousin Eliza was married to the Comte de Feuillide, a captain in Marie Antoinette's Regiment of Dragoons and an ardent Royalist.

In September 1792, at the height of the Terror, Eliza was staying with the Austens at Steventon.

She wrote to her cousin Phila Walter:

'I can readily believe that the share of sensibility I know you to be possessed of would not suffer you to learn the tragical events of which France has of late been the theatre, without being much affected. My private letters confirm the intelligence afforded by Public prints, and assure me that nothing we read there is exaggerated. M. de F. is at present in Paris. He had determined on coming to England, but finds it impossible to get away.'

The Comte made several visits to England, but in February 1794 he fell foul of the Revolution and was executed at the guillotine. It is possible that Eliza was staying in Steventon when she heard of her husband's death, bringing the Revolution dramatically and tragically into the Hampshire countryside.

Copperplate engraving of the execution of Louis XVI, by Georg Heinrich Sieveking.