

Letter from Jane Austen (Bath) to Cassandra Austen (Steventon), 11 June 1799

Papers of Edward Augustus Petherick

NLA MS 760

Series 18 Letters and autographs acquired by Petherick

Item 12

Explanatory note

This transcription is a copy of the letter, not a facsimile, and certain elements of the original have not been reproduced in exactly the same form. Jane Austen's spelling, punctuation and capitalisation have been retained. Her spelling was occasionally erratic and (sic) has been added to indicate that a word was misspelt by Austen rather than by the transcriber.

The letter does not have page numbers. To indicate the location of each page within the original letter, the unique url number that includes the obj number, which appears at the top of the digitised image of that page, has been included. It is in this format: <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-229629729/view>.

At the end of the transcript some details have been provided about some of the people, places and books mentioned in the letter.

The Transcript

[<https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-229629729/view>]

13, Queen Square Tuesday June 11th [1799]

My dear Cassandra

Your letter yesterday made me very happy. I am heartily glad that You have escaped any share in the Impurities of Deane, & not sorry as it turns out that our stay here has been lengthened. - I feel tolerably secure of our getting away next week, tho' it is certainly possible that we may remain till Thursday the 27th - I wonder what we shall do with all our intended visits this summer? - I should like to make a compromise with Adlestrop, Harden [Harpsden?] & Bookham that Martha's spending the summer at Steventon should be considered as our respective visits to them all. - Edward has been pretty well for this last Week, & as the Waters have never disagreed with him in any respect, We are inclined to hope that he will derive advantage from them in the end; - everybody encourages us in this expectation, for they all say that the effect of the Waters cannot be negative, & many are the instances in which their benefit is felt afterwards more than on the spot. - He is more comfortable here that I thought he would be, & so is Eliz: - tho' they will both I believe be very glad to get away, the latter especially - Which one can't wonder at somehow. - So much for Mrs Piozzi. - I had some thoughts of writing the whole of my letter in her stile,

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but I beleive (sic) I shall not. - Though you have given me unlimited powers concerning Your Sprig, I cannot determine what to do about it, & shall therefore in this & in every future letter continue to ask you for further directions. - We have been to the cheap Shop, & very cheap we found it, but there are only flowers made there, no fruit - & as I could get 4 or 5 very pretty sprigs of the former for the same money which would procure only one Orleans plumb, in short could get more for three or four Shillings than I could have means of bringing home, I cannot decide on the fruit until I hear from you again. - Besides, I cannot help thinking that it is more natural to have flowers grow out of the head than fruit. - What do you think on that subject? - I would not let Martha read First Impressions again upon any account, & am very glad that I did not leave it in your power. - She is very cunning, but I see through her design; - she means to publish it from Memory, & one more perusal might enable her to do it. - As for Fitzalbini, when I get home she shall have it, as soon as ever she will own that Mr Elliott is handsomer than Mr Lance – that fair Men are preferable to Black – for I mean to take every opportunity of rooting out her prejudices. - Benjamin Portal is here. How charming that is! - I do not know exactly why, but the phrase followed so naturally that I could not help putting it down. - My Mother saw him the other day, but without making herself known to him. - I am very glad You liked my Lace, & so are You & so is Martha - & we are all glad together. - I have got your Cloak home, which

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is quite delightful! - as delightful at least as half the circumstances which are called so. - I do not know what is the matter with me to day, but I cannot write quietly; I am always wandering away into some exclamation or other. - Fortunately I have nothing very particular to say. - We walked to Weston one evening last week, & liked it very much. - Liked what very much? Weston? - no – walking to Weston – I have not expressed myself properly, but I hope you will understand me. - We have not been to any public place lately, nor performed anything out of the common daily routine of No. 13, Queen Square, Bath –. But to day we were to have dashed away at a very extraordinary rate, by dining out, had it not so happened that we do not go. - Edward renewed his acquaintance lately with Mr Evelyn who lives in the Queen's parade & was invited to a family dinner, which I beleive (sic) at first Eliz: was rather sorry at his accepting, but yesterday Mrs Evelyn called on us & her manners were so pleasing that we liked the idea of going very much. - The Biggs would call her a nice Woman. - But Mr Evelyn who was indisposed yesterday, is worse to day & we are put off. - It is rather impertinent to suggest any household care to a Housekeeper, but I just venture to say that the Coffee Mill will be wanted every day while Edw: is at Steventon as he always drinks Coffee for Breakfast. - Fanny desires her Love to You, her Love to Grandpapa, her Love to Anna, & her Love to Hannah; - the latter particularly is to be remembered. - Edw:d Desires his Love to You, to Grandpapa, to Anna, to little Edw:d, to Aunt James & Uncle James, & he hopes all your Turkies (sic) & Ducks & Chicken & Guinea Fowls are very well - & he wishes You very much to send him a printed Letter & so does Fanny - & they both rather think they shall answer it.

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"On more accounts than one you wished our stay here to be lengthened beyond last Thursday." - There is some Mystery in this. What have you going on in Hampshire besides the Itch from which you want to keep us? - Dr Gardiner was married yesterday to Mrs Percy & her three daughters. - Now I will give you the history of Mary's veil, in the purchase of which I have so considerably involved you that it is my duty to economise for you in the flowers. - I had no difficulty in getting a

muslin veil for half a guinea, & not much more in discovering afterwards that the Muslin was thick, dirty & ragged, and would therefore by no means do for a united Gift. - I changed it consequently as soon as I could, & considering what a state my imprudence had reduced me to, I thought myself lucky in getting a black Lace one for 16 shillings -. I hope the half of that sum will not greatly exceed what You had intended to offer up on the altar of Sister-in-law affection. - Yours affe:

Jane

Miss Austen,
Steventon,
Overton,
Hants

June 11th

[Postscript upside down at top of the first page- <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-229629729/view>]

They do not seem to trouble You much from Manydown. I have long wanted to quarrel with them, & I beleive (sic) I shall take this opportunity. - There is no denying that they are very capricious! - for they like to enjoy their elder Sisters company when they can.

People, Places and Books

Adlestrop	Village in Gloucestershire, home of the Leigh family.
Anna	(Jane) Anna Austen (1793-1872), daughter of Rev. James Austen and his first wife Anne and niece of Jane Austen.
Aunt James	Mary Austen (1771-1843), second wife of Rev. James Austen and sister of Martha Lloyd.
Benjamin Portal Biggs	Rev. Benjamin Portal (1768-1812), fellow of St John's College, Oxford. The Bigg Family of Wootton St Lawrence, Hampshire, including three sisters, Elizabeth, Catherine and Alatheia Bigg, who were friends of Jane and Cassandra Austen.
Bookham	Great Bookham, village in Surrey, home of Rev. Samuel Cooke, godfather of Jane Austen and cousin of her mother.
Cassandra Deane	Cassandra Austen (1773-1845), Jane Austen's only sister. Village in Hampshire, two miles north of Steventon. James and Mary Austen lived at the Deane parsonage.
Edward	Edward Austen (1767-1852), elder brother of Jane Austen, adopted by his wealthy cousin, Thomas Knight, in 1783.
Elizabeth	Elizabeth Austen (1773-1808), wife of Edward Austen.
Fanny	Fanny Austen (1793-1882) daughter of Edward and Elizabeth Austen and niece of Jane Austen.
First Impressions	Original title of <i>Pride and Prejudice</i> , written in 1797 but not published until 1813.
Fitzalbini	<i>Arthur Fitz-Albini</i> , a novel by Egerton Brydges (1798).
Gardiner	Rev. Dr John Gardiner (1757-1838), minister of the Octagon Chapel, Bath.

Grandpapa	Rev. George Austen (1731-1805), rector of Steventon and Deane, father of Jane and Cassandra Austen and grandfather of Fanny Austen.
Hannah	Hannah Hilliard (b. 1796), daughter of Anne (Nanny) Hilliard, a maidservant at Steventon Rectory.
Harpsden	Village in Oxfordshire, home of Rev. Edward Cooper, cousin of Jane Austen.
Little Edward	Presumably Edward Austen (1794-1879), son of Edward and Elizabeth Austen and nephew of Jane Austen.
Manydown	Manydown Park, the home of the Bigg Family at Wootton St Lawrence, Hampshire.
Martha	Martha Lloyd (1765-1843), friend of Jane and Cassandra Austen and sister-in-law of Rev. James Austen.
Mother	Cassandra Austen (1739-1827), daughter of Thomas and Jane Leigh and mother of Jane Austen.
Mr Evelyn	William Evelyn (1734-1813), MP for Hythe (1768-96), resident of Bath.
Mrs Piozzi	Hester Piozzi (1741-1831), friend of Dr Samuel Johnson.
Steventon	Village in Hampshire, seven miles from the town of Basingstoke. Jane Austen was born in Steventon Rectory in 1775 and lived there until she and her family moved to Bath in 1801.
Uncle James	Rev. James Austen (1765-1819), Jane Austen's eldest brother and Fanny Austen's uncle, curate of Deane. He succeeded his father as rector of Steventon in 1800.
Weston	Village two miles north-west of Bath.