

Jane Austen



Jane Austen (1775 – 1817) was born December 16th, 1775 at Steventon, Hampshire, England (near Basingstoke). She was the seventh child of eight and the second daughter of the Rev. George Austen, the local rector, or Church of England clergyman, and his wife Cassandra.

Jane was an English novelist whose realism, biting social commentary and masterful use of free indirect speech, burlesque and irony have earned her a place as one of the most widely-read and best-loved writers in British literature. She lived her entire life as part of a large and close-knit family located on the lower fringes of English gentry. She was educated primarily by her father and older brothers as well as through her own reading.

Poetry for the family

Jane Austen

Happy the Lab'rer

Happy the lab'rer in his Sunday clothes!
In light-drab coat, smart waistcoat, well-darn'd hose,
And that upon his head, to church he goes;
As oft, with conscious pride, he downward throws
A glance upon the ample cabbage rose
That, stuck in button-hole, regales his nose,
He envies not the gayest London beaux.
In church he takes his seat among the rows,
Pays to the place the reverence he owes,
Likes best the prayers whose meaning least he knows,
Lists to the sermon in a softening doze,
And rouses joyous at the welcome close.

I've a Pain in my Head

'I've a pain in my head'
Said the suffering Beckford;
To her Doctor so dread.
'Oh! what shall I take for't?'

Said this Doctor so dread
Whose name it was Newnham.
'For this pain in your head
Ah! What can you do Ma'am?'

Said Miss Beckford, 'Suppose
If you think there's no risk,
I take a good Dose
Of calomel brisk.'--

'What a praise worthy Notion.'
Replied Mr. Newnham.
'You shall have such a potion
And so will I too Ma'am.'

Miss Lloyd has now went to Miss Green

Miss Lloyd has now sent to Miss Green,
As, on opening the box, may be seen,
Some years of a Black Ploughman's Gauze,
To be made up directly, because
Miss Lloyd must in mourning appear
For the death of a Relative dear--
Miss Lloyd must expect to receive
This license to mourn and to grieve,
Complete, ere the end of the week--
It is better to write than to speak

Mock Panegyric on a Young Friend

In measured verse I'll now rehearse
The charms of lovely Anna:
And, first, her mind is unconfined
Like any vast savannah.

Ontario's lake may fitly speak
Her fancy's ample bound:
Its circuit may, on strict survey
Five hundred miles be found.

Her wit descends on foes and friends
Like famed Niagara's fall;
And travellers gaze in wild amaze,
And listen, one and all.

Her judgment sound, thick, black, profound,
Like transatlantic groves,
Dispenses aid, and friendly shade
To all that in it roves.

If thus her mind to be defined
America exhausts,
And all that's grand in that great land
In similes it costs --

Oh how can I her person try
To image and portray?
How paint the face, the form how trace,
In which those virtues lay?

Another world must be unfurled,
Another language known,
Ere tongue or sound can publish round
Her charms of flesh and bone.

My Dearest Frank, I Wish You Joy

My dearest Frank, I wish you joy
Of Mary's safety with a Boy,
Whose birth has given little pain
Compared with that of Mary Jane.--
May he a growing Blessing prove,
And well deserve his Parents' Love!--
Endow'd with Art's and Nature's Good,
Thy Name possessing with thy Blood,
In him, in all his ways, may we
Another Francis William see!--
Thy infant days may he inherit,
Thy warmth, nay insolence of spirit;--
We would not with one foul dispense
To weaken the resemblance.
May he revive thy Nursery sin,
Peeping as daringly within,
His curley Locks but just descried,
With 'Bet, my be not come to bide.'--
Fearless of danger, braving pain,
And threaten'd very oft in vain,
Still may one Terror daunt his Soul,
One needful engine of Controul
Be found in this sublime array,
A neighbouring Donkey's awful Bray.
So may his equal faults as Child,
Produce Maturity as mild!
His saucy words and fiery ways
In early Childhood's pettish days,
In Manhood, shew his Father's mind
Like him, considerate and Kind;
All Gentleness to those around,
And anger only not to wound.
Then like his Father too, he must,
To his own former struggles just,
Feel his Deserts with honest Glow,
And all his self-improvement know.
A native fault may thus give birth
To the best blessing, conscious Worth.
As for ourselves we're very well;
As unaffected prose will tell.--

Cassandra's pen will paint our state,
The many comforts that await
Our Chawton home, how much we find
Already in it, to our mind;
And how convinced, that when complete
It will all other Houses beat
The ever have been made or mended,
With rooms concise, or rooms distended.
You'll find us very snug next year,
Perhaps with Charles and Fanny near,
For now it often does delight us
To fancy them just over-right us.--

Ode to Pity

1
Ever musing I delight to tread
The Paths of honour and the Myrtle Grove
Whilst the pale Moon her beams doth shed
On disappointed Love.
While Philomel on airy hawthorn Bush
Sings sweet and Melancholy, And the thrush
Converses with the Dove.

2
Gently brawling down the turnpike road,
Sweetly noisy falls the Silent Stream--
The Moon emerges from behind a Cloud
And darts upon the Myrtle Grove her beam.
Ah! then what Lovely Scenes appear,
The hut, the Cot, the Grot, and Chapel queer,
And eke the Abbey too a mouldering heap,
Conceal'd by aged pines her head doth rear
And quite invisible doth take a peep.

Of A Ministry Pitiful, Angry, Mean

Of a Ministry pitiful, angry, mean,
A gallant commander the victim is seen.
For promptitude, vigour, success, does he stand
Condemn'd to receive a severe reprimand!
To his foes I could wish a resemblance in fate:
That they, too, may suffer themselves, soon or late,
The injustice they warrent. But vain is my spite
They cannot so suffer who never do right.

Oh! Mr Best You're Very Bad

Oh! Mr. Best, you're very bad
And all the world shall know it;
Your base behaviour shall be sung
By me, a tunefull Poet.--

You used to go to Harrowgate
Each summer as it came,
And why I pray should you refuse
To go this year the same?--

The way's as plain, the road's as smooth,
The Posting not increased;
You're scarcely stouter than you were,
Not younger Sir at least.--

If e'er the waters were of use
Why now their use forego?
You may not live another year,
All's mortal here below.--

It is your duty Mr Best
To give your health repair.
Vain else your Richard's pills will be,
And vain your Consort's care.

But yet a nobler Duty calls
You now towards the North.
Arise ennobled--as Escort
Of Martha Lloyd stand forth.

She wants your aid--she honours you
With a distinguished call.
Stand forth to be the friend of her
Who is the friend of all.--

Take her, and wonder at your luck,
In having such a Trust.
Her converse sensible and sweet
Will banish heat and dust.--

So short she'll make the journey seem
You'll bid the Chaise stand still.
T'will be like driving at full speed
From Newb'ry to Speen hill.--

Convey her safe to Morton's wife
And I'll forget the past,

And write some verses in your praise
As finely and as fast.

But if you still refuse to go
I'll never let your rest,
Buy haunt you with reproachful song
Oh! wicked Mr. Best!--

See they come, post haste from Thanet

See they come, post haste from Thanet,
Lovely couple, side by side;
They've left behind them Richard Kennet
With the Parents of the Bride!

Canterbury they have passed through;
Next succeeded Stamford-bridge;
Chilham village they came fast through;
Now they've mounted yonder ridge.

Down the hill they're swift proceeding,
Now they skirt the Park around;
Lo! The Cattle sweetly feeding
Scamper, startled at the sound!

Run, my Brothers, to the Pier gate!
Throw it open, very wide!
Let it not be said that we're late
In welcoming my Uncle's Bride!

To the house the chaise advances;
Now it stops--They're here, they're here!
How d'ye do, my Uncle Francis?
How does do your Lady dear?

This Little Bag

This little bag I hope will prove
To be not vainly made--
For, if you should a needle want
It will afford you aid.
And as we are about to part
T'will serve another end,
For when you look upon the Bag
You'll recollect your friend

**To the Memory of Mrs. Lefroy
who died Dec:r 16 -- my Birthday.**

The day returns again, my natal day;
What mix'd emotions with the Thought arise!
Beloved friend, four years have pass'd away
Since thou wert snatch'd forever from our eyes.--

The day, commemorative of my birth
Bestowing Life and Light and Hope on me,
Brings back the hour which was thy last on Earth.
Oh! bitter pang of torturing Memory!--

Angelic Woman! past my power to praise
In Language meet, thy Talents, Temper, mind.
Thy solid Worth, they captivating Grace!--
Thou friend and ornament of Humankind!--

At Johnson's death by Hamilton t'was said,
'Seek we a substitute--Ah! vain the plan,
No second best remains to Johnson dead--
None can remind us even of the Man.'

So we of thee--unequall'd in thy race
Unequall'd thou, as he the first of Men.
Vainly we wearch around the vacant place,
We ne'er may look upon thy like again.

Come then fond Fancy, thou indulgant Power,--
--Hope is desponding, chill, severe to thee!--
Bless thou, this little portion of an hour,
Let me behold her as she used to be.

I see her here, with all her smiles benign,
Her looks of eager Love, her accents sweet.
That voice and Countenance almost divine!--
Expression, Harmony, alike complete.--

I listen--'tis not sound alone--'tis sense,
'Tis Genius, Taste and Tenderness of Soul.
'Tis genuine warmth of heart without pretence
And purity of Mind that crowns the whole.

She speaks; 'tis Eloquence--that grace of Tongue
So rare, so lovely!--Never misapplied
By her to palliate Vice, or deck a Wrong,
She speaks and reasons but on Virtue's side.

Her's is the Engergy of Soul sincere.
Her Christian Spirit ignorant to feign,
Seeks but to comfort, heal, enlighten, chear,
Confer a pleasure, or prevent a pain.--

Can ought enhance such Goodness?--Yes, to me,
Her partial favour from my earliest years
Consummates all.--Ah! Give me yet to see
Her smile of Love.--the Vision diappears.

'Tis past and gone--We meet no more below.
Short is the Cheat of Fancy o'er the Tomb.
Oh! might I hope to equal Bliss to go!
To meet thee Angel! in thy future home!--

Fain would I feel an union in thy fate,
Fain would I seek to draw an Omen fair
From this connection in our Earthly date.
Indulge the harmless weakness--Reason, spare.--

When Stretch'd on One's Bed

When stretch'd on one's bed
With a fierce-throbbing head,
Which precludes alike thought or repose,
How little one cares
For the grandest affairs
That may busy the world as it goes!

How little one feels
For the waltzes and reels
Of our Dance-loving friends at a Ball!
How slight one's concern
To conjecture or learn
What their flounces or hearts may befall.

How little one minds
If a company dines
On the best that the Season affords!
How short is one's muse
O'er the Sauces and Stews,
Or the Guests, be they Beggars or Lords.

How little the Bells,
Ring they Peels, toll they Knells,
Can attract our attention or Ears!
The Bride may be married,

The Corse may be carried
And touch nor our hopes nor our fears.

Our own bodily pains
Ev'ry faculty chains;
We can feel on no subject besides.
Tis in health and in ease
We the power must seize
For our friends and our souls to provide.

When Winchester races

When Winchester races first took their beginning
It is said the good people forgot their old Saint
Not applying at all for the leave of Saint Swithin
And that William of Wykeham's approval was faint.

The races however were fixed and determined
The company came and the Weather was charming
The Lords and the Ladies were satine'd and ermined
And nobody saw any future alarming.--

But when the old Saint was informed of these doings
He made but one Spring from his Shrine to the Roof
Of the Palace which now lies so sadly in ruins
And then he addressed them all standing aloof.

'Oh! subjects rebellious! Oh Venta depraved
When once we are buried you think we are gone
But behold me immortal! By vice you're enslaved
You have sinned and must suffer, ten farther he said

These races and revels and dissolute measures
With which you're debasing a neighboring Plain
Let them stand--You shall meet with your curse in your
pleasures
Set off for your course, I'll pursue with my rain.

Ye cannot but know my command o'er July
Henceforward I'll triumph in shewing my powers
Shift your race as you will it shall never be dry
The curse upon Venta is July in showers--'.