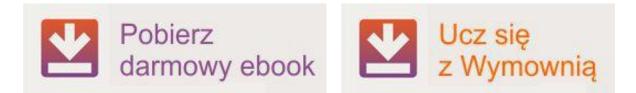
Memoir of Jane Austen



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by James Edward Austen-Leigh

PREFACE.

THE MEMOIR of my AUNT, JANE AUSTEN, has been received with more favour than I had ventured to expect. The notices taken of it in the periodical press, as well as letters addressed to me by many with whom I am not personally acquainted, show that an unabated interest is still taken in every particular that can be told about her. I am thus encouraged not only to offer a Second Edition of the Memoir, but also to enlarge it with some additional matter which I might have scrupled to intrude on the public if they had not thus seemed to call for it. In the present Edition, the narrative is somewhat enlarged, and a few more letters are added; with a short specimen of her childish stories. The cancelled chapter of 'Persuasion' is given, in compliance with wishes both publicly and privately expressed. A fragment of a story entitled 'The Watsons' is printed; p. iiiand extracts are given from a novel which she had begun a few months before her death; but the chief addition is a short tale never before published, called 'Lady Susan.' I regret that the little which I have been able to add could not appear in my First Edition; as much of it was either unknown to me, or not at my command, when I first published; and I hope that I may claim some indulgent allowance for the difficulty of recovering little facts and feelings which had been merged half a century deep in oblivion.

NOVEMBER 17, 1870.

CONTENTS.

Chapter I. Introductory Remarks—Birth of Jane Austen—Her Family Connections—Their Influence on her Writings

Chapter II. Description of Steventon—Life at Steventon—Changes of Habits and Customs in the last Century

Chapter III. Early Compositions—Friends at Ashe—A very Old Letter—Lines on the Death of Mrs. Lefroy—Observations on Jane Austen's Letter-writing—Letters

Chapter IV. *Removal from Steventon—Residence at Bath and at Southampton— Settling at Chawton* Chapter V. Description of Jane Austen's person, character, and tastes

Chapter VI. Habits of Composition resumed after a long interval—First publication—The interest taken by the Author in the success of her Works

Chapter VII. Seclusion from the literary world—Notice from the Prince Regent— Correspondence with Mr. Clarke—Suggestions to alter her style of writing

Chapter VIII. Slow growth of her fame—Ill success of first attempts at publication—Two Reviews of her works contrasted

Chapter IX. *Opinions expressed by eminent persons—Opinions of others of less eminence—Opinion of American readers*

Chapter X. Observations on the Novels

Chapter XI. Declining health of Jane Austen—Elasticity of her spirits—Her resignation and humility—Her death

Chapter XII. The cancelled Chapter of 'Persuasion'

Chapter XIII. The last work

Chapter XIV. Postscript

'He knew of no one but himself who was inclined to the work. This is no uncommon motive. A man sees something to be done, knows of no one who will do it but himself, and so is driven to the enterprise.'

HELPS' Life of Columbus, ch. i.

p. 1CHAPTER I.

Introductory Remarks—Birth of Jane Austen—Her Family Connections—Their Influence on her Writings.

More than half a century has passed away since I, the youngest of the mourners, attended the funeral of my dear aunt Jane in Winchester Cathedral; and now, in my old age, I am asked whether my memory will serve to rescue from oblivion any events of her life or any traits of her character to satisfy the enquiries of a generation of readers who have been born since she died. Of events her life was singularly barren: few changes and no great crisis p. 2ever broke the smooth current of its course. Even her fame may be said to have been posthumous: it did not attain to any vigorous life till she had ceased to exist. Her talents did not introduce her to the notice of other writers, or connect her with the literary world, or in any degree pierce through the obscurity of her domestic retirement. I have therefore scarcely any materials for a detailed life of my aunt; but I have a distinct recollection of her person and character; and perhaps many may take an interest in