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CLASSICS SERIES CL131

JANE AUSTEN

MANSFIELD PARK

A Classic Romance



Introduction by Mary M. Threapleton

COMPLETE AND UNABRIDGED

MANSFIELD PARK



JANE AUSTEN



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MANSFIELD PARK

JANE AUSTEN



INTRODUCTION

Steventon Rectory already housed a healthy, handsome group of young Austens when Jane was born in December, 1775. There was studious James, later to succeed his father as rector; good-natured Edward; lively, versatile Henry; Cassandra, Jane's lifetime confidante; and mischievous Francis. Last of all came Charles, Jane's "particular baby brother." The Austens were a close family. When Cassandra was sent to boarding school, six-year-old Jane was not to be left behind, but when the girls returned home three years later, their education was continued by the family. Jane read widely, and her father and brothers, like Edmund Bertram in *Mansfield Park*, "made reading useful by talking to her of what she read and heightened its attractions by judicious praise." Reading aloud was popular at home, and when Jane began to write little charades and burlesques of current fiction, these were chuckled over by the whole family. Amused by the swooning heroines of the day, Jane wrote *Love and Freindship* (spelling was never her long suit), in which the ladies "faint alternately upon a sofa." Another of her early works is a delightful history of England, "by a partial, prejudiced, and ignorant historian." Theatricals were also popular in the Austen family; Henry even persuaded his father to have a small stage built in the barn, where he and his cousin Eliza de Feuillide dazzled the family at Christmas when Jane was twelve. She herself took no great part in these productions, but absorbed everything with a writer's eye, later to spin it out in *Mansfield Park*.

Her first piece of serious writing was *Elinor and Marianne*, in the popular epistolary form. She laid it aside dissatisfied, and began a new novel, working at a little box desk on tiny sheets of paper that could quickly be covered with her sewing when anyone came into the room. Cassandra was her first audience, and gradually, as the family heard more and more read aloud, Elizabeth Bennet and her proud lover became as familiar and real to them as their own neighbors, for this was *Pride and Prejudice*, first titled *First Impressions*. Mr. Austen was so impressed with this novel that he inquired of a publisher as to the probable cost of publication, but nothing came of his rather diffident letter.

Writing, sewing shirts for her brothers, devising new trimmings for bonnets and gowns, dancing and flirting at the local Assemblies, corresponding with Cassandra when they were separated by visits to friends and relatives, Jane Austen passed her girlhood and young womanhood pleasantly enough. Mrs. Mitford, a family friend, thought her "the prettiest, silliest, most affected husband-hunting butterfly she ever remembers." But sadder moments followed. In 1797, Cassandra's fiancé, Tom Fowle, died of yellow fever in Antigua, where he was serving as a military chaplain. And in 1800, Mr. and Mrs. Austen decided that the family was to leave Steventon for Bath. For the first time in her life, Jane, who mocked fainting heroines, fainted at the news. Before they settled in Bath, the sisters toured Devonshire with their parents, and on this trip Jane met and fell in love with a young clergyman. No one knows his name. Cassandra as an old lady described him as one of the most charming people she had ever met, but refused to say more, for she had promised her sister not to speak of him. After the Austens returned to Bath, the news arrived that the young man had died very suddenly. Jane Austen's youth seems to have died with him. She was not very happy in Bath, finding the city trying and the society rather elderly. Finally, she took up her "scribbling" again, and went to work on a story she had discarded earlier, about a young girl with a headful of Gothic romances who went to Bath to find a husband. A publisher paid her 10£ for *Northanger Abbey*, but let the manuscript gather dust. Years afterward, Henry bought it back for the same sum, and enjoyed the later discomfiture of the dilatory publisher when he realized what he had lost.

When Jane was thirty-three, her father died, and with her mother and Cassandra, she joined Frank and his bride at Southampton. Then Edward, heartbroken at the loss of his lovely wife, wanted his mother and sisters near him, and prepared a home for them at Chawton. There Jane rewrote *Elinor and Marianne*, and had it published as *Sense and Sensibility*. This novel, "by a Lady," was immensely popular, and was the first

and last one whose publication she had to subsidize. To her surprise and delight, it earned her 150£. *First Impressions*, rewritten now as *Pride and Prejudice*, came out next, and Henry's pride in his sister was too great for his vows of secrecy. The identity of the anonymous "Lady" was revealed, much to the amazement of her nieces, nephews, and neighbors, who had enjoyed the book without knowing its authorship. While she was reading the proofs of *Sense and Sensibility*, and revising *Pride and Prejudice*, she was also drafting *Mansfield Park*, the first totally new work she had attempted for many years. It is remarkable that she was able to juggle the words of these novels with her everyday world as well, for her family made considerable demands on her time and energy. Her niece Fanny must have her advice about her young love affairs; Henry needed his sister in London to help him move into a new home; some of the young people took up writing in imitation of their famous aunt, and she often laid her own work aside to act as a kindly critic of theirs. *Mansfield Park*, begun early in 1811, was finished in the summer of 1813, but it was still her habit to keep the manuscript by her for some time before attempting publication. Henry read the novel in manuscript in March, 1814, and it went to the publisher that same spring, after she had begun work on *Emma*.

During one of her London visits, she was honored by a call from the Prince Regent's librarian with an invitation to tour the royal town house. The librarian, a rather pompous clergyman, suggested to her that she should try her hand at a historical romance based on the House of Cobourg. This suggestion reflects rather poorly on the librarian's literary sensitivity, but to it we are indebted for Jane Austen's reply:

I could no more write a romance than an epic poem. I could not sit seriously down to write a serious romance under any other motive than to save my life; and if it were indispensable for me to keep it up and never relax into laughing at myself or other people, I am sure I should be hung before I had finished the first chapter. No, I must keep to my own style and go on in my own way; and although I may never succeed again in that, I am convinced that I should totally fail in any other.

She kept her word, and certainly "succeeded again" with *Emma*, which was dedicated, by gracious permission, to the Prince Regent.

Persuasion, a serene and autumnal story, was her last completed novel. After it, she began *Sanditon*, but laid it aside unfinished. Her health was failing and she was in considerable pain. Cassandra took her to Winchester for treatment, but the doctors

were unable to help her. She died in her sister's arms in July of 1817. She was forty-two years old.

Henry Austen saw the revised *Northanger Abbey* and *Persuasion* through publication that fall, and wrote for them a biographical notice which included the name of the authoress for the first time in any of her books.

Except for a tiny and rather unsatisfactory water-color sketch by her sister, no likeness of Jane Austen exists. Her nephew Edward describes her in his *Memoir* of his aunt as "very attractive . . . her countenance had a peculiar charm of its own to the eye of most beholders." Her novels, too, have this peculiar charm of their own. The comment most frequently made about her work is the smallness of her world. She herself wrote of "the little bit (two inches wide) of ivory on which I work with so fine a brush." It is small by choice. As she had pointed out to the royal librarian, Jane Austen knew her strengths and her limitations, and found that "three or four families in a country village" was for her the perfect scope. And yet she was not unacquainted with larger issues. Her brothers Frank and Charles were at sea during the Napoleonic blockade; Frank served with Nelson aboard the *Elephant*; her sister's fiancé worked and died in Antigua; her cousin's husband was a French aristocrat who was guillotined during the Terror. But violence, disease, and world affairs seem to exist outside the magic circle of her novels. Although her main topics are love and marriage, strong sexual passion never appears. Moments of intimacy and tenderness are glossed over in third-person summary rather than given in dramatic form. Almost all her characters come from one class, the country gentry—the account of Fanny's weeks in Portsmouth in *Mansfield Park* is unusual for its emphasis on the sordid and the vulgar, and for its glimpse into the male world of the navy. Her characters seldom venture into the world of ideas. When Henry Tilney in *Northanger Abbey* talks of politics to Catherine, "from politics it is an easy step to silence." Nor are her characters ever called upon to cope with the fantastic or alien. It is not for them to discover mad wives in attics, or to stumble starving across the moors, as does Charlotte Brontë's Jane Eyre. It is not surprising that Charlotte Brontë disliked Jane Austen's novels, particularly since her publisher had suggested that some of Miss Austen's restraint would not do Miss Brontë's melodrama any harm. When Charlotte Brontë read *Pride and Prejudice*, she called it "an accurate daguerreotype portrait of a commonplace face," and wrote later, "The passions are perfectly unknown to her . . . Even to the feelings she vouchsafes no more than an occasional graceful but distant recognition."

However, too much can be made of the limitations of Jane

Austen's novels. She can probe human nature as effectively in the drawing room as other authors do in the bedroom or the field of battle. George Eliot points out, "Her circle may be restricted, but it is complete. Her world is a perfect orb, and vital . . . To read one of her books is like an actual experience of life; you know the people as if you had lived with them, and you feel something of personal affection towards them."

Mansfield Park belongs, with *Emma* and *Persuasion*, to the second group of Jane Austen's novels, those drafted and completed in her mature years, after she had achieved recognition with her earlier work. After revising *Pride and Prejudice*, she wrote: "Now I will try and write something else, and it shall be a complete change of subject—ordination." The novel as we have it does not seem to center around ordination, but perhaps Jane Austen is using the term as a symbol of commitment to a right course. Both Edmund and Fanny hold to their commitments, although both are tempted away by the witty and delightful Crawfords. Jane Austen has been accused of making the Crawfords *too* delightful, and then of betraying them to enforce her moral and justify the dullness of her hero and heroine. Certainly Fanny is less interesting and amusing than Elizabeth Bennet—or Mary Crawford—and has much less vitality. All the irony and wit for which Jane Austen is famous, in her letters as well as her novels, are given to Mary Crawford, not to Fanny. And yet we are asked to condemn Mary, and accept Fanny and her rather priggish adherence to the "right." *Mansfield Park* is a serious book, and we are asked to take it seriously. One sign of this is that we are almost never invited to laugh at the heroine. Only once is Fanny mocked, and that is for admitting that the chapel at Sotherton does not live up to her rather Gothic expectations. Mary and Henry are witty; Mrs. Norris, Lady Bertram, and poor Mr. Rushworth are comic characters; but a high seriousness surrounds Edmund and Fanny. Some of this seriousness touches Jane Austen's treatment of the comic characters as well: Rushworth's honest stupidity is defended when it is set beside Henry Crawford's treachery; Mrs. Norris, unlike Lady Catherine of *Pride and Prejudice*, is not permitted to go on in her selfish path, but goes into voluntary exile with the erring Maria; and Lady Bertram, despite her sofa and her pug, "thinks rightly on all important topics," and in the end shows real regard for Fanny. It is the lack of seriousness when seriousness is called for which shows up Mary Crawford as a woman not worthy of Edmund's love. Her almost flippant reaction to Henry's seduction of Maria finally reveals to Edmund the shallowness of which the reader, looking through Fanny's eyes, has long been aware.

The contrast between the tone of *Mansfield Park* and that of *Pride and Prejudice* can be demonstrated in another reaction to Maria's seduction. Sir Thomas condemns his daughter's behavior in much the same terms as those in which Mr. Collins of *Pride and Prejudice* condemns Lydia's, and yet we are invited to accept Sir Thomas' views, and to regard Collins' as intolerant humbug.

Mansfield Park exalts commitment; it stresses the importance of sound education and upbringing as preparation for making the right choices, the right commitments; it defends the decency and integrity of the "Establishment," represented by Mansfield itself, against the urbanity and shallowness of the Crawfords' world; it grants success and happiness to the good and the dull, not to the intelligent and the interesting. Lionel Trilling writes of *Mansfield Park*: "Perhaps no other work of genius has ever spoken, or seemed to speak, so insistently for cautiousness and constraint, even for dullness. No other great novel has so anxiously asserted the need to find security, to establish in fixity and enclosure, a refuge from the dangers of openness and chance."

Besides its emphasis on commitment and security, which are perhaps not entirely unwelcome in our own shifting world, *Mansfield Park* is rich in those elements we expect of a Jane Austen novel. It has witty dialogue; beautifully blocked dramatic episodes; the little moments of decision and recognition that reveal character to us so incisively; the subtly changing point of view that begins a paragraph from inside a character's mind, and shifts gradually until the final sentence comes to us in full irony direct from the author; and over all the cool elegance of a style that is only Jane Austen's.

MARY M. THREAPLETON
Memorial University of Newfoundland

Chapter 1 §

About thirty years ago, Miss Maria Ward, of Huntingdon, with only seven thousand pounds, had the good luck to captivate Sir Thomas Bertram, of Mansfield Park, in the county of Northampton, and to be thereby raised to the rank of a baronet's lady, with all the comforts and consequences of an handsome house and large income. All Huntingdon exclaimed on the greatness of the match, and her uncle, the lawyer, himself, allowed her to be at least three thousand pounds short of any equitable claim to it. She had two sisters to be benefited by her elevation; and such of their acquaintance as thought Miss Ward and Miss Frances quite as handsome as Miss Maria, did not scruple to predict their marrying with almost equal advantage. But there certainly are not so many men of large fortune in the world, as there are pretty women to deserve them. Miss Ward, at the end of half a dozen years, found herself obliged to be attached to the Rev. Mr. Norris, a friend of her brother-in-law, with scarcely any private fortune, and Miss Frances fared yet worse. Miss Ward's match, indeed, when it came to the point, was not contemptible, Sir Thomas being happily able to give his friend an income in the living of Mansfield; and Mr. and Mrs. Norris began their career of conjugal felicity with very little less than a thousand a-year. But Miss Frances married, in the common phrase, to disoblige her family, and by fixing on a Lieutenant of Marines, without education, fortune, or connections, did it very thoroughly. She could hardly have made a more untoward choice. Sir Thomas Bertram had interest, which, from principle as well as pride, from a general wish of doing right, and a desire of seeing all that were connected with him in situations of respectability, he would have been glad to exert for the advantage of Lady Bertram's sister; but her husband's profession was such as no interest could reach; and before he had time to devise any other method of assisting them, an absolute breach between the sisters had taken place. It was the natural result of the conduct of each party, and such as a very imprudent marriage almost always produces. To save herself from useless remonstrance, Mrs. Price never wrote to her family on the subject till actually married. Lady Bertram, who was a woman of very tranquil feelings, and a temper remarkably easy and indolent, would have contented herself with merely giving up her sister, and thinking no more of the matter: but Mrs. Norris had a spirit of activity, which could not be satisfied till she had written a long and angry letter to Fanny, to point out the folly of her conduct, and threaten her with all its possible ill consequences. Mrs. Price in her turn was injured and angry; and an answer which comprehended

each sister in its bitterness, and bestowed such very disrespectful reflections on the pride of Sir Thomas, as Mrs. Norris could not possibly keep to herself, put an end to all intercourse between them for a considerable period.

Their homes were so distant, and the circles in which they moved so distinct, as almost to preclude the means of ever hearing of each other's existence during the eleven following years, or at least to make it very wonderful to Sir Thomas, that Mrs. Norris should ever have it in her power to tell them, as she now and then did in an angry voice, that Fanny had got another child. By the end of eleven years, however, Mrs. Price could no longer afford to cherish pride or resentment, or to lose one connection that might possibly assist her. A large and still increasing family, an husband disabled for active service, but not the less equal to company and good liquor, and a very small income to supply their wants, made her eager to regain the friends she had so carelessly sacrificed; and she addressed Lady Bertram in a letter which spoke so much contrition and despondence, such a superfluity of children, and such a want of almost everything else, as could not but dispose them all to a reconciliation. She was preparing for her ninth lying-in, and after bewailing the circumstance, and imploring their countenance as sponsors to the expected child, she could not conceal how important she felt they might be to the future maintenance of the eight already in being. Her eldest was a boy of ten years old, a fine spirited fellow who longed to be out in the world; but what could she do? Was there any chance of his being hereafter useful to Sir Thomas in the concerns of his West Indian property? No situation would be beneath him—or what did Sir Thomas think of Woolwich? or how could a boy be sent out to the East?

The letter was not unproductive. It re-established peace and kindness. Sir Thomas sent friendly advice and professions, Lady Bertram dispatched money and baby-linen, and Mrs. Norris wrote the letters.

Such were its immediate effects, and within a twelvemonth a more important advantage to Mrs. Price resulted from it. Mrs. Norris was often observing to the others, that she could not get her poor sister and her family out of her head, and that much as they had all done for her, she seemed to be wanting to do more: and at length she could not but own it to be her wish, that poor Mrs. Price should be relieved from the charge and expense of one child entirely out of her great number. "What if they were among them to undertake the care of her eldest daughter, a girl now nine years old, of an age to require more attention than her poor mother could possibly give? The trouble and expense of it to them, would be nothing compared with the benevolence of the action." Lady Bertram agreed with her instantly. "I think we cannot do better," said she, "Let us send for the child."

Sir Thomas could not give so instantaneous and unquali-

fied a consent. He debated and hesitated;—it was a serious charge;—a girl so brought up must be adequately provided for, or there would be cruelty instead of kindness in taking her from her family. He thought of his own four children, and his two sons, of cousins in love, &c.;—but no sooner had he deliberately begun to state his objections, than Mrs. Norris interrupted him with a reply to them all whether stated or not.

“My dear Sir Thomas, I perfectly comprehend you, and do justice to the generosity and delicacy of your notions, which indeed are quite of a piece with your general conduct; and I entirely agree with you in the main as to the propriety of doing every thing one could by way of providing for a child one had in a manner taken into one's own hands; and I am sure I should be the last person in the world to withhold my mite upon such an occasion. Having no children of my own, who should I look to in any little matter I may ever have to bestow, but the children of my sisters?—and I am sure Mr. Norris it too just—but you know I am a woman of few words and professions. Do not let us be frightened from a good deed by a trifle. Give a girl an education, and introduce her properly into the world, and ten to one but she has the means of settling well, without farther expense to anybody. A niece of ours, Sir Thomas, I may say, or, at least, of *yours*, would not grow up in this neighbourhood without many advantages. I don't say she would be so handsome as her cousins. I dare say she would not; but she would be introduced into the society of this country under such very favourable circumstances as, in all human probability, would get her a creditable establishment. You are thinking of your sons—but do not you know that of all things upon earth *that* is the least likely to happen; brought up, as they would be, always together like brothers and sisters? It is morally impossible. I never knew an instance of it. It is, in fact, the only sure way of providing against the connection. Suppose her a pretty girl, and seen by Tom or Edmund for the first time seven years hence, and I dare say there would be mischief. The very idea of her having been suffered to grow up at a distance from us all in poverty and neglect, would be enough to make either of the dear sweet-tempered boys in love with her. But breed her up with them from this time, and suppose her even to have the beauty of an angel, and she will never be more to either than a sister.”

“There is a great deal of truth in what you say,” replied Sir Thomas, “and far be it from me to throw any fanciful impediment in the way of a plan which would be so consistent with the relative situations of each. I only meant to observe, that it ought not to be lightly engaged in, and that to make it really serviceable to Mrs. Price, and creditable to ourselves, we must secure to the child, or consider ourselves engaged to secure to her hereafter, as circumstances may arise, the provision of a gentlewoman, if no such establishment should offer as you are so sanguine in expecting.”

"I thoroughly understand you," cried Mrs. Norris; "you are every thing that is generous and considerate, and I am sure we shall never disagree on this point. Whatever I can do, as you well know, I am always ready enough to do for the good of those I love; and, though I could never feel for this little girl the hundredth part of the regard I bear your own dear children, nor consider her, in any respect, so much my own, I should hate myself if I were capable of neglecting her. Is not she a sister's child? and could I bear to see her want, while I had a bit of bread to give her? My dear Sir Thomas, with all my faults I have a warm heart: and, poor as I am, would rather deny myself the necessities of life, than do an ungenerous thing. So, if you are not against it, I will write to my poor sister to-morrow, and make the proposal; and, as soon as matters are settled, I will engage to get the child to Mansfield; you shall have no trouble about it. My own trouble, you know, I never regard. I will send Nanny to London on purpose, and she may have a bed at her cousin, the saddler's, and the child be appointed to meet her there. They may easily get her from Portsmouth to town by the coach, under the care of any creditable person that may chance to be going. I dare say there is always some reputable tradesman's wife or other going up."

Except to the attack on Nanny's cousin, Sir Thomas no longer made any objection, and a more respectable, though less economical rendezvous being accordingly substituted, every thing was considered as settled, and the pleasures of so benevolent a scheme were already enjoyed. The division of gratifying sensations ought not, in strict justice, to have been equal; for Sir Thomas was fully resolved to be the real and consistent patron of the selected child, and Mrs. Norris had not the least intention of being at any expense whatever in her maintenance. As far as walking, talking, and contriving reached, she was thoroughly benevolent, and nobody knew better how to dictate liberality to others: but her love of money was equal to her love of directing, and she knew quite as well how to save her own as to spend that of her friends. Having married on a narrower income than she had been used to look forward to, she had, from the first, fancied a very strict line of economy necessary; and what was begun as a matter of prudence, soon grew into a matter of choice, as an object of that needful solicitude, which there were no children to supply. Had there been a family to provide for, Mrs. Norris might never have saved her money; but having no care of that kind, there was nothing to impede her frugality, or lessen the comfort of making a yearly addition to an income which they had never lived up to. Under this infatuating principle, counteracted by no real affection for her sister, it was impossible for her to aim at more than the credit of projecting and arranging so expensive a charity; though perhaps she might so little know herself, as to walk home to the Parsonage after this con-

versation, in the happy belief of being the most liberal-minded sister and aunt in the world.

When the subject was brought forward again, her views were more fully explained; and, in reply to Lady Bertram's calm inquiry of "Where shall the child come to first, sister, to you or to us?" Sir Thomas heard, with some surprise, that it would be totally out of Mrs. Norris's power to take any share in the personal charge of her. He had been considering her as a particularly welcome addition at the Parsonage, as a desirable companion to an aunt who had no children of her own; but he found himself wholly mistaken. Mrs. Norris was sorry to say, that the little girl's staying with them, at least as things then were, was quite out of the question. Poor Mr. Norris's indifferent state of health made it an impossibility: he could no more bear the noise of a child than he could fly; if indeed he should ever get well of his gouty complaints, it would be a different matter: she should then be glad to take her turn, and think nothing of the inconvenience; but just now, poor Mr. Norris took up every moment of her time, and the very mention of such a thing she was sure would distract him.

"Then she had better come to us?" said Lady Bertram with the utmost composure. After a short pause, Sir Thomas added with dignity, "Yes, let her home be in this house. We will endeavour to do our duty by her, and she will at least have the advantage of companions of her own age, and of a regular instructress."

"Very true," cried Mrs. Norris, "which are both very important considerations: and it will be just the same to Miss Lee, whether she has three girls to teach, or only two—there can be no difference. I only wish I could be more useful; but you see I do all in my power. I am not one of those that spare their own trouble; and Nanny shall fetch her, however it may put me to inconvenience to have my chief counsellor away for three days. I suppose, sister, you will put the child in the little white attic, near the old nurseries. It will be much the best place for her, so near Miss Lee, and not far from the girls, and close by the housemaids, who could either of them help to dress her you know, and take care of her clothes, for I suppose you would not think it fair to expect Ellis to wait on her as well as the others. Indeed, I do not see that you could possibly place her any where else."

Lady Bertram made no opposition.

"I hope she will prove a well-disposed girl," continued Mrs. Norris, "and be sensible of her uncommon good fortune in having such friends."

"Should her disposition be really bad," said Sir Thomas, "we must not, for our own children's sake, continue her in the family; but there is no reason to expect so great an evil. We shall probably see much to wish-altered in her, and must prepare ourselves for gross ignorance, some meanness of opin-

ions, and very distressing vulgarity of manner; but these are not incurable faults—nor, I trust, can they be dangerous for her associates. Had my daughters been *younger* than herself, I should have considered the introduction of such a companion, as a matter of very serious moment; but as it is, I hope there can be nothing to fear for *them*, and every thing to hope for *her*, from the association.”

“That is exactly what I think,” cried Mrs. Norris, “and what I was saying to my husband this morning. It will be an education for the child, said I, only being with her cousins; if Miss Lee taught her nothing, she would learn to be good and clever from *them*.”

“I hope she will not tease my poor Pug,” said Lady Bertram; “I have but just got Julia to leave it alone.”

“There will be some difficulty in our way, Mrs. Norris,” observed Sir Thomas, “as to the distinction proper to be made between the girls as they grow up; how to preserve in the minds of my *daughters* the consciousness of what they are, without making them think too lowly of their cousin; and how, without depressing her spirits too far, to make her remember that she is not a *Miss Bertram*. I should wish to see them very good friends, and would, on no account, authorize in my girls the smallest degree of arrogance towards their relation; but still they cannot be equals. Their rank, fortune, rights, and expectations, will always be different. It is a point of great delicacy, and you must assist us in our endeavours to choose exactly the right line of conduct.”

Mrs. Norris was quite at his service; and though she perfectly agreed with him as to its being a most difficult thing, encouraged him to hope that between them it would be easily managed.

It will be readily believed that Mrs. Norris did not write to her sister in vain. Mrs. Price seemed rather surprised that a girl should be fixed on, when she had so many fine boys, but accepted the offer most thankfully, assuring them of her daughter's being a very well-disposed, good-humoured girl, and trusting they would never have cause to throw her off. She spoke of her farther as somewhat delicate and puny, but was sanguine in the hope of her being materially better for change of air. Poor woman! she probably thought change of air might agree with many of her children.

Chapter 2 §

The little girl performed her long journey in safety; and at Northampton was met by Mrs. Norris, who thus regaled in the credit of being foremost to welcome her, and in the importance of leading her in to the others, and recommending her to their kindness.

Fanny Price was at this time just ten years old, and though there might not be much in her first appearance to captivate, there was, at least, nothing to disgust her relations. She was small of her age, with no glow of complexion, or any other striking beauty; exceedingly timid and shy, and shrinking from notice; but her air, though awkward, was not vulgar, her voice was sweet, and when she spoke, her countenance was pretty. Sir Thomas and Lady Bertram received her very kindly, and Sir Thomas, seeing how much she needed encouragement, tried to be all that was conciliating; but he had to work against a most untoward gravity of deportment—and Lady Bertram, without taking half so much trouble, or speaking one word where he spoke ten, by the mere aid of a good-humoured smile, became immediately the less awful character of the two.

The young people were all at home, and sustained their share in the introduction very well, with much good humour, and no embarrassment, at least on the part of the sons, who at seventeen and sixteen, and tall of their age, had all the grandeur of men in the eyes of their little cousin. The two girls were more at a loss from being younger and in greater awe of their father, who addressed them on the occasion with rather an injudicious particularity. But they were too much used to company and praise, to have anything like natural shyness, and their confidence increasing from their cousin's total want of it, they were soon able to take a full survey of her face and her frock in easy indifference.

They were a remarkably fine family, the sons very well-looking, the daughters decidedly handsome, and all of them well-grown and forward of their age, which produced as striking a difference between the cousins in person, as education had given to their address; and no one would have supposed the girls so nearly of an age as they really were. There was in fact but two years between the youngest and Fanny. Julia Bertram was only twelve, and Maria but a year older. The little visitor meanwhile was as unhappy as possible. Afraid of every body, ashamed of herself, and longing for the home she had left, she knew not how to look up, and could scarcely speak to be heard, or without crying. Mrs. Norris had been talking to her the whole way from Northampton of her wonderful good fortune, and the extraordinary degree of gratitude and good behaviour which it ought to produce, and her consciousness of misery was therefore increased by the idea of its being a wicked thing for her not to be happy. The fatigue, too, of so long a journey, became soon no trifling evil. In vain were the well-meant condescensions of Sir Thomas, and all the officious prognostications of Mrs. Norris that she would be a good girl; in vain did Lady Bertram smile and make her sit on the sofa with herself and Pug, and vain was even the sight of a gooseberry tart towards giving her comfort; she could scarcely swallow two mouthfuls before tears interrupted her,

and sleep seeming to be her likeliest friend, she was taken to finish her sorrows in bed.

"This is not a very promising beginning," said Mrs. Norris, when Fanny had left the room.—"After all that I said to her as we came along, I thought she would have behaved better; I told her how much might depend upon her acquitting herself well at first. I wish there may not be a little sulkiness of temper—her poor mother had a good deal; but we must make allowances for such a child—and I do not know that her being sorry to leave her home is really against her, for, with all its faults, it *was* her home, and she cannot as yet understand how much she has changed for the better; but then there is moderation in all things."

It required a longer time, however, than Mrs. Norris was inclined to allow, to reconcile Fanny to the novelty of Mansfield Park, and the separation from every body she had been used to. Her feelings were very acute, and too little understood do be properly attended to. Nobody meant to be unkind, but nobody put themselves out of their way to secure her comfort.

The holiday allowed to the Miss Bertrams the next day, on purpose to afford leisure for getting acquainted with, and entertaining their young cousin, produced little union. They could not but hold her cheap on finding that she had but two sashes, and had never learned French; and when they perceived her to be little struck with the duet [they] were so good as to play, they could do no more than make her a generous present of some of their least valued toys, and leave her to herself, while they adjourned to whatever might be the favourite holiday sport of the moment, making artificial flowers or wasting gold paper.

Fanny, whether near or from her cousins, whether in the school-room, the drawing-room, or the shrubbery, was equally forlorn, finding something to fear in every person and place. She was disheartened by Lady Bertram's silence, awed by Sir Thomas's grave looks, and quite overcome by Mrs. Norris's admonitions. Her elder cousins mortified her by reflections on her size, and abashed her by noticing her shyness; Miss Lee wondered at her ignorance, and the maid-servants sneered at her clothes; and when to these sorrows was added the idea of the brothers and sisters among whom she had always been important as playfellow, instructress, and nurse, the despondence that sunk her little heart was severe.

The grandeur of the house astonished, but could not console her. The rooms were too large for her to move in with ease; whatever she touched she expected to injure, and she crept about in constant terror of something or other; often retreating towards her own chamber to cry; and the little girl who was spoken of in the drawing-room when she left it at night, as seeming so desirably sensible of her peculiar good fortune, ended every day's sorrows by sobbing herself to sleep. A week