

JANE AUSTEN, THE SUNBEAM OF STEVENTON PARSONAGE.

BY MARGARET E. SANGSTER.

The story-loving young people, who are familiar through their study of literature at school with the most noted names in English fiction, do not know how much pleasure there is before them if they have not yet read any of Miss Austen's works. Sir Walter Scott delighted in them. Sydney Smith read them over and over. Lord Macaulay did not hesitate to say that he thought Miss Austen approached Shakespeare in her power of describing different characters.

So you must let me persuade you to read "Northanger Abbey," "Pride and Prejudice," "Emma," "Sense and Sensibility," and "Mansfield Park." Perhaps you will like them better for knowing a little beforehand about their author.

Jane Austen was born in 1775 at the parsonage-house of Steventon, in Hampshire, England. Her father was a clergyman. Her mother was a woman of rare talents and worth. Jane had five brothers and an only sister, named Cassandra, whom she loved very dearly.

When only twelve years old Jane amused herself and the family by writing stories and plays, which were acted in costume by the brothers and sisters. Her education, which was thorough, was conducted at home by her parents and older brother. During a part of her childhood the family group was enlivened by the presence of a clever and beautiful cousin, who, although quite young, had passed through some tragical experiences.

This lady was the Countess de Feuillade. An English girl, brought up in Paris, she had married a French nobleman, who perished by the guillotine in the Revolution, his chief offence being his rank. The widowed Countess found a home at Steventon Parsonage, which she brightened by her wit and grace. She taught Jane to speak French as though it had been her native tongue, and in time she became a still nearer relation by marrying, as her second husband, Jane's brother Henry.

The home at Steventon stood in a valley sprinkled with elm-trees and surrounded by meadows. A number of little cottages, each with its tiny garden, were scattered within sight on either side of the road. The parsonage, though large and convenient, was roughly finished inside. But the carriage-drive which led up to the front door through a velvet lawn, the terrace of the finest turf under the southern windows, and above all the hedge-rows, where Jane could find the earliest primroses and hyacinths, or the first bird's nest in the thick

growing copse, were outside beauties which made up for the plainness of the interior. Her first three novels were written before she was twenty-one, but, perhaps fortunately, were laid aside for several years before they appeared in print, because the young author could find no publisher willing to bring them out.

In all her life she never had the luxury of a study or library of her own in which to write. She always sat with the family

Her books became very popular, and compliments poured in upon her from people in high station, but she remained, her life long, sweet, simple, and unspoiled. One of her nieces wrote of her thus:

"As a little girl, I was always creeping up to Aunt Jane, and following her whenever I could, in the house and out of it. I remember this by my mother telling me privately that I must not be troublesome to my aunt. Her first charm to children was

and often brightened her letters by lively rhymes suggested by some incident of the day. A Mr. Gell, for example, was married to a Miss Gill, and this odd conjunction was noticed in a droll little jingle:

"At Eastbourne Mr. Gell,
From being perfectly well,
Became dreadfully ill
For love of Miss Gill:
So he said, with some sighs,
'I'm a slave of your ill's,
Oh, restore, if you please,
By accepting my ee's!'"

Jane Austen was the sunbeam of the parsonage, because she was very unselfish.

There was but one sofa in the sitting-room, and during her last illness, a slow decline, she would never lie upon it. A young cousin begged to know why she preferred a couch made of two or three chairs, and found that Miss Austen feared lest her mother, who was aged, might resign the sofa in her favor if she appeared to like it.

She was a sincere Christian from her childhood, and though she had much to live for, she was cheerful and patient through the final months of weakness. She died in 1817. Uncomplaining to the end, she thanked everyone who did her any service.

A little while before all was over, a friend asked if she wanted anything.

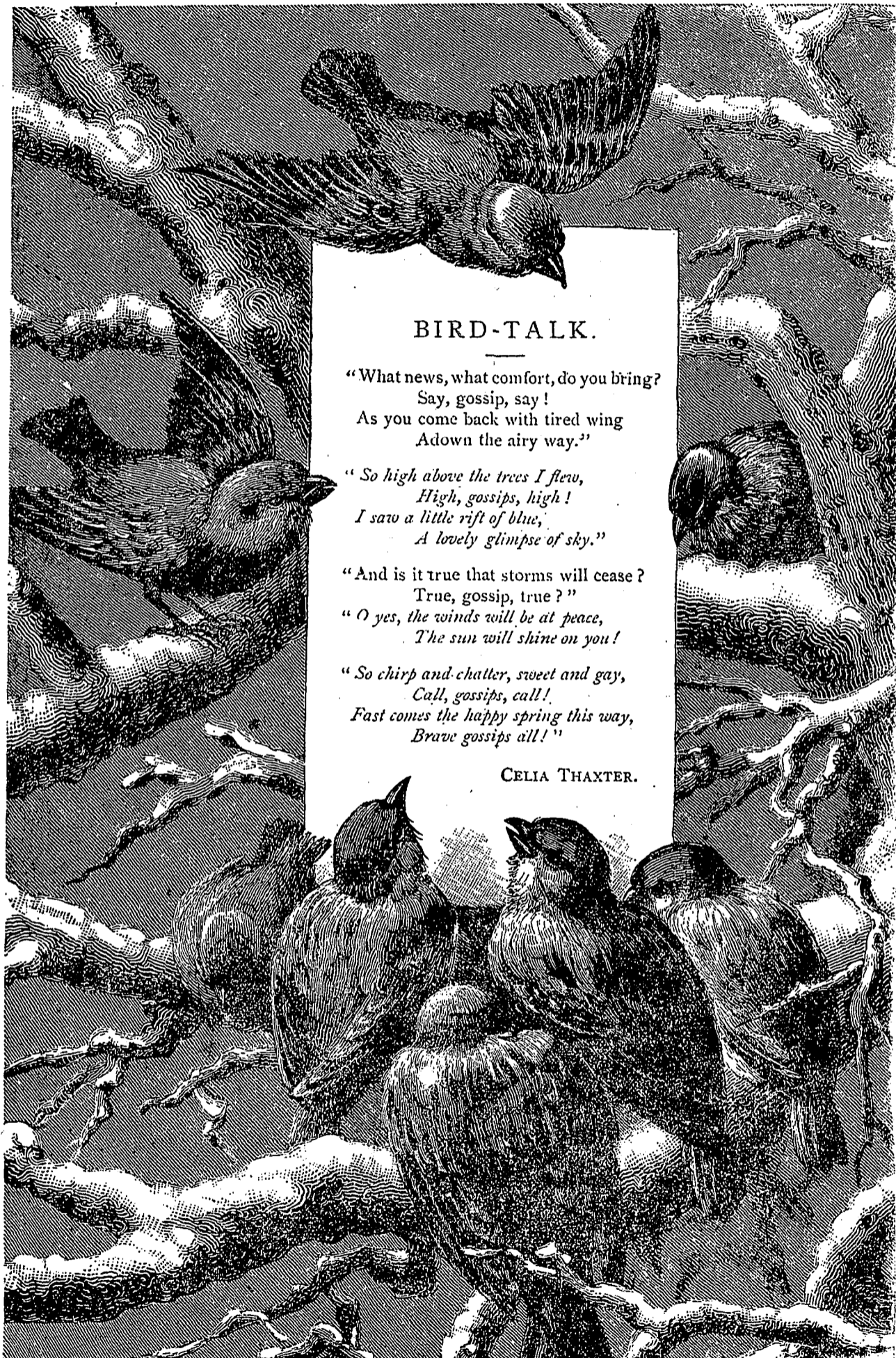
"Nothing but death," she replied, and soon after she entered into life eternal.

MR. "TEN MINUTES."

A touching story is told of the late Prince Napoleon. He had joined the English army, and was one day at the head of a squad riding horseback outside of the camp. It was a dangerous situation. One of the company said: "We had better return. If we don't hasten we may fall into the hands of the enemy." "Oh," said the Prince, "let us stay here ten minutes and drink our coffee." Before the ten minutes had passed a company of Zulus came upon them, and in the skirmish the Prince lost his life. His mother, when informed of the facts, in her anguish said, "That was his great mistake from his babyhood. He never wanted to go to bed at night in time, nor to arise in the morning. He was ever pleading for ten minutes more. When too sleepy to speak, he would lift up his two little hands and spread out his ten fingers, indicating that he wanted ten minutes more. On this account I some-

times called him 'Mr. Ten Minutes.' How many have lost not only their lives, but their precious, immortal souls, by this sin of procrastination! When God calls we should promptly obey.

BE LOVING and you will never want for love; be humble and you will never want for guiding.—D. Mulock Cruik.



BIRD-TALK.

"What news, what comfort, do you bring?
Say, gossip, say!
As you come back with tired wing
Adown the airy way."

"So high above the trees I flew,
High, gossips, high!
I saw a little rift of blue,
A lovely glimpse of sky."

"And is it true that storms will cease?
True, gossip, true?"
"O yes, the winds will be at peace,
The sun will shine on you!"

"So chirp and chatter, sweet and gay,
Call, gossips, call!
Fast comes the happy spring this way,
Brave gossips all!"

CELIA THAXTER.

in the parlor, which was the general living room. She wrote upon her lap on small sheets of paper, which could easily be put away, or, if visitors entered, concealed under a piece of blotting paper. There was a creaking-door in the room, which was left unholed at Jane's desire, as if anyone was coming it gave her timely warning, and she could hide her paper and pen.

great sweetness of manner. She seemed to love you, and you loved her in return. She could make everything amusing to a child. As I grew older, and cousins came to see us, Aunt Jane would tell us the most delightful stories of fairy-land, inventing the tale at the moment, and sometimes continuing it for several days.

Miss Austen was gifted as a letter-writer,