

to each fact and emotion its precise shade and value. The things she did not see she did not attempt. Affectation was impossible to her, — most of all, affectation of knowledge or feeling not justly her own. “She held the mirror up to her time” with an exquisite sincerity and fidelity; and the closeness of her study brought her intimately near to those hidden springs which underlie all human nature. This is the reason why, for all their skimp skirts, leg-of-mutton sleeves, and bygone impossible bonnets, her characters do not seem to us old-fashioned. Minds and hearts are made pretty much after the same pattern from century to century; and given a modern dress and speech, Emma or Elizabeth or dear Anne Eliot could enter a drawing-room to-day, and excite no surprise except by so closely resembling the people whom they would find there.

“Miss Austen’s novels are dateless things,” Mr. Augustine Birrell tells us. “Nobody in his senses would speak of them as ‘old novels.’ ‘John Inglesant’ is an old novel, so is ‘Ginx’s Baby.’ But Emma is quite new, and, like a wise woman, affords few clues to her age.”

We allude with a special touch of affection to Anne Eliot. “Persuasion,” which was written during the last two years of Miss Austen’s life, when the refining touch of Eternity was already upon her, has always seemed to us the most perfect of her novels; and Anne, with her exquis-