

Q. 115. What do you know about the life of Jane Austen (1775-1817)? Give a brief account of the novels of Jane Austen.

Ans. Life of Jane Austen—Jane Austen's life gives little opportunity for the biographer, unless perchance, he has something of her own power to show the beauty and charm of commonplace things. She was the seventh child of Rev. George Austen, rector of Steventon, and was born in the personage of the village in 1775. With her sisters she was educated at home, and passed her life very quietly, cheerfully, in the doing of small domestic duties, to which love lent the magic lamp that makes all things beautiful. She began to write at an early age, and seems to have done her work on a little table in the family sitting room, in the midst of the family life. When a visitor entered, she would throw a paper or a piece of sewing over her work, and she modestly refused to be known as the author of novels which we now count among the treasured possessions. With the publishers she had little success. *Pride and Prejudice* went begging for sixteen years; and *Northanger Abbey* (1798) was sold for a trivial sum to a publisher, who laid it aside and forgot it, until the appearance and moderate success of *Sense and Sensibility* in 1811. Then, after keeping the manuscript some fifteen years, he sold it back to the family, who found another publisher.

An anonymous article in the *Quarterly Review*, following the appearance of *Emma* in 1815, full of generous appreciation of the charm of the new writers, was the beginning of Jane Austen's fame; and it is only within a few years that it was learned that the friendly and discerning critic was Walter Scott. He continued

to be her admirer until her early death ; but these two, the greatest writers of fiction in their age, were never brought together. Both were home-loving people, and Miss Austen especially was averse to publicity and popularity. She died, quietly as she had lived, at Winchester, in 1817, and was buried in the cathedral. She was a bright, attractive little woman, whose sunny qualities are unconsciously reflected in all her books.