

President's Letter

When Joan Austen-Leigh first told me that she wanted to retire as Editor of *Persuasions*, I closed my ears. Such unwelcome news! *Persuasions* was demonstrably Joan's "own darling child" and although it was growing up very properly, it could not yet do without its creator and nurturer.

From JASNA's very beginning, the yearbook has been its star. To many members it is their most important contact with the Society; to some it was for several years (while it was the sole publication), their only contact. For those who live in isolated places, those who prefer reading to discussing, those who look for the "light, and bright, and sparkling," *Persuasions* means much.

At once light and serious, as is fitting for the annual of a Society such as ours, it attracts a continuing stream of articles from poets, professors, postmen, lawyers and librarians, booksellers and bookkeepers, housewives, historians, novelists, editors, teachers. Distinguished writers from around the world have appeared on its pages. The Editor herself has contributed some of its best writing. Its readers live all over the globe, and principal libraries in large cities and on university campuses throughout North America subscribe to it through membership in the Society.

Not only is *Persuasions* a pleasure to read, but it is also a pleasure to see with its handsome covers, pleasing design, and splendid artwork, much of it derived from the Editor's own rich store of treasures dating from Jane Austen's time, all of it enhancing *Persuasions* pages. Like Mary Edwards, our Editor "has a very good Taste."

When inquiries came a few years ago to the Society's Board from scholars abroad wanting to know whether JASNA would support the publication of a yearbook of Jane Austen studies, the Board's reaction was that it would naturally want to support the advancement of Jane Austen studies. In fact, it was already doing so by publishing *Persuasions*, the yearbook that is now eight years old and well established.

Parting with Joan Austen-Leigh as an Editor who had given unstintingly of her time and talent and had cared for "Ps" as a mother might a child, was a disheartening thought. Understandably, she wanted relief from such rigorous duty and more time for her own writing. She is an award-winning playwright. [Perhaps composition is just as difficult with a head full of printer's proofs and writers' demands as another author found it was "with a head full of Joints of Mutton & doses of rhubarb."]

The separation has been made easier, however, by the knowledge that the post will be filled by the person Joan Austen-Leigh calls "perfect" for the job: Juliet McMaster.

A University Professor at the University of Alberta in Edmonton, Juliet McMaster is also Professor of English, 1986 winner of her University's Research Prize, a patron and member of the Board of JASNA since its founding, author of *Jane Austen on Love*, editor of *Jane Austen's Achievement*, and contributor to *Persuasions*. Her eloquence, demonstrated on two occasions as principal speaker at JASNA conferences, can be appreciated

in "God Gave Us Our Relations," her Vancouver address, published in this issue. Members still discuss "Hospitality," her Toronto talk (1982). [See *Ps* No. 4.]

"I think *Persuasions* should continue to reflect the Society's membership," Juliet said. "It should be a mix of light and serious articles and should please the eye as well as the mind."

To borrow a phrase from Captain Harville: we are "in very good anchorage here." On behalf of all the members of the Jane Austen Society of North America, I salute our Editors and wish them well!

Lorraine Hanaway