



Jane and the Waterloo Map (Being a Jane Austen Mystery)

By *Stephanie Barron*

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Jane Austen turns sleuth in this delightful Regency-era mystery

November, 1815. The Battle of Waterloo has come and gone, leaving the British economy in shreds; Henry Austen, high-flying banker, is about to declare bankruptcy—dragging several of his brothers down with him. The crisis destroys Henry’s health, and Jane flies to his London bedside, believing him to be dying. While she’s there, the chaplain to His Royal Highness the Prince Regent invites Jane to tour Carlton House, the Prince’s fabulous London home. But her visit takes a startling turn when Jane stumbles upon a body—sprawled on the carpet in the Regent’s library. The dying man utters a single failing phrase: “Waterloo map,” sending Jane on the hunt for a treasure of incalculable value and a killer of considerable cunning.

From the Hardcover edition.

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- Sales Rank: #259720 in eBooks
- Published on: 2016-02-02
- Released on: 2016-02-02
- Format: Kindle eBook

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Editorial Review

Review

Praise for *Jane and the Waterloo Map*

"With a keen sense of plot—the identity of the villain surprises—perfect pitch for Austen's voice and a cast of new and familiar characters, Barron has again produced a pleasant excursion into literate and historical escapism."

—*Richmond Times-Dispatch*

"Absolutely delightful, with just the right balance between likable, captivating characters and the actual history of Jane Austen's life."

—*Historical Novel Society*

"*Jane and the Waterloo Map* is a pleasant excursion into England of the early 1800s. This is a well-told story by an accomplished author."

—*Reviewing the Evidence*

"This book is a delight for Jane Austen fans . . . as if you are stepping through the page into Regency England. False trails, misleading information, and suspicious characters keep readers turning the pages."

—*Gumshoe Review*

"A well-crafted narrative with multiple subplots drives Barron's splendid 13th Jane Austen mystery. Series fans will be happy to see more of Jane's extended family and friends, and Austenites will enjoy the imaginative power with which Barron spins another riveting mystery around a writer generally assumed to have led a quiet and uneventful life."

—*Publishers Weekly, Starred Review*

"Writing in the form of Jane's diaries, Barron has spun a credible tale from a true encounter, enhanced with meticulous research and use of period vocabulary."

—*Booklist*

"Barron, who's picked up the pace since *Jane and the Twelve Days of Christmas*, portrays an even more seasoned and unflinching heroine in the face of nasty death and her own peril."

—*Kirkus Reviews*

"Barron deftly imitates Austen's voice, wit, and occasional melancholy while spinning a well-researched plot that will please historical mystery readers and Janeites everywhere. Jane Austen died two years after the events of Waterloo; one hopes that Barron conjures a few more adventures for her beloved protagonist before historical fact suspends her fiction."

—*Library Journal*

Praise for *Jane and the Twelve Days of Christmas*

National Bestseller

LibraryReads Top Ten List

“A complex murder mystery with the same kind of rapier wit that Austen deployed . . . Great fun for readers who long ago ran out of Jane Austen novels.”

—*The Boston Globe*

“Witty, immaculately researched.”

—*USA Today*

“Sings with not just a good plot but courtly language and an engaging group of characters worthy of the famed novelist herself . . . A first-rate mystery.”

—*The Denver Post*

“Ingenious in plot—Barron plays fair with clues in this intriguing whodunit . . . Add Barron’s deft imitation of her subject’s prose style, and you have a novel that its subject may well have admired.”

—*Richmond Times-Dispatch*

“An excellent period mystery for all historical fiction fans . . . Jane Austen devotees will especially appreciate immersing themselves in the many biographical details about Austen that accompany the fictional murder mystery.”

—*Library Journal, Starred Review*

About the Author

Francine Mathews was born in Binghamton, New York, the last of six girls. She attended Princeton and Stanford Universities, where she studied history, before going on to work as an intelligence analyst at the CIA. She wrote her first book in 1992 and left the Agency a year later. Since then, she has written twenty-five books, including five novels in the Merry Folger series (*Death in the Off-Season*, *Death in Rough Water*, *Death in a Mood Indigo*, *Death in a Cold Hard Light*, and *Death on Nantucket*) as well as the nationally bestselling Being a Jane Austen mystery series, which she writes under the penname Stephanie Barron. She lives and works in Denver, Colorado.

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Chapter One

There can be few things more lowering to the female sensibility than to be caught in a shower of rain at exactly the moment one most desires to appear to advantage. It is not that I care two straws for His Royal Highness the Prince Regent’s good opinion; indeed, I should regard the admiration of such a roué as bordering upon insult; but there is an undeniable duty to answer a summons to Carlton House that demands the donning of one’s best carriage gown, the coiffing of one’s hair, and the hiring of a suitable chaise.

To be thoroughly drenched, therefore, in the simple act of gaining that chaise, is a rebuke to misplaced vanity and expence. As I shivered on the threshold of the palace, my elegant boots damp at the toes and my curls lank upon my brow, I could not bear to look at Manon hovering two steps behind me. My brother’s French housekeeper had deplored this visit from the outset. She had no opinion of the Royal House, and appeared certain that all I should achieve by accepting the Prince’s invitation was ravishment at his hands. She had insisted, therefore, upon accompanying me—my brother Henry being as yet too ill to leave his bed.

It was because of Henry—who else but Henry?—that I was known to Carlton House at all.

I arrived in London a month ago, expressly to negotiate the terms of publication of my latest novel, *Emma*—an eventuality by no means assured. It has not been enough that my earlier works were generally admired, and briskly sold, nor that the third of these—*Mansfield Park*—has exhausted its first edition. My publisher, Mr. Thomas Egerton, refused a second edition of the latter, and spurned my fourth book entirely. I am inclined to attribute his disaffection to the dislike felt by some readers—and perhaps Egerton

himself—for my saintly *Mansfield* heroine, Fanny Price. Where the arch and impertinent Lizzy Bennet found favour among the abandoned inhabitants of the Metropolis, Fanny was simply too *good* to be entertaining. Egerton must have feared that my spoilt and headstrong Emma should be similarly received; but in this he showed the limitations of a journeyman publisher. I suspect that Emma will prove the darling of the frivolous *ton*.

Another lady might have read in Egerton's rebuff the instruction of Providence, and left off writing such dubious stuff as *novels*; my brother James, in his role as Divine Intermediary, counseled as much. He regards the indulgence of novel-reading as a dangerous diversion from Duty, particularly among women. To embrace the scandalous project of actually *writing* such books—and profiting by them!—is to tempt Satan. I would not have had James learn of Egerton's defection for the world, but my mother let slip some part of the intelligence, when relating the news of my journey to Hans Place.

My beloved Henry, far from scolding my arrogant proclivities, actually encourages them. In the face of Egerton's stupidity, he proposed that we approach none other than the illustrious Mr.

John Murray, of Albemarle Street, founder of the *Quarterly Review*. As Murray is well known to publish Lord Byron and Sir Walter Scott, the hubris of this notion was staggering. Only Henry could assume that a tale dismissed by an Egerton might be coveted by a Murray; our Henry has been tilting at windmills all his life. But in the event, his wager answered: Murray deigned

to glance at my *Emma*. It seems he was a little acquainted with Lizzy Bennet, and found her charming.

All matters of cost and gain being uncertain in these straitened months after Wellington's great victory, however, Murray proved cautious. He required a second opinion—none other than that of the *Quarterly Review*'s editor, Mr. William Gifford, who found “nothing but good” in my manuscript, and offered to edit it for publication. *Emma* having survived the scrutiny of so critical a reader, Murray offered me his price: £450 for the copyright.

For *Emma* alone, this should have proved acceptable. But being a rogue as well as a man of letters, Murray demanded the rights to *Mansfield Park* and *Sense and Sensibility* as well. Such terms being likely to beggar me, I refused them. Miss Marianne Dashwood and Miss Mary Crawford cost me too much effort in their fashioning, to be cast upon the world for a pittance.

The delicate business was complicated by my brother's falling ill, of a trifling cold. He attempted to dictate from his bed an indignant letter to Mr. Murray, protesting the publisher's terms, but was unequal to completing it. Henry's indisposition turned to something far more dangerous by the third week in October—a low fever that worsened every hour. I had little time or thought for business. Days passed with no improvement in my brother's condition. He was delirious and wandering, his pulse depressed.

The excellent Mr. Haden, our surgeon, bled Henry copiously, but urged me to inform my family of the gravity of his illness. I was so alarmed by Haden's sombre looks as to send Express to James at Steventon and Edward in Kent, that Henry's last hours might not go unwitnessed by those he loved. Indeed, so wrapped in misery was I, and so deprived of sleep, that I required the presence of others to support me.

James collected Cassandra on his way to London, which suggested he was not so entirely bereft of sense as I usually judge him. They were all three arrived in Hans Place by the twenty-fourth of October, so that Manon and her mother had their hands full of Austens. Edward immediately urging the services of a more experienced man than Mr. Haden, Dr. Matthew Baillie, the Court Physician, was summoned—and so answered his patient's need, that by the thirtieth October, Henry was on the mend.

I cannot describe the exquisite relief of being spared my particularly beloved brother. Suffice it to say that when the crisis was observed to have passed—a little before dawn on the twenty-ninth October—that Cassandra and I, who had been sitting up together at the bedside, neither being willing to fail in the final moments of Henry's life, fell into each other's arms and wept.

It was some days before the patient could stand, or consume more than a little thick gruel. By the first week of November, however, Edward was gone back into Kent and James into Hampshire, taking my sister with him. I remained here in London to nurse Henry—and see what could be done with my difficult *Emma*.

I wrote directly to John Murray and desired him to wait upon me in Hans Place. He was so good as to appear the following morning, and the briefest of conversations secured our mutual satisfaction. I am to retain the copyright of *Emma*, publishing the work at my own expence; and Mr. Murray is to take ten percent of the profits, for his trouble in putting out the volumes.

As I followed a similar course with all my dearest children but *Pride and Prejudice*—which copyright Egerton purchased outright for the sum of £110—I am untroubled by fear of risk. Murray has agreed to publish a second edition of *Mansfield Park*, on similar terms.

James shall be appalled to learn that I have become a woman of Business, as well as Letters. My fallen nature is confirmed.

I had scarcely closed the door on one visitor, than another appeared in Hans Place—entirely unknown to me, and unsettling in the extreme.

Mr. James Stanier Clarke is a clergyman notable for his reliance upon Royal patronage. He is Historiographer to the King (tho' what a madman may want with learning, is open to question), a Canon of Windsor, and author of the yearly *Naval Chronicle*, which must endear him to everyone in the Austen family. He also wrote a fulsome biography of Admiral Lord Nelson, that praised all the hero's better qualities and ignored whatever was lamentable in his character—an office Clarke undertook with the aid of the Duke of Clarence and the Prince Regent.

When he sent in his card, I instructed Manon to convey Mr. Austen's compliments and the intelligence that he was as yet confined to his rooms. But Manon looked darkly and said that Mr. Clarke wished to interview *me*. I bade her show him up to the parlour, therefore, and prepared for a tedious quarter-hour.

“Miss Austen!” he cried, as tho' we met again after many years parted. “What pleasure is this, to trace in your gentle looks and modest attire the Genius that lends such animation to your works—and, I need not add, provides amusement to so many!”

He bounded forward from the threshold, a round little man with fair hair and innocent blue eyes, very finely turned out in a dark green coat. I stepped backwards, a trifle disconcerted, but managed a feeble curtsey. The fact of my authorship is but lately known, my first novel having been published as “by a Lady.” Henry chose to explode my anonymity, entirely against instruction, and deposit the books at my feet for the World to criticise. I should have preferred to write in all the freedom of obscurity, without the weight of either censure or praise.

“Mr. Clarke,” I acknowledged. “I am grateful for your good opinion, sir. But I confess I cannot account for the honour of your presence in Hans Place. My brother is only lately delivered from his sickbed, and is quite unequal to the strain of visitors. How may I serve you?”

“By accepting my sincere congratulations on Mr. Henry Austen's deliverance, madam, and the good wishes of His Royal Highness the Prince Regent, who was informed of your brother's illness in recent days—and of your own angelic office, in nursing him back to health—by our esteemed mutual acquaintance, Dr. Matthew Baillie.”

The Court Physician. He had impressed me as a quiet and efficient fellow, spare of figure and ugly of countenance, with a monkey's shrewd eyes. Why should he canvass the difficulties of a common banker and his sister around the card tables at Carlton House? Henry's pockets had been thoroughly emptied by the Regent's circle in the past—he was forever lending money on generous terms to friends of Eliza's, and my late sister had been acquainted with far too many of the Great; but—

“The Regent, I may say, was instantly electrified to learn of *Miss Jane Austen's* residence in the Metropolis,” Clarke persisted, bowing low, “and despatched me to your door with all possible haste.”

I groped behind me for a chair.

That the presence in London of a woman unremarkable for birth, beauty, blowsy corpulence, or loose morals should be immediately electrifying to the Prince Regent!

“You must know,” Clarke added, “that His Royal Highness keeps a complete set of your works, handsomely bound, in each of his residences. The young Princess Charlotte has also found them vastly entertaining.”

“Pray sit down, sir,” I said faintly.

The cherub beamed, and did so.

“I am instructed to convey all that is proper of His Royal Highness’s esteem and commendation, Miss Austen, and to offer the considerable resources and ample solitude of the Library at Carlton House, for your use and pleasure, should you require it, during your stay in London. I may add that His Royal Highness has further instructed Dr. Baillie to call here in Hans Place each day and carry a report of your brother’s progress to Carlton House—the Regent being most anxious for Mr. Austen’s return to robust health.”

I am afraid I openly frowned at the little man, so incomprehensible did this speech seem. Had Henry been in his usual high spirits and stout form, I should have suspected him of hiring the fellow to trick me.

“The Library at Carlton House? The Regent intends for me to *write* there?”

“Not if you should dislike it,” Mr. Clarke said hurriedly. “But I cannot conceive why you should. It is in every way an admirable chamber, lined with a varied and thorough selection of works on every subject; handsomely appointed, the lighting good, the warmth without question (His Royal Highness is highly particular about the heating of his rooms)—and as nobody at Carlton House is excessively devoted to literature, generally empty.”

This last, I could well believe; and as the final note rang true, I must credit the whole.

“You are very good, sir,” I said, rising with an air that must be read as dismissal—“and the Regent’s generosity is nothing short of remarkable. Please say everything proper to His Royal Highness, of my gratitude for his notice and his esteem. It must be impossible for me to accept his kind invitation, however. The demands of my brother’s precarious health make any interests of my own immaterial at present.”

The expression of dismay on poor Mr. Clarke’s face was so sudden and ill-disguised that I very nearly disgraced myself with laughter. His disappointment was vast, and his discomfiture palpable. He stood to his full height of five feet and turned agitatedly before the hearth, his hands clasped upon his stomach. It was evident I had committed some solecism, and by my refusal presented Mr. Clarke with a problem.

“My dear Miss Austen,” he managed at length, “be assured I have every sympathy with the family difficulties you entertain. I am sensible of the burdens that rest so heavily upon the shoulders of a writer, too, being not unacquainted with the demands of that celestial endeavour myself. —You *are* in the midst of some noble creation of the pen, I assume? An understanding as fertile as your own, cannot long be occupied solely with the sickbed.”

“I am,” I conceded. *Emma* being complete, I had begun to trifle with a tale I thought suited to November—the story of a slighted young woman despairing of her present, whose heart is buried with her past.

Clarke came to a standstill and studied me with his earnest child’s eyes. “I am afraid you do not entirely apprehend the situation,” he said. “An invitation of this sort, from a personage such as His Royal Highness, to a lady of your station and accomplishments

... is by way of being impossible to refuse. It is as much a Royal *summons*, as an extension of gracious notice. Forgive me, madam—but do I make myself intelligible?”

I hesitated for a moment. There are few people of whom I think less than the Prince Regent. His entire history is either foolish or despicable, and his injured wife—tho’ little better than he—ought to be the object

of every woman's pity. But poor Mr. Clarke was denied the luxury of my sentiments. He had arrived in Hans Place as the bearer of joyous gifts, of Royal favour and attention; his position must be miserable, did he return to Carlton House unrequited. As ridiculous as I might find his manners and appearance, he had taken the trouble to call upon me and fulfill his Prince's errand. I could not be so cruel as to deny him success.

"Perfectly intelligible." I sighed. "Pray let us name the day, Mr. Clarke, when I am to visit the Regent's Library."

Users Review

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