
Admirers of Jane Austen are familiar with Cassandra Austen's small pencil and water-color sketch of her sister's face and its Victorian copies (Record, plate VIII, and accompanying illustrations between 128 and 129). Literary and art historians deem the Cassandra portrait, in the possession of London's National Portrait Gallery since 1948, as the only known authentic likeness of Jane Austen's face taken when she was an adult. But another portrait of the adult Jane Austen, also a sketch in pencil and watercolors and also small (6 inches by 4 inches), exists: the work of the Rev. James Stanier Clarke, Domestic Chaplain and Librarian to the Prince of Wales (later, George IV).

Clarke is known to Austenites for escorting the author through Carlton House, the Prince Regent's London residence, on Monday, 13 November 1815, when she went to see the Prince's Library, and then engaging her in an epistolary exchange in which he urged her "to delineate in some future work the Habits of Life and Character and enthusiasm of a Clergyman—who should pass his time between the metropolis & the Country ... Fond of, & entirely engaged in Literature—no man's Enemy but his own" (16 November 1815). If he had also described himself as a fine sketch artist, he might have been regarded by Austen biographers with greater seriousness, rather than as the comical man who was loath to give up having Jane Austen feature him in a romantic novel.

Richard Wheeler's finding the Clarke portrait of Jane Austen is almost the stuff of a romantic novel—or at least the stuff of a novel about a lover of antique books. In 1955, a second-hand book dealer in Canterbury, Kent, found at the estate sale of a proverbial "little old lady" a small slip case containing an album bound in eighteenth-century green morocco leather decorated with gilt. The gilded words Sacred To Friendship (hereafter called Friendship Book) appeared on the upper part of the spine; on the lower were the gilded initials "J.S.C." (Wheeler 6). Richard Wheeler came upon this book in the estate sale visitor's secondhand bookstore.

Within the covers, he found the paper watermarked, authenticating it as eighteenth-century paper. And on those pages, he discovered more than one hundred drawings, verses, and autographs by such celebrities as poet William Cowper, painter George Romney, novelists Charlotte Smith and Anna Seward, and actors Richard Brinsley Sheridan and John Kemble. Crayon and water-color sketches of two unnamed women appear in the book. The Tate Gallery assisted Wheeler in identifying one subject...
Posts about Rev. James Stanier Clarke written by Vic. This Jane Austen blog brings Jane Austen, her novels, and the Regency Period alive through food, dress, social customs, and other 19th C. historical details related to this topic. Feeds: Posts. Comments. Posts Tagged ‘Rev. James Stanier Clarke’. Letter written by Jane Austen, April 1, 1816. Posted in Emma, jane austen, Jane Austen Novels, Jane Austen's letters, Jane Austen's life, Jane Austen's World, tagged Carlton House, Jane Austen's Visit to Carlton House, Rev. James Stanier Clarke on April 1, 2011| 9 Comments ». Watercolor, James Stanier Clarke. Portrait of Jane Austen?, 1816. For those who mistakenly think that ... Jane Austen's House holds an unparalleled collection of objects relating to Jane Austen and her close family circle. Here you can see some of the treasures of the collection, ranging from books and letters to pieces of furniture, clothing and paintings. Many of these objects can be seen in the House, although for conservation reasons some objects may be periodically removed from display. Share. Jane Austen's writing table. Jane Austen's muslin shawl.