

Sir Walter Scott on Jane Austen

From Sir Walter Scott's Diary

"Read again, for the third time at least, Miss Austen's very finely written novel of 'Pride and Prejudice'. That young lady has a talent for describing the involvement of feelings and characters of ordinary life which is to me the most wonderful I have ever met with. The big bow-wow strain I can do myself, like anyone now going; but the exquisite touch which renders ordinary common place things and characters interesting, from the truth of the description and the sentiment, is denied to me."

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From a letter from Sir Walter Scott to Miss Joanna Baillie dated Edinburgh, February 10, 1822

"By the way, did you know Miss Austen, authoress of some novels which have a great deal of nature in them? – nature in ordinary and middle life, to be sure, but valuable from its strong resemblance and correct drawing."

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"I [Scott] find myself every now and then with one of her books in my hand. There's a finishing-off in some of her scenes that is really quite above everyone else."

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"There are real lovers of literature who are content with their reminiscences refreshed perhaps by an occasional dip into the volumes they once knew well, ... while they turn again and again not only to the pages but actually to the books of Miss Austen. And it is not my concern to deny that one can read, say 'Emma' with perfect satisfaction right through several times, while one might be content with re-reading 'Evelina' on certain accustomed 'skippings' [There is] greater attraction in Miss Austen's work which leads to an easy and oft-repeated recurrence to it for pure delight in reading."

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From Sir Walter Scott's article in Quarterly Review No.xxvii

"We bestow no mean compliment upon the author of 'Emma' when we say that keeping close to common incidents, and to such characters as occupy the ordinary walks of life, she has produced sketches of such spirit and originality... and her dramatic personae conduct themselves upon the motives and principles which the readers may recognize as ruling their own, and that of most of their own acquaintances."

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Jane Austen, Her Contemporaries and Herself by Walter Herries Pollock, published by Longmans, Green, and Co. in 1899