

not drive her, because she had such thick ancles.<sup>10</sup> I dare say she will not be in good humour again this month; but I am determined I will not be cross; it is not a little matter that puts me out of temper."<sup>11</sup>

Isabella now entered the room with so eager a step, and a look of such happy importance, as engaged all her friend's notice. Maria was without ceremony sent away, and Isabella, embracing Catherine, thus began:—"Yes, my dear Catherine, it is so indeed your penetration,<sup>12</sup> has not deceived you.—Oh! that arch eye of yours!—It sees through every thing."

Catherine replied only by a look of wondering ignorance.

"Nay, my beloved, sweetest friend," continued the other, "compose yourself.—I am amazingly agitated, as you perceive. Let us sit down and talk in comfort. Well, and so you guessed it the moment you had my note?—Sly creature!—Oh! my dear Catherine, you alone who know my heart can judge of my present happiness. Your brother is the most charming of men. I only wish I were more worthy of him.—But what will your excellent father and mother say?—Oh! heavens! when I think of them I am so agitated!"

Catherine's understanding began to awake: an idea of the truth suddenly darted into her mind; and, with the natural blush of so new an emotion, she cried out, "Good heaven!—my dear Isabella, what do you mean? Can you—can you really be in love with James?"

This bold surmise, however, she soon learnt comprehended but half the fact. The anxious affection, which she was accused of having continually watched in Isabella's every look and action, had, in the course of their yesterday's party, received the delightful confession of an equal love.<sup>13</sup> Her heart and faith were alike engaged to James.—Never had Catherine listened to any thing so full of interest, wonder, and joy. Her brother and her friend engaged!—New to such circumstances, the importance of it appeared unspeakably great, and she contemplated it as one of those grand events, of which the ordinary course of life can hardly afford a return.<sup>14</sup> The strength of her feelings she could not

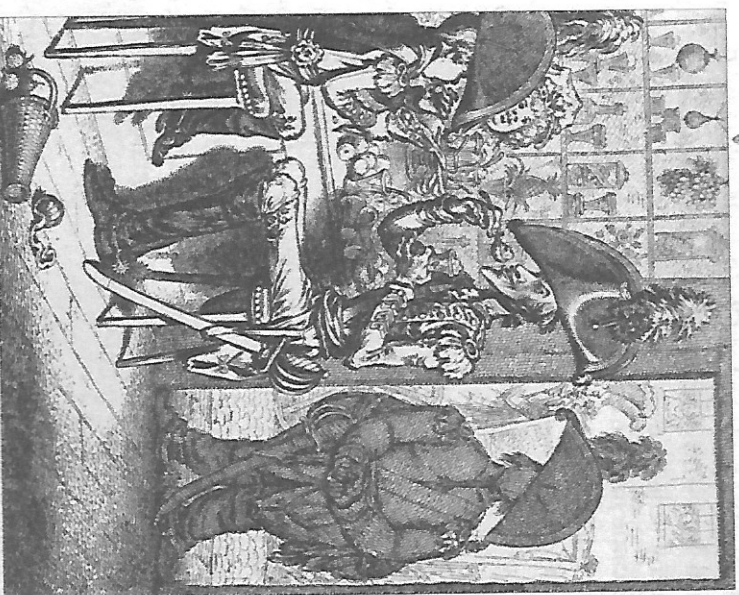
<sup>10</sup> Women's dresses would cover their ankles while standing or walking, but not always when sitting. Thus the quality of a woman's ankles could at times be noticed—including by those observing a carriage, which is presumably what worries Thorpe—though to speak of them openly would be a mark of rudely and impropriety; nobody else in Austen's novels ever does.

<sup>11</sup> *puts me out of temper*: makes me angry or discomposes me.

<sup>12</sup> *penetration*: sagacity, keenness of perception.

<sup>13</sup> To declare one's love in such a situation was to declare an intention to marry, for it was highly improper otherwise to speak in such terms to an unmarried person of the opposite sex.

<sup>14</sup> *afford a return*: furnish a recurrence.



A pastry shop. The man in the center is eating an ice.  
[From *Works of James Gillray* (London, 1849), Figure 434]

express; the nature of them, however, contented her friend. The happiness of having such a sister was their first effusion, and the fair ladies mingled in embraces and tears of joy.

Delighting, however, as Catherine sincerely did in the prospect of the connexion,<sup>15</sup> it must be acknowledged that Isabella far surpassed her in tender anticipations. — “You will be so infinitely dearer to me, my Catherine, than either Anne or Maria: I feel that I shall be so much more attached to my dear Morland’s family than to my own.”

This was a pitch of friendship beyond Catherine.

“You are so like your dear brother,” continued Isabella, “that I quite doated on you the first moment I saw you. But so it always is with me; the first moment settles every thing. The very first day that Morland came to us last Christmas<sup>16</sup>—the very first moment I beheld him—my heart was irrecoverably gone. I remember I wore my yellow gown, with my hair done up in braids;<sup>17</sup> and when I came into the drawing-room, and John introduced him, I thought I never saw any body so handsome before.”

Here Catherine secretly acknowledged the power of love; for, though exceedingly fond of her brother, and partial to all his endowments, she had never in her life thought him handsome.

“I remember too, Miss Andrews drank tea with us that evening,<sup>18</sup> and wore her puce-coloured sarsenet;<sup>19</sup> and she looked so heavenly, that I thought your brother must certainly fall in love with her: I could not sleep a wink all night for thinking of it. Oh! Catherine, the many sleepless nights I have had on your brother’s account—I would not have you suffer half what I have done! I am grown wretchedly thin I know; but I will not pain you by describing my anxiety; you have seen enough of it. I feel that I have betrayed myself perpetually;—so unguarded in speaking of my partiality for the church!<sup>20</sup>—But my secret I was always sure would be safe with you.”

Catherine felt that nothing could have been safer; but ashamed of an ignorance little expected, she dared no longer contest the point, nor refuse to have been as full of arch penetration and affectionate sympathy as Isabella chose to consider her. Her brother

15. *connexion*: connection or link through marriage.

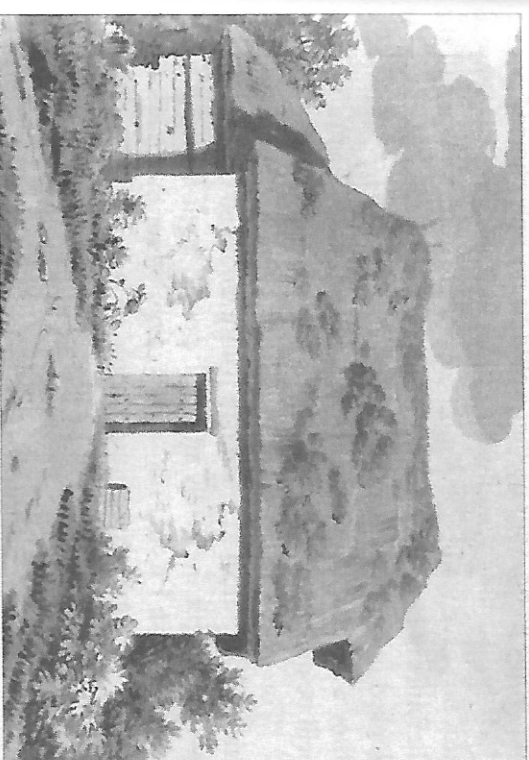
16. She is referring to when Morland visited her family during his Christmas holiday from Oxford.

17. Adult women always wore their hair up in public, and braids were one of the many styles in which it could be arranged.

18. Tea, a snack involving the titular beverage, breads, and cakes—and frequently coffee as well—was usually served in the early evening. People could be invited for tea as a more casual alternative to being invited for dinner.

19. Puce is a purplish-brown color; the word had only recently come into use in English. Sarsenet is a fine, light silk that had become popular in this period (the name refers to its origins among the Saracens). Isabella is describing a gown of that material.

20. As will soon be confirmed, James Morland is planning to be a clergyman, like his father; most of those attending Oxford or Cambridge did so to prepare themselves for the church.



A cottage (see note 24 on next page).

[From James Merigot, *The Amdur's Portfolio, or the New Drawing Magazine*, Vol. I (London, 1815–1816), No. 5, Plate 4.]