

Catharine, or the Bower Ball Scene by Jane Austen

[Note: This digital copy is from *Jane Austen's Juvenilia, Vol III Catherine, or the Bower* available on the JASNA Ohio North Coast website:

<http://archives.jasnaonc.com/>. I have made minor edits to the file to reflect the occasional misspellings, italics, unusual capitalizations, and lack of quotation marks within a sentence in *Catherine, or the Bower* from *The Works of Jane Austen, Vol VI, Minor Works*, edited by R.W. Chapman & first published by Oxford U Press in 1953. For ease of reading, I did not use Austen's superscript for some abbreviations as Chapman did, such as "M^{rs}" (and all abbreviated titles in the manuscript do not have a period after). This section corresponds to MW 217-227. Michele Larow]

[Catharine/Kitty had a toothache and was not going to attend the ball at the Dudleys house that her aunt and the Stanleys were attending. She starts to feel better and decides to go to the ball. Young Mr Stanley unexpectedly shows up and after much confusion, explains who he is. He is the first speaker.]

"... But tell me, where are you going to so smart? Your carriage is just coming round."

"I am going to a Dance at a Neighbour's, where your Family and my Aunt are already gone."

"Gone, without you! what's the meaning of *that*? But I suppose you are like myself, rather long in dressing."

"I must have been so indeed, if that were the case for they have been gone nearly these two hours; The reason however was not what you suppose—I was prevented going by a pain—

"By a pain! interrupted Stanley, 'Oh! heavens, that is dreadful indeed! No Matter where the pain was. But my dear Miss Percival, what do you say to my accompanying you? And suppose you were to dance with me too? I think it would be very pleasant."

"I can have no objection to either I am sure, said Kitty laughing to find how near the truth her Maid's conjecture had been; on the contrary I shall be highly honoured by both, and I can answer for Your being extremely welcome to the Family who give the Ball."

"Oh! hang them; who cares for that; they cannot turn me out of the house. But I am afraid I shall cut a sad figure among all your Devonshire Beaux in this dusty, travelling apparel, and I have not wherewithal to change it. You can procure me some powder perhaps, and I must get a pair of Shoes from one of the Men, for I was in

such a devil of a hurry to leave Lyons that I had not time to have anything pack'd up but some linen." Kitty very readily undertook to procure for him everything he wanted, & telling the footman to shew him into Mr Stanley's dressing room, gave Nanny orders to send in some powder & pomatum, which orders Nanny chose to execute in person. As Stanley's preparations in dressing were confined to such very trifling articles, Kitty of course expected him in about ten minutes; but she found that it had not been merely a boast of vanity in saying that he was dilatory in that respect, as he kept her waiting for him above half an hour, so that the Clock had struck ten before he entered the room and the rest of the party had gone by eight.

"Well,' said he as he came in, have not I been very quick! I never hurried so much in my Life before."

"In that case you certainly have, replied Kitty, for all Merit you know is comparative."

"Oh! I knew you would be delighted with me for making so much haste—. But come, the Carriage is ready; so, do not keep me waiting." And so saying he took her by the hand, & led her out of the room. "Why, my dear Cousin, said he when they were seated, this will be a most agreeable surprize to everybody to see you enter the room with such a smart Young Fellow as I am—I hope your Aunt won't be alarmed."

"To tell you the truth, replied Kitty, I think the best way to prevent it, will be to send for her, or your Mother before we go into the room, especially as you are a perfect stranger, and must of course be introduced to Mr and Mrs Dudley—"

"Oh! Nonsense, said he; I did not expect *you* to stand upon such Ceremony; Our acquaintance with each other renders all such Prudery, ridiculous; Besides, if we go in together, we shall be the whole talk of the Country—"

"To *me* replied Kitty, that would certainly be a most powerful inducement; but I scarcely know whether my Aunt would consider it as such—. Women at her time of life, have odd ideas of propriety you know."

"Which is the very thing that you ought to break them of; and why should you object to entering a room with me where all our relations are, when you have done me the honour to admit me without any chaperone into your Carriage? Do not you think your Aunt will be as much offended with you for one, as for the other of these mighty crimes."

"Why really said Catharine, I do not know but that she may; however, it is no reason that I should offend against Decorum a second time, because I have already done it once."

“On the contrary, that is the very reason which makes it impossible for you to prevent it, since you cannot offend for the *first time* again.”

“You are very ridiculous, said she laughing, but I am afraid your arguments divert me too much to convince me.”

“At least they will convince you that I am very agreeable, which after all, is the happiest conviction for me, and as to the affair of Propriety we will let that rest till we arrive at our Journey's end—. This is a monthly Ball I suppose. Nothing but Dancing here—.”

“I thought I had told you that it was given by a Mr and Mrs Dudley—”

“Oh! aye so you did; but why should not Mr Dudley give one every month? By the bye who *is that* Man? Everybody gives Balls now I think; I believe I must give one myself soon—o. Well, but how do you like my Father & Mother? And poor little Camilla too, has not she plagued you to death with the Halifaxes?” Here the Carriage fortunately stopped at Mr Dudley's, and Stanley was too much engaged in handing her out of it, to wait for an answer, or to remember that what he had said required one. They entered the small vestibule which Mr Dudley had raised to the Dignity of a Hall, & Kitty immediately desired the footman who was leading the way upstairs, to inform either Mrs Peterson [should be Percival], or Mrs Stanley of her arrival, & beg them to come to her, but Stanley unused to any contradiction and impatient to be amongst them, would neither allow her to wait, or listen to what she said, & forcibly seizing her arm within his, overpowered her voice with the rapidity of his own, & Kitty half angry, and half laughing was obliged to go with him up stairs, and could even with difficulty prevail on him to relinquish her hand before they entered the room. Mrs Percival was at that very moment engaged in conversation with a Lady at the upper end of the room, to whom she had been giving a long account of her Neice's unlucky disappointment, & the dreadful pain that she had with so much fortitude, endured the whole Day—"I left her however, said she, thank heaven! a little better, and I hope she has been able to amuse herself with a book, poor thing! for she must otherwise be very dull. She is probably in bed by this time, which while she is so poorly, is the best place for her you know, Ma'am." The Lady was going to give her assent to this opinion, when the Noise of voices on the stairs, and the footman's opening the door as if for the entrance of Company, attracted the attention of every body in the room; and as it was in one of those Intervals between the Dances when every one seemed glad to sit down, Mrs Peterson had a most unfortunate opportunity of seeing her Neice whom she had supposed in bed, or amusing herself as the height of gaiety with a book, enter the room most elegantly dressed, with a smile on her Countenance, and a glow of mingled Clearfulness & Confusion on her Cheeks, attended by a young Man uncommonly handsome, and who without any of her

Confusion, appeared to have all her vivacity. Mrs Percival, colouring with anger & astonishment, rose from her Seat, & Kitty walked eagerly towards her, impatient to account for what she saw appeared wonderful to every body, and extremely offensive to *her*, while Camilla on seeing her Brother ran instantly towards him, and very soon explained who he was by her words & her actions. Mr Stanley, who so fondly doated on his Son, that the pleasure of seeing him again after an absence of three Months prevented his feeling for the time any anger against him for returning to England without his knowledge, received him with equal surprise & delight; and soon comprehending the cause of his Journey, forbore any further conversation with him, as he was eager to see his Mother, & it was necessary that he should be introduced to Mr Dudley's family. This introduction to any one but Stanley would have been highly unpleasant, for they considered their dignity injured by his coming uninvited to their house, & received him with more than their usual haughtiness: But Stanley who with a vivacity of temper seldom subdued, & a contempt of censure not to be overcome, possessed an opinion of his own Consequence, & a perseverance in his own schemes which were not to be damped by the conduct of others, appeared not to perceive it. The Civilities therefore which they coldly offered, he received with a gaiety & ease peculiar to himself, and then attended by his Father & Sister walked into another room where his Mother was playing at Cards, to experience another Meeting, and undergo a repetition of pleasure, surprise, & Explanations. While these were passing, Camilla eager to communicate all she felt to some one who would attend to her, returned to Catharine, & seating herself by her, immediately began—"Well, did you ever know anything so delightful as this? But it always is so; I never go to a Ball in my Life but what something or other happens unexpectedly that is quite charming!"

"A Ball replied Kitty, seems to be a most eventful thing to you—"

"Oh! Lord, it is indeed—But only think of my brother's returning so suddenly—And how shocking a thing it is that has brought him over! I never heard anything so dreadful—!"

"What is it pray that has occasioned his leaving France? I am sorry to find that it is a melancholy event."

"Oh! it is beyond anything you can conceive! His favourite Hunter who was turned out in the park on his going abroad, somehow or other fell ill—No, I believe it was an accident, but however it was something or other, or else it was something else, and so they sent an Express immediately to Lyons where my Brother was, for they knew that he valued this Mare more than anything else in the world besides; and so my Brother set off directly for England, and without packing up another Coat; I am quite angry with him about it; it was so shocking you know to come away without a change of Cloathes—"

“Why indeed, said Kitty, it seems to have been a very shocking affair from beginning to end.”

“Oh! it is beyond anything You can conceive! I would rather have had *anything* happen than that he should have lost that mare.”

“Except his coming away without another coat.”

“Oh! yes, that has vexed me more than you can imagine.—Well, & so Edward got to Brampton just as the poor Thing was dead; but as he could not bear to remain there *then*, he came off directly to Chetwynde on purpose to see us—. I hope he may not go abroad again.”

“Do you think he will not?”

“Oh! dear, to be sure he must, but I wish he may not with all my heart—. You cannot think how fond I am of him! By the bye are not you in love with him yourself?”

“To be sure I am, replied Kitty laughing, I am in love with every handsome Man I see.”

“That is just like me—I am always in love with every handsome Man in the world.”

“There you outdo me replied Catharine for I am only in love with those I *do* see. Mrs Percival who was sitting on the other side of her, & who began now to distinguish the words, *Love & Handsome man*, turned hastily towards them, & said “What are you talking of Catharine?” To which Catharine immediately answered with the simple artifice of a Child, “Nothing Ma'am.” She had already received a very severe lecture from her Aunt on the imprudence of her behaviour during the whole evening; She blamed her for coming to the Ball, for coming in the same Carriage with Edward Stanley, and still more for entering the room with him. For the last-mentioned offence Catharine knew not what apology to give, and tho' she longed in answer to the second to say that she had not thought it would be civil to make Mr Stanley *walk*, she dared not so to trifle with her aunt, who would have been but the more offended by it. The first accusation however she considered as very unreasonable, as she thought herself perfectly justified in coming. This conversation continued till Edward Stanley entering the room came instantly towards her, and telling her that every one waited for *her* to begin the next Dance led her to the top of the room, for Kitty, impatient to escape from so unpleasant a Companion, without the least hesitation, or one civil scruple at being so distinguished, immediately gave him her hand, & joyfully left her seat. This conduct however was highly resented by several young Ladies present, and among the rest by Miss Stanley whose regard for

her brother tho' *excessive*, & whose affection for Kitty tho' *prodigious*, were not proof against such an injury to her importance and her peace. Edward had however only consulted his own inclinations in desiring Miss Peterson to begin the Dance, nor had he any reason to know that it was either wished or expected by anyone else in the Party. As an heiress she was certainly of consequence, but her Birth gave her no other claim to it, for her Father had been a Merchant. It was this very circumstance which rendered this unfortunate affair so offensive to Camilla, for tho' she would sometimes boast in the pride of her heart, & her eagerness to be admired that she did not know who her grandfather had been, and was as ignorant of everything relative to Genealogy as to Astronomy, (and she might have added, Geography) yet she was really proud of her family & Connexions, and easily offended if they were treated with Neglect. "I should not have minded it, said she to her Mother, if she had been *anybody* else's daughter; but to see her pretend to be above me, when her Father was only a tradesman, is too bad! It is such an affront to our whole Family! I declare I think Papa ought to interfere in it, but he never cares about anything but Politics. If I were Mr Pitt or the Lord Chancellor, he would take care I should not be insulted, but he never thinks about *me*; And it is so provoking that *Edward* should let her stand there. I wish with all my heart that he had never come to England! I hope she may fall down & break her neck, or sprain her Ankle." Mrs Stanley perfectly agreed with her daughter concerning the affair, & tho' with less violence, expressed almost equal resentment at the indignity. Kitty in the meantime remained insensible of having given any one Offence, and therefore unable either to offer an apology, or make a reparation; her whole attention was occupied by the happiness she enjoyed in dancing with the most elegant young Man in the room, and every one else was equally unregarded. The Evening indeed to *her*, passed off delightfully; he was her partner during the greatest part of it, and the united attractions that he possessed of Person, Address & vivacity, had easily gained that preference from Kitty which they seldom fail of obtaining from every one. She was too happy to care either for her Aunt's illhumour which she could not help remarking, or for the Alteration in Camilla's behaviour which forced itself at last on her observations. Her Spirits were elevated above the influence of Displeasure in any one, and she was equally indifferent as to the cause of Camilla's, or the continuance of her Aunt's. Though Mr Stanley could never be really offended by any imprudence or folly in his Son that had given him the pleasure of seeing him, he was yet perfectly convinced that Edward ought not to remain in England, and was resolved to hasten his leaving it as soon as possible; but when he talked to Edward about it, he found him much less disposed towards returning to France, than to accompany them in their projected tour, which he assured his father would be infinitely more pleasant to him, and that as to the affair of travelling he considered it of no importance, and what might be pursued at any little odd time, when he had nothing better to do. He advanced these objections in a manner which plainly shewed that he had scarcely a doubt of their being complied

with, and appeared to consider his father's arguments in opposition to them, as merely given with a view to keep up his authority, & such as he should find little difficulty in combating. He concluded at last by saying, as the chaise in which they returned together from Mr Dudley's reached Mrs Percivals, "Well Sir, we will settle this point some other time, and fortunately it is of so little consequence, that an immediate discussion of it is unnecessary." He then got out of the chaise and entered the house without waiting for his father's reply. It was not till their return that Kitty could account for that coldness in Camilla's behaviour to her, which had been so pointed as to render it impossible to be entirely unnoticed. When however they were seated in the Coach with the two other Ladies, Miss Stanley's indignation was no longer to be suppressed from breaking out into words, & found the following vent.

"Well, I must say *this*, that I never was at a stupider Ball in my Life! But it always is so; I am always disappointed in them for some reason or other. I wish there were no such things."

"I am sorry, Miss Stanley, said Mrs Percival drawing herself up, that you have not been amused; every thing was meant for the best I am sure, and it is a poor encouragement for your Mama to take you to another if you are so hard to be satisfied."

"I do not know what you mean Ma'am, about Mama's taking me to another. You know I am come out."

"Oh! dear Mrs Percival, said Mrs Stanley, you must not believe everything that my lively Camilla says, for her spirits are prodigiously high sometimes, and she frequently speaks without thinking. I am sure it is impossible for *any one* to have been at a more elegant or agreeable dance, and so she wishes to express herself I am certain."

"To be sure I do, said Camilla very sulkily, only I must say that it is not very pleasant to have any body behave so rude to one as to be quite shocking! I am sure I am not at all offended, and should not care if all the World were to stand above me, but still it is extremely abominable, & what I cannot put up with. It is not that I mind it in the least, for I had just as soon stand at the bottom as at the top all night long, if it was not so very disagreeable—. But to have a person come in the middle of the Evening & take everybody's place is what I am not used to, and tho' I do not care a pin about it myself, I assure you I shall not easily forgive or forget it."

This speech which perfectly explained the whole affair to Kitty, was shortly followed on her side by a very submissive apology, for she had too much good Sense to be proud of her family, and too much good Nature to live at variance with any one. The Excuses she made, were delivered with so much real concern for the Offence,

and such unaffected Sweetness, that it was almost impossible for Camilla to retain that anger which had occasioned them; She felt indeed most highly gratified to find that no insult had been intended and that Catharine was very far from forgetting the difference in their birth for which she could *now* only pity her, and her good humour being restored with the same Ease in which it had been affected, she spoke with the highest delight of the Evening, & declared that she had never before been at so pleasant a Ball. The same endeavours that had procured the forgiveness of Miss Stanley ensured to her the cordiality of her Mother, and nothing was wanting but Mrs P's good humour to render the happiness of the others complete; but She, offended with Camilla for her affected Superiority, Still more so with her brother for coming to Chetwynde, & dissatisfied with the whole Evening, continued silent and gloomy and was a restraint on the vivacity of her Companions.