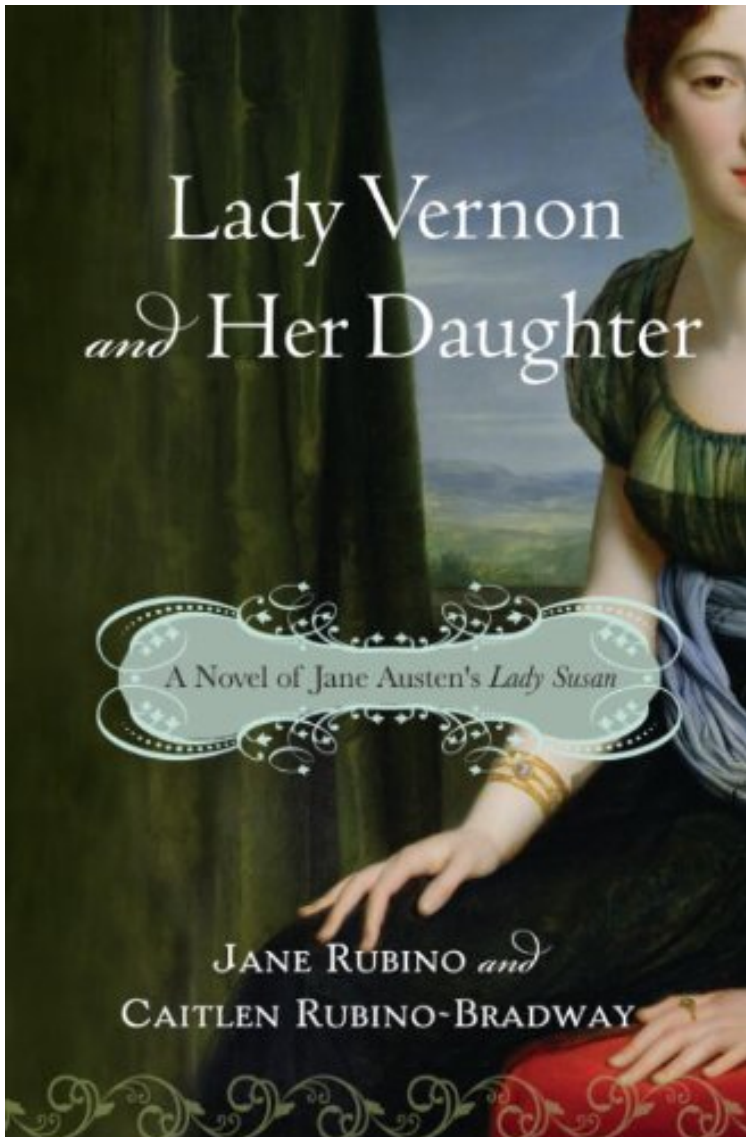


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Lady Vernon and Her Daughter: A Novel of Jane Austen's Lady Susan



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Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurIn Lady Vernon and Her Daughter, Jane Rubino and Caitlen Rubino-Bradway have taken Jane Austen's novella, Lady Susan, and transformed it into a vivid and richly developed novel of love lost and found--and the complex relationships between women, men, and money in Regency England.Lady Vernon and her daughter, Frederica, are left penniless and without a home after the death of Sir Frederick Vernon, Susan's husband. Frederick' s brother and heir, Charles Vernon, like so many others of his time, has forgotten his promises to look after the women, and despite their fervent hopes to the contrary, does nothing

to financially support Lady Vernon and Frederica. When the ladies, left without another option, bravely arrive at Charles's home to confront him about his treatment of his family, they are faced with Charles's indifference, his wife Catherine's distrustful animosity, and a flood of rumors that threaten to undo them all.

Will Lady Vernon and Frederica find love and happiness--and financial security--or will their hopes be dashed with their lost fortune? With wit and warmth reminiscent of Austen's greatest works, *Lady Vernon and Her Daughter* brings to vivid life a time and place where a woman's security is at the mercy of an entail, where love is hindered by misunderstanding, where marriage can never be entirely isolated from money, yet where romance somehow carries the day.

Chapter one: A woman with neither property nor fortune must ward off this affliction by cultivating the beauty, brilliance, and accomplishment that will blind a promising suitor to the want of a dowry. When she is securely married, she may suspend her own improvement and turn her energies toward the domestication of her husband and the acquisition of wealthy suitors for their daughters. Still, she must never sink to complacency, but always keep sharp, for it may be her unfortunate lot to survive her spouse and she will be thrown back upon her wits once more.

This principle became the subject of debate one evening between Sir William Martin and his lady. He observed that a young woman of marriageable age must always be accomplished and handsome, while a gentleman was under no such obligation. I cannot agree with you, Sir William, protested his lady. It is not nature but circumstance that determines how far one must exert. Personal advantages are no less necessary to a male than to a female, save in the case of a firstborn son. He may be as coarse as he likes, but unless he is quite sickly, his younger brothers will be obliged to cultivate a superior mind, a pleasing manner, and a handsome face.

Well, if you are right, answered her husband, who was too good-humored to argue long with his wife, then it is a fortunate thing for our John that he has them all.

Lady Martin could not disagree. She favored John over her elder son, William, for the latter was a plain, dry, serious sort of person, while John Martin was a young man of extraordinary good looks and captivating manners.

Upon the death of Sir William, the elder son succeeded to the title and the handsome estate in Derbyshire; he married Miss Elinor Metcalfe, who dutifully presented him with an heir, christened James William, after her father and his.

John Martin, meanwhile, was left to secure his future as well as he could, and for some time he deliberated whether he must look to the law, the Navy, the clergy, or marriage to a woman of fortune.

Alas, John Martin had neither talent nor inclination for the law, the sea, or the church. He was not averse to a good match, but he wanted to be happy as much as he wanted to be rich, and while there were many young ladies who were pretty and many who were rich, there were few who were both, and those did not have to settle for a second son.

An introduction to the lovely daughter of a merchant named Osbourne persuaded John Martin that he wanted to be happy more than he wanted to be rich. Miss Susannah Osbourne possessed a beautiful face, an elegant bearing, and a lively wit, and John Martin fell so thoroughly in love as to conclude that they might do very well on his modest fortune and her five thousand pounds.

The lady's affectionate father took a more practical view of the matter and introduced John Martin to an enterprising young man who was connected with a prominent banking house. Lewis deCourcy was a second son himself; his elder brother, Sir Reginald deCourcy, had inherited a large fortune and considerable property, while the younger had to make do with an excellent understanding, diligence, and an acumen for business.

Lewis deCourcy was favorably impressed with Martin's cleverness and handsome manners and had no trouble in securing him a place where he had to do little more than to be agreeable to gentlemen of fortune and persuade them to relinquish their money.

Into this happy union came one child, a daughter. Susan Martin was a beautiful girl who became a beautiful young woman without suffering those years of awkward transition. An active mind, a fondness for reading, and acute powers of observation gave her a precocious understanding of the world and supported a respectable measure of accomplishment. She learned to read German, speak French, and sing in Italian. She played the fortepiano in a style that was more emphatic than lyrical, but she was shrewd enough to play only those pieces that suited her spirited fingers. She possessed a keen eye for contour and expression, though her sketches were confined to caricatures of anyone she did not like. To these were added the quickest tongue in repartee, the surest seat on a saddle, the lightest foot on a ballroom floor, and most important of all, an inimitable charm of presence that livened a room when she entered it and left its mark in the dullness that followed upon her retreat.

Susan Martin's beauty was particularly gratifying to her father, for his natural liberality and want of economy had them always living in a style just above what they could afford and leaving nothing over for her future. She will have her pick of rich men, he consoled himself. For I do not think there is a prettier girl in all of England!

Well before Miss Martin might express her inclination for anyone, however, her parents settled upon their nephew, James, for their future son-in-law. Although their daughter's affection for her cousin was

expressed in nothing more than the teasing fondness of a sister for a brother, the Martins were not discouraged, for their designs were promoted by Lady Martin, who believed that her impetuous son would feel the want of cleverness in a wife more than he would feel a want of fortune. Sir William was of an opposite opinion and resolved to do what he could to get rid of his niece before his son lost all sense of obligation to unite his fortune to one of equal measure and tendered his proposal to his fair cousin. As soon as Miss Martin was out, her uncle gave a grand private ball in order to bring his niece together with several single gentlemen who ought to be married and wanted only a few more dances and a few more charming smiles to fix them. James Martin secured his cousin for the first two dances, which allowed the pair to turn their wit upon the party. Is this not superior company, Susan? asked he. I did not know that my excellent father had so many vain and empty-headed acquaintance! There are three fools to every sensible fellow. Among so many peacocks I will certainly appear to advantage. Or perhaps you can only take pleasure in the company of equals, she replied archly. I take pleasure in whatever is before me, that is my particular talent. To think of nothing beyond the present? Indeed, yes! The past cannot be altered, and the future cannot be known to dwell upon either will turn one into a fright or a bore. We cannot all enjoy such agreeable indifference, James. You reproach me wrongly, protested her cousin. You may think me a fool or a reprobate, but you must never think me indifferent. Sir William had been observing this repartee with some apprehension, and at the first opportunity he approached the young cousins with the outward motive of complimenting their dancing. But you must allow the other gentlemen their share of pleasure or they will feel themselves slighted, Sir William said to his son. When your set is done, bring Susan to me, for some acquaintances have just arrived whom I particularly wish her to know. These candidates were the brothers Vernon. Frederick Vernon, the elder, was a good-natured gentleman of thirty. He had, some years earlier, rescued an impulsive young duke who had jumped into a pond on a challenge only moments before recollecting that he did not swim. A knighthood had been the result, and the conversion from Mr. Frederick Vernon to Sir Frederick Vernon had been effected without injuring the young mans kindhearted civility. He had a great fondness for society but had lately been kept from the enjoyment of it out of filial obligation. His father had suffered a prolonged illness, and Sir Frederick sacrificed his own pleasures to remain at the family property in Sussex, attending his father with great devotion until his demise. It was the younger Vernon, however, who immediately petitioned Miss Martin for the next two dances, and she was obliged to consent. Charles Vernon was six years his brothers junior, and very different in appearance and disposition. He was handsomer of figure and face, more ingratiating in his manner, and livelier in his conversation. An unsophisticated observer would find him the more pleasing of the two, but the more cautious eye would detect the sort of high spirits that were the result of habitual indulgence in all of the license that a young man of good family can lay claim to. When Miss Martin expressed her condolences upon his recent loss, his remarks displayed a want of feeling and propriety that not even his handsome face and ingratiating conduct could disguise. While his father lived, Charles Vernon did not scruple to forfeit principle to pleasure, and when his father lay ill, he continued to amuse himself in London and Bath, arguing himself into the conviction that his fathers health would not hang upon his going to Sussex and making a show of concern. If the old gentleman lived, Charles would have sacrificed his diversion for nothing, and if he died, Charles would be scarcely a penny better off. Mr. Vernon had always held the opinion there was no wisdom in assigning large portions to younger children; it was the heir who must keep up the family property and he must have the money to do it. Having neither property nor profession, and only the five thousand pounds through his mothers marriage settlement and another five that was left by his fathers will, Charles had resolved upon marrying a rich woman yet when he laid eyes upon Susan Martin, even this principle began to give way. She was, beyond anything, the most beautiful woman he had ever beheld, and to her personal advantages was added the material one of being a near relation to Sir William and Lady Martin. The affection of Lady Martin for her niece was particularly promising as it was rumored that she h...
Revue de presse "Like any worthwhile pastiche, this entertaining novel prompts a renewed appreciation of the subtlety and wit of the real Jane Austen, who would never have had a character say ' . . . everything is all about money!' even when it was."--Boston Globe "One imagines it is precisely what Austen would have done with the character had she the inclination to turn her novella into a novel"--Newark Star-Ledger "Inspired by Jane Austen's novella *Lady Susan*, this biting social comedy from mother-daughter duo Rubino (the veteran author) and Rubino-Bradway (the first-timer) is a delightful, worthy homage to Austen. In 19th-century England, *Lady Susan Vernon* is left nearly penniless after her honorable, wealthy husband dies and his unscrupulous little brother, Charles, bilks Susan and her daughter, Frederica, of their share of his fortune.

Forced to rely upon the kindness of friends, the two spend several months bouncing from home to home. Subjected to the two-faced machinations of her social circle (particularly from Charles's wife, Catherine), Susan cleverly (and believably) turns several of her enemies against each other, using their own words. As in Austen's novels, securing a generous dowry and a good marriage (that is, one with money and status) is the all-important goal of every woman, but Susan is a dynamic character more than capable of delivering a shocking surprise."--Publishers Weekly"Cleverly inverts the premise of Austen's *Lady Susan*, with a richness of background and detail that enlivens the original epistolary novel. Should delight the most acute Austen fans."Stephanie Barron, national bestselling author of the *Jane Austen Mysteries*"A captivating read with a charmingly redeemed heroineJane Austen fans will love it!"Syrie James, author of the bestselling *The Lost Memoirs of Jane Austen* and *The Secret Diaries of Charlotte Brontë*"Austen devotees will appreciate the authenticity of language and setting as well as the many witty allusions to the canon." Laurie Viera Rigler, author of *Rude Awakenings of a Jane Austen Addict*"A delightful trip through the complex world of the Regency, exposing goodness and hypocrisy with equal skill. I was sorry to see it end!"Abigail Reynolds, author of *Impulse Initiative*"This solid rethinking of *Lady Susan* deserves a place on the shelf of any Austen aficionado."Marsha Altman, author of the *Darcys the Bingleys*"A delightfully clever resculpting of Austen's youthful *Lady Susan*. Jane Rubino and Caitlen Rubino-Bradway have rewarded honesty and perseverance in the style of *Sense and Sensibility*. Good fun!"Kathryn L. Nelson, author of *Pemberley Manor*"I loved this book! A brilliant tour de force in Austen-related fiction and I believe that Jane Austen would be the first to congratulate the authors on their achievement."C. Allyn Pierson, author of *And This Our Life: Chronicles of the Darcy Family*"I admire the way the authors have paid homage to the Austen style throughout. I loved it."Jill Pitkeathley, author of *Cassandra Jane*