Mar 14th, 8:27 AM

The Importance of Practice

Anna Belle Bacon

Wright State University - Main Campus

Follow this and additional works at: https://corescholar.libraries.wright.edu/celia_pride

Part of the English Language and Literature Commons

Repository Citation

https://corescholar.libraries.wright.edu/celia_pride/preconference/blog/9

This Event is brought to you for free and open access by the CELIA Events at CORE Scholar. It has been accepted for inclusion in Pride and Prejudice: The Bicentennial by an authorized administrator of CORE Scholar. For more information, please contact corescholar@www.libraries.wright.edu, library-corescholar@wright.edu.
The Importance of Practice

Barclay Dun’s “A Translation of Nine of the Most Fashionable Quadrilles, Consisting of Fifty French Country Dances, as performed in England and Scotland.” (1818) is an instructional guide to the period dances as well as an overview to the conduct of dancing as well. Dun was a dance instructor, who not only includes the actual dance steps in the book, but as well as his opinion on how to improve one’s skills. Dancing in the Regency time was for entertainment but also showed good breeding. It indicated that you were somewhat educated and showed that you cared enough about your social status to practice and know the dance steps. Young people were typically taught the dances and were required to practice as to prevent embarrassment at the ball. Ball attendance was mostly reserved for the more socially elite, meaning the upper class and upper middle class. Balls usually required a ticket or an invitation, and as a guest you were expected to dance. A proper gentleman was expected to dance with every eligible lady in the room as a way to mingle and find a mate. This is why when Mr. Darcy refuses to dance at the Meryton ball, he is considered rude and pompous. He later proves that he is able to dance; he just chooses not to dance at Meryton. This is also why he dances with Elizabeth at the Netherfield ball. At this point in the novel, his feelings for Elizabeth have begun to appear. Mr. Collin’s unfortunately is a different story.

Dun writes, “I cannot but deplore the disgraceful neglect that is so apparent in most dancers with regard to the proper use of their arms, as surely this is of as much consequence as the management of their legs.” (20-21) At the Netherfield ball, when Mr. Collins and Elizabeth dance, it is awkward, uncoordinated, and embarrassing. This is not only because Elizabeth detests Mr. Collins, but also because of his lack of dancing skills. Mr. Collins inability to dance is both fitting for his character and surprising at the same time. Mr. Collins is at a somewhat respectable rank, his patroness is Lady Catherine and has the opportunity to own the Bennet’s home, and he is in many ways considered a gentleman, except that he is a terrible dancer. This shows that he either has not taken the time to learn the dances or that he is simply a terrible dancer. Mr. Collin’s poor dancing skills isolate him in this scene as well as Elizabeth who is his partner. This is because he does not realize his own faults. He is out of touch with society and does not seem to care enough about how he is presented by his dancing skills. Neither of these are characteristics of a gentleman in the Regency. He is then outdone by Mr. Darcy and his dancing skills. This also shows the difference between these two men, and their social grooming. Mr. Collin’s dancing skills make him unappealing to women. After all, Charlotte Lucas marries him because he is the best option available.