

[Accueil](#)[Revenir à l'accueil](#)[Collection](#)[Les correspondances de François Guizot : 1806-1874](#)[Collection180_181_Correspondance entre Sarah Austin et François Guizot : 1840-1867](#)[Collection180_Lettres de Sarah Austin : 1840-1867](#)[Item](#)**Dec. 18, 1861, Sarah Austin à François Guizot**

Dec. 18, 1861, Sarah Austin à François Guizot

Auteurs : Austin, Sarah (1793-1867)

Les folios

En passant la souris sur une vignette, le titre de l'image apparaît.

8 Fichier(s)

Les mots clés

[Droit](#), [Femme \(de lettres\)](#), [France \(1852-1870, Second Empire\)](#), [Philosophie](#), [Politique \(Angleterre\)](#), [Portrait](#), [Récit](#), [Travail intellectuel](#)

Relations entre les lettres

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Présentation

Date1861-12-18

GenreCorrespondance

Editeur de la ficheMarie Dupond & Association François Guizot, projet EMAN
(Thalim, CNRS-ENS-Sorbonne nouvelle)

Information générales

LangueAnglais

Cote105, AN : 163 MI 42 AP 180 Papiers Guizot Bobine Opérateur 29

Nature du documentLettre autographe

Supportcopie numérisée de microfilm

Etat général du documentBon

Localisation du documentArchives Nationales (Paris)

Transcriptionpp. 381-383.

Citer cette page

Austin, Sarah (1793-1867), Dec. 18, 1861, Sarah Austin à François Guizot,
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Consulté le 26/01/2026 sur la plate-forme EMAN :

<https://eman-archives.org/Guizot-Lieven/items/show/7677>

Copier

Informations éditoriales

DestinataireGuizot, François (1787-1874)

Lieu de destinationVal-Richer (France)

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Notice créée par [Marie Dupond](#) Notice créée le 24/10/2024 Dernière modification le 02/04/2025

Sept 28. 1861

Dear Monsieur Guizot
 I have only thanks to give
 you for your anxiety to understand
 perfectly what were my husband's
 relations to Mr Bentham & his
 sentiments with regard to these opinions
 one of which the eminent man was
 the author or the advocate. (as
 I must divide Mr Bentham's life into
 I knew it) into two parts. When
 married my husband had just been
 introduced to him & was enthusiastic
 admirer - almost a worshipper of him
 in consequence of those great works
 which remain & will remain monuments
 of his original genius & acute mind.
 The fragment on Gov. to the defence of liberty
 & the principles of morals & legislation
 more especially - concerning them his
 opinion was altered. As a politician
 my husband, tho' rarely in ultra
 liberal opinions, early dissented from
 those held by Mr Bentham, which
 were founded on his extreme igno-
 rance of the lower classes & his
 ardent, enthusiastic zeal for their
 welfare. At the time we first
 knew Mr Bentham, his friends
 were few, but ^{they were} men of great experience
 and honour. Sir Samuel Romilly,

Burnmont, Thompson, Mill, & Barker
Steth (the late Lord Langdale) were
the most considerable of them. All
had been attracted to him by their
admiration for his learning, genius,
and courage, as a Law Reformer, and
by their veneration for his ardent
philanthropy and his entire devotion
to the cause he had espoused. Even
unfortunately however, as he advanced
in age, he became more and more
impatient of contradiction, and he
gradually surrounded himself
with only inferior men, who ~~flattered~~
^{flattered} his ^{weaknesses}, & assented
to everything he said. You may
imagine, that my husband was ill
qualified to ask this question: he had
always referred to Mr Bentham his
respectful dissent from some of his
opinions, ~~which~~ ^{and others} gradually ended in
Mr Austin seeing less & less of him.
This state of things was very painful
to us both; for we were extremely

attached to the dear old man
in spite of great peculiarities, &
weaknesses, he was not only
but lovable. You ask what
Austin regarded himself as
Mr Bentham's disciples.
and philosophy - certainly
in both he found much to
in his writings, but it was
as the most original
of all routes on
he looked up to him with
veneration. In this light
regarded by all the leading
men of England; or rather
that all the law reformers that
came out of late years took
by him, and that hundreds
who are ignorant of his works
unconscious of the debt they
are in fact owing upon that
he laid down. I Lord Brougham
whom Mr Bentham could
influence I have alluded

earn, Mill, & Bicker
and Langdale) were
dearable of them, all
ted to him by their
his learning, genius
Law Reformer, and
for his ardent
his entire devotion in both he found much to ad
and exposed. Even in his writings, but it was as
er, as he advanced or rather, as the most original
one more and more inventive of all writers on Law
tradition, and he he looked up to him with just
ended himself veneration. In this light, he
or even, who were regarded by all the leading Law
ers of England; or rather, I should
said. You may that all the law reforms that have
husband was ill carried out of late years were
is just; he had by him, and that hundreds of
to Mr Bentham his who are ignorant of his writings
from some of his unconscious of the debt they owe
gradually ended in are in fact acting upon the prima
left & left of him. he laid down. Lord Brougham
was very painful when Mr Bentham made the
- were extremely influences I have alluded to, he

very ill,) much to his honour, bore the
testimony in the House of Lords to the
enormous obligation which the country
& the cause of Law Reform, owed to Mr. J.
Bentham. But the low radicals who
gathered about Mr. Bentham in the last
years of his life, & who used his munificence
jeal for what he thought useful, for
their own purposes, succeeded (as you
may suppose) in alienating him from
his best & worthiest friends. There
is, in one of my husband's Lectures, a
passage relating to his sentiments with
regard to Mr. Bentham, ^{which} I enclose
to you. He calls his veneration for the great
Law Reformer, & at the same time, the
freedom & independence of his own
judgment, that if I can find it, I
will certainly send it to you. It is
perfectly characteristic of the writer.
What I have said will form in part an
answer to your second question. You
know pretty nearly what were the
opinions of the men whom I have named
as Mr. Bentham's earlier friends. Without
being precisely radicals, they were all
something beyond Whigs, but they

grasped, at the time of the violent contests
about Parliamentary Reform, under the
general denomination of Radicals, and
acted with such men as Gtze, Haller,
Molesworth, & others, who certainly entertain-
ed the most Democratic opinions.
All this is utterly changed since the passing
of the Reform Bill: no such party can
be said to exist. With the exception of
Mr. Gtze, who is inaccessible to any new
idea, I hardly think that one remains.
The lessons given to us by France & America
have not been thrown away, & Radicalism
is now sunk into the ranks to which it
properly belongs. Mr. Bentham's funda-
mental error was, the belief that because
the people can have no sinister interests
hostile to good government, they would
therefore always be in favour of good
government. My husband used
vainly to represent to him that the
ignorance & wrong headedness of the
people were ~~both~~ ^{equally} dangerous to
good government, as the "sinister interests"
of the governing classes, upon this point

They were always at issue. I must add
that the progress of my husband's kind
was in an opposite direction to that of his
venerable friend; but, alas the ^{consequence}
wonder which they lived ^{respecting} tended to this
result.
I have been to London to consult a very
eminent surgeon about my arm. He
says that everything is restored to its right
place; yet, I fear it will be long before
I shall be able to use it with comfort.
I saw Sir George Lewis, who told me that
he thinks there are among the things some
letters from Horace Walpole, but
nothing of any importance. About
Lady Charlotte, he knew nothing. I was
going to say he seemed to think her death
almost inevitable. A friend who
called on me had just seen her. She
said the letters they received from America
were most painful, because they displayed
the most entire ignorance of the real state
of things, & spoke of the Irish affairs with
levity. She said they are all living in a
"Lost Paradise". I heard that the excellent
Paine, whom we have lost, was extremely
shocked at the idea of war, which he & the
Quakers were most anxious to avoid. I cannot

"I hastily borrowed the destination from the
works of Mr Bentham, a writer whom I much
revere & whom I am prone to follow, though
I will not receive his dogma with blind
& servile submission. I suspect exact
from their disciples' inattention of the
understanding, because their doctrines will
not endure examination. A man of Mr
Bentham's genius may provoke inquiry;
& may be satisfied with the ample &
genuine admiration which his writings will
infallibly attract from scrutinizing and
impartial judges."

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Lectures on Jurisprudence
I need hardly add that the divergence
of Mr Austin's opinions from Mr Ben-
tham's became gradually wider
from the time when this was written