

Chapter 1

IT is a truth universally acknowledged¹, that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife.

However little known the feelings or views of such a man may be on his first entering a neighbourhood, this truth is so well fixed in the minds of the surrounding families, that he is considered as the rightful property of some one or other of their daughters.

"My dear Mr. Bennet," said his lady to him one day, "have you heard that Netherfield Park is let at last?"

Mr. Bennet replied that he had not.

"But it is," returned she; "for Mrs. Long has just been here, and she told me all about it."

Mr. Bennet made no answer.

"Do not you want to know who has taken it?" cried his wife impatiently.

"You want to tell me, and I have no objection to hearing it."

This was invitation enough.

"Why, my dear, you must know, Mrs. Long says that Netherfield is taken by a young man of large fortune from the north of England; that he came down on Monday in a chaise and four to see the place, and was so much delighted with it that he agreed with Mr. Morris immediately; that he is to take possession before Michaelmas, and some of his servants are to be in the house by the end of next week."

"What is his name?"

"Bingley."

"Is he married or single?"

"Oh! single, my dear, to be sure! A single man of large fortune; four or five thousand a year. What a fine thing for our girls!"

"How so? How can it affect them?"

"My dear Mr. Bennet," replied his wife, "how can you be so tiresome! You must know that I am thinking of his marrying one of them."

"Is that his design² in settling here?"

"Design! nonsense, how can you talk so! But it is very likely that he may fall in love with one of them, and therefore you must visit him as soon as he comes."

"I see no occasion for that. You and the girls may go, or you may send them by themselves, which perhaps will be still better; for, as you are as handsome as any of them, Mr. Bingley might like you the best of the party."

"My dear, you flatter me. I certainly have had my share of beauty, but I do not pretend to be any thing extraordinary now.

When a woman has five grown up daughters, she ought to give over³ thinking of her own beauty."

"In such cases, a woman has not often much beauty to think of."

"But, my dear, you must indeed go and see Mr. Bingley when he comes into the neighbourhood."

"It is more than I engage⁴ for, I assure you."

"But consider⁵ your daughters. Only think what an establishment⁶ it would be for one of them. Sir William and Lady Lucas are determined to go, merely on that account⁷, for in general, you know they visit no new comers. Indeed⁸ you must go, for it will be impossible for us to visit him, if you do not."

"You are over-scrupulous, surely. I dare say Mr. Bingley will be very glad to see you; and I will send a few lines by you to assure him of my hearty⁹ consent to his marrying which ever he chooses of the girls; though I must throw in a good word for my little Lizzy."

"I desire you will do no such thing. Lizzy is not a bit better than the others; and I am sure she is not half so handsome as Jane, nor half so good humoured as Lydia. But you are always giving her the preference."

"They have none of them much to recommend¹⁰ them," replied he; "they are all silly and ignorant like other girls; but Lizzy has something more of quickness than her sisters."

"Mr. Bennet, how can you abuse¹¹ your own children in such way?

You take delight in vexing me. You have no compassion on my poor nerves."

"You mistake me¹², my dear. I have a high respect for your nerves. They are my old friends. I have heard you mention them with consideration¹³ these twenty years at least."

"Ah! You do not know what I suffer."

"But I hope you will get over it, and live to see many young men of four thousand a year come into the neighbourhood."

"It will be no use to us if twenty such should come, since you will not visit them."


"Depend upon it¹⁴, my dear, that when there are twenty I will visit them all."

Mr. Bennet was so odd a mixture of quick parts, sarcastic humour, reserve, and caprice, that the experience of three and twenty years had been insufficient to make his wife understand his character. Her mind was less difficult to develop. She was a woman of mean¹⁵ understanding, little information, and uncertain temper. When she was discontented, she fancied¹⁶ herself nervous. The business of her life was to get her daughters married; its solace¹⁷ was visiting and news.

VOCABULARY NOTES

- ¹ Recognised
- ² Project
- ³ Stop
- ⁴ It is more than I plan to do
- ⁵ Think about
- ⁶ Good situation
- ⁷ Only for this
- ⁸ Really
- ⁹ Sincere
- ¹⁰ To be in their favour
- ¹¹ Speak ill of your children
- ¹² You are wrong.
- ¹³ Importance
- ¹⁴ Trust me
- ¹⁵ Simple
- ¹⁶ She imagined
- ¹⁷ The things she liked most.

<http://classiclit.about.com/library/bl-etexts/jausten/bl-jausten-pri-3.htm>



Soon after Mr Bingley arrived in Hertfordshire, a ball is organised in Meryton, a town nearby. It is the first time Mr Bingley meets his neighbours.

A report soon followed that Mr. Bingley was to¹ bring twelve ladies and seven gentlemen with him to the assembly. The girls grieved² over such a large number of ladies; but were comforted the day before the ball by hearing that, instead of twelve, he had brought only six with him from London, his five sisters and a cousin. And when the party entered the assembly room, it consisted of only five altogether³; Mr. Bingley, his two sisters, the husband of the oldest, and another young man.

Mr. Bingley was good looking and gentlemanlike; he had a pleasant countenance, and easy, unaffected manners. His brother-in-law, Mr. Hurst, merely looked the gentleman; but his friend Mr. Darcy soon drew the attention of the room by his fine, tall person, handsome features, noble mien⁴; and the report which was in general circulation within⁵ five minutes after his entrance, of his having ten thousand a year. The gentlemen pronounced him to be a fine figure of a man, the ladies declared he was much handsomer than Mr. Bingley, and he was looked at with great admiration for about half the evening, till⁶ his manners gave a disgust which turned the tide⁷ of his popularity; for he was discovered to be proud, to be above his company⁸, and above being pleased⁹; and not all his large estate in Derbyshire could then save him from having a most forbidding, disagreeable countenance, and being unworthy to be compared with his friend.

Mr. Bingley had soon made himself acquainted¹⁰ with all the principal people in the room; he was lively and unreserved, danced every dance, was angry that the ball closed so early, and talked of giving one himself at Netherfield. Such amiable qualities must speak for themselves. What a contrast between him and his friend! Mr. Darcy danced only once with Mrs. Hurst and once with Miss Bingley, declined being introduced to any

other lady, and spent the rest of the evening in walking about the room, speaking occasionally to one of his own party. His character was decided. He was the proudest, most disagreeable man in the world, and everybody hoped that he would never come there again. Amongst the most violent against him was Mrs. Bennet, whose dislike of his general behaviour was sharpened¹¹ into particular resentment by his having slighted¹² one of her daughters.

Elizabeth Bennet had been obliged, by the scarcity¹³ of gentlemen, to sit down for two dances; and during part of that time, Mr. Darcy had been standing near enough for her to overhear a conversation between him and Mr. Bingley, who came from the dance for a few minutes to press his friend to join it.

"Come, Darcy," said he, "I must have you dance. I hate to see you standing about by yourself in this stupid manner. You had much better dance."


"I certainly shall not. You know how I detest it, unless I am particularly acquainted¹⁴ with my partner. At such an assembly as this, it would be insupportable. Your sisters are engaged¹⁵, and there is not another woman in the room whom it would not be a punishment to me to stand up with."


"I would not be so fastidious as you are," cried Bingley, "for a kingdom! Upon my honour I never met with so many pleasant girls in my life, as I have this evening; and there are several of them, you see, uncommonly pretty."

"You are dancing with the only handsome girl in the room," said Mr. Darcy, looking at the eldest Miss Bennet.

"Oh! She is the most beautiful creature I ever beheld¹⁶! But there is one of her sisters sitting down just behind you, who is very pretty, and I dare say very agreeable. Do let me ask my partner to introduce you."

"Which do you mean?" and turning round, he looked for a moment at Elizabeth, till catching her eye, he withdrew his own¹⁷ and coldly said, "She is tolerable; but not handsome enough to tempt me; and I am in no





humour at present to give consequence¹⁸ to young ladies who are slighted by other men. You had better return to your partner and enjoy her smiles, for you are wasting your time with me."

Mr. Bingley followed his advice. Mr. Darcy walked off; and Elizabeth remained with no very cordial feelings towards him. She told the story however with great spirit¹⁹ among her friends; for she had a lively, playful disposition, which delighted in anything ridiculous.

The evening altogether passed off pleasantly to the whole family. Mrs. Bennet had seen her eldest daughter much admired by the Netherfield party. Mr. Bingley had danced with her twice, and she had been distinguished by his sisters. Jane was as much gratified by this as her mother could be, though in a quieter way. Elizabeth felt Jane's pleasure. Mary had heard herself mentioned to Miss Bingley as the most accomplished girl in the neighbourhood; and Catherine and Lydia had been fortunate enough to be never without partners, which was all that they had yet learnt to care for at a ball. They returned therefore, in good spirits to Longbourn, the village where they lived, and of which they were the principal inhabitants.




VOCABULARY NOTES

- ¹ Was going to
- ² Were pained by
- ³ As a whole
- ⁴ Attitude
- ⁵ Only after
- ⁶ Until
- ⁷ The wave / the current...
- ⁸ To feel superior to the people around him
- ⁹ Not pleased by anything
- ¹⁰ Known by
- ¹¹ Made even worse
- ¹² Ignored
- ¹³ The very small number of
- ¹⁴ I know my partner particularly well
- ¹⁵ Occupied
- ¹⁶ Seen / looked at
- ¹⁷ He looked away
- ¹⁸ To take care of
- ¹⁹ Great intelligence

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Elizabeth and her family have been invited to dinner at Netherfield, Bingley's house. Bingley's family and Darcy are there.

As Elizabeth had no longer any interest of her own to pursue¹, she turned her attention almost entirely on her sister and Mr. Bingley, and the train of agreeable reflections which her observations gave birth to, made her perhaps almost as happy as Jane. She saw her, in idea, settled² in that very house, in all the felicity which a marriage of true affection could bestow³; and she felt capable, under such circumstances, of endeavouring⁴ even to like Bingley's two sisters.

Her mother's thoughts she plainly⁵ saw were bent the same way, and she determined not to venture⁶ near her, lest⁷ she might hear too much. When they sat down to supper, therefore, she considered it a most unlucky perverseness which placed them within one of each other⁸; and deeply was she vexed to find that her mother was talking to that one person (Lady Lucas) freely, openly, and of nothing else but of her expectation that Jane would be soon married to Mr. Bingley.

It was an animating subject, and Mrs. Bennet seemed incapable of fatigue while enumerating the advantages of the match⁹. His being such a charming young man, and so rich, and living but¹⁰ three miles from them, were the first points of self-gratulation; -- and then it was such a comfort to think how fond the two sisters were of Jane¹¹, and to be certain that they must desire the connection as much as she could do.

It was, moreover, such a promising thing for her younger daughters, as Jane's marrying so greatly must¹² throw them in the way of other rich men. She concluded with many good wishes that Lady Lucas might soon be equally fortunate¹³, though evidently and triumphantly believing there was no chance of it.

In vain did Elizabeth endeavour¹⁴ to check the rapidity of her mother's words, or persuade her to describe her felicity¹⁵ in a less audible whisper; for to her inexpressible vexation¹⁶, she could perceive that the chief¹⁷ of it

was overheard by Mr. Darcy, who sat opposite to them. Her mother only scolded¹⁸ her for being nonsensical.


"What is Mr. Darcy to me, pray¹⁹, that I should be afraid of him? I am sure we owe him no such particular civility as to be obliged to say nothing he may not like to hear."

"For heaven's sake, madam, speak lower. -- What advantage can it be to you to offend Mr. Darcy? -- You will never recommend yourself to his friend by so doing."

Nothing that she could say, however, had any influence. Her mother would talk of her views in the same intelligible tone. Elizabeth blushed and blushed again with shame and vexation. She could not help frequently glancing her eye at Mr. Darcy, though every glance convinced her of what she dreaded²⁰; for though²¹ he was not always looking at her mother, she was convinced that his attention was invariably fixed by her. The expression of his face changed gradually from indignant contempt²² to a composed and steady gravity²³.

At length however Mrs. Bennet had no more to say; and Lady Lucas, who had been long yawning at the repetition of delights which she saw no likelihood²⁴ of sharing, was left to the comforts of cold ham and chicken. Elizabeth now began to revive. But not long was the interval of tranquillity; for when supper was over, singing was talked of, and she had the mortification of seeing Mary, after very little entreaty, preparing to oblige²⁵ the company.

By many significant looks and silent entreaties²⁶, did she endeavour to prevent such a proof of complaisance, -- but in vain; Mary would not understand them; such an opportunity of exhibiting was delightful to her, and she began her song. Elizabeth's eyes were fixed on her with most painful sensations; and she watched her progress through the several stanzas with an impatience which was very ill rewarded at their close; for Mary, on receiving amongst the thanks of the table, the hint²⁷ of a hope



that she might be prevailed on²⁸ to favour them again, after the pause of half a minute began another. Mary's powers were by no means fitted²⁹ for such a display; her voice was weak, and her manner affected³⁰. -- Elizabeth was in agonies. She looked at Jane, to see how she bore it; but Jane was very composedly³¹ talking to Bingley. She looked at his two sisters, and saw them making signs of derision at each other, and at Darcy, who continued however impenetrably grave. She looked at her father to entreat his interference, lest Mary should be singing all night. He took the hint, and when Mary had finished her second song, said aloud, "That will do extremely well, child. You have delighted us long enough. Let the other young ladies have time to exhibit."

To Elizabeth it appeared, that had her family made an agreement to expose themselves³² as much as they could during the evening, it would have been impossible for them to play their parts with more spirit³³, or finer³⁴ success.

VOCABULARY NOTES

- ¹ think about
- ² Living
- ³ Give
- ⁴ Make an effort
- ⁵ Clearly
- ⁶ Go
- ⁷ Fearing that
- ⁸ Separated only by one person
- ⁹ Alliance
- ¹⁰ Only
- ¹¹ How much his two sisters liked Jane
- ¹² Was very likely to
- ¹³ Lucky
- ¹⁴ Tried very hard
- ¹⁵ Happiness
- ¹⁶ Shame
- ¹⁷ The majority of it
- ¹⁸ Reprimanded
- ¹⁹ Please
- ²⁰ Feared
- ²¹ Even if
- ²² Disdain
- ²³ Serious calm
- ²⁴ Possibility
- ²⁵ Give the company what they asked for.
- ²⁶ Supplications / pleading
- ²⁷ A small sign
- ²⁸ That she might be asked
- ²⁹ In no way good enough
- ³⁰ Ridiculous
- ³¹ Calmly
- ³² If they had agreed to behave badly as much as they could
- ³³ Effort
- ³⁴ Better

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Lady Catherine, Mr Darcy's Aunt, has heard rumours about her nephew and Elizabeth Bennet. She comes to discourage her attempts.

As soon as they entered the copse, Lady Catherine began in the following manner: --

"You can be at no loss¹, Miss Bennet, to understand the reason of my journey hither². Your own heart, your own conscience, must tell you why I come."

Elizabeth looked with unaffected³ astonishment⁴.

"Indeed, you are mistaken, Madam. I have not been at all able to account for⁵ the honour of seeing you here."

"Miss Bennet," replied her ladyship, in an angry tone, "you ought to know, that I am not to be trifled with⁶. But however insincere you may choose to be, you shall not find me so. My character has ever been celebrated for its sincerity and frankness, and in a cause of such moment as this, I shall certainly not depart from it⁷."

A report of a most alarming nature reached me two days ago. I was told that not only your sister was on the point of being most advantageously married, but that you, that Miss Elizabeth Bennet, would, in all likelihood, be soon afterwards united to my nephew, my own nephew, Mr. Darcy. Though I know it must be a scandalous falsehood⁸, though I would not injure⁹ him so much as to suppose the truth of it possible, I instantly resolved on setting off for this place¹⁰, that I might make my sentiments known to you."

"If you believed it impossible to be true," said Elizabeth, colouring with astonishment and disdain, "I wonder you¹¹ took the trouble of coming so far. What could your ladyship propose¹² by it?"

"At once to insist upon¹³ having such a report universally contradicted."

"Your coming to Longbourn, to see me and my family," said Elizabeth coolly, "will be rather a confirmation of it; if, indeed, such a report is in existence."

"If! Do you then pretend to be ignorant of it? Has it not been industriously circulated by yourselves? Do you not know that such a report is spread abroad?"

"I never heard that it was."

"And can you likewise¹⁴ declare, that there is no foundation¹⁵ for it?"

"I do not pretend to possess equal frankness with your ladyship. You may ask questions which I shall not choose to answer."

"This is not to be borne¹⁶. Miss Bennet, I insist on being satisfied. Has he, has my nephew, made you an offer of marriage?"

"Your ladyship has declared it to be impossible."

"It ought to be so; it must be so, while he retains¹⁷ the use of his reason. But your arts and allurements¹⁸ may, in a moment of infatuation, have made him forget what he owes to himself and to all his family. You may have drawn him in."

"If I have, I shall be the last person to confess it."

"Miss Bennet, do you know who I am? I have not been accustomed¹⁹ to such language as this. I am almost the nearest relation he has in the world, and am entitled to²⁰ know all his dearest concerns."


"But you are not entitled to know mine; nor will such behaviour as this, ever induce²¹ me to be explicit."

"Let me be rightly understood. This match²², to which you have the presumption to aspire, can never take place. No, never. Mr. Darcy is engaged to my daughter. Now what have you to say?"

"Only this; that if he is so, you can have no reason to suppose he will make an offer to me."

Lady Catherine hesitated for a moment, and then replied,

"The engagement between them is of a peculiar kind. From their infancy, they have been intended²³ for each other. It was the favourite wish of his mother, as well as of hers. While in their cradles²⁴, we planned the union: and now, at the moment when the wishes of both sisters would be accomplished in their marriage, to be prevented by a young woman of inferior birth, of no importance in the world, and wholly²⁵ unallied to the



family! Are you lost to every feeling of propriety and delicacy? Have you not heard me say that from his earliest hours he was destined for his cousin?"

"Yes, and I had heard it before. But what is that to me? If there is no other objection to my marrying your nephew, I shall certainly not be kept from it²⁶ by knowing that his mother and aunt wished him to marry Miss De Bourgh. You both did as much as you could in planning the marriage. Its completion²⁷ depended on others. If Mr. Darcy is neither by honour nor inclination²⁸ confined to his cousin, why is not he to²⁹ make another choice? And if I am that choice, why may not I accept him?"

"Because honour, decorum, prudence, nay³⁰, interest, forbid it. Yes, Miss Bennet, interest; for do not expect to be noticed³¹ by his family or friends, if you wilfully³² act against the inclinations of all. You will be censured, slighted³³, and despised, by every one connected with him. Your alliance will be a disgrace; your name will never even be mentioned by any of us."

"These are heavy misfortunes," replied Elizabeth." But the wife of Mr. Darcy must have such extraordinary sources of happiness necessarily attached to her situation, that she could, upon the whole, have no cause³⁴ to repine.³⁵"

"Obstinate, headstrong girl! I am ashamed of you! You are to³⁶ understand, Miss Bennet, that I came here with the determined resolution of carrying my purpose³⁷; nor will I be dissuaded from it. I have not been used to submit to any person's whims³⁸. I have not been in the habit of brooking disappointment³⁹."

"That will make your ladyship's situation at present more pitiable; but it will have no effect on me."

"I will not be interrupted. Hear me in silence. My daughter and my nephew are formed for each other. Their fortune on both sides is splendid. They are destined for each other by the voice of every member of their respective houses; and what is to divide them? The upstart⁴⁰ pretensions of a young woman without family, connections, or fortune. Is this to be endured! But it must not, shall not be. If you were sensible of

your own good, you would not wish to quit the sphere in which you have been brought up."

"In marrying your nephew, I should not consider myself as quitting that sphere. He is a gentleman; I am a gentleman's daughter; so far we are equal."

"True. You are a gentleman's daughter. But who was your mother? Who are your uncles and aunts? Do not imagine me ignorant of their condition."

"Whatever my connections may be," said Elizabeth, "if your nephew does not object⁴¹ to them, they can be nothing to you."

"Tell me once for all, are you engaged to him?"

Though⁴² Elizabeth would not, for the mere purpose of obliging Lady Catherine, have answered this question, she could not but say⁴³, after a moment's deliberation,

"I am not."

Lady Catherine seemed pleased.

"And will you promise me, never to enter into such an engagement?"

"I will make no promise of the kind⁴⁴."

"Miss Bennet I am shocked and astonished. I expected to find a more reasonable young woman. But do not deceive yourself into a belief that I will ever recede⁴⁵. I shall not go away till⁴⁶ you have given me the assurance I require."

"And I certainly never shall give it. I am not to be intimidated into anything so wholly unreasonable. You have widely⁴⁷ mistaken my character, if you think I can be worked on⁴⁸ by such persuasions as these. How far your nephew might approve of your interference in his affairs, I cannot tell; but you have certainly no right to concern yourself in mine. I must beg, therefore, to be importuned no farther on the subject."

"Not so hasty⁴⁹, if you please. I have by no means done. To all the objections I have already urged, I have still another to add. I am no stranger⁵⁰ to the particulars of your youngest sister's infamous elopement. I know it all. And is such a girl to be my nephew's sister?

Heaven and earth! -- of what are you thinking? Are the shades of Pemberley⁵¹ to be thus polluted?"

"You can now have nothing farther to say," she resentfully⁵² answered.

"You have insulted me in every possible method. I must beg to return to the house."

VOCABULARY NOTES

¹ You cannot ignore

² Here

³ Real / genuine

⁴ Amazement / complete surprise

⁵ To understand the reason why

⁶ I am not someone you can make fun of

⁷ I will certainly not change it

⁸ A scandalous lie

⁹ Insult / think so ill of him

¹⁰ Coming here

¹¹ Why did you

¹² Want

¹³ On

¹⁴ Also

¹⁵ That there is no reason

¹⁶ This is unbearable

¹⁷ Keeps

¹⁸ Seductions

¹⁹ Used to

²⁰ I have the right to

²¹ Persuade

²² Marriage

²³ Meant

²⁴ Bed for a baby

²⁵ Completely

²⁶ I will not be prevented from marrying Mr Darcy

²⁷ Finishing

²⁸ Desire

²⁹ Why should he not

³⁰ No

³¹ Talked to / acknowledged

³² Deliberately

³³ Ignored

³⁴ Reason

³⁵ Be bored / languish

³⁶ Must

³⁷ Accomplishing what I came for

³⁸ *Caprice*

³⁹ I have not been used to being disappointed

⁴⁰ *Arrivistes*

⁴¹ Disagree

⁴² Even if

⁴³ She was forced to say

⁴⁴ I will not make this kind of promise.

⁴⁵ Go away

⁴⁶ Until

⁴⁷ Largely

⁴⁸ Persuaded

⁴⁹ Not so quick

⁵⁰ I know about

⁵¹ Darcy's house

⁵² Angrily

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