

JANE AUSTEN



PRIDE AND
PREJUDICE

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Jane Austen

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Pride And Prejudice - An Introduction By John Bailey

AFTER *Sense and Sensibility*, in the order of publication, comes *Pride and Prejudice*, which was published in January 1813. There is, as we have seen, just a possibility that it may have been written before its predecessor. But if there be any shadow of doubt about the priority of time there is none at all about the priority of rank. *Pride and Prejudice* is certainly the most brilliant of the six novels. *Emma* has one

kind of merit which it does not possess, and Persuasion another; but of the brilliance, wit, satire, the entire and never-failing felicity of expression, which are the central characteristics of Jane Austen's art, none of her books has so much as *Pride and Prejudice*. Mr. Bennet is by far the most amusing of the men she means us to like, and Elizabeth is the cleverest, wittiest, liveliest, and most like the writer herself, of all her creations. And no doubt the one she liked best of all. 'I must confess', she once wrote of Elizabeth, 'that I think her as delightful a creature as ever appeared in print: how I shall be able to tolerate those who do not like her, at least, I do not know.' A century of readers has felt just as Jane herself did: we know no one so delightful as Elizabeth; and as for those who do not like her, we do not tolerate them, and do not wish to.

It is curious, perhaps, that with Jane Austen's most perfect creation, *Pride and Prejudice* contains her one absolute failure. Why she introduced Mary Bennet into the book it is difficult to say. She plays no part in the main story and hardly any even in the minor episodes. And it is not only that she has no connexion with the action and little with the other characters: she is nothing whatever in herself and never comes alive for a moment. No studious or priggish girl ever behaved at all like her. She is useless and even dull-as a caricature because the last vestiges of life and truth have been caricatured out of her. In fact, she is a failure even is a caricature because the essence of caricature is to combine recognizable truth with entertaining distortion; and here is neither truth nor entertainment. She scarcely says one word which even such a fool as she is could have actually said in life. When we contrast her with Mr. Collins we see the difference between art and its absence or negation. The immortal Collins, like the still more immortal Micawber, is a caricature. No actual person would ever have said or done

many of the things which Collins says and does. But if that were all that there is to be said against Mary Bennet she would escape easily enough. Indeed it may be said that a large part of the method of the dramatist's or novelist's art consists in making people utter or act what in life they only think. That is Hamlet and Macbeth as well as Collins and Micawber.

The business of art is the revelation of life and character, and in order to achieve it the artist makes the creatures of his imagination much more self-revealing, much more articulate, than they are in the world of experience. Mr. Collins utters by letter and by word of mouth all the imbecilities that might come into the head of a very stupid and very snobbish clergyman. But the things which Mary says are commonly such as could not have been really felt or thought by anybody. And there is this other difference. If Mary might conceivably have thought some of the things she is made to say, she could not conceivably have said any of them. Collins says many things which such a man might not only have thought but said. When he says that he considers 'music as a very innocent diversion and perfectly compatible with the profession of a clergyman', or when in the course of his proposal to Elizabeth he assures her that he is 'not now to learn that it is usual with young ladies to reject the addresses of the man whom they secretly mean to accept, when he first applies for their favour', he only says what such a man as he might well have actually said in real life. Much of him is in this way firmly based on fact, naturalness, and reality. And when he goes on to make such remarks as those in his letter to Mr. Bennet, that Lydia's 'disposition must be naturally bad, or she could not be guilty of such an enormity at so early an age', and that 'this false step in one daughter will be injurious to the fortunes of all the others; for who, as Lady Catharine herself condescendingly says, will connect themselves with such a

family?' he is plainly writing what he might well think but could not possibly have written. He is only taking art's privilege of being more articulate than life.

On other occasions Jane Austen's delight in the absurdity of her creation plainly leads her over the edge and makes him say things which he could scarcely even have thought. He might well have thought that 'the clerical office' was 'equal in point of dignity with the highest rank in the kingdom'; but when he adds 'provided that a proper humility of behaviour is at the same time maintained', we are evidently stepping outside 'the modesty of nature'. All art does that in one way or another; but when it is done in this way, and done so often, the result inevitably becomes a particular kind of art which is not the highest. The character, so treated, however delightful, leaves the impression, at any rate the partial impression, of a caricature. Nature had given the sinner a very large nose: the artist has, for the fun of the thing, given him one which is fantastic and incredible.

Of the method of art which never runs over the border into caricature, there are no finer examples in Jane Austen than Elizabeth and her father and mother. Caricature does not ask us to think that its subject or victim is in fact quite like what its picture represents him to be. But a higher art, while never leaving people as they are, always leaves the reader under the impression that that is just what it has done. We say and think that Falstaff or Mrs. Poyser or Sam Weller or Elizabeth Bennet is 'perfectly natural'. But in fact, of course, no drunken knight was ever half so witty as Falstaff, no farmer's wife so shrewd and pithy as Mrs. Poyser, no cockney servant such a perpetual fountain of good things as Sam Weller, no young lady so unfailingly brilliant and humorous, such a combination of sense and character, wit and charm, as Elizabeth Bennet. Art

concentrates and intensifies: turns all its light upon the quality it wants to bring out; yet so as to make it no caricature but something more natural than nature, truer than truth itself. When we read or hear Hamlet we do not ask ourselves whether princes are in the habit of making eloquent soliloquies in blank verse: as we listen we forget all doubts and criticisms; first, in sheer wonder that human thought can be so searching and profound, human language of a quality so extraordinary, of a music so divine; and then in delighted rest at the discovery that these thoughts, though they at first so astonish us, are in truth our very own, are of ourselves as we really are or as we can secretly imagine ourselves to be: that these words somehow belong to us and seem natural to us, though their language is one which in our present state we cannot speak. And this law of surprise followed by recognition of truth is to be seen in all art, not only in Hamlet and Macbeth, but in the Dashwoods, the Woodhouses, and the Bennets. When we read Pride and Prejudice we do not ask ourselves whether any husband and father ever gave himself so continuously and humorously as Mr. Bennet to that business of laughing at his family which he makes us enjoy as much as he enjoyed it himself: or whether any wife and mother was ever so entirely absorbed in being ridiculous as Mrs. Bennet. She never once speaks but to expose her own folly. But, though it would be hard to discover in life a woman who never says a sensible thing, yet the magic of art knows how to make Mrs. Bennet alive and convincing from her first word to her last. That is the secret. Art is not art if it is not surprising: it is not great art if it is not true. We are surprised at the silliness of Mrs. Bennet, at the wit and sense of Elizabeth.

And they are, of course, each a concentration and intensification transcending any individual whom we have ever known. But as we read the book for the second, or

fifth, or fiftieth time our surprise is more and more absorbed, as it was in the case of Hamlet, in recognition that, as Hamlet's heights and depths turned strangely out to be our own, so, too, Mrs. Bennet's silliness is our silliness, and Elizabeth's sense our sense. The surprise never ceases altogether; if it did, too much of the delight would go with it; but at each reading the surprise, which began by asking whether such things could be true, comes more and more to ask only how so much of truth can be known and uttered with such certainty and force. And, if we have laughed at Mrs. Bennet with some aloofness and superiority all through the book, don't we at the end recognize that the last and silliest of all her outbursts is the one in which, if we will but confess it, we most see ourselves?—

'Oh! my sweetest Lizzy! How rich and how great you will be! What pin-money, what jewels, what carriages you will have! Jane's is nothing to it—nothing at all.... Dear, dear Lizzy! A house in town! Everything that is charming! Three daughters married! Ten thousand a year! Oh Lord! What will become of me?'

It is true that we don't care so much about there being three Miss Bennets married, and of one of them we are thankful to be rid. But Mrs. Bennet's 'dear, dear Lizzy' is our dear, dear Lizzy; and certainly, for us as for her, Jane's marriage, and indeed Jane herself, is 'nothing to it, nothing at all'. We are as sure as Mrs. Bennet that Elizabeth's marriage will have 'everything that is charming' in it: partly, indeed, because Elizabeth is Elizabeth and for other reasons of which Mrs. Bennet knows nothing; but partly also—let us not be hypocritical enough to pretend to deny it—exactly for Mrs. Bennet's reasons; because of Pemberley and the house in town and the ten thousand a year. Mr. Darcy is the biggest fish that swims in any of Jane Austen's

waters and, silly or not, we are enchanted that he should fall into the basket of our dear Elizabeth, the most delightful of all Jane Austen's young women! All the novels depend primarily on their heroines, and none more than *Pride and Prejudice*. Elizabeth may not, indeed, stand so much alone as some of the others; for we are interested in Darcy on his own account: but she and her father make their story the wittiest and most brilliant of Jane Austen's books; and she makes it the one most of us love best. And it is also in several, though not in all, ways the best of the stories. All the novels are stories of love and marriage: their business is to get the heroine into the port of matrimony; and while that is being accomplished to let the rest of the characters act on that philosophy of life which Mr. Bennet offered to Elizabeth at such an inconvenient moment: 'for what do we live but to make sport for our neighbours and laugh at them in our turn?' In *Pride and Prejudice* the main business is exceptionally interesting and the episodes exceptionally entertaining. The love-affair, though not the most moving, is the most exciting of all Jane Austen gives us. If our hearts are not quite so much concerned as they are for Anne Elliot, our minds are much more entertained and absorbed. That is not merely because Elizabeth is much more than Anne: it is also because Darcy is much more than Wentworth, and in fact more than any of Jane Austen's lovers. He gains, no doubt, by the foil of the other lover of the book, his colourless, insignificant, and docile friend Bingley: of whom Elizabeth, a few minutes after her engagement, 'longed to observe' that he 'had been a most delightful friend: so easily guided that his worth was invaluable'; but had to check herself by remembering that Darcy 'had yet to learn to be laughed at and it was rather too early to begin'. But, apart from that, Darcy stands out among the men of all the novels as the one most difficult to win and most worth winning. Beside him all the others have simple, obvious, merely amiable characters: they are good

fellows, likely to make good husbands, but nothing more. Darcy took some conquering. He begins by being something like a mere stage embodiment of aristocratic insolence; and the story from the fifth chapter of the book to the last 'is that of the difficult victory of love over pride.

Love wins, of course, as the experienced reader of novels knows it will. But even the most experienced has his moments of more than excitement, of actual anxiety and alarm, as Mrs. Bennet and Wickham and Lydia, and even Elizabeth herself, raise their formidable obstacles in the path to marriage, which is, of course, for Jane Austen, love's natural and only goal. Darcy seems to be the very last man in all the world who could accept the position of Mrs. Bennet's son-in-law. Yet he does accept it: proposes to Elizabeth actually from his proud aunt's house, is evidently again going to propose at Lambton when the dreadful news about Lydia arrives; and is not finally deterred even by the discovery that the son-in-law of Mrs. Bennet must also be the brother-in-law of Wickham. Our being made to believe in all this and see its probability is the strongest thing in all Jane Austen. She has the courage to make her hero positively disagreeable at first, so much so, indeed, that, until you look carefully, you may easily think that the Darcy of the first chapters is not the Darcy of the last and that Jane changed her mind about him as the story progressed. I have at times been tempted to that delusion myself—but a delusion it plainly is. What she meant to do, and did, was to make a hero who, unlike most heroes in novels, had some very disagreeable qualities; and to show them modified and purified, but by no means destroyed, by the power of love. She was evidently and justly proud of her creation. Soon after the book came out, and when it was being read by her relations, she wrote of the niece whose judgement she valued as much as any: 'her liking Darcy and Elizabeth is enough. She might hate all the others if she would.' And

she amused herself by following Darcy outside the book and showing his pride still in him, though now the ally instead of the rival of his love. Mrs. Bingley's portrait she found at the Pall Mall Exhibition in 1813; but she could not find Mrs. Darcy. 'I can only imagine Mr. D. prizes any picture of her too much to like it should be exposed to the public eye. I can imagine he would have that sort of feeling; that mixture of love, pride and delicacy.' Pride and Prejudice was probably, as it well might be, Jane Austen's own favourite among her books. She calls it her 'darling child', and often introduces allusions to its characters into her letters. She was no doubt proud of its strength; and of course she delighted in its brilliance and wit. But she must also have taken great pleasure in its satisfactory combination of irony and probability. She was a mistress of irony; it is at play everywhere in all her letters. At play: for hers were really 'life's little ironies'; not the grim ones to which Mr. Hardy gave that name. And it is at play continually all through Pride and Prejudice. Everything goes by contraries and yet everything as natural and probable. All the characters do the opposite of what they wish to do and experience the opposite of what they and others expect them to experience; and yet we, who look on, see that what they do and suffer and enjoy is in them from the first. Sometimes the irony lies even in the fulfilment of expectation, as when Charlotte says that 'it is better to know as little as possible of the defects of the person with whom you are to pass your life'; and does not know that she will marry Mr. Collins. Mr. Darcy at his first sight of Elizabeth is 'in no humour at present to give consequence to young ladies who are slighted by other men' and has no notion how much meaning there may be in 'at present'. Miss Bingley, setting her cap at Darcy, again and again forces from him the praise of Elizabeth which is to her the most disagreeable sound on earth, and which, but for her, he might not have uttered. Darcy does what his sense of

honour really forbids him to do in order to prevent his friend marrying a Miss Bennet; and he marries one himself. Lady Catharine demeans herself to forbid Elizabeth to accept Darcy, who has not in fact proposed, with the result that her report of her interview gives him the courage to do so. Mrs. Bennet thinks Darcy the most disagreeable man in the world; and declares she will 'go distracted' with delight directly she hears he is to be her son-in-law. Mr. Bennet thinks Darcy 'a proud unpleasant sort of man'; and, in his blind detachment from the affairs of his family, asks Elizabeth, after he hears of the proposal, whether she had not 'always hated him'; but has his eyes rather forcibly opened by what she has to tell him; at once becomes himself again with 'If any young men come for Mary or Kitty, send them in, I am quite at leisure'; and is able, the very next day, to say to Elizabeth: 'I admire all my three sons-in-law highly. Wickham, perhaps, is my favourite: but I think I shall like your husband quite as well as Jane's.'

Yet all the ironies do not affect the probability of the story. There are weak spots, of course. Beside Mary, there are the charms of Wickham, so often asserted, so little exhibited. The chief use of him seems to be to bring out the other characters: the blindness and wilfulness of which Elizabeth is to be cured; the wilfulness and worthlessness of which Lydia will never be cured; above all the generosity of Darcy, or rather the love out of which it springs. But though Wickham is a scoundrel who never comes alive, his Lydia is a fool who has plenty of life in her. Jane Austen never did anything better of its kind, anything more entirely convincing, than Lydia's letter announcing her elopement, or the account she gives Elizabeth of her marriage. Indeed, everybody in the book, except Wickham and Mary, is alive and quite capable of playing his or her part in it. Nor does the plot turn upon any strained or improbable incidents. Here is no concealed engagement confusing all the action

as in Emma, no absurd accident on the Cobb where one young lady nearly dies of a fall of a few feet though there is a gentleman to catch her, and another is thought likely to die of the shock of standing by: no melodramatic delusions about General Tilney and his murdered wife: no far-fetched and incredible untying of the knot such as that in Sense and Sensibility where the vulgar and worthless young woman who has somehow to be got out of Elinor's way is simply married to the last man in the world who would ever have looked at her, at any rate in the matrimonial way. From violences of this kind Pride and Prejudice is quite free. It has its points of inferiority to Emma and to Persuasion. But of all the novels "it is not only the most brilliant but at once the strongest and the most probable.



Reading Jane's Letters. Chap. 34.

Pride And Prejudice

Chapter 1

It is a truth universally acknowledged, 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 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 you not 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."

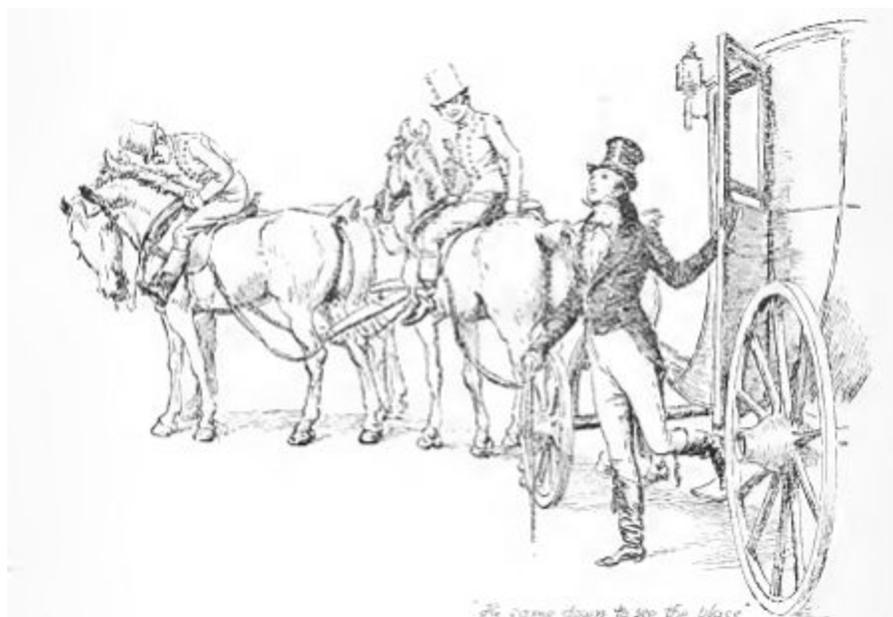
"What is his name?"

"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 design 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 may 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 anything extraordinary now. When a woman has five grown-up daughters, she ought to give over 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 engage for, I assure you."

"But consider your daughters. Only think what an establishment it would be for one of them. Sir William and Lady Lucas are determined to go, merely on that account, for in general, you know, they visit no newcomers. Indeed 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 hearty consent to his marrying whichever 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 recommend 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 abuse your own children in such a way? You take delight in vexing me. You have no compassion for my poor nerves."

"You mistake me, my dear. I have a high respect for your nerves. They are my old friends. I have heard you mention them with consideration these last 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 it, 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 mean understanding, little information, and uncertain temper. When she was discontented, she fancied herself nervous. The business of her life was to get her daughters married; its solace was visiting and news.



Chapter 2

Mr. Bennet was among the earliest of those who waited on Mr. Bingley. He had always intended to visit him, though to

the last always assuring his wife that he should not go; and till the evening after the visit was paid she had no knowledge of it. It was then disclosed in the following manner. Observing his second daughter employed in trimming a hat, he suddenly addressed her with:

"I hope Mr. Bingley will like it, Lizzy."

"We are not in a way to know *what* Mr. Bingley likes," said her mother resentfully, "since we are not to visit."

"But you forget, mamma," said Elizabeth, "that we shall meet him at the assemblies, and that Mrs. Long promised to introduce him."

"I do not believe Mrs. Long will do any such thing. She has two nieces of her own. She is a selfish, hypocritical woman, and I have no opinion of her."

"No more have I," said Mr. Bennet; "and I am glad to find that you do not depend on her serving you."

Mrs. Bennet deigned not to make any reply, but, unable to contain herself, began scolding one of her daughters.

"Don't keep coughing so, Kitty, for Heaven's sake! Have a little compassion on my nerves. You tear them to pieces."

"Kitty has no discretion in her coughs," said her father; "she times them ill."

"I do not cough for my own amusement," replied Kitty fretfully. "When is your next ball to be, Lizzy?"

"To-morrow fortnight."

"Aye, so it is," cried her mother, "and Mrs. Long does not come back till the day before; so it will be impossible for her to introduce him, for she will not know him herself."

"Then, my dear, you may have the advantage of your friend, and introduce Mr. Bingley to *her*."

"Impossible, Mr. Bennet, impossible, when I am not acquainted with him myself; how can you be so teasing?"

"I honour your circumspection. A fortnight's acquaintance is certainly very little. One cannot know what a man really is by the end of a fortnight. But if *we* do not venture somebody else will; and after all, Mrs. Long and her daughters must stand their chance; and, therefore, as she will think it an act of kindness, if you decline the office, I will take it on myself."

The girls stared at their father. Mrs. Bennet said only, "Nonsense, nonsense!"

"What can be the meaning of that emphatic exclamation?" cried he. "Do you consider the forms of introduction, and the stress that is laid on them, as nonsense? I cannot quite agree with you *there*. What say you, Mary? For you are a young lady of deep reflection, I know, and read great books and make extracts."

Mary wished to say something sensible, but knew not how.

"While Mary is adjusting her ideas," he continued, "let us return to Mr. Bingley."

"I am sick of Mr. Bingley," cried his wife.

"I am sorry to hear *that*; but why did not you tell me that before? If I had known as much this morning I certainly would not have called on him. It is very unlucky; but as I have actually paid the visit, we cannot escape the acquaintance now."

The astonishment of the ladies was just what he wished; that of Mrs. Bennet perhaps surpassing the rest; though, when the first tumult of joy was over, she began to declare that it was what she had expected all the while.

"How good it was in you, my dear Mr. Bennet! But I knew I should persuade you at last. I was sure you loved your girls too well to neglect such an acquaintance. Well, how pleased I am! and it is such a good joke, too, that you should have gone this morning and never said a word about it till now."

"Now, Kitty, you may cough as much as you choose," said Mr. Bennet; and, as he spoke, he left the room, fatigued with the raptures of his wife.

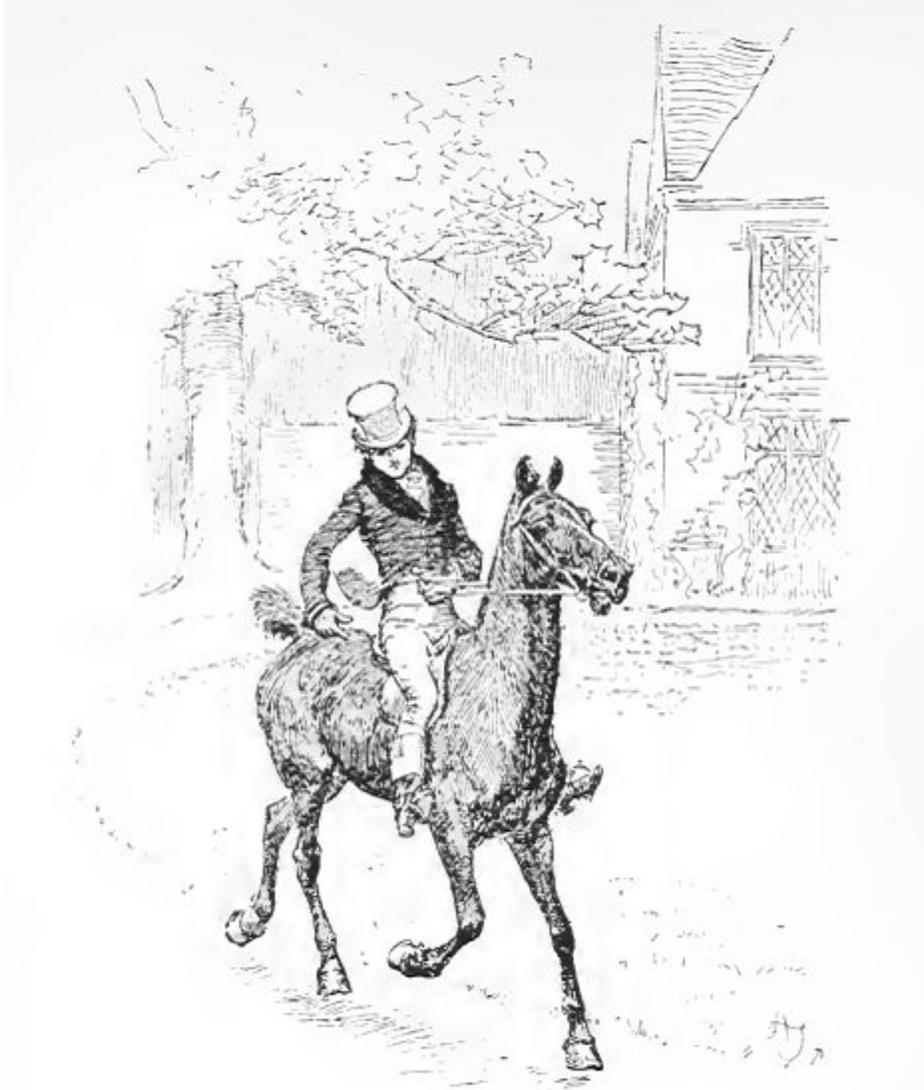
"What an excellent father you have, girls!" said she, when the door was shut. "I do not know how you will ever make him amends for his kindness; or me, either, for that matter. At our time of life it is not so pleasant, I can tell you, to be making new acquaintances every day; but for your sakes, we would do anything. Lydia, my love, though you *are* the youngest, I dare say Mr. Bingley will dance with you at the next ball."

"Oh!" said Lydia stoutly, "I am not afraid; for though I *am* the youngest, I'm the tallest."

The rest of the evening was spent in conjecturing how soon he would return Mr. Bennet's visit, and determining when they should ask him to dinner.



Chapter 3



There's a black horse

Not all that Mrs. Bennet, however, with the assistance of her five daughters, could ask on the subject, was sufficient to draw from her husband any satisfactory description of Mr. Bingley. They attacked him in various ways—with barefaced questions, ingenious suppositions, and distant surmises; but he eluded the skill of them all, and they were at last obliged to accept the second-hand intelligence of their neighbour, Lady Lucas. Her report was highly favourable. Sir William had been delighted with him. He was quite young, wonderfully handsome, extremely agreeable, and, to crown the whole, he meant to be at the

next assembly with a large party. Nothing could be more delightful! To be fond of dancing was a certain step towards falling in love; and very lively hopes of Mr. Bingley's heart were entertained.

"If I can but see one of my daughters happily settled at Netherfield," said Mrs. Bennet to her husband, "and all the others equally well married, I shall have nothing to wish for."

In a few days Mr. Bingley returned Mr. Bennet's visit, and sat about ten minutes with him in his library. He had entertained hopes of being admitted to a sight of the young ladies, of whose beauty he had heard much; but he saw only the father. The ladies were somewhat more fortunate, for they had the advantage of ascertaining from an upper window that he wore a blue coat, and rode a black horse.

An invitation to dinner was soon afterwards dispatched; and already had Mrs. Bennet planned the courses that were to do credit to her housekeeping, when an answer arrived which deferred it all. Mr. Bingley was obliged to be in town the following day, and, consequently, unable to accept the honour of their invitation, etc. Mrs. Bennet was quite disconcerted. She could not imagine what business he could have in town so soon after his arrival in Hertfordshire; and she began to fear that he might be always flying about from one place to another, and never settled at Netherfield as he ought to be. Lady Lucas quieted her fears a little by starting the idea of his being gone to London only to get a large party for the ball; and a report soon followed that Mr. Bingley was to bring twelve ladies and seven gentlemen with him to the assembly. The girls grieved over such a number of ladies, but were comforted the day before the ball by hearing, that instead of twelve he 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 altogether—Mr. Bingley, his two sisters, the husband of the eldest, and another young man.

Mr. Bingley was good-looking and gentlemanlike; he had a pleasant countenance, and easy, unaffected manners. His sisters were fine women, with an air of decided fashion. 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 mien, and the report which was in general circulation within 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, till his manners gave a disgust which turned the tide of his popularity; for he was discovered to be proud; to be above his company, and above being pleased; 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 acquainted 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 sharpened into particular resentment by his having slighted one of her daughters.

Elizabeth Bennet had been obliged, by the scarcity of gentlemen, to sit down for two dances; and during part of that time, Mr. Darcy had been standing near enough for her to hear 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 acquainted with my partner. At such an assembly as this it would be insupportable. Your sisters are engaged, 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 Mr. 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 beheld! 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 own and coldly said: "She is tolerable, but not handsome enough to tempt *me*; I am in no humour at present to give consequence 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 toward him. She told the story, however, with great spirit 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