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| Researcher | Jane Austen |
| Project | Pride and Prejudice |
| Tags | Manners, morality |

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.