

That he was not a good-tempered man had been her firmest opinion. Her keenest attention was awakened; she longed to hear more, and was grateful to her uncle for saying:

“There are very few people of whom so much can be said. You are lucky in having such a master.”

“Yes, sir, I know I am. If I were to go through the world, I could not meet with a better. But I have always observed, that they who are good-natured when children, are good-natured when they grow up; and he was always the sweetest-tempered, most generous-hearted boy in the world.”

Elizabeth almost stared at her. “Can this be Mr. Darcy?” thought she.

“His father was an excellent man,” said Mrs. Gardiner.

“Yes, ma’am, that he was indeed; and his son will be just like him—just as affable to the poor.”

Elizabeth listened, wondered, doubted, and was impatient for more. Mrs. Reynolds could interest her on no other point. She related the subjects of the pictures, the dimensions of the rooms, and the price of the furniture, in vain. Mr. Gardiner, highly amused by the kind of family prejudice to which he attributed her excessive commendation of her master, soon led again to the subject; and she dwelt with energy on his many merits as they proceeded together up the great staircase.

“He is the best landlord, and the best master,” said she, “that ever lived; not like the wild young men nowadays, who think of nothing but themselves. There is not one of his tenants or servants but will give him a good name. Some people call him proud; but I am sure I never saw anything of it. To my fancy, it is only because he does not rattle away like other young men.”

“In what an amiable light does this place him!” thought Elizabeth.

“This fine account of him,” whispered her aunt as they walked, “is not quite consistent with his behaviour to our poor friend.”

“Perhaps we might be deceived.”

“That is not very likely; our authority was too good.”

On reaching the spacious lobby above they were shown into a very pretty sitting-room, lately fitted up with greater elegance and lightness than the apartments below; and were informed that it was but just done to give pleasure to Miss Darcy, who had taken a liking to the room when last at Pemberley.

“He is certainly a good brother,” said Elizabeth, as she walked towards one of the windows.