

saying, which everybody here is of course familiar with: ‘Keep your breath to cool your porridge’; and I shall keep mine to swell my song.”

Her performance was pleasing, though by no means capital. After a song or two, and before she could reply to the entreaties of several that she would sing again, she was eagerly succeeded at the instrument by her sister Mary, who having, in consequence of being the only plain one in the family, worked hard for knowledge and accomplishments, was always impatient for display.

Mary had neither genius nor taste; and though vanity had given her application, it had given her likewise a pedantic air and conceited manner, which would have injured a higher degree of excellence than she had reached. Elizabeth, easy and unaffected, had been listened to with much more pleasure, though not playing half so well; and Mary, at the end of a long concerto, was glad to purchase praise and gratitude by Scotch and Irish airs, at the request of her younger sisters, who, with some of the Lucases, and two or three officers, joined eagerly in dancing at one end of the room.

Mr. Darcy stood near them in silent indignation at such a mode of passing the evening, to the exclusion of all conversation, and was too much engrossed by his thoughts to perceive that Sir William Lucas was his neighbour, till Sir William thus began:

“What a charming amusement for young people this is, Mr. Darcy! There is nothing like dancing after all. I consider it as one of the first refinements of polished society.”

“Certainly, sir; and it has the advantage also of being in vogue amongst the less polished societies of the world. Every savage can dance.”

Sir William only smiled. “Your friend performs delightfully,” he continued after a pause, on seeing Bingley join the group; “and I doubt not that you are an adept in the science yourself, Mr. Darcy.”

“You saw me dance at Meryton, I believe, sir.”

“Yes, indeed, and received no inconsiderable pleasure from the sight. Do you often dance at St. James’s?”

“Never, sir.”

“Do you not think it would be a proper compliment to the place?”

“It is a compliment which I never pay to any place if I can avoid it.”

“You have a house in town, I conclude?”

Mr. Darcy bowed.

“I had once had some thought of fixing in town myself—for I am fond of