

by four o'clock, and shall probably trespass on your hospitality till the Saturday se'ennight following, which I can do without any inconvenience, as Lady Catherine is far from objecting to my occasional absence on a Sunday, provided that some other clergyman is engaged to do the duty of the day.—I remain, dear sir, with respectful compliments to your lady and daughters, your well-wisher and friend,

“WILLIAM COLLINS”

“At four o'clock, therefore, we may expect this peace-making gentleman,” said Mr. Bennet, as he folded up the letter. “He seems to be a most conscientious and polite young man, upon my word, and I doubt not will prove a valuable acquaintance, especially if Lady Catherine should be so indulgent as to let him come to us again.”

“There is some sense in what he says about the girls, however, and if he is disposed to make them any amends, I shall not be the person to discourage him.”

“Though it is difficult,” said Jane, “to guess in what way he can mean to make us the atonement he thinks our due, the wish is certainly to his credit.”

Elizabeth was chiefly struck by his extraordinary deference for Lady Catherine, and his kind intention of christening, marrying, and burying his parishioners whenever it were required.

“He must be an oddity, I think,” said she. “I cannot make him out.—There is something very pompous in his style.—And what can he mean by apologising for being next in the entail?—We cannot suppose he would help it if he could.—Could he be a sensible man, sir?”

“No, my dear, I think not. I have great hopes of finding him quite the reverse. There is a mixture of servility and self-importance in his letter, which promises well. I am impatient to see him.”

“In point of composition,” said Mary, “the letter does not seem defective. The idea of the olive-branch perhaps is not wholly new, yet I think it is well expressed.”

To Catherine and Lydia, neither the letter nor its writer were in any degree interesting. It was next to impossible that their cousin should come in a scarlet coat, and it was now some weeks since they had received pleasure from the society of a man in any other colour. As for their mother, Mr. Collins's letter had done away much of her ill-will, and she was preparing to see him with a degree of composure which astonished her husband and daughters.