SENSE AND SENSIBILITY

by Jane Austen

(1811)

CHAPTER 1

The family of Dashwood had long been settled in Sussex. Their estate

was large, and their residence was at Norland Park, in the centre of

their property, where, for many generations, they had lived in so

respectable a manner as to engage the general good opinion of their

surrounding acquaintance. The late owner of this estate was a single

man, who lived to a very advanced age, and who for many years of his

life, had a constant companion and housekeeper in his sister. But her

death, which happened ten years before his own, produced a great

alteration in his home; for to supply her loss, he invited and received

into his house the family of his nephew Mr. Henry Dashwood, the legal

inheritor of the Norland estate, and the person to whom he intended to

bequeath it. In the society of his nephew and niece, and their

children, the old Gentleman's days were comfortably spent. His

attachment to them all increased. The constant attention of Mr. and

Mrs. Henry Dashwood to his wishes, which proceeded not merely from

interest, but from goodness of heart, gave him every degree of solid

comfort which his age could receive; and the cheerfulness of the

children added a relish to his existence.

By a former marriage, Mr. Henry Dashwood had one son: by his present

lady, three daughters. The son, a steady respectable young man, was

amply provided for by the fortune of his mother, which had been large,

and half of which devolved on him on his coming of age. By his own

marriage, likewise, which happened soon afterwards, he added to his

wealth. To him therefore the succession to the Norland estate was not

so really important as to his sisters; for their fortune, independent

of what might arise to them from their father's inheriting that

property, could be but small. Their mother had nothing, and their

father only seven thousand pounds in his own disposal; for the

remaining moiety of his first wife's fortune was also secured to her

child, and he had only a life-interest in it.

The old gentleman died: his will was read, and like almost every other

will, gave as much disappointment as pleasure. He was neither so

unjust, nor so ungrateful, as to leave his estate from his nephew;--but

he left it to him on such terms as destroyed half the value of the

bequest. Mr. Dashwood had wished for it more for the sake of his wife

and daughters than for himself or his son;--but to his son, and his

son's son, a child of four years old, it was secured, in such a way, as

to leave to himself no power of providing for those who were most dear

to him, and who most needed a provision by any charge on the estate, or

by any sale of its valuable woods. The whole was tied up for the

benefit of this child, who, in occasional visits with his father and

mother at Norland, had so far gained on the affections of his uncle, by

such attractions as are by no means unusual in children of two or three

years old; an imperfect articulation, an earnest desire of having his

own way, many cunning tricks, and a great deal of noise, as to outweigh

all the value of all the attention which, for years, he had received

from his niece and her daughters. He meant not to be unkind, however,

and, as a mark of his affection for the three girls, he left them a

thousand pounds a-piece.

Mr. Dashwood's disappointment was, at first, severe; but his temper was

cheerful and sanguine; and he might reasonably hope to live many years,

and by living economically, lay by a considerable sum from the produce

of an estate already large, and capable of almost immediate

improvement. But the fortune, which had been so tardy in coming, was

his only one twelvemonth. He survived his uncle no longer; and ten

thousand pounds, including the late legacies, was all that remained for

his widow and daughters.

His son was sent for as soon as his danger was known, and to him Mr.

Dashwood recommended, with all the strength and urgency which illness

could command, the interest of his mother-in-law and sisters.

Mr. John Dashwood had not the strong feelings of the rest of the

family; but he was affected by a recommendation of such a nature at

such a time, and he promised to do every thing in his power to make

them comfortable. His father was rendered easy by such an assurance,

and Mr. John Dashwood had then leisure to consider how much there might

prudently be in his power to do for them.

He was not an ill-disposed young man, unless to be rather cold hearted

and rather selfish is to be ill-disposed: but he was, in general, well

respected; for he conducted himself with propriety in the discharge of

his ordinary duties. Had he married a more amiable woman, he might

have been made still more respectable than he was:--he might even have

been made amiable himself; for he was very young when he married, and

very fond of his wife. But Mrs. John Dashwood was a strong caricature

of himself;--more narrow-minded and selfish.

When he gave his promise to his father, he meditated within himself to

increase the fortunes of his sisters by the present of a thousand

pounds a-piece. He then really thought himself equal to it. The

prospect of four thousand a-year, in addition to his present income,

besides the remaining half of his own mother's fortune, warmed his

heart, and made him feel capable of generosity.-- "Yes, he would give

them three thousand pounds: it would be liberal and handsome! It would

be enough to make them completely easy. Three thousand pounds! he

could spare so considerable a sum with little inconvenience."-- He

thought of it all day long, and for many days successively, and he did

not repent.

No sooner was his father's funeral over, than Mrs. John Dashwood,

without sending any notice of her intention to her mother-in-law,

arrived with her child and their attendants. No one could dispute her

right to come; the house was her husband's from the moment of his

father's decease; but the indelicacy of her conduct was so much the

greater, and to a woman in Mrs. Dashwood's situation, with only common

feelings, must have been highly unpleasing;--but in HER mind there was

a sense of honor so keen, a generosity so romantic, that any offence of

the kind, by whomsoever given or received, was to her a source of

immoveable disgust. Mrs. John Dashwood had never been a favourite with

any of her husband's family; but she had had no opportunity, till the

present, of shewing them with how little attention to the comfort of

other people she could act when occasion required it.

So acutely did Mrs. Dashwood feel this ungracious behaviour, and so

earnestly did she despise her daughter-in-law for it, that, on the

arrival of the latter, she would have quitted the house for ever, had

not the entreaty of her eldest girl induced her first to reflect on the

propriety of going, and her own tender love for all her three children

determined her afterwards to stay, and for their sakes avoid a breach

with their brother.

Elinor, this eldest daughter, whose advice was so effectual, possessed

a strength of understanding, and coolness of judgment, which qualified

her, though only nineteen, to be the counsellor of her mother, and

enabled her frequently to counteract, to the advantage of them all,

that eagerness of mind in Mrs. Dashwood which must generally have led

to imprudence. She had an excellent heart;--her disposition was

affectionate, and her feelings were strong; but she knew how to govern

them: it was a knowledge which her mother had yet to learn; and which

one of her sisters had resolved never to be taught.

Marianne's abilities were, in many respects, quite equal to Elinor's.

She was sensible and clever; but eager in everything: her sorrows, her

joys, could have no moderation. She was generous, amiable,

interesting: she was everything but prudent. The resemblance between

her and her mother was strikingly great.

Elinor saw, with concern, the excess of her sister's sensibility; but

by Mrs. Dashwood it was valued and cherished. They encouraged each

other now in the violence of their affliction. The agony of grief

which overpowered them at first, was voluntarily renewed, was sought

for, was created again and again. They gave themselves up wholly to

their sorrow, seeking increase of wretchedness in every reflection that

could afford it, and resolved against ever admitting consolation in

future. Elinor, too, was deeply afflicted; but still she could

struggle, she could exert herself. She could consult with her brother,

could receive her sister-in-law on her arrival, and treat her with

proper attention; and could strive to rouse her mother to similar

exertion, and encourage her to similar forbearance.

Margaret, the other sister, was a good-humored, well-disposed girl; but

as she had already imbibed a good deal of Marianne's romance, without

having much of her sense, she did not, at thirteen, bid fair to equal

her sisters at a more advanced period of life.

CHAPTER 2

Mrs. John Dashwood now installed herself mistress of Norland; and her

mother and sisters-in-law were degraded to the condition of visitors.

As such, however, they were treated by her with quiet civility; and by

her husband with as much kindness as he could feel towards anybody

beyond himself, his wife, and their child. He really pressed them,

with some earnestness, to consider Norland as their home; and, as no

plan appeared so eligible to Mrs. Dashwood as remaining there till she

could accommodate herself with a house in the neighbourhood, his

invitation was accepted.

A continuance in a place where everything reminded her of former

delight, was exactly what suited her mind. In seasons of cheerfulness,

no temper could be more cheerful than hers, or possess, in a greater

degree, that sanguine expectation of happiness which is happiness

itself. But in sorrow she must be equally carried away by her fancy,

and as far beyond consolation as in pleasure she was beyond alloy.

Mrs. John Dashwood did not at all approve of what her husband intended

to do for his sisters. To take three thousand pounds from the fortune

of their dear little boy would be impoverishing him to the most

dreadful degree. She begged him to think again on the subject. How

could he answer it to himself to rob his child, and his only child too,

of so large a sum? And what possible claim could the Miss Dashwoods,

who were related to him only by half blood, which she considered as no

relationship at all, have on his generosity to so large an amount. It

was very well known that no affection was ever supposed to exist

between the children of any man by different marriages; and why was he

to ruin himself, and their poor little Harry, by giving away all his

money to his half sisters?

"It was my father's last request to me," replied her husband, "that I

should assist his widow and daughters."

"He did not know what he was talking of, I dare say; ten to one but he

was light-headed at the time. Had he been in his right senses, he

could not have thought of such a thing as begging you to give away half

your fortune from your own child."

"He did not stipulate for any particular sum, my dear Fanny; he only

requested me, in general terms, to assist them, and make their

situation more comfortable than it was in his power to do. Perhaps it

would have been as well if he had left it wholly to myself. He could

hardly suppose I should neglect them. But as he required the promise,

I could not do less than give it; at least I thought so at the time.

The promise, therefore, was given, and must be performed. Something

must be done for them whenever they leave Norland and settle in a new

home."

"Well, then, LET something be done for them; but THAT something need

not be three thousand pounds. Consider," she added, "that when the

money is once parted with, it never can return. Your sisters will

marry, and it will be gone for ever. If, indeed, it could be restored

to our poor little boy--"

"Why, to be sure," said her husband, very gravely, "that would make

great difference. The time may come when Harry will regret that so

large a sum was parted with. If he should have a numerous family, for

instance, it would be a very convenient addition."

"To be sure it would."

"Perhaps, then, it would be better for all parties, if the sum were

diminished one half.--Five hundred pounds would be a prodigious

increase to their fortunes!"

"Oh! beyond anything great! What brother on earth would do half so

much for his sisters, even if REALLY his sisters! And as it is--only

half blood!--But you have such a generous spirit!"

"I would not wish to do any thing mean," he replied. "One had rather,

on such occasions, do too much than too little. No one, at least, can

think I have not done enough for them: even themselves, they can hardly

expect more."

"There is no knowing what THEY may expect," said the lady, "but we are

not to think of their expectations: the question is, what you can

afford to do."

"Certainly--and I think I may afford to give them five hundred pounds

a-piece. As it is, without any addition of mine, they will each have

about three thousand pounds on their mother's death--a very comfortable

fortune for any young woman."

"To be sure it is; and, indeed, it strikes me that they can want no

addition at all. They will have ten thousand pounds divided amongst

them. If they marry, they will be sure of doing well, and if they do

not, they may all live very comfortably together on the interest of ten

thousand pounds."

"That is very true, and, therefore, I do not know whether, upon the

whole, it would not be more advisable to do something for their mother

while she lives, rather than for them--something of the annuity kind I

mean.--My sisters would feel the good effects of it as well as herself.

A hundred a year would make them all perfectly comfortable."

His wife hesitated a little, however, in giving her consent to this

plan.

"To be sure," said she, "it is better than parting with fifteen hundred

pounds at once. But, then, if Mrs. Dashwood should live fifteen years

we shall be completely taken in."

"Fifteen years! my dear Fanny; her life cannot be worth half that

purchase."

"Certainly not; but if you observe, people always live for ever when

there is an annuity to be paid them; and she is very stout and healthy,

and hardly forty. An annuity is a very serious business; it comes over

and over every year, and there is no getting rid of it. You are not

aware of what you are doing. I have known a great deal of the trouble

of annuities; for my mother was clogged with the payment of three to

old superannuated servants by my father's will, and it is amazing how

disagreeable she found it. Twice every year these annuities were to be

paid; and then there was the trouble of getting it to them; and then

one of them was said to have died, and afterwards it turned out to be

no such thing. My mother was quite sick of it. Her income was not her

own, she said, with such perpetual claims on it; and it was the more

unkind in my father, because, otherwise, the money would have been

entirely at my mother's disposal, without any restriction whatever. It

has given me such an abhorrence of annuities, that I am sure I would

not pin myself down to the payment of one for all the world."

"It is certainly an unpleasant thing," replied Mr. Dashwood, "to have

those kind of yearly drains on one's income. One's fortune, as your

mother justly says, is NOT one's own. To be tied down to the regular

payment of such a sum, on every rent day, is by no means desirable: it

takes away one's independence."

"Undoubtedly; and after all you have no thanks for it. They think

themselves secure, you do no more than what is expected, and it raises

no gratitude at all. If I were you, whatever I did should be done at

my own discretion entirely. I would not bind myself to allow them any

thing yearly. It may be very inconvenient some years to spare a

hundred, or even fifty pounds from our own expenses."

"I believe you are right, my love; it will be better that there should

by no annuity in the case; whatever I may give them occasionally will

be of far greater assistance than a yearly allowance, because they

would only enlarge their style of living if they felt sure of a larger

income, and would not be sixpence the richer for it at the end of the

year. It will certainly be much the best way. A present of fifty

pounds, now and then, will prevent their ever being distressed for

money, and will, I think, be amply discharging my promise to my father."

"To be sure it will. Indeed, to say the truth, I am convinced within

myself that your father had no idea of your giving them any money at

all. The assistance he thought of, I dare say, was only such as might

be reasonably expected of you; for instance, such as looking out for a

comfortable small house for them, helping them to move their things,

and sending them presents of fish and game, and so forth, whenever they

are in season. I'll lay my life that he meant nothing farther; indeed,

it would be very strange and unreasonable if he did. Do but consider,

my dear Mr. Dashwood, how excessively comfortable your mother-in-law

and her daughters may live on the interest of seven thousand pounds,

besides the thousand pounds belonging to each of the girls, which

brings them in fifty pounds a year a-piece, and, of course, they will

pay their mother for their board out of it. Altogether, they will have

five hundred a-year amongst them, and what on earth can four women want

for more than that?--They will live so cheap! Their housekeeping will

be nothing at all. They will have no carriage, no horses, and hardly

any servants; they will keep no company, and can have no expenses of

any kind! Only conceive how comfortable they will be! Five hundred a

year! I am sure I cannot imagine how they will spend half of it; and as

to your giving them more, it is quite absurd to think of it. They will

be much more able to give YOU something."

"Upon my word," said Mr. Dashwood, "I believe you are perfectly right.

My father certainly could mean nothing more by his request to me than

what you say. I clearly understand it now, and I will strictly fulfil

my engagement by such acts of assistance and kindness to them as you

have described. When my mother removes into another house my services

shall be readily given to accommodate her as far as I can. Some little

present of furniture too may be acceptable then."

"Certainly," returned Mrs. John Dashwood. "But, however, ONE thing

must be considered. When your father and mother moved to Norland,

though the furniture of Stanhill was sold, all the china, plate, and

linen was saved, and is now left to your mother. Her house will

therefore be almost completely fitted up as soon as she takes it."

"That is a material consideration undoubtedly. A valuable legacy

indeed! And yet some of the plate would have been a very pleasant

addition to our own stock here."

"Yes; and the set of breakfast china is twice as handsome as what

belongs to this house. A great deal too handsome, in my opinion, for

any place THEY can ever afford to live in. But, however, so it is.

Your father thought only of THEM. And I must say this: that you owe no

particular gratitude to him, nor attention to his wishes; for we very

well know that if he could, he would have left almost everything in the

world to THEM."

This argument was irresistible. It gave to his intentions whatever of

decision was wanting before; and he finally resolved, that it would be

absolutely unnecessary, if not highly indecorous, to do more for the

widow and children of his father, than such kind of neighbourly acts as

his own wife pointed out.

CHAPTER 3

Mrs. Dashwood remained at Norland several months; not from any

disinclination to move when the sight of every well known spot ceased

to raise the violent emotion which it produced for a while; for when

her spirits began to revive, and her mind became capable of some other

exertion than that of heightening its affliction by melancholy

remembrances, she was impatient to be gone, and indefatigable in her

inquiries for a suitable dwelling in the neighbourhood of Norland; for

to remove far from that beloved spot was impossible. But she could

hear of no situation that at once answered her notions of comfort and

ease, and suited the prudence of her eldest daughter, whose steadier

judgment rejected several houses as too large for their income, which

her mother would have approved.

Mrs. Dashwood had been informed by her husband of the solemn promise on

the part of his son in their favour, which gave comfort to his last

earthly reflections. She doubted the sincerity of this assurance no

more than he had doubted it himself, and she thought of it for her

daughters' sake with satisfaction, though as for herself she was

persuaded that a much smaller provision than 7000L would support her in

affluence. For their brother's sake, too, for the sake of his own

heart, she rejoiced; and she reproached herself for being unjust to his

merit before, in believing him incapable of generosity. His attentive

behaviour to herself and his sisters convinced her that their welfare

was dear to him, and, for a long time, she firmly relied on the

liberality of his intentions.

The contempt which she had, very early in their acquaintance, felt for

her daughter-in-law, was very much increased by the farther knowledge

of her character, which half a year's residence in her family afforded;

and perhaps in spite of every consideration of politeness or maternal

affection on the side of the former, the two ladies might have found it

impossible to have lived together so long, had not a particular

circumstance occurred to give still greater eligibility, according to

the opinions of Mrs. Dashwood, to her daughters' continuance at Norland.

This circumstance was a growing attachment between her eldest girl and

the brother of Mrs. John Dashwood, a gentleman-like and pleasing young

man, who was introduced to their acquaintance soon after his sister's

establishment at Norland, and who had since spent the greatest part of

his time there.

Some mothers might have encouraged the intimacy from motives of

interest, for Edward Ferrars was the eldest son of a man who had died

very rich; and some might have repressed it from motives of prudence,

for, except a trifling sum, the whole of his fortune depended on the

will of his mother. But Mrs. Dashwood was alike uninfluenced by either

consideration. It was enough for her that he appeared to be amiable,

that he loved her daughter, and that Elinor returned the partiality.

It was contrary to every doctrine of her's that difference of fortune

should keep any couple asunder who were attracted by resemblance of

disposition; and that Elinor's merit should not be acknowledged by

every one who knew her, was to her comprehension impossible.

Edward Ferrars was not recommended to their good opinion by any

peculiar graces of person or address. He was not handsome, and his

manners required intimacy to make them pleasing. He was too diffident

to do justice to himself; but when his natural shyness was overcome,

his behaviour gave every indication of an open, affectionate heart.

His understanding was good, and his education had given it solid

improvement. But he was neither fitted by abilities nor disposition to

answer the wishes of his mother and sister, who longed to see him

distinguished--as--they hardly knew what. They wanted him to make a

fine figure in the world in some manner or other. His mother wished to

interest him in political concerns, to get him into parliament, or to

see him connected with some of the great men of the day. Mrs. John

Dashwood wished it likewise; but in the mean while, till one of these

superior blessings could be attained, it would have quieted her

ambition to see him driving a barouche. But Edward had no turn for

great men or barouches. All his wishes centered in domestic comfort

and the quiet of private life. Fortunately he had a younger brother

who was more promising.

Edward had been staying several weeks in the house before he engaged

much of Mrs. Dashwood's attention; for she was, at that time, in such

affliction as rendered her careless of surrounding objects. She saw

only that he was quiet and unobtrusive, and she liked him for it. He

did not disturb the wretchedness of her mind by ill-timed conversation.

She was first called to observe and approve him farther, by a

reflection which Elinor chanced one day to make on the difference

between him and his sister. It was a contrast which recommended him

most forcibly to her mother.

"It is enough," said she; "to say that he is unlike Fanny is enough.

It implies everything amiable. I love him already."

"I think you will like him," said Elinor, "when you know more of him."

"Like him!" replied her mother with a smile. "I feel no sentiment of

approbation inferior to love."

"You may esteem him."

"I have never yet known what it was to separate esteem and love."

Mrs. Dashwood now took pains to get acquainted with him. Her manners

were attaching, and soon banished his reserve. She speedily

comprehended all his merits; the persuasion of his regard for Elinor

perhaps assisted her penetration; but she really felt assured of his

worth: and even that quietness of manner, which militated against all

her established ideas of what a young man's address ought to be, was no

longer uninteresting when she knew his heart to be warm and his temper

affectionate.

No sooner did she perceive any symptom of love in his behaviour to

Elinor, than she considered their serious attachment as certain, and

looked forward to their marriage as rapidly approaching.

"In a few months, my dear Marianne." said she, "Elinor will, in all

probability be settled for life. We shall miss her; but SHE will be

happy."

"Oh! Mamma, how shall we do without her?"

"My love, it will be scarcely a separation. We shall live within a few

miles of each other, and shall meet every day of our lives. You will

gain a brother, a real, affectionate brother. I have the highest

opinion in the world of Edward's heart. But you look grave, Marianne;

do you disapprove your sister's choice?"

"Perhaps," said Marianne, "I may consider it with some surprise.

Edward is very amiable, and I love him tenderly. But yet--he is not

the kind of young man--there is something wanting--his figure is not

striking; it has none of that grace which I should expect in the man

who could seriously attach my sister. His eyes want all that spirit,

that fire, which at once announce virtue and intelligence. And besides

all this, I am afraid, Mamma, he has no real taste. Music seems

scarcely to attract him, and though he admires Elinor's drawings very

much, it is not the admiration of a person who can understand their

worth. It is evident, in spite of his frequent attention to her while

she draws, that in fact he knows nothing of the matter. He admires as

a lover, not as a connoisseur. To satisfy me, those characters must be

united. I could not be happy with a man whose taste did not in every

point coincide with my own. He must enter into all my feelings; the

same books, the same music must charm us both. Oh! mama, how

spiritless, how tame was Edward's manner in reading to us last night!

I felt for my sister most severely. Yet she bore it with so much

composure, she seemed scarcely to notice it. I could hardly keep my

seat. To hear those beautiful lines which have frequently almost

driven me wild, pronounced with such impenetrable calmness, such

dreadful indifference!"-- "He would certainly have done more justice to

simple and elegant prose. I thought so at the time; but you WOULD give

him Cowper."

"Nay, Mamma, if he is not to be animated by Cowper!--but we must allow

for difference of taste. Elinor has not my feelings, and therefore she

may overlook it, and be happy with him. But it would have broke MY

heart, had I loved him, to hear him read with so little sensibility.

Mama, the more I know of the world, the more am I convinced that I

shall never see a man whom I can really love. I require so much! He

must have all Edward's virtues, and his person and manners must

ornament his goodness with every possible charm."

"Remember, my love, that you are not seventeen. It is yet too early in

life to despair of such a happiness. Why should you be less fortunate

than your mother? In one circumstance only, my Marianne, may your

destiny be different from her's!"

CHAPTER 4

"What a pity it is, Elinor," said Marianne, "that Edward should have no

taste for drawing."

"No taste for drawing!" replied Elinor, "why should you think so? He

does not draw himself, indeed, but he has great pleasure in seeing the

performances of other people, and I assure you he is by no means

deficient in natural taste, though he has not had opportunities of

improving it. Had he ever been in the way of learning, I think he

would have drawn very well. He distrusts his own judgment in such

matters so much, that he is always unwilling to give his opinion on any

picture; but he has an innate propriety and simplicity of taste, which

in general direct him perfectly right."

Marianne was afraid of offending, and said no more on the subject; but

the kind of approbation which Elinor described as excited in him by the

drawings of other people, was very far from that rapturous delight,

which, in her opinion, could alone be called taste. Yet, though

smiling within herself at the mistake, she honoured her sister for that

blind partiality to Edward which produced it.

"I hope, Marianne," continued Elinor, "you do not consider him as

deficient in general taste. Indeed, I think I may say that you cannot,

for your behaviour to him is perfectly cordial, and if THAT were your

opinion, I am sure you could never be civil to him."

Marianne hardly knew what to say. She would not wound the feelings of

her sister on any account, and yet to say what she did not believe was

impossible. At length she replied:

"Do not be offended, Elinor, if my praise of him is not in every thing

equal to your sense of his merits. I have not had so many

opportunities of estimating the minuter propensities of his mind, his

inclinations and tastes, as you have; but I have the highest opinion in

the world of his goodness and sense. I think him every thing that is

worthy and amiable."

"I am sure," replied Elinor, with a smile, "that his dearest friends

could not be dissatisfied with such commendation as that. I do not

perceive how you could express yourself more warmly."

Marianne was rejoiced to find her sister so easily pleased.

"Of his sense and his goodness," continued Elinor, "no one can, I

think, be in doubt, who has seen him often enough to engage him in

unreserved conversation. The excellence of his understanding and his

principles can be concealed only by that shyness which too often keeps

him silent. You know enough of him to do justice to his solid worth.

But of his minuter propensities, as you call them you have from

peculiar circumstances been kept more ignorant than myself. He and I

have been at times thrown a good deal together, while you have been

wholly engrossed on the most affectionate principle by my mother. I

have seen a great deal of him, have studied his sentiments and heard

his opinion on subjects of literature and taste; and, upon the whole, I

venture to pronounce that his mind is well-informed, enjoyment of books

exceedingly great, his imagination lively, his observation just and

correct, and his taste delicate and pure. His abilities in every

respect improve as much upon acquaintance as his manners and person.

At first sight, his address is certainly not striking; and his person

can hardly be called handsome, till the expression of his eyes, which

are uncommonly good, and the general sweetness of his countenance, is

perceived. At present, I know him so well, that I think him really

handsome; or at least, almost so. What say you, Marianne?"

"I shall very soon think him handsome, Elinor, if I do not now. When

you tell me to love him as a brother, I shall no more see imperfection

in his face, than I now do in his heart."

Elinor started at this declaration, and was sorry for the warmth she

had been betrayed into, in speaking of him. She felt that Edward stood

very high in her opinion. She believed the regard to be mutual; but

she required greater certainty of it to make Marianne's conviction of

their attachment agreeable to her. She knew that what Marianne and her

mother conjectured one moment, they believed the next--that with them,

to wish was to hope, and to hope was to expect. She tried to explain

the real state of the case to her sister.

"I do not attempt to deny," said she, "that I think very highly of

him--that I greatly esteem, that I like him."

Marianne here burst forth with indignation--

"Esteem him! Like him! Cold-hearted Elinor! Oh! worse than

cold-hearted! Ashamed of being otherwise. Use those words again, and I

will leave the room this moment."

Elinor could not help laughing. "Excuse me," said she; "and be assured

that I meant no offence to you, by speaking, in so quiet a way, of my

own feelings. Believe them to be stronger than I have declared;

believe them, in short, to be such as his merit, and the suspicion--the

hope of his affection for me may warrant, without imprudence or folly.

But farther than this you must not believe. I am by no means assured

of his regard for me. There are moments when the extent of it seems

doubtful; and till his sentiments are fully known, you cannot wonder at

my wishing to avoid any encouragement of my own partiality, by

believing or calling it more than it is. In my heart I feel

little--scarcely any doubt of his preference. But there are other

points to be considered besides his inclination. He is very far from

being independent. What his mother really is we cannot know; but, from

Fanny's occasional mention of her conduct and opinions, we have never

been disposed to think her amiable; and I am very much mistaken if

Edward is not himself aware that there would be many difficulties in

his way, if he were to wish to marry a woman who had not either a great

fortune or high rank."

Marianne was astonished to find how much the imagination of her mother

and herself had outstripped the truth.

"And you really are not engaged to him!" said she. "Yet it certainly

soon will happen. But two advantages will proceed from this delay. I

shall not lose you so soon, and Edward will have greater opportunity of

improving that natural taste for your favourite pursuit which must be

so indispensably necessary to your future felicity. Oh! if he should

be so far stimulated by your genius as to learn to draw himself, how

delightful it would be!"

Elinor had given her real opinion to her sister. She could not

consider her partiality for Edward in so prosperous a state as Marianne

had believed it. There was, at times, a want of spirits about him

which, if it did not denote indifference, spoke of something almost as

unpromising. A doubt of her regard, supposing him to feel it, need not

give him more than inquietude. It would not be likely to produce that

dejection of mind which frequently attended him. A more reasonable

cause might be found in the dependent situation which forbade the

indulgence of his affection. She knew that his mother neither behaved

to him so as to make his home comfortable at present, nor to give him

any assurance that he might form a home for himself, without strictly

attending to her views for his aggrandizement. With such a knowledge

as this, it was impossible for Elinor to feel easy on the subject. She

was far from depending on that result of his preference of her, which

her mother and sister still considered as certain. Nay, the longer

they were together the more doubtful seemed the nature of his regard;

and sometimes, for a few painful minutes, she believed it to be no more

than friendship.

But, whatever might really be its limits, it was enough, when perceived

by his sister, to make her uneasy, and at the same time, (which was

still more common,) to make her uncivil. She took the first

opportunity of affronting her mother-in-law on the occasion, talking to

her so expressively of her brother's great expectations, of Mrs.

Ferrars's resolution that both her sons should marry well, and of the

danger attending any young woman who attempted to DRAW HIM IN; that

Mrs. Dashwood could neither pretend to be unconscious, nor endeavor to

be calm. She gave her an answer which marked her contempt, and

instantly left the room, resolving that, whatever might be the

inconvenience or expense of so sudden a removal, her beloved Elinor

should not be exposed another week to such insinuations.

In this state of her spirits, a letter was delivered to her from the

post, which contained a proposal particularly well timed. It was the

offer of a small house, on very easy terms, belonging to a relation of

her own, a gentleman of consequence and property in Devonshire. The

letter was from this gentleman himself, and written in the true spirit

of friendly accommodation. He understood that she was in need of a

dwelling; and though the house he now offered her was merely a cottage,

he assured her that everything should be done to it which she might

think necessary, if the situation pleased her. He earnestly pressed

her, after giving the particulars of the house and garden, to come with

her daughters to Barton Park, the place of his own residence, from

whence she might judge, herself, whether Barton Cottage, for the houses

were in the same parish, could, by any alteration, be made comfortable

to her. He seemed really anxious to accommodate them and the whole of

his letter was written in so friendly a style as could not fail of

giving pleasure to his cousin; more especially at a moment when she was

suffering under the cold and unfeeling behaviour of her nearer

connections. She needed no time for deliberation or inquiry. Her

resolution was formed as she read. The situation of Barton, in a

county so far distant from Sussex as Devonshire, which, but a few hours

before, would have been a sufficient objection to outweigh every

possible advantage belonging to the place, was now its first

recommendation. To quit the neighbourhood of Norland was no longer an

evil; it was an object of desire; it was a blessing, in comparison of

the misery of continuing her daughter-in-law's guest; and to remove for

ever from that beloved place would be less painful than to inhabit or

visit it while such a woman was its mistress. She instantly wrote Sir

John Middleton her acknowledgment of his kindness, and her acceptance

of his proposal; and then hastened to shew both letters to her

daughters, that she might be secure of their approbation before her

answer were sent.

Elinor had always thought it would be more prudent for them to settle

at some distance from Norland, than immediately amongst their present

acquaintance. On THAT head, therefore, it was not for her to oppose

her mother's intention of removing into Devonshire. The house, too, as

described by Sir John, was on so simple a scale, and the rent so

uncommonly moderate, as to leave her no right of objection on either

point; and, therefore, though it was not a plan which brought any charm

to her fancy, though it was a removal from the vicinity of Norland

beyond her wishes, she made no attempt to dissuade her mother from

sending a letter of acquiescence.

CHAPTER 5

No sooner was her answer dispatched, than Mrs. Dashwood indulged

herself in the pleasure of announcing to her son-in-law and his wife

that she was provided with a house, and should incommode them no longer

than till every thing were ready for her inhabiting it. They heard her

with surprise. Mrs. John Dashwood said nothing; but her husband

civilly hoped that she would not be settled far from Norland. She had

great satisfaction in replying that she was going into

Devonshire.--Edward turned hastily towards her, on hearing this, and,

in a voice of surprise and concern, which required no explanation to

her, repeated, "Devonshire! Are you, indeed, going there? So far from

hence! And to what part of it?" She explained the situation. It was

within four miles northward of Exeter.

"It is but a cottage," she continued, "but I hope to see many of my

friends in it. A room or two can easily be added; and if my friends

find no difficulty in travelling so far to see me, I am sure I will

find none in accommodating them."

She concluded with a very kind invitation to Mr. and Mrs. John Dashwood

to visit her at Barton; and to Edward she gave one with still greater

affection. Though her late conversation with her daughter-in-law had

made her resolve on remaining at Norland no longer than was

unavoidable, it had not produced the smallest effect on her in that

point to which it principally tended. To separate Edward and Elinor

was as far from being her object as ever; and she wished to show Mrs.

John Dashwood, by this pointed invitation to her brother, how totally

she disregarded her disapprobation of the match.

Mr. John Dashwood told his mother again and again how exceedingly sorry

he was that she had taken a house at such a distance from Norland as to

prevent his being of any service to her in removing her furniture. He

really felt conscientiously vexed on the occasion; for the very

exertion to which he had limited the performance of his promise to his

father was by this arrangement rendered impracticable.-- The furniture

was all sent around by water. It chiefly consisted of household linen,

plate, china, and books, with a handsome pianoforte of Marianne's.

Mrs. John Dashwood saw the packages depart with a sigh: she could not

help feeling it hard that as Mrs. Dashwood's income would be so

trifling in comparison with their own, she should have any handsome

article of furniture.

Mrs. Dashwood took the house for a twelvemonth; it was ready furnished,

and she might have immediate possession. No difficulty arose on either

side in the agreement; and she waited only for the disposal of her

effects at Norland, and to determine her future household, before she

set off for the west; and this, as she was exceedingly rapid in the

performance of everything that interested her, was soon done.--The

horses which were left her by her husband had been sold soon after his

death, and an opportunity now offering of disposing of her carriage,

she agreed to sell that likewise at the earnest advice of her eldest

daughter. For the comfort of her children, had she consulted only her

own wishes, she would have kept it; but the discretion of Elinor

prevailed. HER wisdom too limited the number of their servants to

three; two maids and a man, with whom they were speedily provided from

amongst those who had formed their establishment at Norland.

The man and one of the maids were sent off immediately into Devonshire,

to prepare the house for their mistress's arrival; for as Lady

Middleton was entirely unknown to Mrs. Dashwood, she preferred going

directly to the cottage to being a visitor at Barton Park; and she

relied so undoubtingly on Sir John's description of the house, as to

feel no curiosity to examine it herself till she entered it as her own.

Her eagerness to be gone from Norland was preserved from diminution by

the evident satisfaction of her daughter-in-law in the prospect of her

removal; a satisfaction which was but feebly attempted to be concealed

under a cold invitation to her to defer her departure. Now was the

time when her son-in-law's promise to his father might with particular

propriety be fulfilled. Since he had neglected to do it on first

coming to the estate, their quitting his house might be looked on as

the most suitable period for its accomplishment. But Mrs. Dashwood

began shortly to give over every hope of the kind, and to be convinced,

from the general drift of his discourse, that his assistance extended

no farther than their maintenance for six months at Norland. He so

frequently talked of the increasing expenses of housekeeping, and of

the perpetual demands upon his purse, which a man of any consequence in

the world was beyond calculation exposed to, that he seemed rather to

stand in need of more money himself than to have any design of giving

money away.

In a very few weeks from the day which brought Sir John Middleton's

first letter to Norland, every thing was so far settled in their future

abode as to enable Mrs. Dashwood and her daughters to begin their

journey.

Many were the tears shed by them in their last adieus to a place so

much beloved. "Dear, dear Norland!" said Marianne, as she wandered

alone before the house, on the last evening of their being there; "when

shall I cease to regret you!--when learn to feel a home elsewhere!--Oh!

happy house, could you know what I suffer in now viewing you from this

spot, from whence perhaps I may view you no more!--And you, ye

well-known trees!--but you will continue the same.--No leaf will decay

because we are removed, nor any branch become motionless although we

can observe you no longer!--No; you will continue the same; unconscious

of the pleasure or the regret you occasion, and insensible of any

change in those who walk under your shade!--But who will remain to

enjoy you?"

CHAPTER 6

The first part of their journey was performed in too melancholy a

disposition to be otherwise than tedious and unpleasant. But as they

drew towards the end of it, their interest in the appearance of a

country which they were to inhabit overcame their dejection, and a view

of Barton Valley as they entered it gave them cheerfulness. It was a

pleasant fertile spot, well wooded, and rich in pasture. After winding

along it for more than a mile, they reached their own house. A small

green court was the whole of its demesne in front; and a neat wicket

gate admitted them into it.

As a house, Barton Cottage, though small, was comfortable and compact;

but as a cottage it was defective, for the building was regular, the

roof was tiled, the window shutters were not painted green, nor were

the walls covered with honeysuckles. A narrow passage led directly

through the house into the garden behind. On each side of the entrance

was a sitting room, about sixteen feet square; and beyond them were the

offices and the stairs. Four bed-rooms and two garrets formed the rest

of the house. It had not been built many years and was in good repair.

In comparison of Norland, it was poor and small indeed!--but the tears

which recollection called forth as they entered the house were soon

dried away. They were cheered by the joy of the servants on their

arrival, and each for the sake of the others resolved to appear happy.

It was very early in September; the season was fine, and from first

seeing the place under the advantage of good weather, they received an

impression in its favour which was of material service in recommending

it to their lasting approbation.

The situation of the house was good. High hills rose immediately

behind, and at no great distance on each side; some of which were open

downs, the others cultivated and woody. The village of Barton was

chiefly on one of these hills, and formed a pleasant view from the

cottage windows. The prospect in front was more extensive; it

commanded the whole of the valley, and reached into the country beyond.

The hills which surrounded the cottage terminated the valley in that

direction; under another name, and in another course, it branched out

again between two of the steepest of them.

With the size and furniture of the house Mrs. Dashwood was upon the

whole well satisfied; for though her former style of life rendered many

additions to the latter indispensable, yet to add and improve was a

delight to her; and she had at this time ready money enough to supply

all that was wanted of greater elegance to the apartments. "As for the

house itself, to be sure," said she, "it is too small for our family,

but we will make ourselves tolerably comfortable for the present, as it

is too late in the year for improvements. Perhaps in the spring, if I

have plenty of money, as I dare say I shall, we may think about

building. These parlors are both too small for such parties of our

friends as I hope to see often collected here; and I have some thoughts

of throwing the passage into one of them with perhaps a part of the

other, and so leave the remainder of that other for an entrance; this,

with a new drawing room which may be easily added, and a bed-chamber

and garret above, will make it a very snug little cottage. I could

wish the stairs were handsome. But one must not expect every thing;

though I suppose it would be no difficult matter to widen them. I

shall see how much I am before-hand with the world in the spring, and

we will plan our improvements accordingly."

In the mean time, till all these alterations could be made from the

savings of an income of five hundred a-year by a woman who never saved

in her life, they were wise enough to be contented with the house as it

was; and each of them was busy in arranging their particular concerns,

and endeavoring, by placing around them books and other possessions, to

form themselves a home. Marianne's pianoforte was unpacked and

properly disposed of; and Elinor's drawings were affixed to the walls

of their sitting room.

In such employments as these they were interrupted soon after breakfast

the next day by the entrance of their landlord, who called to welcome

them to Barton, and to offer them every accommodation from his own

house and garden in which theirs might at present be deficient. Sir

John Middleton was a good looking man about forty. He had formerly

visited at Stanhill, but it was too long for his young cousins to

remember him. His countenance was thoroughly good-humoured; and his

manners were as friendly as the style of his letter. Their arrival

seemed to afford him real satisfaction, and their comfort to be an

object of real solicitude to him. He said much of his earnest desire

of their living in the most sociable terms with his family, and pressed

them so cordially to dine at Barton Park every day till they were

better settled at home, that, though his entreaties were carried to a

point of perseverance beyond civility, they could not give offence.

His kindness was not confined to words; for within an hour after he

left them, a large basket full of garden stuff and fruit arrived from

the park, which was followed before the end of the day by a present of

game. He insisted, moreover, on conveying all their letters to and

from the post for them, and would not be denied the satisfaction of

sending them his newspaper every day.

Lady Middleton had sent a very civil message by him, denoting her

intention of waiting on Mrs. Dashwood as soon as she could be assured

that her visit would be no inconvenience; and as this message was

answered by an invitation equally polite, her ladyship was introduced

to them the next day.

They were, of course, very anxious to see a person on whom so much of

their comfort at Barton must depend; and the elegance of her appearance

was favourable to their wishes. Lady Middleton was not more than six

or seven and twenty; her face was handsome, her figure tall and

striking, and her address graceful. Her manners had all the elegance

which her husband's wanted. But they would have been improved by some

share of his frankness and warmth; and her visit was long enough to

detract something from their first admiration, by shewing that, though

perfectly well-bred, she was reserved, cold, and had nothing to say for

herself beyond the most common-place inquiry or remark.

Conversation however was not wanted, for Sir John was very chatty, and

Lady Middleton had taken the wise precaution of bringing with her their

eldest child, a fine little boy about six years old, by which means

there was one subject always to be recurred to by the ladies in case of

extremity, for they had to enquire his name and age, admire his beauty,

and ask him questions which his mother answered for him, while he hung

about her and held down his head, to the great surprise of her

ladyship, who wondered at his being so shy before company, as he could

make noise enough at home. On every formal visit a child ought to be

of the party, by way of provision for discourse. In the present case

it took up ten minutes to determine whether the boy were most like his

father or mother, and in what particular he resembled either, for of

course every body differed, and every body was astonished at the

opinion of the others.

An opportunity was soon to be given to the Dashwoods of debating on the

rest of the children, as Sir John would not leave the house without

securing their promise of dining at the park the next day.

CHAPTER 7

Barton Park was about half a mile from the cottage. The ladies had

passed near it in their way along the valley, but it was screened from

their view at home by the projection of a hill. The house was large

and handsome; and the Middletons lived in a style of equal hospitality

and elegance. The former was for Sir John's gratification, the latter

for that of his lady. They were scarcely ever without some friends

staying with them in the house, and they kept more company of every

kind than any other family in the neighbourhood. It was necessary to

the happiness of both; for however dissimilar in temper and outward

behaviour, they strongly resembled each other in that total want of

talent and taste which confined their employments, unconnected with

such as society produced, within a very narrow compass. Sir John was a

sportsman, Lady Middleton a mother. He hunted and shot, and she

humoured her children; and these were their only resources. Lady

Middleton had the advantage of being able to spoil her children all the

year round, while Sir John's independent employments were in existence

only half the time. Continual engagements at home and abroad, however,

supplied all the deficiencies of nature and education; supported the

good spirits of Sir John, and gave exercise to the good breeding of his

wife.

Lady Middleton piqued herself upon the elegance of her table, and of

all her domestic arrangements; and from this kind of vanity was her

greatest enjoyment in any of their parties. But Sir John's

satisfaction in society was much more real; he delighted in collecting

about him more young people than his house would hold, and the noisier

they were the better was he pleased. He was a blessing to all the

juvenile part of the neighbourhood, for in summer he was for ever

forming parties to eat cold ham and chicken out of doors, and in winter

his private balls were numerous enough for any young lady who was not

suffering under the unsatiable appetite of fifteen.

The arrival of a new family in the country was always a matter of joy

to him, and in every point of view he was charmed with the inhabitants

he had now procured for his cottage at Barton. The Miss Dashwoods were

young, pretty, and unaffected. It was enough to secure his good

opinion; for to be unaffected was all that a pretty girl could want to

make her mind as captivating as her person. The friendliness of his

disposition made him happy in accommodating those, whose situation

might be considered, in comparison with the past, as unfortunate. In

showing kindness to his cousins therefore he had the real satisfaction

of a good heart; and in settling a family of females only in his

cottage, he had all the satisfaction of a sportsman; for a sportsman,

though he esteems only those of his sex who are sportsmen likewise, is

not often desirous of encouraging their taste by admitting them to a

residence within his own manor.

Mrs. Dashwood and her daughters were met at the door of the house by

Sir John, who welcomed them to Barton Park with unaffected sincerity;

and as he attended them to the drawing room repeated to the young

ladies the concern which the same subject had drawn from him the day

before, at being unable to get any smart young men to meet them. They

would see, he said, only one gentleman there besides himself; a

particular friend who was staying at the park, but who was neither very

young nor very gay. He hoped they would all excuse the smallness of

the party, and could assure them it should never happen so again. He

had been to several families that morning in hopes of procuring some

addition to their number, but it was moonlight and every body was full

of engagements. Luckily Lady Middleton's mother had arrived at Barton

within the last hour, and as she was a very cheerful agreeable woman,

he hoped the young ladies would not find it so very dull as they might

imagine. The young ladies, as well as their mother, were perfectly

satisfied with having two entire strangers of the party, and wished for

no more.

Mrs. Jennings, Lady Middleton's mother, was a good-humoured, merry,

fat, elderly woman, who talked a great deal, seemed very happy, and

rather vulgar. She was full of jokes and laughter, and before dinner

was over had said many witty things on the subject of lovers and

husbands; hoped they had not left their hearts behind them in Sussex,

and pretended to see them blush whether they did or not. Marianne was

vexed at it for her sister's sake, and turned her eyes towards Elinor

to see how she bore these attacks, with an earnestness which gave

Elinor far more pain than could arise from such common-place raillery

as Mrs. Jennings's.

Colonel Brandon, the friend of Sir John, seemed no more adapted by

resemblance of manner to be his friend, than Lady Middleton was to be

his wife, or Mrs. Jennings to be Lady Middleton's mother. He was

silent and grave. His appearance however was not unpleasing, in spite

of his being in the opinion of Marianne and Margaret an absolute old

bachelor, for he was on the wrong side of five and thirty; but though

his face was not handsome, his countenance was sensible, and his

address was particularly gentlemanlike.

There was nothing in any of the party which could recommend them as

companions to the Dashwoods; but the cold insipidity of Lady Middleton

was so particularly repulsive, that in comparison of it the gravity of

Colonel Brandon, and even the boisterous mirth of Sir John and his

mother-in-law was interesting. Lady Middleton seemed to be roused to

enjoyment only by the entrance of her four noisy children after dinner,

who pulled her about, tore her clothes, and put an end to every kind of

discourse except what related to themselves.

In the evening, as Marianne was discovered to be musical, she was

invited to play. The instrument was unlocked, every body prepared to

be charmed, and Marianne, who sang very well, at their request went

through the chief of the songs which Lady Middleton had brought into

the family on her marriage, and which perhaps had lain ever since in

the same position on the pianoforte, for her ladyship had celebrated

that event by giving up music, although by her mother's account, she

had played extremely well, and by her own was very fond of it.

Marianne's performance was highly applauded. Sir John was loud in his

admiration at the end of every song, and as loud in his conversation

with the others while every song lasted. Lady Middleton frequently

called him to order, wondered how any one's attention could be diverted

from music for a moment, and asked Marianne to sing a particular song

which Marianne had just finished. Colonel Brandon alone, of all the

party, heard her without being in raptures. He paid her only the

compliment of attention; and she felt a respect for him on the

occasion, which the others had reasonably forfeited by their shameless

want of taste. His pleasure in music, though it amounted not to that

ecstatic delight which alone could sympathize with her own, was

estimable when contrasted against the horrible insensibility of the

others; and she was reasonable enough to allow that a man of five and

thirty might well have outlived all acuteness of feeling and every

exquisite power of enjoyment. She was perfectly disposed to make every

allowance for the colonel's advanced state of life which humanity

required.

CHAPTER 8

Mrs. Jennings was a widow with an ample jointure. She had only two

daughters, both of whom she had lived to see respectably married, and

she had now therefore nothing to do but to marry all the rest of the

world. In the promotion of this object she was zealously active, as

far as her ability reached; and missed no opportunity of projecting

weddings among all the young people of her acquaintance. She was

remarkably quick in the discovery of attachments, and had enjoyed the

advantage of raising the blushes and the vanity of many a young lady by

insinuations of her power over such a young man; and this kind of

discernment enabled her soon after her arrival at Barton decisively to

pronounce that Colonel Brandon was very much in love with Marianne

Dashwood. She rather suspected it to be so, on the very first evening

of their being together, from his listening so attentively while she

sang to them; and when the visit was returned by the Middletons' dining

at the cottage, the fact was ascertained by his listening to her again.

It must be so. She was perfectly convinced of it. It would be an

excellent match, for HE was rich, and SHE was handsome. Mrs. Jennings

had been anxious to see Colonel Brandon well married, ever since her

connection with Sir John first brought him to her knowledge; and she

was always anxious to get a good husband for every pretty girl.

The immediate advantage to herself was by no means inconsiderable, for

it supplied her with endless jokes against them both. At the park she

laughed at the colonel, and in the cottage at Marianne. To the former

her raillery was probably, as far as it regarded only himself,

perfectly indifferent; but to the latter it was at first

incomprehensible; and when its object was understood, she hardly knew

whether most to laugh at its absurdity, or censure its impertinence,

for she considered it as an unfeeling reflection on the colonel's

advanced years, and on his forlorn condition as an old bachelor.

Mrs. Dashwood, who could not think a man five years younger than

herself, so exceedingly ancient as he appeared to the youthful fancy of

her daughter, ventured to clear Mrs. Jennings from the probability of

wishing to throw ridicule on his age.

"But at least, Mamma, you cannot deny the absurdity of the accusation,

though you may not think it intentionally ill-natured. Colonel Brandon

is certainly younger than Mrs. Jennings, but he is old enough to be MY

father; and if he were ever animated enough to be in love, must have

long outlived every sensation of the kind. It is too ridiculous! When

is a man to be safe from such wit, if age and infirmity will not

protect him?"

"Infirmity!" said Elinor, "do you call Colonel Brandon infirm? I can

easily suppose that his age may appear much greater to you than to my

mother; but you can hardly deceive yourself as to his having the use of

his limbs!"

"Did not you hear him complain of the rheumatism? and is not that the

commonest infirmity of declining life?"

"My dearest child," said her mother, laughing, "at this rate you must

be in continual terror of MY decay; and it must seem to you a miracle

that my life has been extended to the advanced age of forty."

"Mamma, you are not doing me justice. I know very well that Colonel

Brandon is not old enough to make his friends yet apprehensive of

losing him in the course of nature. He may live twenty years longer.

But thirty-five has nothing to do with matrimony."

"Perhaps," said Elinor, "thirty-five and seventeen had better not have

any thing to do with matrimony together. But if there should by any

chance happen to be a woman who is single at seven and twenty, I should

not think Colonel Brandon's being thirty-five any objection to his

marrying HER."

"A woman of seven and twenty," said Marianne, after pausing a moment,

"can never hope to feel or inspire affection again, and if her home be

uncomfortable, or her fortune small, I can suppose that she might bring

herself to submit to the offices of a nurse, for the sake of the

provision and security of a wife. In his marrying such a woman

therefore there would be nothing unsuitable. It would be a compact of

convenience, and the world would be satisfied. In my eyes it would be

no marriage at all, but that would be nothing. To me it would seem

only a commercial exchange, in which each wished to be benefited at the

expense of the other."

"It would be impossible, I know," replied Elinor, "to convince you that

a woman of seven and twenty could feel for a man of thirty-five

anything near enough to love, to make him a desirable companion to her.

But I must object to your dooming Colonel Brandon and his wife to the

constant confinement of a sick chamber, merely because he chanced to

complain yesterday (a very cold damp day) of a slight rheumatic feel in

one of his shoulders."

"But he talked of flannel waistcoats," said Marianne; "and with me a

flannel waistcoat is invariably connected with aches, cramps,

rheumatisms, and every species of ailment that can afflict the old and

the feeble."

"Had he been only in a violent fever, you would not have despised him

half so much. Confess, Marianne, is not there something interesting to

you in the flushed cheek, hollow eye, and quick pulse of a fever?"

Soon after this, upon Elinor's leaving the room, "Mamma," said

Marianne, "I have an alarm on the subject of illness which I cannot

conceal from you. I am sure Edward Ferrars is not well. We have now

been here almost a fortnight, and yet he does not come. Nothing but

real indisposition could occasion this extraordinary delay. What else

can detain him at Norland?"

"Had you any idea of his coming so soon?" said Mrs. Dashwood. "I had

none. On the contrary, if I have felt any anxiety at all on the

subject, it has been in recollecting that he sometimes showed a want of

pleasure and readiness in accepting my invitation, when I talked of his

coming to Barton. Does Elinor expect him already?"

"I have never mentioned it to her, but of course she must."

"I rather think you are mistaken, for when I was talking to her

yesterday of getting a new grate for the spare bedchamber, she observed

that there was no immediate hurry for it, as it was not likely that the

room would be wanted for some time."

"How strange this is! what can be the meaning of it! But the whole of

their behaviour to each other has been unaccountable! How cold, how

composed were their last adieus! How languid their conversation the

last evening of their being together! In Edward's farewell there was no

distinction between Elinor and me: it was the good wishes of an

affectionate brother to both. Twice did I leave them purposely

together in the course of the last morning, and each time did he most

unaccountably follow me out of the room. And Elinor, in quitting

Norland and Edward, cried not as I did. Even now her self-command is

invariable. When is she dejected or melancholy? When does she try to

avoid society, or appear restless and dissatisfied in it?"

CHAPTER 9

The Dashwoods were now settled at Barton with tolerable comfort to

themselves. The house and the garden, with all the objects surrounding

them, were now become familiar, and the ordinary pursuits which had

given to Norland half its charms were engaged in again with far greater

enjoyment than Norland had been able to afford, since the loss of their

father. Sir John Middleton, who called on them every day for the first

fortnight, and who was not in the habit of seeing much occupation at

home, could not conceal his amazement on finding them always employed.

Their visitors, except those from Barton Park, were not many; for, in

spite of Sir John's urgent entreaties that they would mix more in the

neighbourhood, and repeated assurances of his carriage being always at

their service, the independence of Mrs. Dashwood's spirit overcame the

wish of society for her children; and she was resolute in declining to

visit any family beyond the distance of a walk. There were but few who

could be so classed; and it was not all of them that were attainable.

About a mile and a half from the cottage, along the narrow winding

valley of Allenham, which issued from that of Barton, as formerly

described, the girls had, in one of their earliest walks, discovered an

ancient respectable looking mansion which, by reminding them a little

of Norland, interested their imagination and made them wish to be

better acquainted with it. But they learnt, on enquiry, that its

possessor, an elderly lady of very good character, was unfortunately

too infirm to mix with the world, and never stirred from home.

The whole country about them abounded in beautiful walks. The high

downs which invited them from almost every window of the cottage to

seek the exquisite enjoyment of air on their summits, were a happy

alternative when the dirt of the valleys beneath shut up their superior

beauties; and towards one of these hills did Marianne and Margaret one

memorable morning direct their steps, attracted by the partial sunshine

of a showery sky, and unable longer to bear the confinement which the

settled rain of the two preceding days had occasioned. The weather was

not tempting enough to draw the two others from their pencil and their

book, in spite of Marianne's declaration that the day would be

lastingly fair, and that every threatening cloud would be drawn off

from their hills; and the two girls set off together.

They gaily ascended the downs, rejoicing in their own penetration at

every glimpse of blue sky; and when they caught in their faces the

animating gales of a high south-westerly wind, they pitied the fears

which had prevented their mother and Elinor from sharing such

delightful sensations.

"Is there a felicity in the world," said Marianne, "superior to

this?--Margaret, we will walk here at least two hours."

Margaret agreed, and they pursued their way against the wind, resisting

it with laughing delight for about twenty minutes longer, when suddenly

the clouds united over their heads, and a driving rain set full in

their face.-- Chagrined and surprised, they were obliged, though

unwillingly, to turn back, for no shelter was nearer than their own

house. One consolation however remained for them, to which the

exigence of the moment gave more than usual propriety; it was that of

running with all possible speed down the steep side of the hill which

led immediately to their garden gate.

They set off. Marianne had at first the advantage, but a false step

brought her suddenly to the ground; and Margaret, unable to stop

herself to assist her, was involuntarily hurried along, and reached the

bottom in safety.

A gentleman carrying a gun, with two pointers playing round him, was

passing up the hill and within a few yards of Marianne, when her

accident happened. He put down his gun and ran to her assistance. She

had raised herself from the ground, but her foot had been twisted in

her fall, and she was scarcely able to stand. The gentleman offered

his services; and perceiving that her modesty declined what her

situation rendered necessary, took her up in his arms without farther

delay, and carried her down the hill. Then passing through the garden,

the gate of which had been left open by Margaret, he bore her directly

into the house, whither Margaret was just arrived, and quitted not his

hold till he had seated her in a chair in the parlour.

Elinor and her mother rose up in amazement at their entrance, and while

the eyes of both were fixed on him with an evident wonder and a secret

admiration which equally sprung from his appearance, he apologized for

his intrusion by relating its cause, in a manner so frank and so

graceful that his person, which was uncommonly handsome, received

additional charms from his voice and expression. Had he been even old,

ugly, and vulgar, the gratitude and kindness of Mrs. Dashwood would

have been secured by any act of attention to her child; but the

influence of youth, beauty, and elegance, gave an interest to the

action which came home to her feelings.

She thanked him again and again; and, with a sweetness of address which

always attended her, invited him to be seated. But this he declined,

as he was dirty and wet. Mrs. Dashwood then begged to know to whom she

was obliged. His name, he replied, was Willoughby, and his present

home was at Allenham, from whence he hoped she would allow him the

honour of calling tomorrow to enquire after Miss Dashwood. The honour

was readily granted, and he then departed, to make himself still more

interesting, in the midst of a heavy rain.

His manly beauty and more than common gracefulness were instantly the

theme of general admiration, and the laugh which his gallantry raised

against Marianne received particular spirit from his exterior

attractions.-- Marianne herself had seen less of his person that the

rest, for the confusion which crimsoned over her face, on his lifting

her up, had robbed her of the power of regarding him after their

entering the house. But she had seen enough of him to join in all the

admiration of the others, and with an energy which always adorned her

praise. His person and air were equal to what her fancy had ever drawn

for the hero of a favourite story; and in his carrying her into the

house with so little previous formality, there was a rapidity of

thought which particularly recommended the action to her. Every

circumstance belonging to him was interesting. His name was good, his

residence was in their favourite village, and she soon found out that

of all manly dresses a shooting-jacket was the most becoming. Her

imagination was busy, her reflections were pleasant, and the pain of a

sprained ankle was disregarded.

Sir John called on them as soon as the next interval of fair weather

that morning allowed him to get out of doors; and Marianne's accident

being related to him, he was eagerly asked whether he knew any

gentleman of the name of Willoughby at Allenham.

"Willoughby!" cried Sir John; "what, is HE in the country? That is good

news however; I will ride over tomorrow, and ask him to dinner on

Thursday."

"You know him then," said Mrs. Dashwood.

"Know him! to be sure I do. Why, he is down here every year."

"And what sort of a young man is he?"

"As good a kind of fellow as ever lived, I assure you. A very decent

shot, and there is not a bolder rider in England."

"And is that all you can say for him?" cried Marianne, indignantly.

"But what are his manners on more intimate acquaintance? What his

pursuits, his talents, and genius?"

Sir John was rather puzzled.

"Upon my soul," said he, "I do not know much about him as to all THAT.

But he is a pleasant, good humoured fellow, and has got the nicest

little black bitch of a pointer I ever saw. Was she out with him

today?"

But Marianne could no more satisfy him as to the colour of Mr.

Willoughby's pointer, than he could describe to her the shades of his

mind.

"But who is he?" said Elinor. "Where does he come from? Has he a

house at Allenham?"

On this point Sir John could give more certain intelligence; and he

told them that Mr. Willoughby had no property of his own in the

country; that he resided there only while he was visiting the old lady

at Allenham Court, to whom he was related, and whose possessions he was

to inherit; adding, "Yes, yes, he is very well worth catching I can

tell you, Miss Dashwood; he has a pretty little estate of his own in

Somersetshire besides; and if I were you, I would not give him up to my

younger sister, in spite of all this tumbling down hills. Miss

Marianne must not expect to have all the men to herself. Brandon will

be jealous, if she does not take care."

"I do not believe," said Mrs. Dashwood, with a good humoured smile,

"that Mr. Willoughby will be incommoded by the attempts of either of MY

daughters towards what you call CATCHING him. It is not an employment

to which they have been brought up. Men are very safe with us, let

them be ever so rich. I am glad to find, however, from what you say,

that he is a respectable young man, and one whose acquaintance will not

be ineligible."

"He is as good a sort of fellow, I believe, as ever lived," repeated

Sir John. "I remember last Christmas at a little hop at the park, he

danced from eight o'clock till four, without once sitting down."

"Did he indeed?" cried Marianne with sparkling eyes, "and with

elegance, with spirit?"

"Yes; and he was up again at eight to ride to covert."

"That is what I like; that is what a young man ought to be. Whatever

be his pursuits, his eagerness in them should know no moderation, and

leave him no sense of fatigue."

"Aye, aye, I see how it will be," said Sir John, "I see how it will be.

You will be setting your cap at him now, and never think of poor

Brandon."

"That is an expression, Sir John," said Marianne, warmly, "which I

particularly dislike. I abhor every common-place phrase by which wit

is intended; and 'setting one's cap at a man,' or 'making a conquest,'

are the most odious of all. Their tendency is gross and illiberal; and

if their construction could ever be deemed clever, time has long ago

destroyed all its ingenuity."

Sir John did not much understand this reproof; but he laughed as

heartily as if he did, and then replied,

"Ay, you will make conquests enough, I dare say, one way or other.

Poor Brandon! he is quite smitten already, and he is very well worth

setting your cap at, I can tell you, in spite of all this tumbling

about and spraining of ankles."

CHAPTER 10

Marianne's preserver, as Margaret, with more elegance than precision,

styled Willoughby, called at the cottage early the next morning to make

his personal enquiries. He was received by Mrs. Dashwood with more

than politeness; with a kindness which Sir John's account of him and

her own gratitude prompted; and every thing that passed during the

visit tended to assure him of the sense, elegance, mutual affection,

and domestic comfort of the family to whom accident had now introduced

him. Of their personal charms he had not required a second interview

to be convinced.

Miss Dashwood had a delicate complexion, regular features, and a

remarkably pretty figure. Marianne was still handsomer. Her form,

though not so correct as her sister's, in having the advantage of

height, was more striking; and her face was so lovely, that when in the

common cant of praise, she was called a beautiful girl, truth was less

violently outraged than usually happens. Her skin was very brown, but,

from its transparency, her complexion was uncommonly brilliant; her

features were all good; her smile was sweet and attractive; and in her

eyes, which were very dark, there was a life, a spirit, an eagerness,

which could hardily be seen without delight. From Willoughby their

expression was at first held back, by the embarrassment which the

remembrance of his assistance created. But when this passed away, when

her spirits became collected, when she saw that to the perfect

good-breeding of the gentleman, he united frankness and vivacity, and

above all, when she heard him declare, that of music and dancing he was

passionately fond, she gave him such a look of approbation as secured

the largest share of his discourse to herself for the rest of his stay.

It was only necessary to mention any favourite amusement to engage her

to talk. She could not be silent when such points were introduced, and

she had neither shyness nor reserve in their discussion. They speedily

discovered that their enjoyment of dancing and music was mutual, and

that it arose from a general conformity of judgment in all that related

to either. Encouraged by this to a further examination of his

opinions, she proceeded to question him on the subject of books; her

favourite authors were brought forward and dwelt upon with so rapturous

a delight, that any young man of five and twenty must have been

insensible indeed, not to become an immediate convert to the excellence

of such works, however disregarded before. Their taste was strikingly

alike. The same books, the same passages were idolized by each--or if

any difference appeared, any objection arose, it lasted no longer than

till the force of her arguments and the brightness of her eyes could be

displayed. He acquiesced in all her decisions, caught all her

enthusiasm; and long before his visit concluded, they conversed with

the familiarity of a long-established acquaintance.

"Well, Marianne," said Elinor, as soon as he had left them, "for ONE

morning I think you have done pretty well. You have already

ascertained Mr. Willoughby's opinion in almost every matter of

importance. You know what he thinks of Cowper and Scott; you are

certain of his estimating their beauties as he ought, and you have

received every assurance of his admiring Pope no more than is proper.

But how is your acquaintance to be long supported, under such

extraordinary despatch of every subject for discourse? You will soon

have exhausted each favourite topic. Another meeting will suffice to

explain his sentiments on picturesque beauty, and second marriages, and

then you can have nothing farther to ask."--

"Elinor," cried Marianne, "is this fair? is this just? are my ideas so

scanty? But I see what you mean. I have been too much at my ease, too

happy, too frank. I have erred against every common-place notion of

decorum; I have been open and sincere where I ought to have been

reserved, spiritless, dull, and deceitful--had I talked only of the

weather and the roads, and had I spoken only once in ten minutes, this

reproach would have been spared."

"My love," said her mother, "you must not be offended with Elinor--she

was only in jest. I should scold her myself, if she were capable of

wishing to check the delight of your conversation with our new

friend."-- Marianne was softened in a moment.

Willoughby, on his side, gave every proof of his pleasure in their

acquaintance, which an evident wish of improving it could offer. He

came to them every day. To enquire after Marianne was at first his

excuse; but the encouragement of his reception, to which every day gave

greater kindness, made such an excuse unnecessary before it had ceased

to be possible, by Marianne's perfect recovery. She was confined for

some days to the house; but never had any confinement been less

irksome. Willoughby was a young man of good abilities, quick

imagination, lively spirits, and open, affectionate manners. He was

exactly formed to engage Marianne's heart, for with all this, he joined

not only a captivating person, but a natural ardour of mind which was

now roused and increased by the example of her own, and which

recommended him to her affection beyond every thing else.

His society became gradually her most exquisite enjoyment. They read,

they talked, they sang together; his musical talents were considerable;

and he read with all the sensibility and spirit which Edward had

unfortunately wanted.

In Mrs. Dashwood's estimation he was as faultless as in Marianne's; and

Elinor saw nothing to censure in him but a propensity, in which he

strongly resembled and peculiarly delighted her sister, of saying too

much what he thought on every occasion, without attention to persons or

circumstances. In hastily forming and giving his opinion of other

people, in sacrificing general politeness to the enjoyment of undivided

attention where his heart was engaged, and in slighting too easily the

forms of worldly propriety, he displayed a want of caution which Elinor

could not approve, in spite of all that he and Marianne could say in

its support.

Marianne began now to perceive that the desperation which had seized

her at sixteen and a half, of ever seeing a man who could satisfy her

ideas of perfection, had been rash and unjustifiable. Willoughby was

all that her fancy had delineated in that unhappy hour and in every

brighter period, as capable of attaching her; and his behaviour

declared his wishes to be in that respect as earnest, as his abilities

were strong.

Her mother too, in whose mind not one speculative thought of their

marriage had been raised, by his prospect of riches, was led before the

end of a week to hope and expect it; and secretly to congratulate

herself on having gained two such sons-in-law as Edward and Willoughby.

Colonel Brandon's partiality for Marianne, which had so early been

discovered by his friends, now first became perceptible to Elinor, when

it ceased to be noticed by them. Their attention and wit were drawn

off to his more fortunate rival; and the raillery which the other had

incurred before any partiality arose, was removed when his feelings

began really to call for the ridicule so justly annexed to sensibility.

Elinor was obliged, though unwillingly, to believe that the sentiments

which Mrs. Jennings had assigned him for her own satisfaction, were now

actually excited by her sister; and that however a general resemblance

of disposition between the parties might forward the affection of Mr.

Willoughby, an equally striking opposition of character was no

hindrance to the regard of Colonel Brandon. She saw it with concern;

for what could a silent man of five and thirty hope, when opposed to a

very lively one of five and twenty? and as she could not even wish him

successful, she heartily wished him indifferent. She liked him--in

spite of his gravity and reserve, she beheld in him an object of

interest. His manners, though serious, were mild; and his reserve

appeared rather the result of some oppression of spirits than of any

natural gloominess of temper. Sir John had dropped hints of past

injuries and disappointments, which justified her belief of his being

an unfortunate man, and she regarded him with respect and compassion.

Perhaps she pitied and esteemed him the more because he was slighted by

Willoughby and Marianne, who, prejudiced against him for being neither

lively nor young, seemed resolved to undervalue his merits.

"Brandon is just the kind of man," said Willoughby one day, when they

were talking of him together, "whom every body speaks well of, and

nobody cares about; whom all are delighted to see, and nobody remembers

to talk to."

"That is exactly what I think of him," cried Marianne.

"Do not boast of it, however," said Elinor, "for it is injustice in

both of you. He is highly esteemed by all the family at the park, and

I never see him myself without taking pains to converse with him."

"That he is patronised by YOU," replied Willoughby, "is certainly in

his favour; but as for the esteem of the others, it is a reproach in

itself. Who would submit to the indignity of being approved by such a

woman as Lady Middleton and Mrs. Jennings, that could command the

indifference of any body else?"

"But perhaps the abuse of such people as yourself and Marianne will

make amends for the regard of Lady Middleton and her mother. If their

praise is censure, your censure may be praise, for they are not more

undiscerning, than you are prejudiced and unjust."

"In defence of your protege you can even be saucy."

"My protege, as you call him, is a sensible man; and sense will always

have attractions for me. Yes, Marianne, even in a man between thirty

and forty. He has seen a great deal of the world; has been abroad, has

read, and has a thinking mind. I have found him capable of giving me

much information on various subjects; and he has always answered my

inquiries with readiness of good-breeding and good nature."

"That is to say," cried Marianne contemptuously, "he has told you, that

in the East Indies the climate is hot, and the mosquitoes are

troublesome."

"He WOULD have told me so, I doubt not, had I made any such inquiries,

but they happened to be points on which I had been previously informed."

"Perhaps," said Willoughby, "his observations may have extended to the

existence of nabobs, gold mohrs, and palanquins."

"I may venture to say that HIS observations have stretched much further

than your candour. But why should you dislike him?"

"I do not dislike him. I consider him, on the contrary, as a very

respectable man, who has every body's good word, and nobody's notice;

who, has more money than he can spend, more time than he knows how to

employ, and two new coats every year."

"Add to which," cried Marianne, "that he has neither genius, taste, nor

spirit. That his understanding has no brilliancy, his feelings no

ardour, and his voice no expression."

"You decide on his imperfections so much in the mass," replied Elinor,

"and so much on the strength of your own imagination, that the

commendation I am able to give of him is comparatively cold and

insipid. I can only pronounce him to be a sensible man, well-bred,

well-informed, of gentle address, and, I believe, possessing an amiable

heart."

"Miss Dashwood," cried Willoughby, "you are now using me unkindly. You

are endeavouring to disarm me by reason, and to convince me against my

will. But it will not do. You shall find me as stubborn as you can be

artful. I have three unanswerable reasons for disliking Colonel

Brandon; he threatened me with rain when I wanted it to be fine; he has

found fault with the hanging of my curricle, and I cannot persuade him

to buy my brown mare. If it will be any satisfaction to you, however,

to be told, that I believe his character to be in other respects

irreproachable, I am ready to confess it. And in return for an

acknowledgment, which must give me some pain, you cannot deny me the

privilege of disliking him as much as ever."